

Biographical & Historical Memoirs of North East Arkansas  
Goodspeed's

## Harris

**William C. Harris**, farmer and miller, Harrisburg, Ark. Worthy reference to the agricultural affairs of Poinsett County would be incomplete without due mention of **Mr. Harris**, among others engaged in tilling the soil, for he is not only prominent in that respect, but, as a citizen and neighbor, is held in the highest esteem. His birth occurred in Poinsett County, Ark., on the 21st of July, 1843, and he is the eldest of eleven children, eight now living, born to **Benjamin and Martha (Thomas) Harris**, natives, respectively, of Alabama and Kentucky. **Benjamin Harris** figured prominently in the affairs of both State and county, first being elected to the office of magistrate, then representative, and afterward filled the position of senator. He came to Arkansas with his parents at an early date, and it was for this family that Harrisburg received its name. He was a member of the Masonic fraternity, a Democrat in his political principles, and, with his family, was a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The eight children now living of the eleven born to his marriage are as follows: Schuyler, died at the age of thirty-three years; Addison, sheriff of Poinsett County; **Mrs. Elvira Merchant**, at Harrisburg; **Mrs. Mary Wrice**; Benjamin, present senator of the Twenty-ninth district; Sophia, Fanny, Irvin, farmer and merchant; Lee, died in 1888, at the age of twenty-five years, and **Mrs. Melvina Perry**, at Paragould, Ark. Early in life **William C. Harris** was taught the principles of farming, and when it became necessary for him to start out in life for himself, he very naturally and wisely chose the occupation to which he had been reared. From that time to the present his success has been such as only a thorough acquaintance with his calling and years of experience might lead him to achieve. His education was received in the common schools of Poinsett County, and in 1862 he enlisted in the army, Company K, Twenty-third Arkansas Cavalry, Adams' command, and participated in these battles: Iuka, Corinth, Port Hudson, and others of minor note. At the

last mentioned place his command was paroled and came home. After this **Mr. Harris** performed scout duty until the close of the war, when he was mustered out of service, under **Col. Lisle**, at Wittsburg, in 1865. After the surrender **Mr. Harris** returned to his farm, and in September of the same year his marriage with **Miss Virginia Hays** took place. She is the daughter of **Henry and Mary (Stencell) Hays**, natives of North Carolina, who came here in 1855. To the marriage of **Mr. and Mrs. Harris** were born the following family: Walter, who died in 1885, at the age of twenty years; Mittie, died in infancy; Melvira, Grace, Willie, died at the age of five years, and Maggie. In 1870 **Mr. Harris** began opening a tract of land, and now has 140 acres, with forty under cultivation. In addition to this he is senior member of the firm of **W. C. Harris & Co.**, owners of 440 acres of timber land, and the owners also of a saw-mill, cotton-gin and gristmill, with which they do a good business. The mill was established in 1888.

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**J. M. Harris** is a native-born resident of the county, his birth occurring in 1843, and ever since starting in life for himself he has enjoyed the reputation of being not only a substantial and progressive planter, but an intelligent and thoroughly posted man in all public matters. His brothers and sisters are as follows: Mary F. (**Mrs. Johnson**), Calvin H., who was killed at the battle of Chickamanga; W. S., a resident of the county; J. M., B. F., who is married and resides near by; C. H., S. A. (**Mrs. Settle**, residing in Cross County, Ark.); Susan (**Mrs. Magee**, of Scott Township), and Alice (deceased). The parents of these children, **W. H. and J. P. (Copeland) Harris**, were born in Alabama, and in 1829 the father removed to Arkansas, and squatted on a tract of land near where our subject now lives. He took an active part in the early history of Poinsett County, and always voted the Democratic ticket. He was elected by that party to the office of county judge, serving a number of years. His death occurred here, in March, 1879, but his widow is still living, and resides on the old homestead. **J. M. Harris** was educated in the schools of the county, and in 1862 dropped both farm work and schools to engage in the Rebellion, serving in Company K,

