

Origin of Lake Name

* **Harris, Lake** (S4-T20S-R25E) Originally (?) "Lake Astatula", which is said to be Indian for "Lake of Sunbeams". Lake was named "Lake Eustis" in 1823, in honor of Col. Abraham Eustis. Upon complaint of Ebenezer J. Harris, about 1850 (?), a resident of the Yalaha area on the southern edge of the lake, it was changed to "Lake Harris" in his honor. In the late 1850's he moved to Ocala; listed there in the 1860 Census. Legend has it that the lake was named in honor of Francis ("Frank") E. Harris. This is not substantiated - F. E. Harris was born in Tallahassee in 1847 and never lived in the area of the lake. USGS / BGN variant is "Lake Astatula"

Astatula, Lake (S4-T20S-R25E) An obsolete Indian name for a lake now known as "Lake Harris". The absence of the name Astatula from the early maps may indicate that it is of imported origin rather than indigenous. Unless older forms can be discovered, any attempt to interpret the name would be a pure guess, for if of Indian derivation, it probably is badly corrupted. With this declaration, it may be mentioned that the first portion resembles the Creek "*Isti*" meaning "people," and the final portion the Timucuan "*Atula*" meaning "arrow." Variant names include "Lake Eustis" on both the C. B. Vignoles map of 1823 and the Taylor map of 1838, "Lake Brockenborough" on the Bruff map of 1846, and "Lake Harris or Lake Astatula" on the Norton map of 1891. (Ref 24,p30). Ref.25, page 44, states "The word Astatula is said to signify "Lake of Sunbeams", or according to some other natives of Florida, "Lake of Sparkling Moonbeams". Whatever the meaning of the name may be, there is certainly nothing in the Seminole dialect to justify either of these translations. The only suggestion, which the reference could offer is that "Astatula" is from Seminole- Creek "*Isti*" = people and "*italwa*" = tribes, thus "people of different tribes". **USGS / BGN recognize "Astatula" as a variant for "Lake Harris"**.

Brockenborough, Lake (T20/21S-R25/26E) Lake name is shown on "The State of Florida", 1846, Compiled n the Bureau of Topographical Engineers, from the best authorities, by J. Goldsborough Bruff. It is shown on the Oklawaha River between "Lakes Eustis and Apopka". **This could be a variant name for "Lake Dora", however, due to its size and location, it has been identified as a variant name for "Lake Harris"**, although it was miss-spelled as "Lake Brokenborough". Another interesting aspect of this lake naming is that in 1845, Mr. J. G. Bruff was the cartographer for a previous map of the Peninsula of Florida, and did show an unnamed lake in the same location as he named on his 1846 map. I believe that Bruff was really trying to make a favorable impression on the Florida Representative in Congress, a William Henry Brockenbrough. He was born in VA, studied Law; admitted to the Bar; moved to Tallahassee. Member of Florida House of Representatives 1837; Florida Senate in 1840-44, and President of Florida Senate in 1842. Member of the U.S. House of Representatives (29th Congress) 1846-47. Fought for tri- monthly mail service on both Florida coasts but was denied on grounds of insufficient traffic. Also wanted to open to public sale, and use, all properties in Florida reserved for the Navy as timber acquisition sites. Was unsuccessful candidate to be Florida's first U.S. Senator (July 1845), losing to David Levy who won with 30 of 78 votes cast. He died in Tallahassee in 1850. (from FHQ V-44, p206/211.)

Explanation

Taken from *About Some Lakes and More in Lake County* by Walter Sime. See reference at end.

Names that are on the USGS / BGN list have a "*" prefix. <http://geonames.usgs.gov/bgn.html>

Lake names with a "+" prefix were provided courtesy of T. L. Benfield Real Estate, Minneola, FL. In the early 1990s Mr. Benfield solicited names from property owners with previously unnamed lakes on their property. His original research materials have been donated to the County and are located at the Environmental Services Department.

The location of the lake by Section Township and Range is shown after the lake name.

Variant names are shown in individual lake listings, cross-referenced where possible. Not all of these variant names are contain within the Lake County Water Atlas.

EBENEZER JACKSON HARRIS - HIS LIFE AND OBITUARY

Taken from *About Some Lakes and More in Lake County* by Walter Sime, pp 208-214. See reference at end.

Ebenezer Jackson Harris first settled in Yalaha about 1845. He was about 31 years of age at the time, and had with him Sarah (wife) 25, and Wm. H.(son), 8 years (born GA.). Sons James A. (1846) and Thomas H. (1848) were both native born Floridians. After the Government Surveyors came through in 1849/50, showing that his land abutted "Lake Eustis", he argued that it was not right (in his opinion), and finally caused the name to be changed to "Lake Harris", in his honor. But wanting a better education for his children, he sold out, moved to Ocala and became a Hotel Owner. The "Florida Historical Quarterly", V-54, P-57, states "In the interior of Florida there are not good hotels, that can be recommended to the tourists or invalids. The best I found were at Ocala kept by Mr. Harris* a well disposed man and of Union sentiments, though he is prudent in their expression as Ocala is in the heart of the secession district."

