

# **A Bank, a Library, and a Hospital**

## **The Legacy of Benjamin F. Harris and Julia F. Burnham**

Peggy Christensen  
Summer Fellowship 2007

**Abstract:** Students will study aspects of the lives of Benjamin F. Harris and Julia F. Burnham, two prominent residents of Champaign, Illinois in the late 1800s. They will analyze primary and secondary sources to better understand how information about an individual is gathered and will note how this information contributes to and reflects the history of the period.

### **Essential Questions / Enduring Understandings:**

- How does an individual's history reflect the history of a particular period?
- How does studying the life of an individual help us better understand moments in history?
- How do primary and secondary sources differ?
- What are some of the limitations that must be recognized when using primary and secondary sources?
- How can the use of multiple sources contribute to a more accurate understanding of a particular situation?

**Assessments:** Students' worksheets and contributions to class discussions will be assessed throughout the unit. Once all lessons have been completed, students will submit their unit folder with all handouts and worksheets as well as their final reflection.

**Setting the Purpose:** The purpose of this unit is for students to learn the difference between primary and secondary sources and the need to use multiple documents to develop an understanding of history.

**Duration:** The entire unit will take eight to ten days. Lessons 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 8 could be studied separately, but lesson 3 will only make sense when combined with lesson 2 and lesson 7 is dependent on lessons 1-6.

**Lesson 1:** Students need to understand the difference between primary and secondary sources as well as limitations of each.

**Lesson 2:** Students often rely on a Google search to gather information about an individual or event, and they seldom consider where researchers originally found the information. In this lesson, students will examine a page from the Harris family Bible as well as three pages from Benjamin F. Harris's autobiography, Notes of B.F. Harris, Sr., to learn more about him. They will also note some of the limitations of individual primary sources.

**Lesson 3:** Students will use primary sources to solve two mysteries. They will gain a better understanding of why historians must use multiple primary sources to better understand events and situations.

**Lesson 4:** Students will read a transcript of B.F. Harris's obituary that appeared in the May 10, 1905 copy of the Champaign County Gazette, and then they will complete the document analysis worksheet. They will discuss how one individual's history reflects the period when he/she lived.

**Lesson Five:** Students will continue to examine ways in which primary sources about B.F. Harris reflect the history of the period when he lived. In this lesson, they will consider the role Harris played on a national level shortly after Abraham Lincoln was elected president and prior to the Emancipation Proclamation and the Gettysburg Address. They will be reading a few pages from his autobiography where he discussed his trip to Washington to offer support to his old friend, Abraham Lincoln. To understand why Harris felt he was needed, students should be aware that prior to his visit, several states had seceded from the Union to join with South Carolina and form the Confederate States of America.

**Lesson Six:** Students will use an analysis worksheet to better understand a photographic primary source.

**Lesson 7:** Students will reflect on their study of B.F. Harris through the use of primary documents.

**Lesson 8:** Like B.F. Harris, Julia Finley Burnham was a prominent figure in Champaign. She was born in 1839, married Albert Burnham in 1866, and died in 1894. Her husband was a wealthy lawyer, banker, and philanthropist. Their daughter, Mary Bruce Burnham, married Newton Harris, grandson of B.F. Harris. In this lesson, students will read Julia F. Burnham's obituary which appeared in the *Champaign County News* on October 29, 1894 as well as an entry written about her by J.O. Cunningham in his History of Champaign County and excerpts from the minutes of the Women's Social and Political Science Club from 1888. As students read these documents, they will be pondering these questions: How does an individual's history reflect the history of a particular period? How does studying the life of an individual help us better understand moments in history?

**Conclusion:** Students will turn in their unit folders with all graded worksheets, handouts, and class notes. Materials should be arranged chronologically by lessons. The final entry in the folder should be a letter to the teacher which addresses the following:

- Think about streets and buildings in Champaign that bear the names of prominent members of our community from previous centuries. If you were going to research the life of one of these people like Dr. H.C. Howard, Ross Mattis, James or William McKinley, Joseph Kuhn, J.O. Cunningham, or Carrie Busey where would you start?
- Explain the process you would follow to be sure that you were using a mix of primary and secondary sources.
- What are some of the difficulties you might encounter?
- How would you resolve them?
- Has this unit helped you become a more aware researcher?
- What activities helped you the most?
- Which activities would you eliminate? Why?
- What other suggestions or comments do you have about this unit?
- Students will submit their folders for final assessment by the teacher.

## **Annotated List of Materials and Resources**

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**Lesson 1:** Students need to understand the difference between primary and secondary sources as well as limitations of each.

