

From *Hitherto* by Foy Johnson Farmer

Section: Executive Secretaries to 1943 [Executive Secretary is equivalent to Executive Director-Treasurer today]

“Mrs. Edna R. Harris

Mrs. Harris, a graduate of Limestone College, in South Carolina, came with rich experience as teacher, homemaker, mother, WMU worker in local societies and associations in South Carolina and in North Carolina. A woman of firm convictions, with more than usual missionary zeal, one who loved her Lord, she was well qualified for the task. Mrs. Jones [Sallie Bailey] thus characterized Mrs. Harris:

Mrs. Harris...has brought to the work unusual qualifications and ability. Her love of people and her untiring energy as she has traveled from one section of the State to another have brought large returns in awakened interest and enthusiasm. The field work of the Union has greatly developed through her service; as many as forty-five of fifty association meetings have been attended by her in one year.

Mrs. Harris was scheduled to leave on Sunday night, May 7, 1939, for the Southern Baptist Convention in Oklahoma City. She was rejoicing in the reports of Golden Jubilee victories she was to carry from her state—victories which she had a large share in winning.

Mrs. Harris had been ill for several months, but had seemingly regained a reasonable degree of strength. On Saturday, May 6, she was busy in the office until late afternoon. She left everything in perfect order for her absence. In the evening, after only a brief illness, God bade her lay down her burdens and enter into the rest prepared for His children. One year after Mrs. Harris' death, Mary Currin, young people's secretary, wrote beautifully of the friend and co-worker to whom she was devoted:

‘Her unswerving loyalty to Christ, her aggressive, intelligent interest in Missions around the world, her yearning for the unsaved in home community and to the uttermost parts, her loving sacrificial service, her genuine love for individuals, of every age and condition—all these made her a leader. She loved every phase of our great WMU work. Especially did she believe that our WMU Training School was a powerful instrument in God's hand for carrying out the Great Commission. Thus, we believe it was Divinely planned that the North Carolina Woman's Missionary Union, in Wilmington, March, 1940, adopted the following resolution: “That we establish a scholarship at the WMU Training School as a memorial to Mrs. Edna R. Harris, this scholarship to be awarded to students of outstanding scholarship, ability, and Christian character.” This living, perpetual memorial she would have, rather than a building of brick or stone.’”

From *And So Much More: Living Legacies of North Carolina Women on Mission* by Dorothy Allred

Page 48 ff: “Mrs. Edna R. Harris was elected to serve as executive secretary in 1926.”

“The Edna R. Harris Scholarship Fund was moved from the WMU Training School in 1963 (after its merger with Southern Seminary) to the Baptist Foundation of North Carolina which was authorized to send receipts from the fund to Southeastern Seminary annually (action of the WMU executive board April 9, 1963). At the May 15, 1994 meeting of the executive board, instructions were given that the Harris fund be held intact and that North Carolina WMU be the recipient for the purpose of granting scholarships in accordance with its original intent. Countless North Carolina women, and some men, have benefited from the action taken in 1940 to establish the scholarship fund, among them one who later served as president, Sara Kanoy Parker (Mrs. A. L.)”

Page 63: “In January 1952, at the suggestion of Miss [Ruth] Provence, \$3,000 was transferred from the Training School Fund to the Baptist Foundation endowment of Edna R. Harris Scholarship in order to increase annual income for scholarships for young women.”

Page 74: “...The following fall she [Sara Parker] began studying at the Woman’s Missionary Union Training School in Louisville, Ky.

After her first year at the school she became the first recipient of the Edna R. Harris scholarship to the Woman’s Missionary Union Training School. The scholarship was based on leadership and scholarship. She marveled at how God had moved so quickly and wonderfully in her life. It was there she was to meet Leroy Parker whom God had led to leave his studies in the medical field to prepare to be a pastor. Sara says today, ‘So God had so much more in mind than I did. WMU even helped get my wonderful husband!’”

