

History of Wayne County, Ohio, from the Days of the Pioneers and First Settlers to the Present Time

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BY
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CAPTAIN GEORGE U. HARN.

“Whether on the scaffold high,
Or in the battle’s van,
The noblest place for man to die,
Is when he dies for man.”

George Upton Harn was born in the city of Baltimore, July 30, 1820. He was the son of John and Charlotte Harn, and was the oldest of a family of fourteen children. In his journal he says, “I have but little to say about my parentage, for I am unapprized of anything worthy of notice except it be, that my genealogy on both father’s and mother’s side could not be impeached with anything short of common honesty, so far as I am acquainted.”

His great-great-grandfather was the first of the name in America, and he came from London, and was of Cymbro or Welsh descent. He spent the first two years of his life in Baltimore with his mother, while his father was in Frederick county working at his trade, which was that of house-joiner. After this the family moved to this county and purchased a plantation. When he was ten years old his father took him to Baltimore to attend school, and placed him in charge of his grandmother. He remained in the city but a few months, when he returned home.

After this he was sent to a subscription school in the neighbor-

hood, and it was here and at the debating society where he first acquired a taste for study and his disposition for public speaking first manifested itself. In the year 1838, being then eighteen years of age, he made a profession of religion. In August, 1839, he was immersed, and on the same Sunday announced that on the following Sunday he would preach. His father declared his opposition to this movement, but notwithstanding this, on the appointed day he delivered his first sermon, taking for his text portions of the first chapter of James.

He obtained permission of his father to attend a camp-meeting at Big Pipe creek, near Tawnytown, about sixteen miles from his home, which was to commence on the 4th of September, but when the time came his father refused to let him go. Mr. Harn remonstrated and said he had promised to go and that he must go, when he was met with the answer that if he did he should never enter the family mansion again. The next morning was Sunday, and he again asked leave to go, and was once more refused. There being now no chance of getting a horse to ride he started afoot through a storm of rain. He left home at 9 A. M. and arrived at his destination at 3 P. M., making the distance of sixteen miles in this time, traveling bare-footed occasionally to save his shoes that he was fearful might give out before he got there. Arriving at the camp-meeting he found himself in the midst of entire strangers, but soon found plenty of friends, afterwards returning home, notwithstanding the uttered prohibition of his father.

In 1841 the Pennsylvania Eldership of the churches assembled at Mt. Joy, Lancaster county, licensed him as a regular minister, and immediately appointed him to a circuit. When he was twenty-four years old he turned his attention to Greek, not, however, being assisted by an instructor. Combined with his good English education, he attained proficiency as a German, Latin, Greek and Hebrew scholar, having made considerable progress in the study of French.

In 1846 he published a small work entitled "A Sermon on the Ordinance of Feet Washing," which was issued from the *Church Advocate* office, the organ of the Church of God in the United States. This book elicited a sarcastic review from a contributor of the *Methodist Protestant*, published in Baltimore. The article, however, was firmly met with a caustic reply, by Rev. Harn, as might well be expected, for the lion of his nature could howl through his pen.

In the summer of 1847, becoming restless, he made an exodus for the then far west, going down the Ohio and up the Mississippi, above St. Louis, when he left the river, and traveled on foot, preaching along the road wherever he could find suitable places, and in his course visiting Mt. Carroll, Freeport, Dixon, Galena, etc., in Illinois. During the winter of 1847-48 he taught school and preached in Mt. Carroll and neighboring places.

In the spring of 1848 he returned east, by the way of Chicago, and by Lake Erie, to Cleveland, and thence by stage to Wooster. Here he was hospitably entertained by Rev. Archibald Megrew, who was then pastor in charge of the Church of God in Wooster, and here, on the 30th of April, 1848, he preached his first sermon in Wooster. His stay in Wooster, this time, was brief, it being only a visit, and on the 11th of this month he started eastward.

In the latter part of 1848 he began preaching in Philadelphia, and in June, 1850, he followed "the course of Empire" west again, accompanied by Elder John Winebrenner, and arrived in Wooster on the 8th of this month, the same evening preaching in the Baptist church. This trip was continued on to Iowa, when he returned to Pennsylvania, and thence back to Wooster, where he arrived about April 12, 1851, this time to take charge of the church, where he remained but a year, having been appointed to the pastorate of the church at Lancaster, Pa., in May, 1852, where he remained two years. He next took charge of the church at Shippenburg, in that State, where he remained until April, 1855, when he once more retraced his steps to Wooster, becoming pastor of the church for several years.

During 1854-55 he took an active part in the temperance reform movement in Pennsylvania. In 1856 he took an active part in local and national politics, and established the reputation of being a powerful orator and debater. From April 1, 1857, to April 1, 1858, he traveled over 5,000 miles, 3,000 of which by private conveyance, and spoke over 200 times, principally upon temperance, slavery and Hebrew servitude. On the 12th of July, in company with General Spink, Hon. William M. Orr, Hon. Eugene Pardee and Hon. Martin Welker, he attended the State convention, as a delegate from Wayne county. In 1858 he was a candidate for Congress before the nominating convention, where he demonstrated great strength and popularity. In 1860 he was a delegate to the Chicago convention, which nominated A. Lincoln. During all these years he was a constant correspondent

of the *Church Advocate*, many of his contributions being masterly and heroic assaults upon slavery. He wrote upon a great variety of topics, such as Baptism by Immersion, Infant Baptism, etc., and in the possession of his family are valuable MSS. upon these and other subjects intended for publication.

He was married March 27, 1851, to Mary A. Bricker, of Cumberland county, Pennsylvania. His oldest son, George U. Harn, is at the present time one of the editors and proprietors of the Mansfield, Ohio, *Herald*.

He was an acute, logical and profound thinker, a fluent and powerful debater, fearless of antagonists, and carrying his challenge in his hand. He had the pluck of Murat, the courage of Turenne. Fear to him was a meaningless term. If he resolved to go forward he would do so "though hell should gape and bid him hold his peace." He faced danger with the courage of conscience and intellect. The man who dared to utter such a sentiment—"Not that I seek death, but if such a sacrifice must be offered, *let me be one who shall do his duty in the decisive hour*," and who, when the decisive hour came, *did die like a hero*, has made an appeal for earthly immortality.