**Procedures:**

- To facilitate this understanding, read the following excerpt from Notes of B.F. Harris, Sr. reproduced from the original manuscript by B.F. Harris, III. Produced and bound in November, 1964 for members of the family and friends. Champaign County Historical Archives, Urbana Free Library, 210 West Green Street, Urbana, Illinois. This account is on pages 4 and 5 and was originally written by B.F. Harris in 1899 when he was 88 years old. The original spellings, punctuation, and terms have been retained. Read this to students without additional background information or explanations:

“I was at six years of age when I commenced going to school. The school house was two miles and a half. I remember the morning I first started to school my mother gave me the little primer and folded up a nice square piece of paper. I asked her what the paper was for. She said it was a thumper and showed me how to use it. So I put out to school, arrive safely, walked in with my primer and thumpaper in hand. The teacher gave me a seat. I looked around and with other things I saw about a half dozen nice hickory switches sittin in one corner near the teacher’s chair. I wondered what they ware for in a short time the teacher drew out one of the hickorys and commenced whipping a boy. I soon found out what the hickory was for. I was scared and kept watch of the Teacher and the switches. Before night the switches was purty well used up. In those days whipping was all the go. The Teachers name was Pilcher. The first few days of my school life I put in my time in watching the Teacher and the switches he would bring in every morning to whip the scholars. In the course of a few weeks I got used to it, and continued going to school some three or four years, to different teachers, at the same school house, until I was about ten years old and then attended school in the winter and worked on the farm in the summer until I was sixteen years of age.”

- Next have students write what they can about the time B.F. Harris spent in school. They should skip every other line to allow room for corrections.
- Once students have finished writing, distribute Worksheet 1.
- Discuss, collect, and assess Worksheet 1.

**Attachment:**

- Worksheet 1: The Difference Between Primary and Secondary Sources

**Analysis of Local Primary Sources:** Notes of B.F. Harris, Sr. is a local primary source that is available at the Champaign County Historical Archives, Urbana Free Library, 210 West Green Street, Urbana, Illinois.

**Ties to a National Primary Source:** There is no tie to a national source in the lesson.

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**Lesson 2:** Students often rely on a Google search to gather information about an individual or event, and they seldom consider where researchers originally found the information. In this lesson, students will examine a page from the Harris family Bible as well as three pages from Benjamin F. Harris's autobiography, Notes of B.F. Harris, Sr., to learn more about him. They will also note some of the limitations of individual primary sources.

**Procedure:**

- Distribute the page titled "Deaths" from the Harris family Bible.
- Fill out the Written Document Analysis Worksheet on an overhead so that the class can discuss each section as you write.
- Hand out Worksheet 2 and the pages from Notes of B.F. Harris, Sr.
- Let students work in small groups to fill out Worksheet 2. Each student will be expected to turn in the completed written assignment. They will need the sheet from the Bible as well as the three pages on "The History of Myself and Family."
- Discuss, collect, and evaluate the worksheet.

**Attachments:**

- Worksheet 2: The Immediate Family of B.F. Harris
- Written Document Analysis Worksheet developed by the staff of the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration  
[http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/written\\_document\\_analysis\\_worksheet.pdf](http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/written_document_analysis_worksheet.pdf)

**Analysis of Local Primary Sources:** Notes of B.F. Harris, Sr. and the family Bible page from the Harris Vertical File are primary sources available at the Champaign County Historical Archives, Urbana Free Library, 210 West Green Street, Urbana, Illinois.

**Ties to National Primary Source:** There is no national source in this lesson.

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**Lesson 3:** Students will use primary sources to solve two mysteries. They will gain a better understanding of why historians must use multiple primary sources to better understand events and situations.

**Procedure:**

- Divide students so that everyone is working with a partner. They will be able to discuss the primary sources and written activity, but each student is expected to complete the worksheet.
- Distribute the worksheet and all primary sources except for the 1900 census.
- Once pairs have completed the worksheet, let them use a computer to view the 1900 census document. They will need to zoom in on pertinent lines. Their mission is to look for information about B.F. Harris's fifth wife. They should add discovered information to Worksheet 2.
- Once everyone has completed the activities, discuss, collect, and assess the worksheet.

**Attachments:**

- Worksheet 3: Mysteries Unfold

**Analysis of Local Primary Sources:** Local primary sources include the Harris divorce document, B.F. Harris vs. M.A. Harris File with Chancery Cases in the Circuit Court, Case # 1774. March 8, 1887; as well as copies of the check and chemist's letter which were provided by Melissa Dobbins Chambers and are now included in the Harris Vertical File at the Champaign County Historical Archives, Urbana Free Library, 210 West Green Street, Urbana, Illinois.

