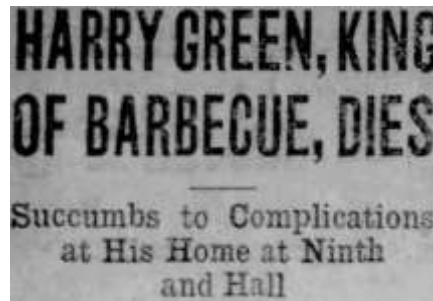


Harry Green (1855-1922) Barbecue King

By Jerry Long

Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 8 October 1922, p.8:



Harry Green, colored, most noted cook of barbecued mutton south of the Mason and Dixon line, died of complications of diseases Friday night at his home, Ninth and Hall streets, following an illness of several days.

Green was born in Breckenridge county 67 years ago, but has been living in Owensboro for the past 40 years. He was well known to nearly every citizen in Owensboro, and enjoyed the respect of the white people of this city.

For the past 35 years, Harry Green has barbecued mutton, and has served hundreds of people in the city and county with deliciously flavored barbecued mutton, which was his chief occupation. The deceased is survived by two sons and two daughters.

The funeral will take place from the Asbury M. T. church at 2 o'clock this afternoon, with burial in the Greenwood cemetery.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 8 October 1922, p.2:



Harry Green, negro, is dead at his home near the corner of Ninth and Breckenridge streets. He was for years the foremost barbecuer of the county, and was conceded to be without a superior in the state. The old negro held the friendship of hundreds of whites in the city and has cooked the meats that have fed thousands.

Visitors to Owensboro have been delighted with barbecues tendered them, all prepared by the old negro, who was an artist, with a love for his work and through these visitors his fame spread.

For many years he has gone to Louisville just before the running of the Derby and barbecued meat at barbecues given the Sunday following the race.

Uncle Harry had the barbecue privilege at the fair for nearly thirty years. He was not well at the time of the fair last month, but said that he had many friends who thought that eating some of his barbecued meat was really a part of the fair and that he was unwilling to entrust the work to the amateur barbecuers that have sprung up around the city.

The passing of the colored man, Owensboro's master chef, will be noted with regret by many friends.

He is to be buried this morning.



21576

Commonwealth of Kentucky
STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS
CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

1 PLACE OF DEATH
County Daviess

Vol. No. _____ Registration District No. 70

2 No. 9th Town Hall Primary Registration District No. 2145

3 FULL NAME Harry S. Green

File No. _____ Registered No. 293

(If death occurred in a hospital or institution, give the NAME instead of Street and number.)

PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS			MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH	
1 SEX <u>Male</u>	4 COLOR OR RACE <u>Black</u>	3 SINGLE, MARRIED, WIDOWED, OR DIVORCED (Write the word) <u>Widower</u>	16 DATE OF DEATH <u>Oct 7th 1922</u> (Month) (Day) (Year)	17 I HEREBY CERTIFY, That I attended deceased from <u>Jan 21, 1855</u> to <u>Oct 7th 1922</u> that I last saw him alive on <u>Oct 6th 1922</u> and that death occurred on the date stated above at <u>9th Hall</u> . The CAUSE OF DEATH* was as follows: <u>Septicemia with</u> <u>Recto-Vaginal Permia</u>
6 DATE OF BIRTH <u>Jan 21 1855</u> (Month) (Day) (Year)	7 AGE <u>67</u> yrs. mos. ds. IF LESS than 1 day ... hrs. or ... min.?	8 OCCUPATION (a) Trade, profession, or particular kind of work <u>Cook</u> (b) General nature of industry business or establishment in which employed (or employer)	Contributory (Secondary) <u>Septicemia</u> (Duration) <u>10</u> yrs. mos. ds.	
9 BIRTHPLACE (State or country) <u>Ky</u>			(Signed) <u>Blaylock</u> M. D. <u>Oct 7th 1922</u> (Address) <u>Owensboro, Ky</u>	
10 NAME OF FATHER <u>Hawkins</u>			*State the IMMEDIATE CAUSE OF DEATH, or, in deaths from VOLUNTARY CAUSES state (1) MEANS OF INJURY; and (2) whether ACCIDENTAL, SUICIDAL, or HOMICIDAL.	
11 BIRTHPLACE OF FATHER (State or country) <u>Ky</u>			18 LENGTH OF RESIDENCE (FOR HOSPITALS, INSTITUTIONS, TRANSIENTS OR RECENT RESIDENTS) At place of death ... yrs. mos. ds. In the State ... yrs. mos. ds. Where was disease contracted, if not at place of death? Former or usual residence _____	
12 MAIDEN NAME OF MOTHER _____			19 PLACE OF BURIAL OR REMOVAL <u>Greenwood Cem</u> DATE OF BURIAL <u>Oct 8, 1922</u>	
13 BIRTHPLACE OF MOTHER (State or country) _____			20 UNDERTAKER <u>Jas H. Davis</u> ADDRESS <u>O'boro</u>	
14 THE ABOVE IS TRUE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE (Informant) <u>Alice Gray & Kate Jew</u> (Address) _____				
15 Filed <u>Oct 7, 1922</u> <u>L. L. Carpenter</u> Registrar				

