

PART 3 -- POSTERITY

CHAPTER IV

THE JAMES HARRIS-WILKERSON-BIGGS DESCENDANTS

JAMES EDWARD, born August 9, 1813, was the first boy baby in the family and there was great rejoicing at the advent of a male child. Like all farm boys of the period he did his share of the many "chores" as soon as he was old enough and was well trained in the many kinds of work that had to be done on the farm. He was given as good an elementary education as the subscription schools afforded, and when he was 18 years old, the father, who took great pride in his oldest son, sent him for a year to Princeton University. The writer has several of the textbooks used by him there, each duly inscribed with the name, date, and place. These books were later passed on to the next son, Samuel, who used them in the same school.

But "Jeems," as he was called by the family, much preferred the great out-doors to books and so became a farmer. Feb. 9, 1837, he married Sarah, a daughter of John Wilkerson, and the couple went to housekeeping on a farm of 200 acres given the husband by his father.

James Harris, Sr., had obtained a tract of land of about 1400 acres lying just north of the road connecting Lebanon and Wilmington and half way between the two towns. Springhill School now stands opposite the south center of this tract. He sold the northern part of this to form what were known as the Jesse Burgess and Underwood farms. The remainder he divided among his three older sons, giving Isaiah 200 acres on the east, James Jr., 200 in the middle, and Samuel, who paid for the extra land, the 250 acres on the west.

There were several fine springs on the south or "Hill" part of the tract, which also lay along the main highway. Because of this the father divided the land lengthwise so that each farm would have two or more of the springs, and a building site on the highway. In this way the farms were each more than a mile long and only 90 to 100 rods wide. The north ends of the farms lay in what was then known as the "swamp."

James Jr. lived on his farm till his death, July 30, 1883. He was a man of most industrious habits and deemed idleness a sin; he dearly loved his land, and hardly a day passed that he did not walk up along the highway bordering the farm, and look over the land—evidently in quiet joy of possessing it. He was economical every way, believed in living on the products of the land mostly, and had a horror of going into debt.

Probably the tragedy of his life was having to mortgage his farm, when he was past sixty, to pay a security debt of \$1200 for a neighbor he had always deemed a trusty friend, though warned of him by his family, and Samuel. The "friend's" wife owned a 200 acres farm and had also signed the note, but after James, so it was collected off of him. The "friend" and his wife never made any attempt to reimburse James, though able to do so. Two years of rigid economy enabled James to pay off the debt, \$1,200, but nothing could restore his former confidence in mankind.

James himself was honest to a fault, attended strictly to his own affairs, a man of strict integrity and highly esteemed by all. While living economically his home was noted for its open hospitality, a great gathering place for young people and the scene of frequent social times among them. To James' first marriage were born:

I William Henry, December 20, 1837. In 1859 he joined the "gold rush" and went to California, part way by train, then on foot, and made the long "trek" across the "Plains" in an ox-cart! Reaching the goldfields he marked off a "claim" and soon made a "stake." He then homesteaded a quarter section which some years later he sold. A part of Bakersfield, a city of 15,000 people, now occupies the land.

In 1867 he returned home, bringing as the writer recalls \$1,200 in gold in a belt under his clothing. Later he went to Illinois where he married Mary V. Johnson, March 19, 1868. He bought a farm near Pleasant Hill, Mo., but after a year sold it to buy a quarter section where Coffeyville, Kansas now stands. Along with the majority of Kansas farmers he was ruined by the "Grasshopper Plague" of 1873. He returned to Illinois but a year or two later on account of his wife's health moved to Canon City, Colorado. There he worked for the D. R. G. Western R. R. till 1893 when he was transferred to Pueblo, same state. Two years later he went to Denver, Col., where he was employed by the Denver Tramway Company till he "retired" at 70.

