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[www.harlanfamily.org](http://www.harlanfamily.org)

Spring 2025

## THE MAGIC OF DAN HARLAN

If you attended the 2023 Harlan Reunion in Lexington, KY, you will remember the Saturday night magic performance of Dan Harlan. Dan wowed us with his Starcle routine, transforming a regular paper napkin into a full moon and, surprisingly, a star. (If you missed it, you can find him on the internet performing it.) This seemingly simple trick is one of his many originals and one of his favorites.

Dan has been charming audiences with his magic and creativity for decades. His unique style of theater and invention and connecting with an audience using stories and scripts makes his shows as much about the person watching as the trick itself. Dan's talent and versatility have made him an internationally recognized performer, inventor, teacher, consultant, and magical community bulwark.



*Dan Harlan performing another of his creations at MAGiCon.*

Magic and performance surrounded Dan from a young age. His elementary school principal was an amateur magician who regularly invited other

magicians to perform at the school in Fremont, Ohio. Dan recalls the allure of magic watching his elementary classmate complete a card trick he had learned from a book. Dan received his first Marshall Brodein TV Magic Set at nine years old from his grandmother. He was hooked.

Dan's creativity has bloomed through many trajectories. While he was always an avid student and performer of magic and theater, his feet did not fully land in that realm straight away. Several years in a graphic design career taught Dan product design and manufacturing, which transformed his ability to design his own tricks. Indeed, it transformed his magic career. Until 1992, Dan had performed magic shows on the side. Then his invention of Card-Toon launched Dan into a full-time working magician. (Again, you can watch him online performing it.)



*Dan's beloved Card-Toon creation catapulted him to another level of magician.*

Magicians were enamored with his card invention, which sold more than 200,000 sets in the first two years. This was all Dan needed to resign his graphic design post and devote all his energy to magic.

In 30 years of a full-time magic career, Dan has travelled the world performing his many magical inventions and educating other amateur and professional magicians. His shows span the globe, throughout the U.S., Europe, and Asia. He supported Penguin Magic production studios for five years as their in-house magician. At Penguin Magic, Dan organized and performed live and recorded lectures and broadcasts for educational purposes.

Another step along Dan's magic path is something no other magician has accomplished: a complete performance and update of *The Tarbell Course in Magic*. (This historic eight-volume encyclopedia contains over 1,200 tricks!) Dan completed all of this over a five-year period, making and designing the props, costumes, choreography, and scripts himself. Quite a feat!

What has engaged Dan in this life's work isn't just the magic – it's the performance and the creativity behind the magic. What feeds Dan's creativity is what most of us overlook: the minutiae and obscure topics. For example, his bookshelf holds a collection of recreational math books. And it's not an assortment that gathers dust, but dense pages that he inspects for ideas and inspiration. Dan has invented hundreds of routines in his decades as a professional magician. He is currently compiling them, along with other musings from a creative life, in a series of fully illustrated books, *Dan Harlan's MasterWorks*.

While Dan composes his life's works, he preserves an integral part of the magic community. Not only does he perform shows, he also cultivates a local magic group. He and his wife, SarahElla, organize the annual North Carolina MAGiCon. And, as always, Dan continues to create, invent, and inspire magicians and audiences.

Not only is Dan's magic a special talent amongst Harlans, Dan Harlan is a truly special magician!

You can connect with Dan through his websites: <https://themystictower.com>, <https://danharlanmagic.com>, or through the publications of his MasterWorks slated for the end of 2025.

## UPDATE ON THE HARLAN-LINCOLN HOUSE

In May 2023, as Iowa Wesleyan University was closing its doors, they turned over the Harlan-Lincoln House to a non-profit organization, the Friends of the Harlan-Lincoln House.

With the help of financial partners and volunteer labor, they have been able to add new front signage; improve the security system and make repairs to entrance steps; and develop both a website ([www.harlanlincoln.org](http://www.harlanlincoln.org)) and The Harlan-Lincoln House on Facebook.

With some grant funding, they were able to finance a necessary new HVAC system and related infrastructure.

