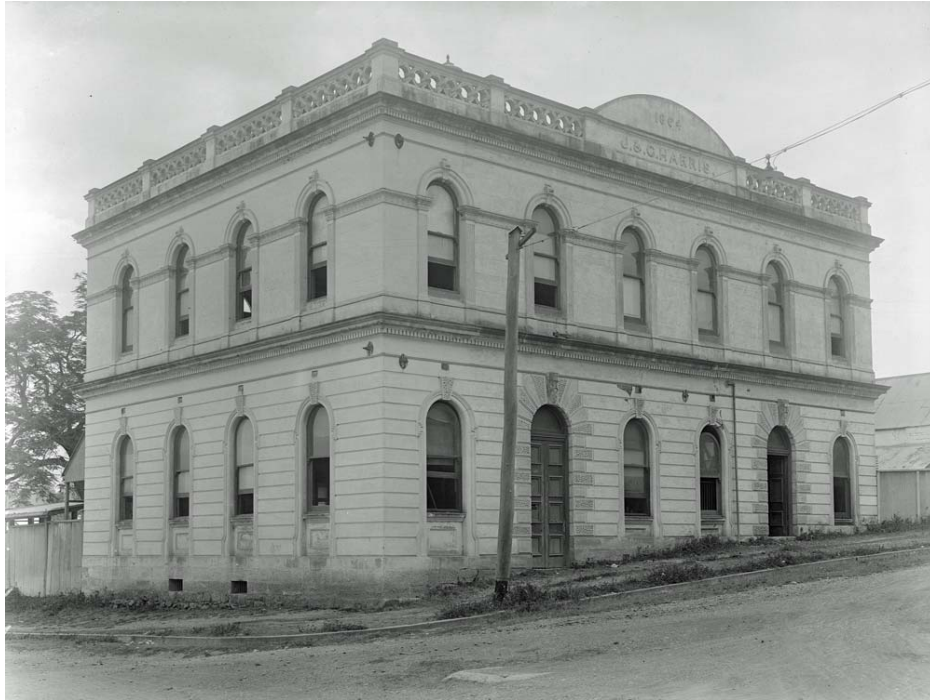


## J & G HARRIS, AGENTS (BRISBANE & IPSWICH)



J & G Harris store on the corner of Bell & Bremer Streets, Ipswich. Source: Picture Ipswich.

### ABD Online

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John Harris (1819-1895) and George Harris (1831-1891), businessmen, were born in London, sons of John Harris and his wife Sarah, née Walton; their grandfather was probably the emancipist, John Harris. As a carpenter their father was given free passages for himself, his wife and six children in the *Indiana* and arrived on 15 October 1833 at Sydney; he became a publican and died aged 56 on 29 May 1844 and was buried in the La Perouse cemetery.

His elder son John joined the business of his uncle Joseph Underwood in April 1842 and on 3 May married his cousin, Catherine Lucy Underwood. In June with George Thornton as his partner he set up a mercantile and shipping agency at Brisbane. In November the partnership was dissolved but John continued the agency. In the squatting rush of 1848 the business expanded rapidly and in August George arrived in Brisbane to work for John. The brothers quarrelled often and in 1852 George went to the goldfields at Bendigo. At John's invitation he returned to Brisbane and became a partner in the agency. Soon afterwards John went to London to set up an office as resident partner. Under John the business had been confined to wool export, wharf management, shipping agencies and wholesale imports from London. George was more venturesome; he added a fleet of coasting ships, opened a fellmongery, tannery and boot and harness factory, and when cotton boomed in the American civil war bought suitable land and set up a processing plant near Ipswich. On 13 October 1860 at St Paul's Anglican Church, Ipswich, he had married Jane, daughter of George Thorn; they had three sons and three daughters. One daughter married Richard Gardiner Casey and another Charles Hill.

In the 1870s George speculated in mining properties at Gympie and Stanthorpe but lost heavily. His brother, increasingly alarmed at the firm's seeming instability, visited Brisbane several times

and sent agents to report on its progress. George resented this interference and, attributing it to parsimony and over-caution, decided that the partnership had broken down. On 29 August 1876 he petitioned to have the firm declared insolvent. The proceedings for winding up the firm ended in October 1878 and he soon opened his own business as George Harris & Co.

With his wide interests George was prominent in Brisbane affairs. In May 1860 he was appointed to the Queensland Legislative Council and served until August 1878. At various times he was consul for the United States of America, for Italy and for Belgium. In 1862 he had leased Newstead House, the old government residency, and later bought it. There he entertained lavishly until the property was lost during the bankruptcy proceedings. He died on 28 March 1891 at North Quay, Brisbane, and John on 27 May 1895 probably in England.