11-5784



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 15 July 1898, p.5:

To Succeed Cal Thomas.
Harry Green, colored, is slated for custom-house janitor, to succeed Cal Thomas, just as soon as Collector Franks has Cal's scalp dangling at his belt.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 2 May 1899, p.1:

Harry Green was granted a permit to build a cottage at corner Of McFarland and Hall Streets, \$250



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 5 October 1899, p.5:

—Harry Green, of the famous Webb David Burgoon club, will barbecue the meat served at the fair ground.



1900 Federal Census of Owensboro, Daviess County, KY, p.52B:

Green, Harry	head	Dec 1855	Black	tobacco stemmer	KY-KY-KY
		married 21 years, owns house, resides on Hall Street			
Harriet	wife	Oct 1854	Black	washer woman	KY-KY-KY
		6 children 5 living born to Harriet, married 21 years			
William	son	Sep 1880	Black	tobacco stemmer	KY-KY-KY
Alice	dau.	Jul 1881	Black	cook	KY-KY-KY
John	son	Oct 1887	Black		KY-KY-KY
Pearl	son	Oct 1892	Black		KY-KY-KY



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 13 November 1902, p.

BARBECUED meat for sale at Harry Green's, 900 Hall, Saturday, November 15. Best cook in the state.



EXCELLENT BURGOO.

—

Visiting Attorneys Have Enjoyable Time at the Fair Grounds.

By far the most enjoyable feature of the meeting of the State Bar association was the burgoo and barbecue at the fair grounds at noon yesterday. At the close of Judge Rouse's speech the attorneys took the cars in waiting on Frederica street for the fair grounds. The burgoo committee composed of Messrs. J. G. Taylor, G. V. Triplett, Paul Weir and Clarence Finn, have just cause to be proud of that feature of the program. In the cool grove of the grounds the tables were set.

Harry Green, a past master at barbecues, began work on the sheep, pigs and fish before daylight, and by the time the attorneys arrived the air was full of the pleasant odor of the cooking meat. George Bridges officiated as carver of the sheep. "Bill" Cushion had charge of the refreshment stand, which divided honors with the burgoo. Jim Davis' orchestra played lively airs while the eating and merry-making went on. To some of the lawyers it was their first burgoo. Every one spoke in the highest terms of it and left with pleasant memories of the occasion.

The majority of the visiting attorneys left for their homes on the 3:27 o'clock train.



1910 Federal Census of Owensboro, Daviess County, KY, p.186A:

Green, Harry	head	52	Black	laborer tobacco factory	KY-KY-KY
				married 30 years, owns house, resides 900 Hall Street	
Harriet	wife	48	Black	laundress	KY-KY-KY
				7 children 4 living born to Harriet, married 30 years	
John	son	22	Black	laborer tobacco factory	KY-KY-KY
Pearl	dau.	17	Black	laborer tobacco factory	KY-KY-KY
				[Pearl was actually a son]	



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 31 August 1913, p.6B:

BARBECUE

AT HICKMAN PARK, LABOR DAY

Given By Owensboro Base Ball Association

Base Ball Game Between Henderson And Owensboro

Game Called at 3 P. M.

Barbecue Served From 11 A. M. Until 2:30 P. M.

Come Out and Enjoy Life.

