

Sketch of the life of John Work Harris, the substance of which was dictated to one of his sons by Nancy and John W. Harris.

### John Work Harris

Inasmuch as the subject of this sketch was perhaps the oldest citizen of the community in which he lived and so far as we now know lived to a greater age than any other person of the Harris name and further that we might not lose the family history, the following brief reference is made to his ancestry.

His paternal grandparents Richard and Beulah Harris were born probably in Maine. After their marriage they moved to Mt. Pleasant, Jefferson Co., Ohio, where their eleven children were born, three of whom died in infancy.

The family moved to a farm north of the road (Main) between Pennsville and Windsor (now Stockport) Morgan Co., Ohio. They were people of splendid character, strict members of the Friends' Church at Pennsville, Ohio. All the children except Jonathan were dispossessed of their birthright in the Friends' church because of their marrying outside the church. A copy of the note of Watson Harris' dismissal is among the papers in the possession of the family.

John's father, Watson Harris, was born in Jefferson Co., Ohio, Aug. 3, 1812 and may be remembered by the older citizens.

John's maternal great grandparents David Work and his wife Mary Ann Porterfield Work came from Ireland, landing near Philadelphia and settled at St. Clairsville, Ohio, where their six children were born and reared. David, the oldest son was a lieutenant in the war of 1812 and married Theodate Todd, who with her parents, brothers and sisters came from Georgia. Six children were born, the youngest being Nancy Work, born Sept. 1, 1819.

John Work Harris, son of Watson and Nancy Work Harris, was born in Pennsville, Morgan Co., Ohio, May 3, 1836 and when about two years old moved to the Alloway farm, thence to the Balderson farm on Bald Eagle Creek, thence to Windsor (now Stockport) thence to Chester Hill, where his boyhood was spent. He and his brother William did the family milling at Brawley's Crut mill on Federal Creek (Armadale). Much of the road was only a path cut through the forest. He chored about, tended sheep for stockbuyers on the old Sifford farm (now the Newbern farm west of Chester Hill), receiving 12½ cents per day. When John was fifteen years of age the family moved to Athens Co., Ohio, on the farm where Abner Galbraith now lives, then owned by grandmother Work. He and William did the sawing on the old hewed log house on the farm owned by his mother, Nancy Harris. The family moved into this house.

At the age of sixteen John began working with his father at the plastering trade and continued at the work as long as health permitted.

On May 8, 1858 he was married to Martha Jane Bille and they began

housekeeping in grandmother Work's old house which stood just east of the present residence of Abner Galbreith, on the State Road a few rods east of the road leading to the Town House. Here they lived until Jordan, Mary Eliza, Lucy and Adda were born, except one year when they lived just south of his mother's farm in order to be near his work. That was the only season he did not work at his trade.

The next move was to the Charles Frisbie lot near the David Gilchrist farm on the road just east of Sharpsburg. Thence to Plantsville in the Ad Fawcett house where Frank was born. Thence to the Fawcett farm on the road leading from Plantsville to the coal bank. Thence to the Noble King farm near the Bethel church, where they lived five years. Here Carlos and Joe were born. He bought a small farm of 87 and 83/100 acres, south end of west half of east half of the fraction numbered twenty-three in section (22) in town No. 7 of range No. 12 as surveyed by John Ackley in 1863. The purchase price was \$400. The lot was all forest and it may be imagined through what hardships the family passed in order to make a living and pay for the little home. Here Leonard, Howard and Seth were born. Seven acres of land were added to the home and then in the Spring of 1867 he purchased thirty acres from his son Jordan, making a total of about 65 acres. This home he loved dearly.

Soon the greatest sorrow of his life was to come, the home was to be broken, the companion of his joys and sorrows was to be snatched ruthlessly from him. On the 16th of August 1867 while he was plastering at the home of Joseph Austro the death angel came and took wife and mother out of the home. This was a sad blow, as it left a father to care for six motherless boys. Very few men could have held the home together as he did.

On December 5, 1891 he was married to Mrs. Margaret Mariah Yearrian. This proved to be a very happy marriage for all concerned. The old home was sold for coal land and a new home was purchased from Isaac Randall and occupied March 31, 1893. This farm with residence on the hill east of the Mt. Hermon Church, a few rods south of the State Road, was transferred from the government by President Andrew Jackson to Edmund Perry, then to John E. Vore, thence to David Perkins. Then the court decided it to Isaac Randall, and thence to John Work Harris. For over twenty-nine years this couple shared each others joys and sorrows. Into the home the children and grandchildren were ever welcome.

His educational advantages were limited. He attended subscription school where the desk was formed by laying a board on pegs driven in the wall and the seats made from split logs with pegs for legs. He never used a blackboard. He attended two winters of three months in the old log school building which stood in front of the present site of the school house in the Hardin district also two winters in Ames Township on the Glazier farm. He loved to read and always insisted that the children should have a common school education.