**Ties to National Primary Source:** There is no national source in this lesson.

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**Lesson 4:** Students will read a transcription of B.F. Harris's obituary which appeared in the May 10, 1905 copy of the Champaign County Gazette, and then they will complete the document analysis worksheet. They will discuss how one individual's history reflects the period when he/she lived.

**Procedure:**

- Distribute a copy of the obituary along with an analysis sheet.
- Students should complete the analysis sheet on their own.
- Have students highlight in their copies of the obituary, activities and events that are unique to Benjamin Harris's lifetime. Discuss how his history as told in the obituary and in his autobiography reflects the period when he lived.
- Discuss the worksheet and the students' conclusions to the previous activity.

**Attachments:**

- Written Document Analysis Worksheet developed by the staff of the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration  
[http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/written\\_document\\_analysis\\_worksheet.pdf](http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/written_document_analysis_worksheet.pdf)

**Analysis of Local Primary Sources:** A copy of the Harris obituary that was examined in this lesson is in the Harris Vertical File at the Champaign County Historical Archives, Urbana Free Library, 210 West Green Street, Urbana, Illinois.

**Ties to National Primary Source:** B.F. Harris's personal friendship with Abraham Lincoln is mentioned in his obituary as is Harris's national reputation as a cattleman.

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**Lesson Five:** Students will continue to examine ways in which primary sources about B.F. Harris reflect the history of the period when he lived. In this lesson, they will consider the role Harris played on a national level shortly after Abraham Lincoln was elected president and prior to the Emancipation Proclamation and the Gettysburg Address. They will be reading a few pages from his autobiography where he discussed his trip to Washington to offer support to his old friend, Abraham Lincoln. To understand why Harris felt he was needed, students should be aware that prior to his visit, several states had seceded from the Union to join with South Carolina and form the Confederate States of America.

**Procedure:**

- Discuss the climate in the North and South following the 1860 election of Abraham Lincoln. Divide students into groups and have them research the events that led to these three famous documents: Surrender of Fort Sumter, Emancipation Proclamation, and the Gettysburg Address. A group might also do a timeline showing major national events during the period between 1860 and 1864. Each group should share its information with the rest of the class.
- The class should then read pages 56, 57, and 58 from Benjamin Harris's autobiography. These pages could be divided into four sections with discussion following each division. The top two-thirds of page 56 deals with the outbreak of war and Henry H. Harris's departure to serve with the Union troops. In the next section from the bottom third of page 56 to the top fourth of page 57, Harris discussed his reason for going to Washington. The third section on the rest of page 57 and the very top of page 58 describes Lincoln's reaction to Harris's arrival. Stop here.
- Hand out the event map that students will complete once they have read the rest of page 58, which is an account of the death of Colonel Elmer Ellsworth. Once their maps have been completed, discuss and collect them.

**Attachments:**

- <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc>. Go to 100 milestone documents to view these documents and background information: Surrender of Fort Sumter, Emancipation Proclamation, Gettysburg Address.
- Graphic Organizer: Event Map: <http://www.teachervision.fen.com/tv/printables/EventMap>

**Analysis of Local Primary Sources:** Three pages from the Harris autobiography, Notes of B.F. Harris, Sr., are examined in this lesson. This book can be found at the Champaign County Historical Archives, Urbana Free Library, 210 West Green Street, Urbana, Illinois.

- **Ties to National Primary Source:** The following speeches are introduced in this lesson: Surrender of Fort Sumter, Emancipation Proclamation, Gettysburg Address.

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**Lesson Six:** Students will use an analysis worksheet to better understand a photographic primary source.

**Procedure:**

- Distribute the photo analysis worksheet then show students the attached photo, but cover the names and dates. Tell students that this is a picture of Benjamin F. Harris with his son, grandson, and great-grandson. Students will then fill out the photo analysis worksheet.
- Encourage students to try to figure out when this photograph might have been taken. What do they know about B.F. Harris and what objects did they note that might help determine a date?
- Discuss, collect, and assess the photo analysis worksheet.

**Attachment:**

- Photo Analysis Worksheet developed by the staff of the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheet/photo-analysis-worksheet.pdf>

**Analysis of Local Primary Sources:** The photograph is a primary source found in the Harris Vertical File at the Champaign County Historical Archives, Urbana Free Library, 210 West Green Street, Urbana, Illinois.

**Ties to National Primary Source:** No national primary sources are used in this lesson.



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**Lesson 7:** Students will reflect on their study of B.F. Harris through the use of primary documents.