Chickens and Barbecue Harry Green, Chef.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 31 May 1914, p.1:

THOUSANDS ENJOY
BARBECUE GIVEN
BY DISTILLERS

In Effort to Induce the Farmers
to Raise More
Stock

FINE SPEECHES MADE

One of the Largest Crowds
That Ever Attended Bar-
becue in West Ky.

... Early on Friday afternoon the butchering and preparing of the 150 sheep 'was begun under the personal supervision of Harry Green, the far-famed barbecue chef. It required a trench of 350 feet in length to furnish the slow hickory fire over which the large number of carcasses was slowly roasted. The peculiar flavor of the meat, which was so relished by those who enjoyed the festivities was given by the hickory wood used. Harry's own sauce preparation, which is gradually at times poured over the carcasses during the roasting period, added a flavor that was unapproachable. Just the proper time to turn, the carcasses on the spits, and how brown they should be allowed to attain, was carefully watched, as this is the indicator to the state of perfection in cooking. Expressions from the many thousands were that never had they eaten such magnificent

viands. In the same way was the 1,000 pounds of fish treated, and they were relished as only the lovers of the fish can.

[On 30 May 1914 this event was held at the Daviess County Fair grounds and the crowd estimate was given as 10,000.]



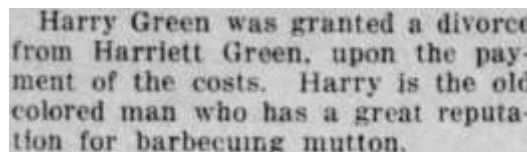
Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 7 August 1918, p.2:



Harry Green, who has become famous as a cook of barbecued mutton and other meats and whose reputation extends throughout the state, has finally decided that he wants a divorce from his wife, Harriett Green, with whom he has not lived for more than five years last past. Harry is a colored man known by everybody in Owensboro, and stands very high with the "white folks." For many years Harry has been barbecuing mutton every Saturday during the summer months, and by economy has saved enough money to purchase a house and two lots at 902 Hall street. He was married by Rev. Archie Clay, a colored minister in the year 1879, and he and his wife separated in 1903. Seven children were born, three of whom are dead. Harry says that his wife makes her own living, and he asks the court to award him the possession of the property free of any right of dower that may be claimed by his wife.



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 21 October 1918, p.2:



1920 Federal Census of Owensboro, Daviess County, KY, p.186A:

Green, Harry	head	58	Black	stemmer tobacco factory	KY-KY-KY
			divorced,	owns house, resides 904 Hall Street	
John	son	28	Black	single stemmer tobacco factory	KY-KY-KY
Pearl	son	26	Black	single stemmer tobacco factory	KY-KY-KY



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 18 September 1923, p.8:

NOTICE—There will be barbecue mutton for sale Sat. Sept. 22nd., corner 9th. Hall cooked by the famous Green Bros. Sons of the late Harry Green. 239



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 20 March 1925, p.2:

Jesse R. Johnson left yesterday for Peru, Ind., to attend a barbecue given by Zack Terrill to the employes of the Sells-Floto circus. John Green, colored, son of the late Harry Green, famous for barbecuing meats, will have charge of the cooking of the meat. The circus will open its season April 11 in Chicago, where it will remain for three weeks. It will then go on the road but will not make Owensboro this year. The organization will send John Robinson's circus here this summer.



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Monday, 3 August 1942, p.2:

Negro Deaths
Harriett Green
Harriett Green, 900 Hall street, died at her home at 11:50 p. m Sunday. She was the widow of Harry Green well known as a barbecuer in this community. Surviving are a daughter, Alice Gray, Indianapolis, Ind., and a son, Pearl Green, colored patrolman in Owensboro and a sister, Elizabeth Meadows, Indianapolis. Funeral services will be held at the Center street Baptist church at 2:30 p. m., Wednesday, the Rev. J. W. Wright officiating. Burial will be in Greenwood cemetery.



