



Harrison House

Harrison House was built by David Ruffin Harrison in 1868 in northwest Herrin (then known as Herrin's Prairie). While their new home was being built, the family lived in a log cabin at the rear of the house.¹ After the basement of the new house was dug, the clay was used to make the bricks on the premises.

D. R. Harrison lived in the Harrison House with his first wife Julia A. Walker Harrison (1836-1874) and their children. His mother, Delilah Phillips Herrin Harrison also lived in the house as did his second wife, Elizabeth "Libby" Fellows Backus Harrison. D. R. Harrison was a very community-minded gentleman who served as Herrin Prairie's first postmaster, established the first bank, and helped organize the Baptist church and the Masonic Lodge.

In the fall of 1899, following the deaths of his wife and mother, D. R. Harrison left his farm at Herrin's Prairie and moved into town. He held a public auction of all his personal property, including the Harrison House in 1900. The house and 400 acre farm were purchased by the Chicago & Carterville Coal company, later known as the C.W. & F. Coal Co. Until 1936, the Harrison House was home to mine superintendents and their families. In 1936, it came back into the Harrison family as the home of D. R. Harrison's great nephew Leonard Pope until 1946 when he sold the house to Sam and Ruby Talley.

After being out of the family nearly three decades, D. R. Harrison's granddaughter, Julia Harrison Bruce, arranged to purchase the house from the Talleys in 1975. She and her husband, Carl Bruce, performed extensive restorations on the house and construction of the log cabin in back, replicating the one in which the D. R. Harrison family had lived prior to construction of the brick house in 1868. Julia Harrison Bruce and her cousin, Julia Mitchell Etherton, cut the ribbon for the grand re-opening of their grandfather's house on July 26, 1977. The first floor of the house was made available to the public as a museum and tourist attraction. For insurance and security purposes, the second floor was made into an apartment and the renter served as coordinator of the museum.

When John A. Logan College officials expressed interest in the home as an addition to its Historical Village, advisors of the Fred G. Harrison Foundation and the Julia Harrison Bruce Foundation collaborated with JALC to preserve the heritage of the historic home by building a replica on the College campus. The house was completed in 2012.

David Ruffin Harrison's parents, George Henry Harrison and Delila Herrin Harrison were neighbors and close friends of Gen. John A. Logan and his wife, Mary.

¹ The log cabin has been replicated and is a part of the Harrison/Bruce Historical Village at John A. Logan College

The replica of the stately home on the John A. Logan College campus contains some of the historical artifacts from the original Harrison House and some added by other owners over the years. Other items include those placed in the house by the Bruces when the home was renovated - either from their own collection, donations, or purchased antiques.

Stones from the original foundation line the walkway into the entrance of the Historical Village and are used decoratively around the front porch of the Harrison House.

The entrance to the house from the front porch leads into a hallway with a staircase to the second floor built from the original wood. The antique hall tree was purchased, but some of the displayed canes belonged to D. R. Harrison.

To the right of the stairway is the parlor. In 1868, parlors were used only for weddings, funerals, parties, or for company. The mantel over the fireplace is from the original house, and the picture over the mantle is of Fred G. Harrison, grandson of D. R. Harrison. The baby picture on the mantel is Julia Mitchell Etherton, the first granddaughter, who was born in a folding bed in the parlor. The picture on the right end of the mantel is Anna Bruyns Gibson who was married in the parlor and lived in the upstairs for six years. Julia Harrison Bruce traded her spinet piano to Lucille Vick Howell for the rosewood Chickering grand piano which dates back to 1872. The walnut marble topped table is from the original house. The music stand with drawers was a Christmas present to Julia Harrison Bruce when she was about 12 years old.

To the left of the stairs is the sitting room – the family room of the 1868s. The love seat and two chairs are part of the home's original furniture. The small chair by the fire-place was made by David Herrin for his daughter, Delila Herrin Harrison, mother of the builder. The Irish shawl on the chair was hers. The silver sword on the mantel is a 33rd degree masonic sword awarded to D. R. Harrison, builder of the house. The mantle is from the original house and the picture above is Julia Harrison Bruce. Some very old books and photographs are on display throughout the room. The large Bible displayed on a stand was given to Ella Harrison Hundley at her marriage by her father, D. R. Harrison. The bells on the corner shelf were a part of Julia Harrison Bruce's collection.

In the dining room, the walnut corner cupboard was made by David Herrin (for whom the town was named) for his daughter, Delila Herrin Harrison, mother of the builder of the house. The dishes on the cupboard are from the original house. The two silver water pitchers were wedding gifts for Anna Harrison Mitchell who was married in the house. Her wedding invitation is displayed nearby. The English Spode dishes on the dining table belonged to former owner Mrs. Samuel Talley and were donated by her daughter.

In the kitchen is a wood-burning stove, a sink with a pump, and an antique light fixture, similar to those in the original house. The wall clock and the irons on the stove are from the original house. The churn and home-made dash are from the Bruce's house. The high chair is hand-made and from the Herrin family. The cranberry punch bowl and cups came from the Bruce's house.

The master bedroom was located upstairs, but that area is not available for tours at this time.

The light fixtures in the parlor, sitting room, and dining rooms were in the house when the Bruces purchased it in the 1970s. The fixtures had replaced the original coal oil lamps. The wall coverings in the replicated house are almost identical to those in the original house.