

# **The William Gbant Family: Pioneers of Melancthon Township**

Article submitted and Appendix compiled by Peter Meyler. Article originally printed in *A History of Dufferin County*, by Stephen Sawden, Orangeville, Ontario, c. 1930s

During what was known as the “Epoch of Colonization” in Grey and Simcoe counties following the years 1849-50, two well-known pioneers of Melancthon, the late William and Mrs. Gbant, came from Toronto to Hall’s Corners and on to Beachell’s tavern, walking much of the way.

Choosing as their homestead the 50 acres, lot No. 285, 1st con. S.W.T. & S. Road, they proceeded to clear a plot on the corner facing the Toronto line upon which to build a log cabin and plant a patch of potatoes. The foundation logs and dugout cellar of this primitive dwelling, still noticeable in recent years, stood almost on the site of the frame tavern, the “Dufferin Inn,” built of rough hemlock lumber by James McGoey, thirty years later.

After spending a few years here and making a considerable clearing on the front of the lot, the Ghants moved four miles farther back from the Toronto Line and settled on a bush lot near what in later years became known as Small’s Corner. Here they settled and cleared another farm, erected log buildings and remained for several years. By this time the Gbant family, five boys and three girls, were almost full grown. With a view to securing farms for his family Mr. Gbant took up from the Crown a block of 300 acres in the 5th and 6th cons., S.W., which in recent years was known as the Ferrier property.

The timber on these lots consisted of considerable beech and maple and some swamp, and the Ghants, father and sons, chopped and cleared a large acreage and became influential farmers, raising abundant crops of oats, peas and barley. The maple syrup and sugar season lasted through the months of March and April and the Ghants usually tapped an average of 250 trees.

William Gbant Sr. was a tall, powerful man and during his long career in Melancthon he never owned a horse, but did all his farm work with a yoke of oxen – sometimes he had two teams of oxen – and did much logging both for himself and his neighbours. His son, Wm. Gbant Jr., owned a good span of bay trotting horses. The youngest son, Thomas Gbant, could play both the fife and fiddle and was often engaged as fifer for L.O.L. No. 909, Melancthon, on the 12th of July.

Mr. Gbant often related thrilling stories of those “Slavery Days” in the Sunny South before the immortal Lincoln achieved the emancipation of his race. Over fifty years ago the Ghants disposed of their large property in Melancthon and moved to Lion’s Head.

Prior to the formation of the County of Grey in 1852, a few adventurous spirits, among whom was the late Louis Ghan, wended their way along the newly blazed Toronto Line from Hall's Corner to Sydenham Village (Owen Sound) in quest of land upon which each might erect a house and home. Of course Edward Noble, Watson Ballard and two or three others had already penetrated into what the Pope calls "these deep solitudes" of the backwoods, and had formed the nucleus of a settlement around what later became known as McDowell's Corner.

Born in the Southern States and coming north as far as Buffalo, Mr. Ghan followed the vocation of a sailor on the Great Lakes, sailing, as he often told the writer, "from Buffalo to Chicago," continuously for twelve years. While still a young man he came to Toronto and for a few years was in the employ of the late Sir W. P. Howland at the famous Lambton Flour Mills on the Humber.

Desirous of taking up a farm of his own, he came to the New Survey of Melancthon and settled first on a lot in the 2nd con., N. E., just above the 270 sideroad. Although Mr. Ghan owned and occupied farms in different sections of the township, both east and west of the old Gravel Road, he always resided in the New Survey. His method was to chop and prepare an acreage during the winter season ready for logging and burning off in the late spring in time for crops the same year, usually oats, peas and possibly spring wheat, potatoes and turnips. He would clear a field of five or more acres, doing the work with his own hands and the aid of a yoke of oxen.

Mr. and Mrs. Ghan raised a family of three sons and five daughters, only three of whom are now living. Mrs. Ghan passed away in 1872, and Mr. Ghan, having lived over four score years, died about forty years ago. He was a consistent member of St. Patrick's Church, Melancthon.