**A History of Owensboro and Daviess County, Kentucky, Hugh O. Potter,
Herr Jones – Paragon Publishing, Montgomery, AL, 1974, p.245:**

Chapter XXXV: Barbecued Mutton Capital

... The first commercial barbecue in Owensboro was a Negro man by the name of Harry Green. He lived at the corner of Ninth Street and Hall Streets. His pit was simply a hole dug in the yard. Although he sold barbecued mutton the year round, the big event of the year for him was the county fair. Old timers estimate that he sold as much as 1,000 pounds of meat during each fair and they believe that he began his business about 1890.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 6 May 2021, p.1C:

Green put Owensboro BBQ on the map

By Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer

As we get ready to celebrate a scaled-down version of the International Bar-B-Q Festival — Bar-B-Q Block Party — on Saturday, it's time we started thinking about a way to honor Harry S. Green.

He was the man who put Owensboro on the nation's barbecue map 131 years ago.

Local histories say that Green was Owensboro's first commercial barbecue chef, selling barbecue from a pit in his yard at Ninth and Hall streets, starting in 1890.

He died in October 1922 — nearly a century ago — and was buried in Greenwood Cemetery on Oct. 8.

Green's obituary in the Owensboro Messenger described him as "an old man."

But he was just 67 when he died.

In 1920, two years before his death, census records say Green was a stemmer in a tobacco factory, divorced and living with two of his children.

But the double-deck headline on Page 2 of the Oct. 8, 1922, Owensboro Messenger makes it clear that Green was well-known throughout the state.

"Harry Green has passed away," the top line says.

"Famous barbecue chef had state-wide reputation," the second line says.

The story said Green lived near Ninth and Breckenridge streets.

Since Hall Street is only a block away, that's probably the same place he had barbecued for 32 years.

"He was for years the foremost barbecuer of the county and was conceded to be without a superior in the state," his obituary says.

It refers to Green as "an artist."

And it mentions that for several years, he had gone to Louisville on the first weekend of May to cook for post-Kentucky Derby celebrations there.

Green never had a restaurant.

He just cooked barbecue for people to take home for dinner.

But Harry Green and his statewide reputation paved the way for all the national attention Owensboro barbecue gets today with its International Bar-B-Q Festival and constant listings nationally among the nation's best barbecue cities.

And we really should find a way to honor him.



Notes by Jerry Long

Harry Green was reported to have been born on 21 January 1855 in KY according to his death certificate. His obituary in the Owensboro Inquirer (8 October 1922, p8) states he was born in Breckinridge County, Kentucky. His death certificate and 1901 Owensboro City Directory lists his name as "Harry S. Green".

In Daviess County, KY Harry Green married Miss Harriett Johnson on 9 March 1879 (Negro Marriage Book D, pp. 236-37). Harry & Harriett in the 1891 Owensboro City Directory (p.182) were listed as residing at 724 Leitchfield Road; his occupation was given as laborer and hers' as washerwoman. In 1893 he was residing at 947 East McFarland (1893 Owensboro City Directory, p.204) – McFarland Street was later renamed Ninth Street. The Owensboro Messenger of 2 May 1899 (p.1) shows that Harry Green had obtained a permit to build a cottage at the corner of Hall and McFarland Street.

By 1900 Federal Census Harry Green was living on Hall Street in Owensboro. The 1901 Owensboro City Directory gives the address as 900 Hall Street. He was still living at the same residence at the time of his death. The 1889 Owensboro City Directory and the 1900, 1910 and 1920 federal censuses give his occupation as stemmer at a tobacco factory. His death certificate gives his occupation as cook.

His obituary states at his death in 1922 he had been barbecuing for the previous 35 years. Most sources suggest he commenced this second trade about 1890. Commencing in 1902 and up until his death Harry Green advertised extensively in the Owensboro newspapers his barbecuing service at 900 Hall Street. The majority of his barbecuing work was done between the months of April thru November.

By 1899 Harry Green had become the "barbecuer of the Daviess County Fair". He died just a month after his last fair. He cooked for many other social events and for various groups including the annual Catholic church picnics.

Harry Green died on 6 October 1922 at his home, 900 Hall Street, in Owensboro. He was buried at Owensboro's Greenwood Cemetery. His obituary listed his survivors as two sons and two daughters; their names were not stated. His wife was not mentioned and his death certificate reported that he was widowed. This was not true. Harriett and he had separated and the Daviess County Circuit Court had granted them a divorce in October 1918.

