

# **W. W. Foreman after the Civil War**

By  
**John D. Foreman**

## **Intro Note**

This short narrative focuses on William Wallace Foreman and includes references to his mother, Jane Dement Foreman and his wife's parents, John and Rebecca Faris.

Throughout the materials consulted for this narrative – newspaper accounts from the 1870s, 80s, 90s, the History of his Civil War Regiment, and a 1907 Reunion of Civil War and Spanish American Veterans – he is referred to as W.W. Foreman.

W. W. Foreman was the grandson of Reuben Foreman, the founder of West Liberty. W.W. Foreman is the great-grandfather of the author.

## **The Foremans**

W. W. Foreman, a resident of West Liberty, W. Va., joined the Grand Army of the Republic at age 19 on 19 Feb 1864 at Wheeling, W.Va. He joined Co. D of the 12th WV Infantry. W.W. Foreman is mentioned and quoted in the history of the 12<sup>th</sup> West Virginia Infantry. He was injured and discharged from the U.S. General Hospital Fortress Monroe, VA, June 2, 1865.

He returned to the family's Ohio County farm and married Susanna Virginia (Jennie) Faris on June 13, 1869 in Ohio County, WV. Jennie was the daughter of prominent farmer and two-term State Legislator, John C. Faris.

W.W. and Jennie went west after the marriage. They appear in Cooper County, MO in the 1870 census. They had purchased property, being listed as owning land with a value of \$3,000. W.W. is a farmer and Jennie is keeping house.

W.W. and Jennie, along with children Mildred, John C., and Mervin return to WV sometime between July 1875 (Mervin's birth in MO) and Oct. 1877 (Zella's birth in WV).

W.W. is active in politics upon his return to WV. In Sept. 1878, he is nominated to be the Republican candidate for state legislature from Liberty District in Ohio County. It appears that he did not win. It would appear that he was again a candidate in 1882.

In January 1880, W.W. hosted a meeting for the purpose of forming a society for the mutual benefit farmers in the area. John Faris chaired the meeting. The process ultimately led to the formation of a Farmers Alliance.

In September 1880, W.W. was Chairman of the local Greenback-Labor Party convention. Wikipedia describes the Party:

The party's name referred to the non-gold backed paper money, commonly known as "greenbacks," issued by the North during the American Civil War and shortly afterward. The party opposed the deflationary lowering of prices paid to producers entailed by a return to a bullion-based monetary system, the policy favored by the dominant Republican Party. Continued use of unbacked currency, it was believed, would better foster business and assist farmers by raising prices and making debts easier to pay.

Initially an agrarian organization associated with the policies of the Grange, from 1878 the organization took the name Greenback Labor Party and attempted to forge a farmer-labor alliance, adding industrial reforms to its agenda, such as support of the 8-hour day and opposition to the use of state or private force to suppress union strikes. The organization faded into oblivion in the second half of the 1880s, with its basic program reborn shortly under the aegis of the People's Party, commonly known as the "Populists."

In October 1883, W. W. purchased his mother Jane Dement Foreman's farm from her. (Speculation by JDF: William Dement (Jane's father) may have divided his property into equal shares among his daughters. In June 1889, W.W. purchased property of identical size from his mother's sister, Nancy Dement. Nancy and her sister Elizabeth lived with W. W. and Jennie in their later years.

Jenny Faris Foreman's parents, John and Rebecca had a gala 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary in 1888. The event was covered in a big feature article in the *Wheeling Register* (Dec. 8, 1888), and included a lengthy description of the trip of John Faris to Wheeling to meet his bride who lived in from Bellaire, Ohio and the problems crossing the swollen Ohio River.

W.W. seems to have had a leadership role with the Farmers Alliance and sought to bring the Farmers and area trade unions together to forge a stronger force for mutual social goals. In February 1892, he addressed a joint meeting of the leaderships and secured an agreement for the two groups to join together.

The *Wheeling Register* reported on May 10, 1892 that "The Combine Formed." The article began:

The die is cast and the combine is on. The farmers have joined issues with the industrial workers of the city, and a new line of action may be looked for. Yesterday in pursuance to a call, delegates of the Farmers Alliance and the Industrial Unions met in Trades Assembly Hall and consummated the plan. It was the first convention of the kind ever held in the city, and there was naturally much interest manifested concerning the outcome. Side by side with the skilled artisans and the honest and wily workers of the factory were the true-hearted tillers of the soil, all working in unison and harmony.

.....  
One point to be gained by the farmers in the adoption of the plan of union was the doing away with the middle-man in disposing of their products. The farmers claim that the middlemen have all along been fixing the process of their products and reaping the largest profits. By the consolidation the farmers will sell direct to the consumers, the farmers selling at a higher price, yet the consumer getting it cheaper, resulting in a corresponding profit to both the producer and the consumer. The various industrial workers promise to purchase direct from the farmers, and in return for thus assisting their fellow workmen, the farmers are to pledge themselves to purchase

in the city none but union goods. There are union goods of all kinds in the city, so it is claimed, and the industrial workers desire the farmers to observe it strictly. "What I want to know," said one of the members, "is whether the farmers will purchase union goods regardless of price, in preference to the non-union products." To this remark **Mr. Foreman** replied that the farmers would so obligate themselves and in return asked a similar question to the industrial member who instantly replied in the affirmative. **Mr. Foreman** then continues, "We are not here for the purpose of being stopped, and we don't intend to. We are here on the broad plane of equality. Whatever profit arises from this system goes alike to the producer and the consumer. We farmers are not here particularly to benefit ourselves. We are here to assist in working out the plan of co-operation"

Jane Dement Foreman lived with her son, Frank, in the last years of her life. She died December 7, 1900 and is buried in Greenwood Cemetery in Wheeling.

John Faris lived his last years with his daughter Anzella Faris Hartley in Elm Grove. He died July 30, 1900.

Coincidentally Jane Foreman and John Faris are entered sequentially in the WV Vital Statistics death records.