He soon grew restless from unemployment and quickly accepted an old friend's offer of a quarter section claim 50 miles east, for \$500.00, if he would finish "proving up" on it. Meantime his wife's health grew poor and as soon as he had obtained a government deed to the land he returned to Denver, tenderly caring for his wife till her death in 1912.

A year later his son, Oliver, who had advanced the \$500 for the claim, took him on a visit among relatives in Texas and Kansas. William was greatly amazed to see tall buildings on what had once been his prairie farm at Coffeyville. The trip did him great good and he

returned to Denver to live a quiet life, cared for in every way by his younger son, Oliver, till his death May 2, 1916. He had always been a steady, efficient, and valued employee, straightforward, honest and trusted by all who knew him. His home life seems to have been exceptionally happy. He had two sons:

1 Charles A., October 11, 1869. For many years he was a salesman. In 1918 he married a widow, Mrs. Mae Smith and the couple lived at 1320-22 Champa Street, Denver, Col. The widow had a grown son, Frank G. Smith. No children were born the couple but they adopted two girls: Saherly May, 1-29, 1928 and Mary Ann 12-4, 1932.

2 Oliver Wendell, born September 21, 1871, on the farm at Coffeyville, Kansas. He was the first white child born in that whole section, which then was still full of Cherokee Indians. Oliver never married. For 27 years he was with the Denver Dry Goods Company, but in 1930 took a position with the City Health Department. He thought a great deal of his father, whom he seems to resemble in many ways, always looking after his interests and taking especial care of him in the long illness preceding his death. He was a valued employee and like his father straightforward and upright, a credit to his ancestry.

II Martha Jane, September 6, 1839. After the death of her mother she lived quite a while with her aunt Martha Stackhouse, and also at her Grandfather Wilkerson's home, always a welcome guest where she visited. In 1875 (?) she married Dr. Brice H. Elder, of Fithian, Ill. The union finally proved uncongenial and the wife for some time made her home with an uncle, Perry G. Mills, in Ohio, with her two living children. The wife returned to Danville, Ill., where she lived till her death, March 22, 1922. To the union were born: 1 Charles, 2 Nellie. Both these died in infancy. 3 Ernest Wilkerson, June 15, 1879, died May 26, 1892. 4 Elton Harris, June 15, 1883. He began the study of pharmacy, and later was employed for some years in the Wabash Hospital for Employees, at Decatur, Ill. While there he married Mable Gray; no children were born to this union. In 1913 he returned to Danville where he has since served as a regular licensed pharmacist.

In 1914 he married again, to Elizabeth Carey, b. July 22, 1896. To this union three children were born: a Howard Carey, March 28, 1916. b Mary Ann, December 15, 1918. c Carol Jean, December 22, 1920.

III John J., May 11, 1841. He was among the first to volunteer in the Civil War, enlisting for three years, July 9, 1861, and enrolled in Company G, 11th O. V. I., August 12, 1861. His regiment took part in many of the most sanguinary battles of the War, among them the Second Battle of Bull Run, Resaca, South Mountain, Antietam, and

Missionary Ridge. In this last he was half way up the Ridge in the Union Center's historic charge, when he was shot directly through the upper body. A slight deviation of the bullet either way would have meant instant death. Eventually he died from the effects of the wound. When his three year term expired he enlisted in the Veterans Reserve Corps and for the remainder of the war was stationed at Washington, D. C. He then spent some years in Illinois and Missouri, returning to Ohio about 1880. On July 8, 1882, he married Dora Williams of Clarksville. The couple lived some time at Bloomington, Ohio, and later on the farm of a cousin, Francis M. Wilkerson, on Springhill. Here he passed away January 29, 1889.

John was naturally of a lively turn of mind and his ready wit and humor made him the life of all social gatherings he attended. As a soldier he was heedless of danger and absolutely fearless in the severest battles. He was honest to a fault, ever ready to help where he could be of service, and always held in the highest respect and esteem. To his marriage was born, 1 Jessie Fremont, August 21, 1888. She married Charles Harry Murrell, August 6, 1910. To this union was born Mary Louise, July 16, 1913. The husband was for some years in charge of the Farmers Exchange, then of the Farmers Bank, at Clarksville and later in a bank at Wilmington with which it merged.

