

Harris Family



Photo of Harris Family (Courtesy of Harris Family)

Members of the Harris family include the following: Jairus Harris, S. F. (Sam) Harris and his wife Louisa, and children Joe, Fred, Carrie, Lenora (Lanie), Mary (Mamie) and husband Ed Johnson, Ada and Irving.

S. F. Harris is one of the first farmers to settle in Taylor County, is widely known as an authority on horticulture, and has rendered valuable assistance along that line to the State Board.

Mr. Harris comes of a family of farmers, as his father and grandfather before him followed that occupation. His grandfather, Byron Harris, was the first male child born of English ancestry in Lewiston, Maine. Jairus Harris, son of Byron, married Olive Hurd, like him a native of that State, and they became the

parents of four sons, Samuel F., James B., Daniel W. and George W., and one daughter, Mircey Olive, who died in 1884. Jairus Harris came to Wisconsin in 1868, settling in Winnebago County. In 1875, he took up a homestead of eighty acres in Taylor County and is still living there, aged eighty-six. His sons all came to Taylor County and all except George took homesteads. James B. came from Maine and took up a homestead in 1876, but died four years later. Daniel W. died at Oshkosh in April, 1897.

S. F. Harris was born in Parkman, Maine, April 28, 1843. He grew up in his native State and received his education in the public Schools. In August, 1863, he enlisted as a private in Company E, 1st D. C. Cavalry, and for a year served under Col. L. E. Baker, the famous secret service chief. Mr. Harris did special service with that company and then, in the fall of 1864, was transferred to Company M, 1st Maine Cavalry, with which he remained until the war was over. In the battle at Hatcher's Run, Va., he received a gunshot wound in the elbow and from that time, Oct. 27, 1864, until his discharge in 1865, he was in the hospital, first at City Point, Va., four weeks; next in Emory Hospital, Washington, several months; then in Cuyler Hospital, in Philadelphia; and at the time of his discharge, June 14, 1865, in that at Chestnut Hill. This was a long period of inactivity and was peculiarly trying to one who had such a record for active service as Mr. Harris.

After his discharge, Mr. Harris returned to Maine, and after regaining his health fully, he settled down to farming there. Reports from the West promised so much better conditions in that section that in 1869 he went to Wisconsin, and bought a small farm in Omro, Winnebago County, where he lived until 1875. In that year, he sold out and moved to Taylor County, which was then just being opened up and where he had entered a claim the previous year. Medford at that time consisted of only a few houses of the most primitive type. Mr. Harris built a log cabin on his claim, a little later brought his family, and lived thus until he proved up his homestead two years later.

From 1876 till 1882, Mr. Harris was a resident of Oshkosh, where he represented George Moulson, a nursery man of Rochester, N. Y. At the expiration of six years, he returned to Medford and bought property in the city. He continued to represent Mr. Moulson and is still engaged in that work. In 1896, he removed to another place, an eighty-acre tract two miles from town which he had purchased some years earlier and where he now lives. He now owns 140 acres.

Mr. Harris was married in 1870 in Winnebago County to Louisa O'Neill, and they have a family of seven children, Frederick L., Mary O., Lenora, Joseph B., Clara P., Ada and Irving. The first vote ever cast by Mr. Harris was for Abraham Lincoln, but of late years he has left the ranks of the Republican Party and become a strong Prohibitionist. He belongs to no organizations save the G. A. R., in which he is a member of James Shields Post, No. 145.

Mr. Harris has been a student of horticulture for twenty-five years and has gained his wealth of information on the subject from practical observation and

experiment, rather than by theoretical methods. He is one of the best informed men in that line in Northern Wisconsin, and has studied especially the trees and fruits of his own State, with reference to their adaptation to the climate and soil.

He has found that the varieties of apples best suited to his section of the country are the Duchess of Oldenburg, Tetofsky, Northwestern Greening, Snow, Talman Sweet, Wealthy and Yellow Transparent, all hardy trees and bearing excellent fruit. In crabs, he finds the Transcendant, Whitney No. 20 and the Red and Yellow Hyslop the best; and in plums, the Wolf, Garden City and Desoto. In small fruits all do comparatively well.

The State Board of Horticulture places the greatest confidence in Mr. Harris' judgment and has shown him several special marks of honor. In 1901, they established an experimental station with Mr. Harris, placing 110 trees the first year, 110 more the second and a third 110 were placed in 1904, when Mr. Harris was made the appointee of the board as manager of the experiment station.

In 1900, Mr. Harris was one of the leading spirits in organizing the Medford Creamery Association, of which he was the first president and is still a stockholder and secretary. This organization has been very useful in promoting the dairy interests of the county.

References

Commemorative Biographical Record Of The Upper Lake Region Containing Biographical Sketches of Prominent and Representative Citizens and Many of the Early Settled Families. By J. H. Beers & Co, Chicago, published 1905, pp. 332 - 334; transcribed by Hildegard and Loretta Kuse.

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