

# JOHN S. HARRISON FAMILY HISTORY

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The John S. Harrison Homestead, located in northeast Bexar County along the Cibolo Creek at the rear of Forest Creek Subdivision on the access road of IH-35, consists of four historic structures/features. The house was built in the early 1850's by stage master, John S. Harrison and his wife, Martha Jane Harrison.

John Sobiesky Koontz Harrison, partner in the [Harrison & McCulloch Stage Lines](#) which ran from Indianola and Galveston to Central Texas as far back as the mid-1840s, was born on August 20, 1818, in Kingston, Roane County, Tennessee. His parents were Dr. Benjamin and Elizabeth (Koontz) Harrison. His grandfather, John Koontz, was a former member of the Virginia House of Delegates and had served as a colonel in the War of 1812. His father died when he was five years old, and, with his mother and his siblings, Harrison moved to La Porte County, Indiana, in 1833. His mother remained in Indiana and was listed as a hotel keeper in the 1850 census of Porter County.

John probably arrived in Texas around 1836. His two older brothers, Achilles Leonidas and Erasmus Darwin Harrison had left for Texas sometime before him. Erasmus served with [James W. Fannin, Jr.](#), and was killed at the [Goliad Massacre](#) in March 1836. John's oldest brother, Achilles, a second lieutenant in the [Army of the Republic of Texas](#), died in the Houston area about 1840. John Harrison served in Captain Burnett's Company, First Regiment, First Brigade, in the Texas Army Volunteers, commanded by Col. [Edwin Morehouse](#), through the year 1836.

In 1839 Harrison resided in Fort Bend County and received a second class certificate for 320 acres. On October 31, 1845, he filed a petition with the probate court at Conroe, Montgomery County, Texas for the estates of his brothers. Erasmus Harrison had received 640 acres in Donation Land Certificate #786 dated January 28, 1839, and 1,920 acres for service from December 25, 1835, to March 27, 1836, in Bounty Land Warrant #707.

John Harrison married Martha Jane E. McCulloch Graves. She was born on September 8, 1828, in Alabama and was the daughter of William G. and Margery (Lee) McCulloch. Martha Jane had a daughter from her first marriage, and the Harrison's eventually had four children of their own.

John went into the stage line business with his brother-in-law, [William H. McCulloch](#), Martha Jane's older brother, and formed the Harrison & McCulloch Stage Line. By 1848 the Harrison's possibly lived in Victoria, Texas, as John Harrison advertised his operation of the Victoria Hotel on May 4, 1848, and was noted as "one of the proprietors of the San Antonio and Port Lavaca Stage Line." In November 1848, Harrison & McCulloch advertised the newly-established "Line of Stages" from Indian Point to Victoria. In 1849 Harrison was also in partnership with Dr. Caleb S. Brown out of Gonzales, Texas, as

Harrison & Brown, and advertised a stage line between San Antonio and Port Lavaca (probably the same line that he promoted as proprietor of the Victoria Hotel). They dissolved their partnership, however, on June 17, 1850.

Harrison & McCulloch began their third postal route in New Braunfels, Comal County, Texas, by 1851; the United States Post Office had awarded them the contract for Route 6285 on May 11, 1850. This route, combined with their other two routes 6154 and 6155, made up a continuous loop through the central “heart” of Texas—from Austin to San Antonio to Port Lavaca back up through Victoria to Gonzales and back to New Braunfels. The Harrison family was listed in the 1850 Comal County census records and lived in the New Braunfels area.

In 1852 the Harrison’s moved from New Braunfels to Cibolo (later to be renamed Selma) and bought a 127-acre farm from sections of properties owned by Johannes Kaderli, Henry Kempel, and Adam Wuest. Harrison established Selma’s first post office when he became the postmaster on June 21, 1852, and served a two-year term until July 15, 1854. He and his family moved from Selma, and they sold their farm to Wilhelm Geier and Martin Schmid in 1854. By 1858 they were living in Pleasanton, Atascosa County, Texas, where Harrison was listed in the 1860 census records as a “stockraiser.” In 1861 he was a private in the command of Capt. Edward Walker of the Mounted Minutemen of Atascosa County where he enlisted in the Confederate Army on May 7, 1861. He and Martha later moved to Bell County where they purchased 105 acres on September 19, 1863. For unknown reasons, John Harrison died about a year later on December 31, 1864, in Waco.

The Harrison & McCulloch Stage Stop which sits on the access road along Interstate 35 at Evans Road in Selma, Texas, northeast of San Antonio, was declared a State Archeological Landmark by the [Texas Historical Commission](#) in October 2000. John S. Harrison’s home, built in 1852 in Selma, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in June 2006 and is currently owned by the city of Selma. In April 2009 the house was listed as a State Archeological Landmark by the Texas Historical Commission in an effort to save it and the history it represents for future generations.

*Source: Handbook of Texas Online, Jean M. Heide, "Harrison, John Sobiesky Koontz ,"* accessed October 31, 2016,  
<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fhagk>.

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