* Ebenezer J. Harris, a South Carolina native and a pioneer settler in Florida, built the Harris House, later the Ocala House.

From "Ocala Banner", Ocala, Marion Cty., Mar.7 1885.

“DEATH OF MR. E. J. HARRIS

“The painful intelligence of the death of this good man and esteemed citizen reached this city early Friday morning, and we can hardly give expression to our sad feelings and the feelings and expressions of profound sorrow the sad intelligence produced throughout the community. Although sick for a long time he died suddenly at his son's residence at Citra, Thursday night about ten o'clock. We received a letter from him the same evening in which he stated that he was much better and expected to be in Ocala by next week.

“The death of no one will be more lamented or cause more sorrow to a larger circle of acquaintances. He was a citizen of Ocala for upwards of thirty years, and was intimately connected with its history – taking “a leading part in all measures that concerned its welfare. He was an active member of the Methodist Church and contributed largely to its support. Others might absent themselves on some excuse, but during his long life here he was a constant attendant at the regular services, the weekly prayer meetings and for many years a teacher at the Sunday School. He was benevolent and charitable, always giving a listening ear and helping hand to the poor, and his good deeds will live long after him. His funeral will take place from the Methodist church at eleven o'clock, a.m. today, to which his friends and acquaintances are respectfully invited.”

[The above was retyped, for clarity, from a microfilm copy on file in the Ocala City Library.]

EBENEZER J.HARRIS - Brief Biography of His Life:

(From "The Ocala Banner", Ocala, Marion County, Saturday, March 14, 1885)

“Ebenezer J. Harris was born in Abbeville District,S.C., June 6, 1815, and died at his son's residence at Citra, Fla., March 5, 1885. At an early age his mother moved with him to Georgia and he became so thoroughly a Georgian in his politics - holding through life an intense admiration for the conservatism and greatness of her long line of statesmen, and was so inflexibly opposed to what he termed the political heresies of South Carolina State's Rights Nullification, and Secession - that many of his most intimate friends believed that he was Georgian by birth. His father was a man of

strong will and positive convictions and his son, the subject of this sketch, inherited these characteristics to a large degree. An incident here that may give an idea of the manner of man his father was. Like all the members of his family for generations back he was in religion a Presbyterian and named his son Ebenezer Erskine after the famous "Scottish Presbyterian Theologian of that name. A while afterwards he disagreed with his pastor on some local church dispute and in consequence of which he not only quit his church and joined the Methodists, but changed his son's name from Ebenezer Erskine to Ebenezer Jack-son, and he ever afterwards went by that name.

"His forefathers were of Scotch-Irish stock and immigrated to America from the North of Ireland before the Revolutionary War and some of them participated in that struggle with distinction. Mr. Harris had in his possession until his death a sword - a family heirloom, which he prized very highly - a relic of that glorious struggle.

"His ancestors were ardent Whigs and Revolutionists and prominent and influential members of society where they resided; but his own father lost his property and died when the subject of this sketch was very young, and in consequence of which he was raised a very poor boy. He had to labor in the fields and neighboring farms at a very tender age and undergo severe hardships. He attended school but three months but his mother taught him at home and he became intensely fond of books and this fondness lasted him through his life. He was a prodigious reader, remembering what he read and reading only instructive books, and but few persons were so well informed upon ancient, modern and current history. His talent for remembering dates, incidents, localities, historical events, etc., were wonderful. In everything relating to the history of the town and county, he was the recognized authority and was consulted by everyone and was rarely, if ever, in error. His mind was well stored with historical information and he seemed to have had the geography of the world photographed upon his memory. He rarely consulted an atlas to ascertain the locality of foreign places and made a study of the habits and customs of the people of all lands, and his conversations on these topics were instructive and entertaining. Macaulay was his favorite author and he was as well informed and took as much interest in the history of England as he did the history of his own country and could recite off-hand with wonderful facility the plots, intrigues, "assassinations, wars and biographies of the public men and women of England from the reign of Egbert to Victoria. He was a natural arithmetician and there were few problems in arithmetic or algebra that he could not work without the aid of pen or pencil. If he had had the advantages of education in his youth and given his attention to literature or politics he no doubt would have achieved distinction, for the versatility and resource of his mind and prodigiousness of his memory were remarkable.

"He was pious from a child and deeply religious throughout his life, and few ministers were better posted in church literature. He took great pleasure and devoted much time to the study of the same. Clark's Commentaries he read and re-read and every page bears his careful scrutiny. He made all religions a study and took a profound interest in the progress of science, yet he never lost faith in the scriptures and believed that Christ was the Redeemer, that God reigns, and for those who live uprightly there is a blissful immortality beyond the grave.