From: *Report of the Fiftieth Annual Session of the Woman's Missionary Union of North Carolina Auxiliary to Baptist State Convention held in First Baptist Church Wilmington, March 12, 13, 14, 1940*

In Memoriam: Steadfast and Triumphant by Mrs. W. N. [Sallie Bailey] Jones

Mrs. Edna Richardson Harris, August 25, 1871—May 6, 1939

“At the close of a week filled to the full with the many duties that make up the routine of her work, the summons to come home came suddenly, and quickly. When a friend said to her as the illness seemed to be abating, ‘You must be quiet and stay in your room tomorrow,’ the answer came at once ‘I will rest tomorrow,’ but before the morrow came she had entered into the rest prepared for the children of God. That final word was characteristic of a life that was filled to the uttermost with labor for our Woman's Missionary Union, for her loved ones and her friends. Rest was always to be on the morrow. Her thought always was for the completion of the day's task. She walked in the way of the Cross. Her prayer was ever

‘Mould me O Christ
Beneath Thy swift creative hand
To do Thy will
To show God's love,
To make His world more free, more joyful,
To combat pain and wrong
To pay in our own flesh
Our share of what it takes to help and save.’

She was steadfast in her work. Her heart was in it, all service was done as to God and not unto men. It was never a burden even when she faced a lessening of her physical strength and so she was joyful in her service.

She was steadfast in faith. A great sorrow that came to her early in her life caused her faith to become a more vital thing—a constant flame that lightened her pathway. She trusted God and He was sufficient for her every need. When she carried her burdens to Him, she left them in His keeping in calm confidence that He would keep them and so her life was not marred with anxiety, but calm and steadfast in her confidence that He would keep that which she had committed to Him.

She was steadfast in her love for her God and love for her fellow-man. The radiance of this love showed on her face and gave her an attractiveness that drew friends to her and made her an acquisition to any circle. The light of His presence showed in her personality in an unusual way. Because of her love for her Lord there was so much joy in her service that we think of her today as not having come to the close of her labors but as one who has entered into the perfect service that we believed awaited her in the land to which she has gone. Life does not end when death comes, ‘The western gates close only to let the eastern gates open.’ In the account of creation we read ‘And the evening and the morning were the first day,’ and each day began with evening and closed with morning. So it will be with the Christian. We come to the evening hour only to

await the glorious morning. John in his vision on the isle of Patmos sees the redeemed glorified ‘Therefore are they before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple.’ No more frail bodies, no longer handicapped by limited abilities, but giving a perfect service.

‘Rest He will give and labor He will give
In that day as in this,
For life is both and on through death we love,
And love, and nothing miss.’

Triumphant

Not only a steadfast service but a triumphant service. Victor Hugo, the great French novelist, said when approaching death, ‘I feel in myself the future life, I am rising, I know, toward the sky. The sunshine is over my head. Heaven lights me with the reflection of unknown worlds. Winter is over my head but eternal spring is in my heart. I can say I have finished my day’s work but I cannot say I have finished my life. My day’s work will begin next morning.’ And so we think of the friend who loved us, and whom we loved, as radiant in the perfect service that has come to her in the glory land. ‘Death is but the gate of life.’ Our motto for the year is taken from the most triumphant expression of faith in the New Testament—the resurrection chapter, the fifteenth chapter of Saint Paul’s letter to the Christians at Corinth. It is again the Easter season. All nature reminds us of the resurrection by the glorious awakening that comes each year to every bud and flower. ‘Because I live ye shall live also’ is the divine message to every heart and life. Isn’t his glorious resurrection connected with our steadfastness? Does the measure of our love and service depend on our faithfulness to the task to which He has assigned us?

Today we would not think of the hands that are stilled forever, nor of the loved face gone from our sight, but remembering her love and devotion we would ask ourselves of the heritage she has left us. Our loss is a call to new duties. Because she was untiring, because her love was unsparring, let us love more, let us serve more faithfully. May we be steadfast, always abounding in the work of the Lord. It is our privilege. We too may live the triumphant life.

‘We are too stupid about death,
We will not learn
How it is wages paid to those who earn:
Now it is the gift for which on earth we yearn.
To be set free from bondage to the flesh:
How it is turning seed corn into grain
How it is winning Heaven’s eternal gain
How it means freedom evermore from pain
How it entangles every mortal mesh.
We are so selfish about death
We count our grief
Far more than we consider their relief,
When the Great Reaper gathers in the sheaf,
No more to know the season’s constant change;
And we forget that it means only life—
Life with all joy, peace, rest and glory rife,
The victory won and ended all the strife,

And Heaven no longer far away or strange.'

'Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life.'

'Blessed are the dead.'"