Adams' regiment, and was a participant in the battles of Corinth, Port Hudson and numerous skirmishes. After the final surrender, he returned to Poinsett County, with the consciousness of having served his cause faithfully and well, and was married here the same year, to **Miss C. A. Stancell**, a native of North Carolina, but her death occurred in 1870, she having borne one child, C. H., who is at home. **Mr. Harris** took for his second wife (in 1873) **Miss R. D. Reeves**, a daughter of **J. F. Reeves**, one of the early pioneers of the county, but he mourned her death the following year. He took for his third wife **Miss N. E. Conn**, by whom he has five children: Sally A., Etta, Dove, Grover G. and Francis. After his first marriage, **Mr. Harris** purchased a farm of forty acres, and, by additional purchases, is now the owner of 320 acres, with 100 acres under cultivation. He is also engaged in stock dealing, and raises to some extent, his cattle being of the Durham breed. He is an active agriculturist, and, in addition to his farm, operates a saw and gristmill and a cotton-gin in Scott Township, his various enterprises netting him a lucrative annual income. Socially, he is a member of the K. of H. He is a member of the school board, and he and his wife belong to the Baptist Church.

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**Add Harris**, county sheriff, was chosen to occupy his present position by the Democratic party in 1886, and is now filling the duties of his second term, in a manner highly creditable to himself and to the satisfaction of the community at large. He is a native-born resident of the county, his birth having occurred in 1847, and from earliest boyhood he has been familiar with the duties of farm life, and his youth was also spent in attending the public schools, where he acquired a good practical education. He started out in life for himself at the age of eighteen years, and his labors to acquire a competency have met with fair results. Having grown to manhood in this county, he has seen a great change take place, and has noted a gradual improvement yearly in its growth and prosperity. He is a member of the school board in District No. 8, and has always been a patron of education and a believer in free schools. He is a son of **Benjamin and**

**Martha (Thrower) Harris**, who were born in Alabama and Kentucky, respectively, but in 1829 Benjamin came with his father, **William Harris**, to what is now Poinsett County, Ark., and squatted on the land near where our subject now resides, the country at that time being almost a wilderness, inhabited by Indians and wild animals. Here the grandfather died, a few years ago. **Benjamin Harris** was married in this county, and settled on the farm which is now occupied by our subject. They reared a family of eleven children, the names of those living being as follows: William, who is married and is a resident of the county; Add, the subject of this memoir; Elvira (**Mrs. Sparks**), of Harrisburg; Mary Ann (**Mrs. Rice**), residing near Paragould; Sophia, residing with her brother Add; Frances (**Mrs. Ervin**), a resident of Bolivar Township; Benjamin, a lawyer of Harrisburg, and Malvina (**Mrs. Perry**), of Paragould. The father of our subject took an active part in the early history of the county, and was quite a prominent politician, being the first man elected to the State Legislature from this district, and was also a State senator in 1877. During the Rebellion he was captain of a company in the Thirteenth Arkansas Regiment of infantry, and was a participant in the battle of Belmont, but was taken sick and confined in the hospital at Memphis, Tenn., for some time. His death occurred in this county, in 1881. His widow resides with her son Add.

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**Hon. Benjamin Harris**, of the Twenty-ninth Senatorial District, was born in Poinsett County, Ark., in 1854, and is the sixth of eleven children born to **Benjamin and Martha (Thrower) Harris**, a short history of whom is given in the sketch of Add Harris, sheriff of Poinsett County. The family are of Scotch descent, and first came to the United States from their native land in 1680, taking up their abode in Nelson County, Va., in which State the paternal grandfather served as a captain in the Revolutionary War. The youthful days of our subject were divided between working on the farm and attending school, and as he grew up he learned the lessons of industry, perseverance and economy, which have stood him in good stead in later years. Becoming familiar with the intricacies of surveying, he

was elected to the office of county surveyor, at the age of twenty-two years, and afterward entered upon the study of law; and after being admitted to the bar, in 1879, he commenced practicing the profession at his old home, and the enviable reputation he has acquired has been gained largely through his own individual efforts, and at the expense of diligent study and hard practical experience. He has been known by [p.596] the people of the community from infancy, and they have had every opportunity to judge of his character and qualifications, and their confidence in him has been intelligently placed. In 1885 he was elected to the house of representatives, and in 1888 was chosen a State senator. Socially, he is a Mason. In 1881 he was united in marriage to **Miss Mary A. Reeves**, a native of Missouri, but he was called upon to mourn her loss in 1887; she was the mother of two children: Frederica and Jachhot Fay. Frederica died in September, 1884.

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