**Procedure:**

- Distribute Worksheet 4: Points to Ponder.
- Once students have completed their worksheets, have them meet in small groups to discuss their reflections. Group members should listen for common reactions and be prepared to share them with the total class.
- Discuss group insights then collect and assess the worksheet.

**Attachments:**

- Worksheet 4: Points to Ponder

**Analysis of Local Primary Sources:** Students will be reflecting on their use of local primary sources connected to B.F. Harris.

**Ties to National Primary Source:** Students will be reflecting on their use of national primary sources connected to B.F. Harris.

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**Lesson 8:** Like B.F. Harris, Julia Finley Burnham was a prominent figure in Champaign. She was born in 1839, married Albert Burnham in 1866, and died in 1894. Her husband was a wealthy lawyer, banker, and philanthropist. Their daughter, Mary Bruce Burnham, married Newton Harris, grandson of B.F. Harris. In this lesson, students will read Julia F. Burnham's obituary which appeared in the *Champaign County News* on October 29, 1894 as well as an entry written about her by J.O. Cunningham in his History of Champaign County and an excerpts from the minutes of the Women's Social and Political Science Club from 1888. As students read these documents, they will be pondering these questions: How does an individual's history reflect the history of a particular period? How does studying the life of an individual help us better understand moments in history?

**Procedure:**

- Divide the class into four groups. Each group will be responsible for studying all or part of a primary document and reporting back to the class.
- Each group should focus on what the document tells about life in Champaign at the time it was written.
- Students should also look for connections to national figures or events.
- In addition, students should look at the life of Julia Burnham as portrayed in the document.
- Each group will have at least one extension question to answer that will require extra research. Group members will divide the tasks as evenly as possible. Once the groups have finished their research, they will take turns sharing their findings. Information may be presented in multiple ways. Posters, skits, and interviews are encouraged. Each group member should have an active role in presenting group findings. The teacher will assess both the overall group effort as well as individual participation.
- The following questions are designed to help students as they consider the documents:

**Group 1** will analyze pages 1-3 of the minutes from the Woman's Social and Political Science Club. These deal with the establishment of the club. Why was it formed? What was Mrs. A.C. Burnham's role in the club? Who was Elizabeth Cady Stanton? What does the term "women's suffrage" mean? Why was it an issue at this time? When was it no longer a point of controversy?

**Group 2** will analyze pages 5 and 17 of the minutes from the Woman's Social and Political Science Club of 1888 and The Champaign Social Science Club of 1892. Page 5 deals with the club's decision to build a hospital while page 17 deals with the building of The Burnham Athenaeum, Champaign's free public library. What was Mrs. Burnham's role in these decisions? What do you think prompted her husband to donate so much money toward the projects? Mrs. H.H. Harris is also mentioned in the minutes dealing with the hospital. She was the wife of Henry Harris, Benjamin F.

Harris's son. How did the activities of Julia Burnham and Mary Harris differ from the way Benjamin F. Harris described the lives of two of his wives in his autobiography? In what ways did the role of women change as the city became more established?

**Group 3** will study the obituary about Julia Burnham that appeared in the *Champaign County News* on October 29, 1894. What do you think the writer meant when he called her “a model of disinterested benevolence and Christian charity?” What were some of the concerns she tried to address? When he was discussing her health, the writer said there was “a paralytic tendency in her family.” What does this mean? What were the leading causes of death in the United States at this time? What does this source indicate about transportation in the 1890s?

**Group 4** will look at two pages from the History of Champaign County by J.O. Cunningham that chronicle Julia Burnham's contributions. Which of her activities were mentioned? What indication was given that education was very important to her? Julia Burnham was educated in the public schools. What were the Champaign public schools like in the late 1800s?

**Attachments:**

- Pages 1, 2, 3, 5, 17 from History of the Champaign Social Science Club
- Julia Burnham Obituary
- History of Champaign County, J.O. Cunningham

**Analysis of Local Primary Sources:** Several primary sources were examined in this lesson. Pages from History of the Champaign Social Science Club. Mrs. Terence T. Quirke, Historian. 1894. Champaign County Historical Archives, Urbana Free Library, 210 West Green Street, Urbana, Illinois were studied as were the obituary from the *Champaign County News*, October 29, 1894 that I found in the Burnham Vertical File at the Champaign County Historical Archives, Urbana Free Library and two pages from History of Champaign County by J.O. Cunningham. Reprint of the 1905 Edition. Edited by Frederick A. Schlipf. Copyright 1984 by the Champaign County Historical Archives, Urbana Free Library.

**Ties to National Primary Source:** Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the term “women's suffrage” as well as national health concerns were all part of this lesson.