#### **The Moreton Bay Courier, Tuesday, 16 October 1860**

Married. By license, on the 13<sup>th</sup> instant, at Saint Paul's Church, Ipswich, by the Rev. Lacy Rumsey, The Hon. George Harris, M.L.C., of Brisbane, to Jane, eldest daughter of George Thorn, Esq., M.P., of Ipswich.

#### **Queensland Times, 17 February 1986, page 6 - 'Headstone mystery uncovered' by Robyn Buchanan.**

The J & G Harris store was located on the corner of Bell and Bremer Streets, Ipswich. The Harris brothers came from London in 1833. In 1860, George married Jane Thorn. In the 1860s the Harris brothers set up a cotton gin and in 1864 built the two-storey brick store. It had a slate roof and the exterior walls were decorated with ornamental mouldings. The two main entrances had keystones with heads sculptured into the sandstone. In the 1870s, George Harris became bankrupt and the Ipswich Middle School used the building until 1877. The building was later demolished. The Keystones from the building were saved by A.E. (Bertie) Roberts and were eventually presented to Ipswich Central School as a gift for their 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

#### **The Brisbane Courier, 1 May 1872**

An inquiry touching the death of a South Sea Islander named Stammid, was held by the Police Magistrate of Ipswich on Tuesday last. From the report of the evidence in the Queensland Times it appears that some islanders belonging to Messrs J. & G. Harris occupy a house in East-street, Ipswich, and on Saturday night and Sunday last they and a few fellow-countrymen were enjoying themselves at this house after the fashion of white labourers – namely, by hard drinking. The deceased, who had been in the colony for six years, and was in a delicate state of health from a sprain of the back through carrying a bag of flour at Maryborough some time ago, got drunk, and died on the spot. Dr. Dorsey found no external marks of violence on the body, and thought it probably that death was caused merely by the man getting drunk in his weak state of health, but could not say positively until he had made a post-mortem examination. The Police Magistrate directed such an examination to be made, and the inquiry was adjourned to hear the doctor's further testimony.

#### **The Brisbane Courier, Friday 3 May 1872**

We learn from the Ipswich Observer of yesterday that Dr. Dorsey made a post mortem examination of the body of the Polynesian Stammid, whose death at Ipswich, was noticed in our issue yesterday. At the adjourned inquiry before the Police Magistrate Dr. Dorsey deposed that he had made a post-mortem examination of the body of deceased; he found, on examination of the head, a very large quantity of extravasated blood between the scalp and the bones of the skull, extending over the occipital bone; there was also a mark of a contusion over the frontal bone, and

consequent extravasation; from the man's color this injury was not visible externally; it was about the size of a florin; on opening the head he found the brain very soft, so much so that it was with difficulty it could be cut; the cavities of the brain contained blood; witness found sufficient cause of death in the examination of the head; he believed that deceased died from effusion on the brain caused by those injuries; they would be more likely to affect him than a more healthy brain; the extravasation over the frontal bone might have been caused by a blow of a stick or falling on a stone, and the injuries to the posterior portion of the head by a violent fall on a hard substance; there was no fracture of the cranium. – The Bench gave a verdict that deceased died from injuries received on the head either by a blow or fall, but whether accidentally or otherwise there is no evidence to show.

### **The Queenslander, Saturday 4 May 1872**

An inquiry into the cause of the sudden death of a Polynesian was held at the Police Court on Monday last. He was one of the islanders that are employed about town, and that occupy a house in East-street. From the evidence given, it seems that on the Saturday night previous, he and his fellow-islanders had held high orgies, and it is supposed that the deceased had drunk too much grog, and that such was the cause of his death. A post-mortem examination was ordered, and revealed the fact that there were contusions about the head; but the verdict given in the case stated that there was no evidence to prove whether these were the results of falls simply or of violence.