James Harris' first wife died March 6, 1842, and on December 19, 1844, he married Mary Biggs, of near Cuba, Ohio, and born February 26, 1822. She was the daughter of William Burr Biggs, son of William and Sarah Burr Biggs, the mother a relative of the noted Aaron Burr. William, the grandfather of Mary, was a lieutenant in the patriot army of the Revolution. To this second marriage were born:

IV George, September 13, 1845. At an early age he enlisted in the Civil War in which he received injuries from which he never recovered mentally or physically. He spent most of his remaining years in the Dayton, Ohio, Asylum, where he died October 19, 1873.

V Mary Elizabeth, February 15, 1847. On February 29, 1868, she married James Henry Vandervoort. (See also the Paul Vandervoort Descendants, Vol. II). Some years later the husband bought a farm near Coffeyville, Kansas, but never lived there. In 1877 the couple moved to the Levi Lukens Farm, near Flatfork, where they lived till 1888 when they returned to the James Harris Homestead. Later they purchased 85 acres off the north part of the farm and on this erected commodious buildings and lived till 1918, when they

“retired” and resided in Waynesville till the husband’s death The widow then moved to Wilmington where she lived with her two younger daughters till her death, June 24, 1931. The family took an active part in all church, social, and community affairs, and were important factors in such wherever they lived. The couple had four children:

1 Cora, April 2, 1869. On February 1, 1894, she married William Ross, son of Snowdon Ross, who was reared near Mason, Ohio. The young couple soon purchased a good farm on the highway between Clarksville and Ft. Ancient. On this they developed a beautiful country home and have ever taken an active and valued part in township and community affairs. They have two children:

a Lois, July 5, 1895. With the exception of a year at Columbus she has passed most of her life at home, always interested in domestic affairs, church and social activities, a valued and capable helper anywhere.

b Herbert, June 24, 1897. He developed into a successful farmer and also a salesman, dividing his time between the home and the “road,” efficient and reliable at either, as well as taking an active and valued part in various church and community affairs. On June 12, 1935, he married Clara Anna Arbogast, b. October 21, 1898.

2 Lula M., October 15, 1871. While a normal child every way Lula never developed very strong physically, and so deemed it best to remain unmarried. She has always stayed at home and as long as her mother lived was a helpful and appreciated companion to her. She and her younger sister, Anna, live together in Wilmington, Ohio.

3 Lucius R., January 1, 1872. On March 7, 1901, he married Fannie Tucker, B. S., Class of 1894, Wilmington College. Some years later the couple purchased a farm near Wilmington, where they lived till they “retired,” sold the farm, and resided for a while in Wilmington, then in Columbus. Later they returned to Wilmington where the husband has since been an all round successful business man. They had the following family:

a Pauline, January 13, 1902. She graduated from Wilmington College, B. S. degree, Class of 1926, and after teaching five years engaged in secretarial work at Akron, Ohio.

b Veda, July 10, 1904. She became a teacher and graduated with the B. A. degree, Class of 1925, Wilmington College. On June 25, 1927, she married A. Paul Porter, graduate of Industrial Arts, Ohio University. In 1928 they were both employed in the high school at Morrow, Ohio, where in 1931 the husband was elected superintendent. Meantime he had obtained a B. S. degree from the University of Cincinnati, and later the M. A.

degree from the same institution. He is now a prominent school man of Warren county and rising steadily in his profession. The couple have two daughters: 1' Margaret Jean, born April 5, 1932. 2' Barbara Ann, April 19, 1934.

c Margaret E., November 24, 1905. After graduation from Ohio State University in 1927 with the B. S. degree she taught in the high schools at Trimble and Waynesville, and is now in the Akron, Ohio high schools.

d Virginia, November 22, 1908. She completed the commercial course in the Office Training School at Columbus, Ohio, in 1927, and has since been engaged in secretarial work, mostly with the Mooch Electrical Company, at Akron, Ohio.

e Mary Louise, October 23, 1910. She graduated from Wilmington College, B. S. degree in 1932 and teaches Home Economics at Rarden, Ohio.

