# Harris, John Cebern Logan [1]

## Harris, John Cebern Logan

by Charles Aycock Poe, 1988

**14 Sept. 1847–17 Mar. 1918**

John Cebern Logan Harris, attorney, newspaperman, and Republican [2] political leader, was born in Rutherfordton, the son of Cebern Lemuel and Susan Logan Harris. In 1862, at age fifteen, he went to Raleigh where he was employed as a printer's devil [3] in the printing establishment of W. W. Holden [4], who published the *Raleigh Standard*.

Harris began the study of law under Edward Graham Haywood and completed his instruction under Chief Justice Richmond M. Pearson [5] and Judge Thomas Settle [6] at Wentworth. He was admitted to the bar in 1868 and continued to practice for nearly half a century. In 1874, he was elected solicitor of the former Sixth District and served for several years. During the 1890s he represented the State Board of Agriculture and several other state departments as attorney. Harris won a notable victory in the Patapsco Guano Company [7] case before the United States Supreme Court, which established the right of a state to collect a tax on foreign manufactured fertilizers. He appeared as counsel in many of the leading criminal cases in the district, and during the last ten years of his life he served as chairman of the Wake County Bar Association.

During his brilliant career as an attorney, Harris never lost his love for newspaper work. From 1884 to 1894 he edited and published the Raleigh *Signal*, a weekly Republican paper. For many years he was the North Carolina correspondent for the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Herald*, and other papers.

The son of a staunch "Union man" and a disciple of Governor Holden, Harris was a participant in the birth, and a leader in the organization, of the Republican party in North Carolina. For many years he was secretary of the Republican state committee. In 1892, he was the pioneer advocate of fusion between the Republicans and the Populists [8]. Failing to consummate his plan in the Republican convention, he took the stump for the Republican candidate for president, Benjamin Harrison, and the Populist [9] candidate for governor, Dr. W. P. Exum, who was opposed by Justice David M. Furches [10], the Republican gubernatorial nominee. In 1894, the plan Harris had fathered was adopted and a fusion legislature elected. He at once began his successful advocacy of his friend Judge Daniel Russell [11] for governor. From 1896 to 1900 he was Governor Russell's most trusted adviser. During this period he was chairman of the State Board of Agriculture and president of the Board of Trustees of the College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts; for several years he also served as adjutant general [12] of North Carolina. In the latter capacity he acquired the title of "Colonel," which remained with him until his death. Twice he represented his district in Republican National conventions.

On 27 Dec. 1869 Harris married Florence Upchurch, the daughter of W. C. Upchurch of Raleigh, who survived him. He was also survived by eleven children: Mrs. Will X. Coley of Raleigh; Mrs. Charles C. Johnson of Richmond, Va.; Cebern D. Harris of Louisville, Ky.; J. C. L. Harris, Jr., of Kingsport, Tenn.; Mrs. M. W. Crocker of Columbus, Ohio; Charles U. Harris, attorney of Raleigh; William Clinton Harris, longtime judge of the Superior Court of Wake County; Gordon Harris of Schenectady, N.Y.; Winder R. Harris [13], later U.S. congressman from Norfolk, Va.; Dr. Jack H. Harris, naval surgeon; and Leland S. Harris of Raleigh.

Harris was buried in Oakwood Cemetery, Raleigh.

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