Some plans for the future, with the help of volunteers' expertise and donations, include a plan for all 8th graders in the Mt. Pleasant School District to tour the house during or after the Civil War history study and a visit from President U.S. Grant, as portrayed by Pete Grady, on President's Day February 17, 2025.

The Harlan Family in America has contributed annually to the Harlan-Lincoln House since 1997. If you would like to personally contribute to the upkeep, programming, and the strengthening of the vision and mission of the it, please send your tax deductible donations to [www.harlanlincoln.org](http://www.harlanlincoln.org) or mail them to the Harlan-Lincoln House, P.O. Box 251, Mt. Pleasant, IA 52641.

And be sure to visit their website (address above) and their Facebook page.

*Dorothy Harlan Sperry (#6807-363)*

## HARLAN PARTY ARRIVES IN MEXICO

In 1846, California was known as Alta California and was still part of Mexico. The Harlan Party, led by George Harlan (#852), had arrived in a foreign country after a two-year journey traveling by wagon from southern Michigan.

“When we arrived at Johnson’s rancho, forty miles from Sutter’s Fort [Sacramento], and heard the cocks crowing, and saw the pastures covered with fat cattle and horses, and with the view of the grand Sacramento valley spread out before us, I was reminded of my dream. . . I traded my mule to Johnson for a pinto horse and got from him some dried beef. . .” (Jacob Wright Harlan in *California 1846-1888*).



*Co-author Pat Fleutsch at the Johnson Ranch California Historical landmark No. 493.*

A fellow 1846 immigrant, Edwin Bryant [not part of the Harlan Party] recalled in his book, *What I Saw in California* that “. . .the house of Mr. Johnson, situated on Bear creek, a tributary of the Rio de los Plumas, near the edge of the valley of the Sacramento. The house of Mr. Johnson is a small building of two rooms, one-half constructed of logs, the other of adobes or sun-dried bricks. Several pens made of poles and pickets surround the house. A building of any kind, inhabited by civilized beings, was almost a curiosity to us.”

Johnson's Ranch was a 22,197-acre Mexican land grant in present-day Yuba County, given in 1844 by Governor Manuel Micheltorena to Pablo Gutiérrez. Gutiérrez was killed in 1845 and his property sold at auction by John Sutter, as magistrate of the region, to William Johnson in 1845. It was the last stop on the overland trail to California. Except for Fort Bridger, there had been no settlements or buildings since the emigrants left Independence, Missouri, on May 12, 1846.



*Co-author Steve Harrison at the Overland Immigrant Trail California Historical landmark No. 799-3.*

The Harlan Party arrived at Johnson’s Ranch, near what is now Wheatland, CA, in October 1846. As they arrived, rain began falling in the foothills and it began snowing in the Sierra Nevada Mountains trapping the Donner-Reed Party. Early in 1847, seven members of the ill-fated Donner Party staggered into the ranch seeking help for those left in the snowbound Sierra Nevada Mountains. Of the 87 members of the party, 48 survived their harrowing ordeal.

During a recent visit to California, we traveled to Wheatland and nearby Camp Far West Lake and discovered three markers (see photos) related to the rancho and the emigrant trail that so many people used to get to California.



*Co-author Pat Fleutsch at the Trucker Trail marker near Camp Far West Lake. The Oregon California Trail Association has placed many markers along the trail.*

*By Pat Fluetsch (#7445-52) and Steve Harrison (#7445-54)*

Do you have a Harlan story to tell? What connects you to your Harlan ancestors? What does it mean to you be a Harlan descendent? Please share your stories in this newsletter! Send articles to the Editor, Stephanie Hines, at [stephanieshines@gmail.com](mailto:stephanieshines@gmail.com) or mail to: 1733 Dali Way, Hanford, CA 93230.



## GENEALOGY CORNER

### GENEALOGY AND JIGSAW PUZZLES

When you think about doing family research, it's like a jigsaw puzzle: you must find all the pieces to make the thing whole. When researching your family, you find people one at a time and locate the information in various resources. Unlike a jigsaw puzzle, where you know how the end product will look, your family tree has many individual branches just like a real tree outside your window. Those branches reach and turn in different ways to make it unique. So finding people and their individual information/history is the challenge.