### **QLD State Archives – Indexes, Inquests**

Stammid (South Sea Islander) File Date: 1872 File No. 78 Location: JUS/N33

### **The Queenslander, Saturday, 4 April 1891**

#### **DEATH OF AN OLD COLONIST**

Mr. George Harris, of the well-known Queen-street firm of Messrs. George Harris and Co., died very suddenly at his residence, Bankside, North Quay, on Saturday evening at half-past 6 o'clock. He had been ill for only sixteen hours, and Dr. Rendle, who attended him, certified that death had resulted from acute laryngitis, or swelling in the throat. The deceased gentleman took so ill early on Saturday morning that medical aid had to be sent for, and at 6 o'clock his son (Mr J.E. Harris) was summoned. The latter promptly answered the summons, and remained with his father until the end. The old gentleman passed away quietly, dying in his son's arms. The late Mr. George Harris had attained the age of 60 years and leaves a widow and grown-up family of four – namely, Mrs. R.G. Casey, of Normanby station; Mrs. G.C. Taylor, of Bellevue, Esk district; Mr. J.E. Harris; and Mr. George. E. Harris. The deceased was born in England, and arrived in Australia when only 2 years of age. After being educated and obtaining some knowledge of business, he entered into partnership with his brother, Mr. John Harris, under the name of Messrs. J. and G. Harris, merchants. The firm was dissolved some years after. Mr. Harris then embarked in business as a merchant on his own account under the style of Messrs. George Harris and Co. In this business he remained until his death. The deceased gentleman was well known in social circles, and there still remain in the minds of a large circle of sorrowing friends pleasant reminiscences of many a happy evening passed at Newstead, where he resided until quite recently. About thirty-two years ago he was wedded to Miss Jane Thorn, daughter of the late Mr. George Thorn, sen., who resided at Clermont, Ipswich, and sister of the Hon. George Thorn, of Ipswich. Besides being a prominent merchant in this city, the deceased was American Consul here for about twenty-five years. He was a member of the Upper House of the first Parliament of Queensland.

A correspondent writes: - 'The late Mr. Harris spent his early youth in Victoria and New South Wales, and like most Australian young men of spirit worked at the diggings in the former place, his 'mates' (if I remember rightly) being Captain Sholl and the late Donald Coutts, of Jondaryan and Bulimba. Mr. Harris, with his brother John, his sister and mother arrived in Brisbane about 1847, and carried on business first at South Brisbane, and afterwards at Short-Street, on a site purchased from the late Hon. James Gibbon. The late Mr. George Harris was a gentleman of great vital business energy and hospitality. The writer has known him in 1855 and 1857 to clear out and pile up the merchandise in his capacious store at the Short-street wharf, cover it up with red and blue blankets and white calico in a decorative style, and give a grand dance and supper on the premises to the leading people of Brisbane, the proceedings lasting till 4.a.m., when he, having shaken hands with the last guest, would set to work, replace the merchandise, and be at full swing of business again at 9.a.m., without one minute of sleep, and without having lost a moment of the working business hours in the twenty-four. But 'sanitary' science (from a municipal standpoint) was then unknown in Brisbane, and every one was strong and healthy.

**The Brisbane Courier, Friday, 16 March 1917,  
page 11.**

#### DEATH OF MRS GEORGE HARRIS

The death occurred yesterday afternoon, in the Mater Misericordiac Private Hospital, of Mrs. George Harris, relict of the late Mr. George Harris, of the firm J. and G. Harris. The deceased lady was one of the oldest residents of the State, and was the fourth child of the late Hon. George Thorn, of Clermont, Ipswich, one of the earliest pioneers of Queensland, and a member of the first Queensland Parliament. Her husband deceased her by about 26 years. Both her sons – Messrs. George and John Ernest Harris – are also dead. She is survived by two daughters – Mrs. Lumley Hill, of Bellevue station, and Mrs. R.G. Casey, wife of Mr. R.G. Casey, chairman of the V.C.R., and a director of Messrs. Goldsborough, Mort, and Co., Melbourne. The funeral will leave St. John's Cathedral this afternoon for the Toowong Cemetery. Bishop Le Fanu and Rev. W. Thompson, of St. Michael and All Angels' Church, New Farm, will conduct the burial service.



Photo: Trove website. George Harris MLC, Queensland, ca.1870



In this photograph is a store owned by J & G Harris in Short Street, Brisbane. The stone building was constructed in 1854 and consists of two storeys topped with a gable roof. There is a clock set in the top of the gable and the store name is framed under the clock.

Source: Picture Queensland

### **SOUTH SEA ISLANDERS WORKING FOR J & G HARRIS**

James Ivory Diaries, Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> Dec 1871. FM 4 6464 jpg 587

B.D. Undoey rather surly, said before Jones he did not care if he was sent to Jail, he hinted that he wishes a tea pot & white sugar & 3 fingers of my best Tobacco. This was in answer to my charging him & the Kanakas of not working properly & up to their agreement. I also told him before Jones that none of these were to go to Ipswich without my authority or I would have to send a constable after them for going away. He said if Kanaka lazy send him away. I said I was Master & that they must work properly or I could give them less food. Undoey told me himself that he had 2 glasses grog at Ipswich. The Kanaka at Harris' is I believe the origin of all this bother, as they were as happy as Princes, singing & leaping about & as merry as could be before they went to Ipswich & saw him getting logs ready for foundation of Centrifugal. Clearing Chicago cane of Summer grass with which it is nearly choked. Fish trap gone I find.