## Appendix – Gants of African Origin

### 1871 Census

**Gant, David**  
**Sex:** Male  
**Age:** 34  
**Place of Birth:** ONT  
**Religion:** Church of England, Anglican  
**Origin:** AFRICAN  
**Occupation:** BARBER  
**District:** WELLINGTON CTRE. (034)  
**Sub-district:** Elora Village (B)  
**Page:** 8  
**Microfilm reel number:** C-9946  
**Reference:** RG31 — Statistics Canada

**Gant, Joseph**  
**Sex:** Male  
**Age:** 48  
**Place of Birth:** UNITED STATES  
**Religion:** Wesleyan Methodist  
**Origin:** AFRICAN  
**Occupation:** LAB  
**District:** HALTON (038)  
**Sub-district:** Oakville Town (C)  
**Page:** 13  
**Microfilm reel number:** C-9956  
**Reference:** RG31 — Statistics Canada

**Gant, Rev Edward**  
**Stray:** Individual bears a different surname than the head of the family  
**Sex:** Male  
**Age:** 70  
**Place of Birth:** UNITED STATES  
**Religion:** Episcopal Methodist/  
Methodist Episcopal  
**Origin:** AFRICAN  
**Occupation:** CLERGYMAN  
**District:** TORONTO WEST (046)  
**Page:** 87  
**Microfilm reel number:** C-9970  
**Reference:** RG31 — Statistics Canada

**Gant, John**  
**Stray:** Individual bears a different surname than the head of the family  
**Sex:** Male  
**Age:** 25  
**Place of Birth:** Ontario  
**Religion:** Christian Conference Baptist  
**Origin:** AFRICAN  
**Occupation:** BARBER  
**District:** ESSEX (001)  
**Sub-district:** Amherstburg (B)  
**Page:** 26  
**Microfilm reel number:** C-9888  
**Reference:** RG31 — Statistics Canada

**Gant, Lewis**  
**Sex:** Male  
**Age:** 45  
**Place of Birth:** UNITED STATES  
**Religion:** Roman Catholic  
**Origin:** AFRICAN  
**Occupation:** FARMER  
**District:** GREY SOUTH (036)  
**Sub-district:** Melancthon (D)  
**Division:** 2  
**Page:** 36  
**Microfilm reel number:** C-9951  
**Reference:** RG31 — Statistics Canada

**Gant, Simon**  
**Stray:** Individual bears a different surname than the head of the family  
**Sex:** Male  
**Age:** 20  
**Place of Birth:** ONTARIO  
**Religion:** Episcopal  
Methodist/Methodist Episcopal  
**Origin:** AFRICAN  
**Occupation:** FARMER  
**District:** GREY SOUTH (036)  
**Sub-district:** Melancthon (D)  
**Division:** 2  
**Page:** 8  
**Microfilm reel number:** C-9951  
**Reference:** RG31 — Statistics Canada

**Gant, William**  
**Sex:** Male  
**Age:** 32  
**Place of Birth:** NEW YORK STATE  
**Religion:** Episcopal  
Methodist/Methodist Episcopal  
**Origin:** AFRICAN  
**Occupation:** FARMER  
**District:** GREY SOUTH (036)  
**Sub-district:** Melancthon (D)  
**Division:** 2  
**Page:** 6  
**Microfilm reel number:** C-9951  
**Reference:** RG31 — Statistics Canada