I get inquiries from time to time from Harlan "cousins" who need help with their branch. A recent letter explained that he could trace his family and knew who they all were, but the Harlan book did not include his direct ancestor in the list of children. From reading Alpheus' account of that particular family, it was difficult to find records for the children. That may account for the one child not being listed. However, the child was listed in Hinshaw's Quaker Encyclopedia, so we know he existed. Record keeping wasn't as accurate and concise during that period in the 1780s as in later years. From this example we know that Harlan book is a great resource and is of immense value, but it has its limitations.

Most of the time the Harlan book can give clues to help us find another piece of the puzzle by knowing what county the family lived in, what church they were affiliated with, the wife's maiden name, or other bits of information about the branch of the family.

So don't give up on your puzzle-research. Just keep digging through the pile of pieces and something will turn up to help you find one more piece.

*Cynthia Rhoades, Director of Genealogy  
(#6326-532)*

## VERMONT ROAD TRIPS

Vermont has lots of natural beauty. It's also an interesting place for Harlan family history.

Hildene, in Manchester, VT, preserves the stories of the Harlans that married into the Lincoln family. It's a sprawling 400-acre property, with a Georgian Revival mansion perched on a hill overlooking the Taconic Mountains. Visitors can also see the goat farm, walk the boardwalk through the marshy Hildene meadowland by the Battenkill, and tour a restored Pullman railroad car. (Robert Todd Lincoln was president of the Pullman Company.)

Robert and Mary (Harlan) Lincoln built this home in 1903, and it was home to Harlan-Lincoln descendants until 1975. The website for Hildene offers self-guided tours, but by arrangement, you can tour with a local Harlan. C.J. King, of Jamaica, VT, and author of *Four Marys and a Jessie: The Story of the Lincoln Women*, loves to share Hildene with fellow Harlans. The welcome mat is out!



*C.J. at Hildene with board member Dorothy Harlan Sperry and her sister, Theresa Eason, both of Iowa, in Fall 2023.*



*C.J. with first cousin, Debbie Bentley, and daughter Rebekah, both of Florida, in July 2024.*

## OUR CALIFORNIA ROAD TRIP (Part 2)

*Part 1 of Our California Road Trip can be found in the Fall 2024 Harlan Record. The road trip coincided with the Harlan Family in America Board Meeting and planning meeting in Sacramento, CA, for the 2027 Reunion. We explored the area and activities that would inspire attendees to enrich their vacation experience in California. The following is an itinerary I found especially delightful and strongly recommend. Enjoy!*

After two days in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park, exploring its wonders and feeling humbled by the ancient trees that had witnessed centuries of history, we arrived in Sacramento, the last major stop on our journey. We immersed ourselves in the city's rich history and vibrant culture for five nights. We visited the California State Capitol, strolled through Old Sacramento, and indulged in delicious cuisine. One of the highlights was the Sacramento History Museum and underground tour, where we delved into Sacramento's hidden history and learned about the city's fascinating past.



*View of downtown Sacramento and the Sacramento River.*

As a grand finale, we headed to Napa Valley for two more nights, staying in Calistoga at Dr. Wilkinson's. The mineral springs were a perfect way to unwind, rejuvenating our travel-weary bodies. Over the next three days, we visited Castello di Amorosa, a stunning castle winery, and indulged in tastings at Grgich Hills Winery, Caymus, and Cakebread Cellars. Each vineyard offered a unique experience and exquisite wines that captured the essence of Napa.



*The Napa Grape Crusher.*

After our delightful time in Napa, we made our way back to Sacramento, where we flew home from Sacramento Airport. As we packed our bags and headed home, we carried with us memories of shimmering lakes, towering cliffs, ancient trees, and delightful vineyards. Our road trip through California was an adventure of a lifetime, and one that we will cherish forever!



*Castello di Amorosa Castle and Winery in Napa Valley.*

If you have any questions or want suggestions about this itinerary or what to see, feel free to contact me!

