

HOME IS WHERE YOUR STORY BEGINS

*The Coshaw Family
Jackson Township
By Beth Bassett*

The Coshaw Family

The Coshaw and Harris families are at the heart of this collection of letters. Why they came to Newton County by 1860 is not known. The research revealed several ways to spell the surnames, so I am using what was shown in the research. You can find detailed Harris family history in the Spring/Summer, 2011 edition of *The Newcomer*. In Letters of Administration recorded in the Carroll County Court, dated October 23, 1851, to James H. Coshaw for the Estate of William W. Coshaw, deceased, of Fayette County, Indiana, to his heirs, Henry, John, Elizabeth and Louisa Jane Coshaw. James H. being the brother to William W. The estate was settled and recorded August 15, 1854. This record validated the relationship of the family members to other information.

After viewing several years of census records (Indiana 1850-1880), that include the counties of Howard, Carroll, Cass, Jasper and Newton, we have established a family tree for the Coshaws. In 1850, the families of the first Coshaw were William W., Sarah E., Joshua, and James H. Coshaw.

Sarah E., married William Buchanon, from the census records, I do not find any children, however, her brother William's sons Thomas J. and Henry H. would reside with them upon the move to Newton County in 1860. It is believed that Louisa Jane also resided with the Buchanons, it's quite possibly where she met John T. Harris. William and Sarah would live a long and prosperous life, we find them at last in the 1880 census of Fulton County, Liberty township at the ages of 75 and 68 respectively, William stating that he had Rheumatism;

Joshua is listed in 1850 Carroll County and in 1860, Newton County, Jackson Township Census. He and his wife Elizabeth had five children, Mary, Sarah A., Margaret, John and Charlotte. Henry Harrison was living with his Aunt and Uncle in 1850, Joshua would ultimately move his family to Cass County, living out his days there. Their son John, enlisted with Company B, 51st Indiana Volunteer Infantry on December 14, 1861, at the age of 17. He would die on April 30, 1863 at Days Gap, Alabama;

James H. is enumerated in the 1850 census of Howard County, along with his

wife Susanna, and children William, Frederick, and Winfield, at that time, his niece Elizabeth, 15, was residing with them. In 1860, James is not enumerated with Susanna and the family. Any reference that Louisa makes in her letters to "Aunt Susan" would be to James' wife, Susannah (Lan-dis).

William W. Coshaw. William was born between 1800-1810 and died between February and April 1844. He married Catherine Buckley, born August 3, 1811, and died on January 31, 1849. They had four children: Elizabeth Abigail, Henry H., Thomas J. and Louisa Jane.

Elizabeth Abigail, born 1835, died 1869. She is listed living with her Uncle James Coshaw in the 1850 census of Howard County. She married Henry H. Kessler. They had two children, Martha and James W., both of them passing at early ages. After her death, Henry married Elizabeth Edging. The children from his second marriage include Joseph, born 1870 and Clara, born 1878.

Henry Harrison, born 1837, died on September 5, 1863 in Camp Sherman, MS. At the age of 13, he was living with his Uncle Joshua, and at 23, he is residing with his Aunt Sarah, the sister to William, and wife of William Buchanon, as he is enumerated in that household in the 1860 Census of Jackson Township, Newton County, at the age of 23. In the same letter dated September 11, 1859, Henry mentions the boarding fees he is paying while attending school, the letter posted from Burnettsville, White County, Indiana. Henry enlisted on August 11, 1862 into Company D, of the Indiana 12th Volunteer Infantry. On September 5, 1863, he died in Camp Sherman, MS, of typhoid fever. Elizabeth referred to him as "Harrison" in the letters.

Thomas Jefferson Coshaw, born 1839, died February 15, 1907, and is buried in Jasper, Illinois. He enlisted as a member of Company G of the 9th Indiana Volunteer Infantry on September 5, 1861, and mustered out on September 19, 1864. He is referred in the letters by his aunts as Jefferson. In 1870, he is enumerated in the household of William and Sarah Buchanon, and later, in 1900, he is found in Jasper County, Illinois. When he left Indiana for Illinois is not known, but his remains were buried there, and it is possible he married

and had a family there.

Louisa Jane Coshaw, born 1841, died Oct 22, 1884. In a letter dated February 15, 1859 from R. J. Lemmon, the pastor of the church the Buchanon's attended in Dale, Spencer County, Indiana, the comment is made, "wonder if John (Harris) and Louisa (Coshaw) will soon be married. Louisa Jane and John T. Harris are found in the 1860 census in Jackson Township, Newton County, Indiana. Louisa would have been 19 years of age, where she resided prior to coming to Newton County is not known at this time. On December 14, 1861, John enlisted in service with Company B of the 51st Indiana Volunteer Infantry, and would muster out on December 14, 1864. At the age of 21, Louisa was left to care for their first born child, Oscar William, born October 14, 1860, in Newton County with only her Aunt Sarah Buchanon, Aunt Elizabeth "Betsy", wife of her Uncle Joshua, and John's brothers' family, William F. and Ruth Harris. Her brother Henry would have been off to school, and her sister Elizabeth was residing in Cass County.