Harriett Green was living with her daughter, Alice Gray, in Indianapolis, IN at the time of the 1920 census. She died on 2 August 1942 at her home at 900 Hall Street in Owensboro. Her death certificate reported that Harriett, daughter of Richard Johnson & Mary Cleveland, was born in Breckinridge County, KY on 7 February 1866. Her obituary stated she was the widow of Harry Green and was survived by a daughter, Alice Gray, of Indianapolis, IN, and a son, Pearl Green, a "colored patrolman in Owensboro."

Harry & Harriett had seven children. In 1910 they had 2 sons and 2 daughters who were living. A son, William H. Green, was born in 1880; in 1907 he was living with his parents at 900 Hall Street in Owensboro and was working as a tobacco stemmer. Alice Green, daughter of Harry

& Harriett, was born 8 July 1882, married Ivory Gray, and died on 21 October 1943 in Indianapolis, IN, where she was buried in the Holy Cross Cemetery. Alice had a son, John Edward Gray (1921-1982).

After Harry Green's death, his sons, John and Pearl, carried on with the family barbecue business at 900 Hall Street for a few years. John Green born 29 October 1889 died on 20 January 1934 in Owensboro; a veteran of World War I he was single and was buried at Greenwood Cemetery in Owensboro.

Pearl Green had been a veteran of World War I. On 12 December 1938 Pearl Green became the first African American to serve with the Owensboro Police Department. The 1940 and 1950 censuses list Pearl Green as an Owensboro policeman and resident of 900 Hall Street. He was born 22 October 1892 and died 5 September 1966. He left no surviving children.

Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 6 September 1966, p1A:

Forest Guinn, Pearl Green Die Monday



Pearl Green

The Owensboro police department was saddened during the Labor Day holiday by the deaths of one of its veteran officers and of a retired officer.

... About three hours after Guinn died, retired officer Pearl Green, 73, of 900 Hall St., died at his residence. He was the first Negro policeman to serve on the force and he retired in 1958 after serving 20 years...

Green joined the police force on Dec. 12, 1938 and retired on Dec. 15, 1958. Chief Vernie Bid- well described him as "one of the best officers that Owensboro ever had." Green attended Western High School prior to joining the armed forces on March 29, 1918, in World War I. Upon his return from the service he was associated with his father, the late Henry Green, in the barbecue business. Following the death of his father, he continued in the business until he became a member of the police department.

He was a member of the Center Street Baptist Church and served as a deacon for several years. He was a member of Lodge 16, Fraternal Order of Police.

Survivors include his widow, Mrs. Rosa Green and a nephew. The body is at the Young Funeral Home.

[Pearl & his wife, Rosa Lee Davis Green (1903-1972), were buried at Elmwood Cemetery, in Owensboro, KY. His wife continued to live at 900 Hall Street until 1971.]



See also:

- Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 4 July 1969, p.1B (“Barbecues Have Been Part Of Summertime Since 1834”, by Frankie Hager)
- Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 4 May 1992, p.1C (“The birth of Owensboro’s barbecue industry”, by Keith Lawrence)
- Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 5 May 1997 p.1B (“Five Facts: Barbecue”; Harry Green, an African American who lived at the corner of Ninth and Hall streets, is believed to have been Owensboro's first commercial barbecue, in 1890, his pit was a hole dug in the yard, from which he sold meat throughout the year, but Green's busy season was during the county fair, when he was said to have sold up to 1,000 pounds each year)
- Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 7 May 2000 p.1 (“Economy cooks with barbecue”, by Keith Lawrence; Barbecue restaurants in Owensboro trace their roots to an African American man named Harry Green, who began selling barbecue from a pit in his yard at Ninth and Hall streets sometime in 1890, his busy season was said to be during the county fair, where he sold up to 1,000 pounds of barbecue each year)
- Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 10 January 2008 p.1C (“We need to get people fired up about our barbecue heritage”, by Keith Lawrence; Harry Green began selling barbecue from a pit in his yard at Ninth and Hall streets in 1890, 118 years ago, he is believed to be the father of the local barbecue industry)
- Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 1 May 2014 p.1B (“We really should honor Harry Green”, by Keith Lawrence)
- “Harry Green: Daviess County’s original pit master”, by Kathy Heflin Olson, Chief Executive Officer, Owensboro Museum of Science and History; Owensboro Times (Owensborotimes.com), 24 February 2019



A southern barbecue – Sketch by Horace Bradley, published in Harper's Weekly, July 1887