### 1881 Census

Gant, Adline  
**Sex:** F  
**Age:** 21  
**Place of Birth:** U.S. (USA)  
**Religion:** Baptist  
**Ethnic Origin:** African  
**Occupation:**  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Bothwell (178)  
**Sub-District Name:** Camden (C)  
**Division:** 2  
**Page:** 10  
**Microfilm:** C-13276  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, Albert  
**Sex:** M  
**Age:** 5  
**Place of Birth:** O (Ontario)  
**Religion:** BAPTIST  
**Ethnic Origin:** AFRICAN  
**Occupation:**  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Halton (150)  
**Sub-District Name:** Georgetown (I)  
**Page:** 47  
**Microfilm:** C-13258  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, Anna M.  
**Sex:** F  
**Age:** 37  
**Place of Birth:** US (USA)  
**Religion:** B.M.E.  
**Ethnic Origin:** African  
**Occupation:** Washer Woman  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Halton (150)  
**Sub-District Name:** Oakville (D)  
**Page:** 19  
**Microfilm:** C-13257  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, Calib  
**Sex:** M  
**Age:** 42  
**Place of Birth:** O (Ontario)  
**Religion:** Meth. Epis  
**Ethnic Origin:** African  
**Occupation:** Farm Laborer  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Grey South (154)  
**Sub-District Name:** Normanby (C)  
**Division:** 1  
**Page:** 7  
**Microfilm:** C-13260  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, David  
**Sex:** M  
**Age:** 45  
**Place of Birth:** O (Ontario)  
**Religion:** BAPTIST  
**Ethnic Origin:** AFRICAN  
**Occupation:** Barber  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Halton (150)  
**Sub-District Name:** Georgetown (I)  
**Page:** 47  
**Microfilm:** C-13258  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, David  
**Sex:** M  
**Age:** 3  
**Place of Birth:** O (Ontario)  
**Religion:** BAPTIST  
**Ethnic Origin:** AFRICAN  
**Occupation:**  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Halton (150)  
**Sub-District Name:** Georgetown (I)  
**Page:** 47  
**Microfilm:** C-13258  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, Charles  
**Sex:** M  
**Age:** 23  
**Place of Birth:** O (Ontario)  
**Religion:** E Church  
**Ethnic Origin:** African  
**Occupation:** Farmer  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Bruce North (177)  
**Sub-District Name:** Albemarle (F)  
**Page:** 27  
**Microfilm:** C-13276  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, Ellen  
**Sex:** F  
**Age:** 18  
**Place of Birth:** O (Ontario)  
**Religion:** E Church  
**Ethnic Origin:** African  
**Occupation:**  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Bruce North (177)  
**Sub-District Name:** Albemarle (F)  
**Page:** 27  
**Microfilm:** C-13276  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, Jane J.  
**Sex:** F  
**Age:** 4  
**Place of Birth:** O (Ontario)  
**Religion:** E Church  
**Ethnic Origin:** African  
**Occupation:**  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Bruce North (177)  
**Sub-District Name:** Albemarle (F)  
**Page:** 27  
**Microfilm:** C-13276  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, Charles  
**Sex:** M  
**Age:** 5  
**Place of Birth:** U.S. (USA)  
**Religion:** Baptist  
**Ethnic Origin:** African  
**Occupation:**  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Bothwell (178)  
**Sub-District Name:** Camden (C)  
**Division:** 2  
**Page:** 10  
**Microfilm:** C-13276  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, Charles  
**Sex:** M  
**Age:** 22  
**Place of Birth:** U.S. (USA)  
**Ethnic Origin:** African  
**Occupation:** Farmer  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Bothwell (178)  
**Sub-District Name:** Camden (C)  
**Division:** 2  
**Page:** 10  
**Microfilm:** C-13276  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, Isaiah  
**Sex:** M  
**Age:** 14  
**Place of Birth:** O (Ontario)  
**Religion:** B.M.E.  
**Ethnic Origin:** African  
**Occupation:** Going To School  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Halton (150)  
**Sub-District Name:** Oakville (D)  
**Page:** 19  
**Microfilm:** C-13257  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, Clara E.  
**Sex:** F  
**Age:** 12  
**Place of Birth:** O (Ontario)  
**Religion:** B.M.E.  
**Ethnic Origin:** African  
**Occupation:** Going To School  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Halton (150)  
**Sub-District Name:** Oakville (D)  
**Page:** 19  
**Microfilm:** C-13257  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, John  
**Sex:** M  
**Age:** 33  
**Place of Birth:** O (Ontario)  
**Religion:** C. Meth.  
**Ethnic Origin:** African  
**Occupation:** Barber  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Essex (181)  
**Sub-District Name:** Amherstburg (B)  
**Page:** 43  
**Microfilm:** C-13280  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, Jessie  
**Sex:** F  
**Age:** 11  
**Place of Birth:** O (Ontario)  
**Religion:** Baptist  
**Ethnic Origin:** African  
**Occupation:**  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Essex (181)  
**Sub-District Name:** Amherstburg (B)  
**Page:** 43  
**Microfilm:** C-13280  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, John M.  