This explains the vastness of the letters that were saved over a period spanning 1858-1892. Letters were the only means of communication, and the fact that letters from the war front actually arrived and were sent is an amazing feat. "My Companion, Dear Husband" often started the letters between the newlyweds. Only once did I sense a bit of doubt in the relationship between John and Louisa, but doubt was erased quickly with the signing of the letters, "forever yours"

John was taken prisoner during the last of "Streight's Raids", but was released. The paroled soldiers were not allowed to return to combat for six months. They were assigned guard duty at a northern POW prison at Camp Morton. Their second son, Grant D. was born in 1864. There is a gap in the letters between the two of them from August of 1863 until November 1863, when he is at Camp Morton in Indianapolis. Grant died on November 28, 1892 in Redlands, San Bernardino, California, at age 28. The cause of his death was Consumption; Bruce T., born 1866, died Feb 9, 1886 in California, about age 19; Detmer E. Harris, b. 1869, died September 16, 1870, age 1, buried at the Harris Cemetery, Jackson Township, Newton County, Indiana.

Louisa passes away in Newton County on October 22, 1884 and is interred at Harris Cemetery, Jackson Township, Newton County, Indiana. John would remarry Nel-

lie Jackson and live a full and interesting life. He is interred at Weston Cemetery in Rensselaer, Indiana.

Branch Added to the John T. Harris Family Tree

We received a wonderful letter from Leslie Hall, a member of our society regarding the Harris family history the Spring/Summer, 2011 edition of the *Newcomer*, which has added a bit of more family history to the Harris family story. This has expanded a branch of their tree, finding a brother to John, Benjamin.

Leslie also included a photograph of the Benjamin Harris family, and I am happy to include Benjamin's obituary. Thanks Leslie, for sending along your information. "Dear Newton County Historical Society:

"I just spent an enjoyable afternoon reading the latest edition of *The Newcomer*" which arrived in the mail today and was pleasantly surprised to see the article on the Harris Family. One of Benjamin T. and Elizabeth Faulk Harris' sons was Benjamin Harris who married one of my great grand aunts, Emily Jane Crisler (a second marriage for Ben). Ben was married first to Catherine A. Wood, but I have no further information regarding her.

"Ben Harris, known to my grandfather as "ol' Uncle Ben" was a philanthropist whose will made provisions for the Benjamin Harris Home for Widows and Orphans in Rensselaer when he died in 1916. He and Emily Jane are both buried in Weston Cemetery in Rensselaer. They had an only daughter, Flora Ellen Harris who married at age 40 the organist and choir director of Rensselaer Methodist Church (and later a Presbyterian Church), Charles Edward Prior, a native of England. Flora died in 1931. She and Charles had no children.

"I am attaching a genealogy report which outlines the information I have gathered on the Benjamin Harris family. I am also attaching a photo of Benjamin and Emily Jane Harris with their daughter Flora Ellen taken probably between 1890 and 1900. (Shown above right) Regards, Leslie Hall, Waynesboro, Virginia."

Death of Well Known Citizen, Rensselaer Republican, December 8, 1916

"Uncle Benjamin Harris Dies at His Home in Rensselaer Today-Funeral Sunday. Benjamin Harris, of this city, died today at 11:00 a.m. He had been sick for the past four months. Mr. Harris was one of the eldest residents of Jasper County, having spent most of his life of seventy-eight years here. He was born in Tippecanoe County,

April 2, 1838.

When a small lad, he with his widowed mother moved to a home about a mile west of Mt. Ayr. He later moved to Brook, Ind., and owned and operated a mill. He was surveyor of Jasper County from 1876-1878. He moved to a farm near Julian and some twenty-two years ago moved to this city. He has made this city his home since that time. He was twice married. His first wife was Catherine Wood. His second wife to whom he has been married over forty years, was Emily Crisler. She and her only child, Mrs. C. E. Prior, survive him. The funeral services will be held at the Church of God Sunday afternoon at 2 p.m. At his request there will be no flowers. Mr. Harris was a quiet, unassuming man but of splendid character. He was a careful business-



Benjamin, Emily and Ellen Harris

man and had accumulated a large estate. He was a member of the Church of God and his life was thoroughly consistent with that belief. A life, such as Uncle Ben has lived among us, will leave an influence for good that will long be felt."



Blankenbaker Family Funds Harris Cemetery Restoration

Descendants of Joel and Susanna (House) Blankenbaker, who are buried in the Harris Cemetery north of Mt. Ayr, commissioned the Graveyard Groomers out of Connersville, IN to restore this cemetery. The restoration began on Monday, October 10, 2011 and was completed Wednesday, October 12, 2011.

During the restoration, bases for two headstones were found. The headstones themselves were not located. However, they did uncover a foot stone with the initials MCR carved on it. This foot stone was located immediately to the south of the Thomas Reed burial location. We assume this to be the burial location of his daughter, Mahala C. Reed. However a Mahala Reed does show up in 1870 (different age) with a Stewart family, so more research should be done to verify this assumption.

The Blankenbaker family greatly appreciates Randy Ames giving permission for them to have access to the cemetery, which is located on his farm. When a cemetery is located on private property, it is the owner's decision as to the upkeep and preservation of the area. The other cemeteries in Jackson Township are under the jurisdiction of the trustee, Sharen Clark, who has done an excellent job in maintaining them. *Submitted and photos by Beth Bassett*