As a citizen he was patriotic and loyal and always insisted that honesty and uprightness of life are to be chosen in preference to wealth or fame. For forty years his vote was directed against the liquor traffic and he lived to see his hopes realized. People believed his word and looked upon him as an exemplary citizen.

In the Civil War he received a commission signed by Gov. David Tod as First Lieutenant of Co. C, Second Regiment of Ohio Militia in Athens Co., Ohio, for the term of five years unless sooner discharged. This commission was signed July 20, 1863. He was elected Captain by his Company July 4, 1863 and his father, Watson Harris, as Justice of the Peace, signed the Commission Sept. 18, 1863.

During the Morgan Raid the militia was ordered to report at Marietta and was detailed to cut timber, etc., to hinder Morgan's progress. The Company then went into camp near the Children's Home near Athens. The Company came very near being ordered out into active service, but the call did not come.

As to religion; as stated above his grandparents were Friends, and he clung tenaciously to some of their principles thruout life. In Feb. 1866 he was converted under the ministry of Rev. Joseph Ogilvie and joined the Methodist Protestant Church at Pleasant Valley Class at Sharpsburg. In the strict sense of the term he was not a churchman but always stood for the principles of the church and for years read the Religious Telescope, the Conference Minutes and the Year Book. The family altar was always maintained by reading the Bible and praying both morning and evening. He despised sham and pride, but was glad to recognize the good in anybody. He aimed never to turn anyone away from his door. The traveler, the hobo alike were cared for.

He often said that much harm was done by eulogy in the funeral sermon and that every one was preaching their own funeral while living. He had strong faith in God and in Jesus Christ, the Revelation of God and that the Holy Spirit is our Comforter.

He was a member of the Masonic Fraternity at Bartlett and appreciated the Lodge, but often expressed the regret that so many members did not live up to the teachings of the Lodge.

(The following was added to the above and read on the occasion of the funeral.)

He loved people and it always grieved him if he thought anyone held aught against him. He did not want to have an enemy. He loved life, but for the last three years of his life he was quite feeble; his hearing and sight failed, so that he often looked across to the cemetery and said he was anxious for the time to come when he would be placed beneath the sod. From the Fall of 1920 his health declined rapidly, but the immediate intimation of his home-going came February 25, when for the last time he sat at the table for a meal. On the evening of February 27 he became worse. All that human hands and skill could do was done, but the cord of life became brittle and more brittle until at 1:45 Friday morning, March 25, 1921, the cord snapped and he was ushered into the presence of his King, at the age of 64 years, 10 months and 22 days.

He leaves to mourn his loss, and in whose hearts he shall ever be enshrined, his faithful wife (and let it be stated here that we as children shall ever appreciate her devotion to father and the remarkable manner in which she cared for him); he leaves also one sister, Mrs. Theodate Marquis, and one brother, Charles W. Harris, of Prosser, Washington. The children living are Jordan, of Lawrence, Kansas, Mrs. G. W. Hanson, of the Mt. Hermon community, Mrs. J. T. Huffman, of Nelsonville, Ohio, Frank, of McGraw, New York, Joe and Leonard, of Westerville, Howard of the Mt. Hermon community, Seth, of Ann Arbor, Michigan, and one step-son, W. H. Yearrian, of Crafton, West Virginia, present at the funeral. There are also twenty-two grandchildren and fifteen great-grandchildren and a host of other relatives and friends who familiarly called him Uncle John.

He often expressed his faith in God and his desire to enter into rest. No one was more sensitive to his own imperfections than he and would be the last to claim perfection for himself.

We shall miss him. No more the sound of his cheery voice, no more his words of counsel, but his life shall ever be a sweet inspiration, for "what is lovely never dies, but passes into other loveliness - star dust, sea foam, or winged air. If this befall our poor unworthy flesh, think what destiny awaits the soul, what glorious vesture it shall wear at last!" We stand by his side and look upon the mortal form for the last time - the house where dwelt personality - immortal spirit, and "As the dissolution of the eye does not destroy the light, and as the dissolution of the ear does not destroy the atmosphere, so the dissolution of the body does not destroy the soul".

On this Easter Day, even when looking into the tomb, we hear a voice saying, "I am the resurrection and the light. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die". "For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands eternal in the Heavens."

"Peaceful be thy silent slumber,  
Peaceful in the grave so low;  
Thou no more will join our number,  
We no more thy song shall know."

The family desires to express our appreciation of the kindness tendered the family by neighbors and friends of the community, the pastor of the church, the members of the Bartlett Masonic Lodge and all who by word or deed have ministered in this time of sorrow.

Note: The above was written and read by one of the sons, Joseph H. Harris, on the occasion of the funeral. The funeral service was held in the Mount Hermon United Brethren Church, Berne Township, Athens County, Ohio, on the afternoon of Easter Sunday, March 27, 1921. Rev. Frank Williamson, the pastor of the church, officiated. George Fawcett, of Chesterhill, was the funeral director. Interment was made in the cemetery at the above named church.

J.H.H.