**Sex:** M  
**Age:** 10  
**Place of Birth:** O (Ontario)  
**Religion:** B.M.E.  
**Ethnic Origin:** African  
**Occupation:** Going To School  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Halton (150)  
**Sub-District Name:** Oakville (D)  
**Page:** 19  
**Microfilm:** C-13257  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, Leales  
**Sex:** F  
**Age:** 4/12  
**Place of Birth:** Ontario  
**Religion:** Bapt  
**Ethnic Origin:** African  
**Occupation:**  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Bothwell (178)  
**Sub-District Name:** Camden (C)  
**Division:** 2  
**Page:** 10  
**Microfilm:** C-13276  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, Jesse  
**Sex:** M  
**Age:** 31  
**Place of Birth:** O (Ontario)  
**Religion:** Presbt  
**Ethnic Origin:** African  
**Occupation:** Barber  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Hamilton (City) (149)  
**Sub-District Name:** Ward No. 5 (E)  
**Division:** 3  
**Page:** 24  
**Microfilm:** C-13257  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, Julia  
**Sex:** F  
**Age:** 24  
**Place of Birth:** O (Ontario)  
**Religion:** Presbt  
**Ethnic Origin:** African  
**Occupation:**  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Hamilton (City) (149)  
**Sub-District Name:** Ward No. 5 (E)  
**Division:** 3  
**Page:** 24  
**Microfilm:** C-13257  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, Luana  
**Sex:** F  
**Age:** 3  
**Place of Birth:** Ontario  
**Religion:** Bapt  
**Ethnic Origin:** African  
**Occupation:**  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Bothwell (178)  
**Sub-District Name:** Camden (C)  
**Division:** 2  
**Page:** 10  
**Microfilm:** C-13276  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, Mary Jane  
**Sex:** F  
**Age:** 25  
**Place of Birth:** O (Ontario)  
**Religion:** E Church  
**Ethnic Origin:** African  
**Occupation:**  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Bruce North (177)  
**Sub-District Name:** Albemarle (F)  
**Page:** 27  
**Microfilm:** C-13276  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, Robert  
**Sex:** M  
**Age:** 4  
**Place of Birth:** O (Ontario)  
**Religion:** BAPTIST  
**Ethnic Origin:** AFRICAN  
**Occupation:**  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Halton (150)  
**Sub-District Name:** Georgetown (I)  
**Page:** 47  
**Microfilm:** C-13258  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, Mary  
**Sex:** F  
**Age:** 52  
**Place of Birth:** Africa  
**Religion:** E Church  
**Ethnic Origin:** African  
**Occupation:**  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Bruce North (177)  
**Sub-District Name:** Albemarle (F)  
**Page:** 27  
**Microfilm:** C-13276  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, Sarah  
**Sex:** F  
**Age:** 15  
**Place of Birth:** O (Ontario)  
**Religion:** E Church  
**Ethnic Origin:** African  
**Occupation:**  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Bruce North (177)  
**Sub-District Name:** Albemarle (F)  
**Page:** 27  
**Microfilm:** C-13276  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, Simon  
**Sex:** M  
**Age:** 21  
**Place of Birth:** O (Ontario)  
**Religion:** E Church  
**Ethnic Origin:** African  
**Occupation:** Farmer  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Bruce North (177)  
**Sub-District Name:** Albemarle (F)  
**Page:** 27  
**Microfilm:** C-13276  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, Simon  
**Sex:** M  
**Age:** 27  
**Place of Birth:** Ontario  
**Religion:** Can. Meth.  
**Ethnic Origin:** African  
**Occupation:** Servant  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Grey East (155)  
**Sub-District Name:** Melancthon (E)  
**Division:** 2  
**Page:** 33  
**Microfilm:** C-13261  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, Thomas  
**Sex:** M  
**Age:** 20  
**Place of Birth:** O (Ontario)  
**Religion:** E Church  
**Ethnic Origin:** African  
**Occupation:** Farmer  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Bruce North (177)  
**Sub-District Name:** Albemarle (F)  
**Page:** 27  
**Microfilm:** C-13276  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, Thomas E.  
**Sex:** M  
**Age:** 8  
**Place of Birth:** O (Ontario)  
**Religion:** B.M.E.  
**Ethnic Origin:** African  
**Occupation:** Going To School  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Halton (150)  
**Sub-District Name:** Oakville (D)  
**Page:** 19  
**Microfilm:** C-13257  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, William  
**Sex:** M  
**Age:** 71  
**Place of Birth:** Africa  
**Religion:** E Church  
**Ethnic Origin:** African  
**Occupation:** Farmer  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Bruce North (177)  
**Sub-District Name:** Albemarle (F)  
**Page:** 27  
**Microfilm:** C-13276  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada

Gant, William  
**Sex:** M  
**Age:** 30  
**Place of Birth:** U.S. (USA)  
**Religion:** E Church  
**Ethnic Origin:** African  
**Occupation:** Farmer  
**Province:** Ontario  
**District Name:** Bruce North (177)  
**Sub-District Name:** Albemarle (F)  
**Page:** 27  
**Microfilm:** C-13276  
**Reference:** RG31 - Statistics Canada