"When a young man he removed to Ft. Gaines, Ga., and engaged in merchandising. Some years afterwards he formed the acquaintance of Miss Sarah A. McDonald to whom he was married on the 10th of August, 1841. Five children were born of this union, only one of whom survives, two died in infancy, two were cut down in the flower of manhood and be buried beside their father.

"Soon after his marriage, Mr. Harris, with his young wife, removed to Florida and settled on the south side of the lake which now bears his name. His nearest neighbor lived on one side of the lake fifteen miles and on the other side forty miles distant. But he was willing to undergo a great many deprivations rather than give up a locality so attractive and susceptible of so much improvement.

His attention was thus early turned to the culture of the orange and he believed that the profits attending the same would lead to the speedy settlement and development of the country. His grove however was ravaged by the scale insect which was then prevalent in Florida, and first one thing and another

“dispelled his hopes and finally the age of his children forced him to seek a home where they could be properly educated, so he sold his home on the lake and purchased one in Ocala.” (ed. - 4 or 5 words not clear in Newspaper due to a fold.) “. . . with its interests and from that day until the day of his death he took an active part in promoting every enterprise that concerned its welfare. The establishment of the East Florida Seminary here enlisted his hearty support. He was a member of the Methodist Church from his youth and contributed largely to its support; and labored zealously for its advancement. He was President of the Board of County Commissioners and held other offices of public trust. He took an active interest in young men and many trace their success in life, if not directly to his aid, at least to his counsel and good advice. He was a benefactor in the truest sense of the term and his good deeds cropped out in many directions. His ears were ever open to cries of distress and his hands ever ready to give relief. No deserving person ever asked for his aid in vain. During the war his hotel was a home for every passing soldier. In religion, moral and politics he had positive convictions and lived up to his convictions and in all things just what he preached he practiced. He was opposed to drunkenness and never entered a bar room in his life and used liquor in no form, nor would he allow anyone else to use it in his presence or in his house. He was opposed to the use of tobacco and cards, and did not know one card from another, nor would he allow them in his sight. He was ignorant of all other games. He was a member of the church and lived up to the requirements of membership, and his course and conduct was that of a consistent christian. He believed that as "the twig is bent the tree will grow" and instilled his ideas into his children, and had the consolation of seeing them all follow in his footsteps. In politics he was an ardent Whig, was violently opposed to the dissolution of the Union and the war and predicted its termination almost with an eye of prophesy. After its termination he clearly foresaw that the freedom of the slave would be followed by his enfranchisement and “he advocated the adoption of the XIV Amendment by the Legislatures of the Southern States. This course alienated him from many of his friends and threw him for a time into co-operation with the Republican party. But he believed that he was right and was open in the avowal of his opinions as he had always been. Having never in his life wavered in his devotion to a public cause or what he conceived to be a public duty. None doubted his integrity. The measures that he advocated were not only afterward adopted by the Legislatures of the Southern States but were also incorporated into the platform of both political parties. He was only a little in advance of others. The sectional tendency of the Republican party and its rapacity and plunder of the Southern States soon drove him out of it, and he became ardently enlisted against it. He took an active interest in the Greely, Tilden, Hancock, and Cleveland campaigns, and expressed a strong desire to see a Democrat elected and inaugurated President of the United States, and that desire was granted. Just before his death he read the inaugural ceremonies of Mr. Cleveland and was much gratified therewith. It was the last thing that he ever read. Soon after reading the paper containing it he retired. In a little while his son heard him struggling and went to him. His father placed his hand on his heart and said the pain was there, and in a few moments he expired.”

“Like a shadow thrown
Softly and sweetly from a passing cloud,
Death fell upon him.”

“The news of his death produced profound sorrow here, and the reception of his remains, the closing of the stores, the largest funeral procession and other tributes of respect to his memory, show in what estimation he was held.

“The funeral services were conducted by Rev. Benj. Helm, assisted by Rev. Charles Nash, and the remans were followed to their last resting place by mourning relatives and friends and a large concourse of citizens of all classes among whom he had lived for nearly half a century. But -

"Why weep for him, who having run
The bound of man's appointed years, at last
Life's blessings all enjoyed, life's labor done
Serenely to his final rest has passed;
While the soft memory of his virtues yet
Lingers, like twilight hours, when the bright
sun has set?"

[This was retyped, for clarity from a microfilm copy on file in the Ocala City Library. In one place the original newspaper had been damaged and a few words were not readable. 26 Nov. 1993, W. P. Sime.]

Reference

In his book *About Some Lakes and more in Lake County*, 1995, Walter Sime compiled a list of lakes and the origin of their names. He identified these from various Plats, Maps, Books, or Newspapers, at one time or another. His listing includes named lakes and contains multiple or variant names. Where possible, multiple and variant names are cross-referenced. Material this book is used by permission of the author.

The book *About Some Lakes and more in Lake County* contains a wealth of information on the history of Lake County and our lakes. This book is available for sale from the Lake County Historical Museum in the Historical Courthouse at 315 W Main Street in Tavares. Their phone number is (352) 343-9600.