*Debby Harlan  
(wife of Board member, Tony Harlan #9318-1c4)*

## A SURPRISING DISCOVERY

The most repeated Harlan family story told in our branch of the family is that of my great-great grandfather, George Harlan (#852). He was the leader of the Harlan-Young Party that came to California in 1846. (You can read about the adventure here: <https://harlanfamily.org/trek>)

I thought no one in the family had any artifacts from that wagon trip across the country. In the Spring 2024 Merced County Historical Society newsletter, I saw a photo of a special exhibit on early California. In the photo was a man who was a descendent of the Donner Party, standing next to a table containing artifacts from the Harlan-Young Party!

My husband, Mike, had been on the committee that saved the courthouse from destruction and made it into a museum. Since we were founding members of the organization, the director was delighted to hear from me. She told me my mother's cousin, Maude Harlan Edmonson, had bequeathed the objects to the museum. I was thrilled.

Next, I found a time when my family members could go with me to the museum to see the two items—a wooden tray and a cast iron cooking pot. From Stockton, Fresno, and San Diego, CA and Hendersonville, NC, we traveled to Merced to hold these items in our hands and connect in a deeply personal way with those who came before us 178 years ago.

*By Pat Fluetsch (#7445-52)*



*Standing L-R - Pat Fluetsch (7445-5-2), Steve Harrison (7445-5-4), Helen Fluetsch (7555-5-2-1-1), seated Gene Harrison (7445-5-1).*

## THE 90+ CLUB

If you have a family member you'd like recognized in the 90+ Club, please send their name, address, date of birth and a short bio to Denise Walters at [rdwalters931@gmail.com](mailto:rdwalters931@gmail.com). Address changes for 90+ members should also be sent to Denise via The Harlan Family in America, P.O. Box 333, Pleasant Unity, PA 15676. Updated information helps us maintain our records and is greatly appreciated.

## REMEMBRANCE FUND

(In honor/memory of)

Tom Buch  
from Sarah Surratt (GA)  
Doris Harlan Gray  
from Cheryl Wright (TX)  
Joseph S, Harlan  
from Virginia Harlan Coy (PA)  
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Diane Harlan Lang  
from Wayne & Kathleen Harlan (CA)  
William S. Harlan  
from Jennifer Beidinger (SC) and Mary Beth Harlan (SC)

## THE REMEMBRANCE FUND

When the Harlan Family in American organization was formed, one of the founders' goals was to ensure that no one would ever have to pay dues to be a member.

38 years later, thanks to the generosity and support of many of you, that principle is still maintained. The interest people have for our common heritage and the strength Harlans have shown in the development and history of our country is matched by few families. We have so much to be proud of!

A sincere thank you to all who continue to support the organization with your gifts. We have several members who contribute a small amount each month through PAYPAL if that is an option for you. Remembrance donations are also tax deductible. We appreciate all of the support from those who are able to donate and all those who enjoy the stories in our newsletter.

*Bob Harlan (PA) (#6807-322)*



# HARLAN FAMILY IN AMERICA

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## TREASURER'S REPORT

Checking Account Balance (9/1/24) \$5,242.67

### INCOME

Donations \$6,041.45  
Withdrawal of CD \$3,052.54

**TOTAL INCOME** \$9,093.99

### DISBURSEMENTS

Fall newsletter \$1,523.02  
PO Box rental \$120.00  
Hotel deposit for 2027 reunion \$7,500.00

**TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS** \$9,143.02

Checking Account Balance \$5,093.64  
(3/1/25)

Certificate of Deposit \$16,159.99

## THE HARLAN RECORD

The *Harlan Record* is published semiannually:

**The Harlan Family in America**  
**P.O. Box 333**  
**Pleasant Unity, PA 15676**

It is a permanent organization established to document the historical contributions made by Harlans in America. Submissions of articles are welcome, are subject to editing, and may be held for future use. Send articles to the Editor, Stephanie Hines, at [stephanieshines@gmail.com](mailto:stephanieshines@gmail.com) or mail to: 1733 Dali Way, Hanford, CA 93230. Current and previous issues of *The Harlan Record* are also available online at [www.harlanfamily.org](http://www.harlanfamily.org). Consider going digital to save paper and printing costs. To add or change your address for *The Harlan Record* or to request an electronic copy via email, send the information to:

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