

THE AUDLEY HARRISON HOUSE

***Notes in italics added by this researcher to show family connections.**

This house is a classic example of the type house built by the first settlers of Warren County. Simple in construction, practical and sufficient to meet the needs of the early immigrants, it is a perfect example of the ingenuity of that of an early Settler, who built his home with the broadax, adz and froe from the materials he found where he decided to locate. This house, built about 1807, is constructed of yellow poplar and cedar with limestone rocks for the foundation and chimney.

The county records indicate the house was probably built by either Aaron Higginbotham or Armistead Stubblefield (*both Higginbotham and Stubblefield are relatives of Audley Harrison*) soon after they arrived in Warren county. On August 15, 1810, Stubblefield sold the house and 150 acres to John Groves (*Audley M. Harrison Sr.'s son-in-law*). Groves, who served as Sheriff from 1836-1838, sold the house and farm to his father-in-law, Audley Harrison, on September 3, 1838. It was noted in the Deed that Harrison already lived in the house.

Harrison is a great example of the type person who settled and developed our county. A born leader, good manager, shrewd trader, Audley Harrison was a lusty individual who lived life to the fullest. If this house could talk, it would relate many interesting incidents that figured in the rich history of Warren County. In 1817, the Tennessee Legislature authorized the construction of a turnpike running from Sequatchie Valley near Pikeville to McMinnville. Peter Hoodenpyl, Samuel Terry and William Raney were the owners and operators of the turnpike, which ran generally along the present State Route 8. Harrison's house was located along side this turnpike on a slope of the Cumberland Mountain near a pure, free flowing spring (*Hennessee Creek*) which supplied abundant water to the house and its occupants (*and neighboring plantations like James Hennessee's*). Located in the Blue Springs Cove area, near the turnpike, the house soon became a favorite stopping place for travelers, stagecoaches and freight wagons making the arduous trek over the Cumberland Mountain.

Adept at cards and other types of gambling, tradition says that Harrison won the turnpike in a card game with William Raney. It was said that Harrison's wife, positioned at the spinning wheel could see the opponent's cards and, by prearranged signals, could advise her husband making him aware of his opponent's cards. Whether true, or told by a sore loser, Harrison, nevertheless, wound up with the turnpike. A major source of toll on the road was the (*Harrison's*) ferry operated by Audley across the Collins River, near the present bridge on S.R. 8. Harrison was soon a major landowner in the area. He also traded in, livestock and his shrewd dealing made him more money.

Sometime in the 1830's, Harrison became Justice of the Peace for the 4th Civil District of Warren County. As such, his house was used to hold Court, hold elections, and to hold district meetings involving pertinent issues of the time. Many times, Audley was called upon to perform marriages, settle estates and serve as guardian or conservator. All of this made him a powerful man in his community. This house served as the capitol of the 4th District, Harrison's Fiefdom.

Audley Harrison came, to Warren County in 1810 and purchased his first land in the Blue Springs Cove area in 1814. He was the son of Thomas and Hannah Dennis Harrison of Tazewell County, Virginia. Thomas was a Revolutionary War soldier who had 8 children and lived his entire life in, Tazewell County, Virginia. Audley was the oldest child and married his first wife, Hannah Elizabeth (*Dennis*), in 1810. To this union were born 10 children. After the death of Hannah Elizabeth, Audley married Elizabeth Grove, and to this union were born 5 children. Most, if not all, of the 15 children were born in this cabin.

As you survey the interior of this cabin, imagine the activity that pervaded it when a stagecoach stopped for food, water and rest, or at election time such as in 1844 when the house was the site of the election to determine if the school lands of the 4th District would be sold. With James Clendenon (*same last name as James Hennessee's wife, Jane McGee's mother*) acting as clerk, all 51 voters cast "Yes" votes to sell the lands. Think of the tension that occurred in the house when neighbors were being tried before JP Harrison on assault, and battery, or disturbing the peace, or operating a bawdy house. Justice was obviously meted out fairly, for Harrison remained as Justice of the Peace for many years.

This cabin is symbolic of the lusty, hard-living years our forefathers experienced as they developed our beautiful countryside from undeveloped forestlands with crude, tools and hard labor. Tough, self-reliant, industrious, ambitious and independent, they lived and loved life to the fullest .

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OUR APPRECIATION TO MR. AND MRS. HUBERT BOYD FOR DONATING THE HARRISON LOG HOUSE TO THE PEOPLE OF WARREN, COUNTY, TO MARY BARNES WHO PROVIDED MOST OF THE AUDLEY HARRISON INFORMATION, AND TO THE WARREN COUNTY FAIR BOARD FOR THEIR COOPERATION.