

THE FIRST HARBOUR

By Nina Harbour Champion
(written June 23, 1943)

According to a story told by Grandpa Harbour, only one Harbour ever came to America. He wanted to come but was too poor to pay his passage. So he stole a pair of shoes and the government transported him to Virginia. He had to work very hard.

I think this story is true. Ship passage was very expensive in colonial days. Also over three hundred crimes in the 17th Century were punishable in England by death. The prisons were crowded by debtors and petty criminals. The government transported many to the colonies, where they were usually bound out for a term of years to pay for their passage. There were both voluntary and involuntary bond servants. The usual period was seven years.

Also Grandpa Harbour should have known. He was born in Champaign County, Ohio, in 1817. His father, Elisha Harbour, was one of the very earliest pioneers in the county, having gone there by horse-back from Virginia not long after 1800. He was married there March 1, 1804.. Later other Harbours followed him from Patrick County, Virginia, into the wilderness, his brother William, Jesse Harbour, Elizabeth Harbour, and probably (I do not have proof yet) his parents, Joel and Sarah Harbour. The land records of Patrick County show that Joel and Sarah Harbour sold all their land (464 A.) in 1809; so there is a strong presumption that they moved to Ohio. Therefore Grandpa could well have heard the story not only from his father but also his grandfather.

His grandfather, Joel Harbour, was a young man at the time the Declaration of Independence was signed. During 1777 all men in Virginia were asked to renounce allegiance to the crown of England and swear an oath of loyalty to the Commonwealth of Virginia. In the list of those in Henry County who took the oath in 1777 appears the name of Joel Harbour. I found this list in a book in the Los Angeles Public Library.

I also found indication that he probably served for a short period as a private in the Revolutionary War and was at the battle of Guilford Court House. This cannot be confirmed from Washington, D.C. because there is no record that he ever applied for either a pension or western lands on the basis of service. The War Dept. wrote me that their records of Revolutionary soldiers are incomplete. A Noah Harbour of Halifax Co., Virginia, undoubtedly a relative, did receive a pension.

I come so near being the youngest of the grandchildren that I have been at a great disadvantage in collecting family history. I never had a chance to know the older members of the family.

Also our people have been pioneers in each generation, and as families scattered the older family records were lost.

Grandpa Harbour had an older cousin, John Arrowsmith, oldest son of Ezekiel Arrowsmith, who left Champaign Co. and settled near Mt. Pleasant, Iowa. Joel and Jesse Harbour, (brothers) with their wives, and their oldest sister, Betsy Wilson, with her husband and children, followed him in January, 1841. John Arrowsmith was a surveyor and helped survey Davis County to the west, after a new treaty with the Indians opened the main part of Iowa to settlement. At first only a tier of about three counties next to the Mississippi River was open to settlement.

In 1846, the spring the Mormons crossed Iowa, Joel and Jesse Harbour moved on to Davis County, where they spent the rest of their lives. The Mormons helped them get out the logs for their cabins. One of these log cabins still stands on the farm of Eli Harbour, Joel's youngest son. They use it mainly to store wood for winter.

Joel and Jesse Harbour helped build the first school in their neighborhood, the old Harbour School which their children attended.

Grandpa Harbour had very dark eyes and hair and eyebrows, spoke in a loud voice, had a keen sense of history, belonged to the Methodist Church, loved to joke, and, like all Harbour men, was very kind to his family. In the spring of 1886 he died of pneumonia at the age of sixty-eight.

This report was done by my mother, Nina Harbour Champion. She lived to be 90, and 2 wks short of her 91st birthday, December 15, 1981. Her ashes are interred with those of her mother, Mary Caroline Harbour, in Pioneer Cemetery, Bishop, California

This report typed by Ninarose Champion Mayer
April 9, 2009
Youngest child, now 75 yrs. old.