4 Anna B., September 24, 1880. She became a successful teacher, was for some time in the schools at Waynesville, Ohio, and is now in those of Wilmington. She holds a life certificate and lives with Lula, at the homestead in Wilmington.

VI Lucinda, April 23, 1848. She taught for some years and on July 20, 1871, married J. Raper Hunter, a minister of the M. E. Church. He was a Civil War Veteran, having served three years in Co. C, 17th Reg. O. V. I. She proved a very helpful, devoted wife and was quite a factor in making her husband's work a success in the various charges he served. About 1896 the husband retired from the ministry and they lived in Lebanon till his death February 9, 1919. Some time after the widow disposed of the Lebanon property and resided in Wilmington till she passed away, August 29, 1930.

The couple had one child, Blanche, born April 4, 1875. She taught school some years, and at Lebanon was employed as an expert stencil maker by March Bros., a school supply firm. She never married and lives at the homestead in Wilmington, Ohio.

VII David, January 11, 1852. On January 14, 1875, he married Alice Reeder. After farming some years in Ohio the couple moved to a place near Chattanooga, Tenn. Later he took charge of a hotel in that city but after operating it for a year or two returned north and established a comfortable home in Clarksville, Ohio. Here he lived with the exception of a year or two at Denver, Col., till his death in 1913. The wife passed away the following year. David was a great lover of music and could play different instruments, but his favorite was the violin. The couple had as family:

1 Raymond L., who became a telegraph operator; he had charge of the railroad station at Sabina, Ohio, many years, till his death, July 16, 1933. He married Claire Cluxton and they had a son, Herbert, who married Anna Wolfe. 2 Bertha, who married Edgar Starry. They have a son, Paul.

VIII Harriet, January 8, 1853. She married Marion Cass, October 19, 1885. For many years they lived happily on the husband's fine farm near Danville, Ill., where the husband passed away October 10, 1911, and the widow has since lived in Danville. They had two children: 1 James Harold, April 12, 1887, died May 13, 1887. 2 Raymond Harris, December 28, 1890. Raymond was a lover of music and for several years traveled with a troupe in the United States and Canada. Later he gave up this life and married Violet Kinder, born June 27, 1896. He is now a successful business man of Danville, where the family all live together in a comfortable, happy home.

IX Rhoda, June 14, 1854, died soon.

X Alfred, January 18, 1856. He married Anna E. Hatfield, February 14, 1878. Some years after they purchased a farm near Oregonia, Ohio, where they lived several years. Later they separated, the wife and children going to Chicago, Ill., where she married again. The husband located at Danville, Ill., where he died in 1923. The couple had four children:

1 Harold Morgan, born about 1880. He married Pearl Goings and had two children: a Viola Hattie. b Ruth. They are both married, but names of husbands and of children, if any, not known. 2 Ethel Pearl, deceased. 3 Earl, deceased. 4 Edgar, married, and has children. Name of wife and children not known.

XI Isaiah, March 10, 1858. He married Hannah Mary Urton, October 3, 1889. He was of a mechanical turn and early spent much time on various inventions, mostly in laundry machinery. He had almost disposed of an ironer he had patented, for a small fortune, when one still better was developed. He was in the laundry business at Wilmington for a time, then at Van Wert, Ohio. Here he developed quite a laundry and broom making business. He died there November 25 1926. The couple had one child, Carl Ivan, June 11, 1895, died July 14, 1900.

