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## SENATOR JAMES HARLAN

Because of the religious persecution of the Quakers in England during the latter part of the seventeenth century, George and Michael Harlan and others including William Penn, left their home country and came to America. Some of the early Harlans settled in Ohio where James Harlan, a descendant of these two indomitable Harlans, was born in 1820. His great grandfather and the author's great, great grandfather were brothers. In 1824 the family moved to Indiana where an embryo community was formed of six families of Harlans, many miles from any other white men.

This is a picture of idyllic simplicity here with these people. Making a pleasantry of their isolated condition, with no schools nor churches; few books and no newspapers, or officers of the law. They named their immediate district of the country the "New Discovery" by which the neighborhood is still known.

Within a few years the log schoolhouse was built. But the Methodist circuit rider preacher had come to the cabins before the teacher. His influence had given young Harlan a thirst for knowledge that he always retained.

As a farm boy in his teens, he became associated with a small drug store that contained a circulating library and a supply of school books. He devoured these books until they became a part of him.

At the age of eighteen he taught school four miles from home. In the autumn following the close of the term of school, Harlan, accompanied by a school fellow, made a journey on horseback to Illinois.

The picturesque and boisterous "hard-cider" campaign of 1840 brought to James Harlan his first knowledge of politics. Men in all walks of life dropped their work, journeying long distances to attend the great political gatherings of the year.

Another three months as a teacher of the district school and work on the farm during the succeeding spring,

brought Harlan to the time when he must take serious thought concerning his own future. One day in May 1841, he was in the field with his father. The elder Harlan surprised his son by inquiring if he had come to any decision as to his chosen life work, suggesting the matter be given thoughtful consideration. The young man pondered the subject in his mind for several days. At the end of that time he told his father he wanted to go to college.

James Harlan attended Rockville Seminary in Indiana. The next year, desiring to attend De Pauw University in Greencastle, Indiana, which was eighteen miles from home, he walked the distance to register. Finding difficulties of self support greater than he had anticipated, he became discouraged and started home. The President of the University, hearing of this, set out to overtake him and persuaded him to return. Harlan was given a job as janitor which he held during a four year college course.

At school the desire to learn took him by storm. He became interested in debates, oratory and literary work. One day he journeyed sixty miles in a farm wagon to hear Henry Clay, the great orator.

Shortly after graduation he married an orphan girl, Ann Peck. On the promise of a faculty position at Iowa City (as it was called at that time) he and his wife traveled to that city from Indiana by horse and buggy. He was a strong influence in the reorganization of the school, regrouping the classes and changing the whole curriculum.

The next year James Harlan was elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction by popular vote, independent of party or caucus. Gifted as he was by an education that cost him years of persistent toil, he was armed for any duty that might be thrust upon him. The year of Harlan's arrival in Iowa witnessed the adoption of the constitution of that state and state officers were to be elected.

The salaries were small. The state Superintendent received a salary of \$1,200 a year. After serving a year as head of the Educational Depart-

ment, he was ejected on the grounds that the law had not been properly published. He again declared himself a candidate, was elected but counted out by the returning board. By these political acts, he lost a state office to which he had been twice elected.

James Harlan was called to head Iowa Wesleyan University at Mt. Pleasant, Iowa in 1853 as President and Professor of Moral and Mental Philosophy. The University was under discouraging conditions both financial and academic. The Board of Trustees of the college informed him that they owned twenty acres of ground and a commodious two-story brick building. The breadth of Harlan's views in regard to the college was much wider than the trustee's views. His ideas were adopted and under the impulse given by reorganization, the school took on new life and the number of students greatly increased. During Harlan's presidency, "Old Main", a three story brick building was begun. On the fourth of July, 1854, the cornerstone was laid.

Harlan became so interested in his work that the suggestion of friends that he should be a candidate for governor received no serious consideration. He was laying the foundation of one of the earliest trans-Mississippi colleges.

James Harlan was elected to the Senate in 1855. He held this position for eighteen years, studying closely sociological, economic and political questions. He resigned in 1857 when the validity of his election was questioned, but was reelected. He was placed on two committees; a committee on agriculture and a committee on manufacturing. As Senator he concentrated on Western measures, homesteads, colleges, land grants, and the Pacific railroad grant, which he personally directed.

During his term in the Senate, Harlan took part in debates on a bill for the benefit of the public schools of the District of Columbia. He held that principles controlling legislation on this subject in states were equally applicable in the District of Columbia. Mr. Harlan offered an amendment that separate schools should be provided

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for the education of the colored children of the district. (This could easily have been the beginning of race segregation in Washington, D.C.)

The Homestead bill which would mean increased prosperity throughout the west had been before Congress for sometime. Failing to pass over the President's veto, Harlan labored faithfully in support of the measure.

Page after page of the congressional record is filled with tedious debates on technical points and questions arising from the jealousy of individual and local interests. One day Harlan spoke for two hours on the admission of Kansas to the Union. "On the hustings Harlan was a power not by brilliancy or flights of oratory, but by sheer readiness."

Senator Harlan gave loyal support to war measures. After the declaration of the War between the States, he engaged in the forming of Iowa troops. To him belongs the credit of creating the Fourth Iowa Cavalry. In fact, the first headquarters of the regiment was near Mt. Pleasant and was called "Camp Harlan." He had two reasons for urging organization of cavalry in Iowa. He believed that the North should recruit cavalry from frontier regions, where good horsemanship was a necessity. He was desirous that people of Iowa should receive benefit from the sale of cavalry horses.

Senator Harlan was daily in receipt of numerous letters from Iowa, containing expressions of loyalty to the government. Returning to Mt. Pleasant after congress adjourned, Senator Harlan was greeted warmly by the town. A public meeting was held on the courthouse lawn and the Senator responded by a bold attack on the policies of the Democratic party.

This United States Senator, a product of the frontier and of its limitations and its opportunities, became intimate with President Lincoln. His daughter later married the President's son, Robert Todd Lincoln.

James Harlan was chosen Secretary of the Interior in President Lincoln's cabinet. This is known as the disastrous turning point of his career. He

was charged with corruption in the disposal of Indian lands. The charges persisted even though they were proven without foundation.

To James Harlan the assassination of President Lincoln was a terrible blow. Harlan was chosen as a member of the Congressional Committee to escort the body to Illinois. A few weeks later he presided over a meeting of citizens held at the National Hotel in Washington for the purpose of inaugurating a movement to erect a monument to President Lincoln. An organization to do so was formed with James Harlan as president.

Because he did not agree with the new president's reconstruction policy, Harlan resigned. He returned to the Senate definitely aligned with the administrative group—supported President Johnson's impeachment and talked in spirited defense of the Santo Dominican policy under President Grant.

Growing division of the political party resulted in the Liberal Republican movement. This caused his defeat by Allison for the United States Senate seat.

Harlan became President of Iowa Wesleyan College in 1869-70. He was appointed President for the Day for the laying of the cornerstone of the Iowa Historical building in 1899. He died the same year in Mt. Pleasant.

Iowa lost a zealous partisan, persistent fighter, tenacious of conviction, whether based on reason or prejudice.

Upon the death of his daughter in 1907, the old homestead in Mt. Pleasant was given to Iowa Wesleyan College. This was to be the home of the presidents of the college.

Iowa was unusually fortunate in influential representation in Washington for nearly a quarter century by a genuine statesman such as James Harlan.

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*Note: The author wrote this article as a student at Iowa Wesleyan College. After teaching for 15 years in*

Iowa, Ruth finished college at the age of 53. After that she taught 10 years in Florida.