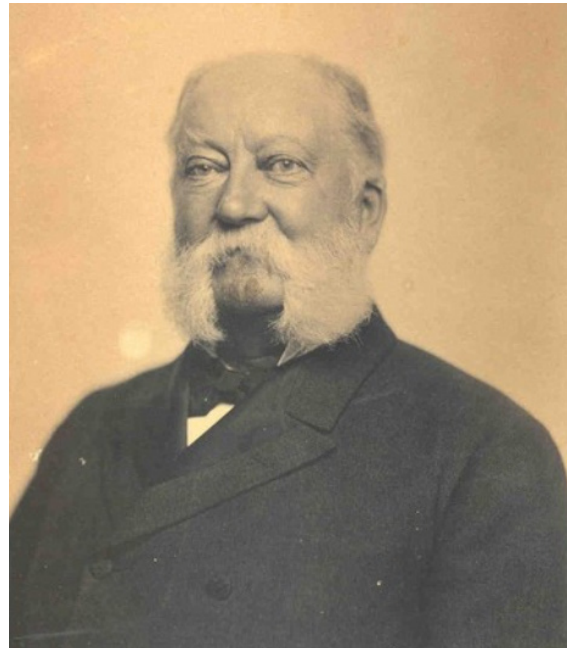


In 2015, Faizal Westcott penned the following essay about his ancestor John McMahon Westcott as his submission for the Society of Stukely Westcott Descendants of America Scholarship. Faizal and Thomas Harkey each were awarded a 2016 scholarship.

Society of Stukely Westcott Descendants of America Scholarship Essay by Faizal Westcott

There are many people in my family that I highly respect. One of them that stands out to me the most is my great-great-grandfather John McMahon Westcott. When I in high school I was assigned a family history project, and I didn't really know much about my family's history. My Dad told me stories about my family, but I didn't fully realize how interesting family history is.

John McMahon Westcott and Stukely Westcott epitomize the values that I aspire to. Like Stukely, John McMahon strove to improve the lives of people through their leadership. From written accounts of the time John is described by others as fair, honest, and of high moral character, and was loved and respected by his community. The story of John McMahon Westcott begins with my earliest known ancestor, Henry Westcott, John's father. Henry was a farmer who lived in New Jersey back when it earned its name the "Garden State" as a major agricultural center supporting the East Coast. When Henry Westcott was born in 1801, the country was still very much a non-mechanized agriculture-based society with most people living in the east. Everything was made by hand and farming was done by horse and oxen. Little is known about Henry or Sarah Dyche, John's mother; unfortunately, as far as I know their story was never recorded.



*John McMahon Westcott
(photo from family archives)*

John McMahon grew up in this predominately agricultural society of his parents, but he also saw society changing with the advent of technology. Seeing the emergence of technology and recognizing the potential impact that they could have on farming practices that he was familiar with, John was able to combine them and create a thriving business. After starting a successful grain dealing business as a young man, he joined the Hoosier Drill Company as an investor.

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(Faizal Westcott Essay, continued)

The Hoosier Drill was a farming implement that revolutionized the planting of crop seeds. Instead of plowing and hand sowing seeds one row at a time, the Hoosier Drill plowed six rows and automatically seeded them. When John joined the company, he had a minor ownership which he later built on and eventually purchased a majority stake in the company. He proceeded to transform the company from a small manufacturer into, at the time of his retirement, the largest producer of seed drills in the world. The company later merged with three other companies to form The American Seeding Machine Company, and then was purchased by International Harvester.

By making the farmer's life more efficient and easier, John ultimately helped build America's future as the Hoosier Drill technology played an important role in the mechanization of agriculture and the transformation of the nation through access to a new abundant food supply. As farmers were able to cultivate more acreage with less work and resources and this freed many people from a life on the farm to new careers in the city and the rapid urbanization of America had begun. This new way of life that John helped foster, bears a resemblance to that of Stukely Westcott's of improving people's lives and his incentive to help change history for the better.

All of this brought great wealth to John and his family allowing him to expand his enterprise into carriage manufacturing, banking, hotels, farms, and horse ranches. In spite of all of this wealth John never lost sight of his family or

community. When John acquired the Hoosier Drill Company he made his sons and his sons-in-law partners, turning the company into a family business. His family was of central importance to him, so much that he purchased an entire city block in Richmond, Indiana and built large houses for each of his children. He also supported his sons in enterprises they were interested in. Burton John, in his efforts in starting the Westcott Motor Car Company, and my grand-father Charles Grant Westcott in his interest in horse breeding.



*John McMahan Westcott's house in
Richmond, IN*

*(photo from family archives; the note on the
photo was written by my great-grandmother,
Hazel Smith Westcott to her son, my
grandfather Charles Grant Westcott, Jr.)*

John was always someone who upheld moral values, whether it be through philanthropy or making sure his workers were treated equally and fairly. While other companies were taking undue advantage of their workers, John set up a fund for his employees that were in financial difficulty and in health need. He understood that the company had a responsibility to its

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(Faizal Westcott Essay, continued)

workers, and he made sure they were taken care of. When John retired from the seeding machine manufacturing business, he had over 400 people working for him. Like Stukely, John highly respected in his community. He helped form business associations which further enriched the community of Richmond. He was deeply involved in community affairs and was a major philanthropist, leading his community in donations and supporting public causes. He was also a leading member of his church and a member of the local lodge. Richmond saw great improvements through his leadership in business enterprises and community affairs.



John McMahon Westcott two of his favorite horses (photo from family archives)

Both Stukely and John McMahon Westcott were quintessential role models of their community and their actions always benefited society. As an incoming college freshman, I find it extremely important for me to keep hold of these principles and to continue growing

in such ways to contribute to my school's community and my community back home. Strong and beneficial leadership played the biggest role in what Stukely and John were able to accomplish. I've been privileged to be a part of the Boy Scouts of America, which helped me develop the leadership skills I have today. As an Eagle Scout, I can say that I have found great satisfaction and personal reward through helping my community, whether it be through volunteer work at my local nature center or doing collection drives for those in need. My Eagle Scout Project was probably the biggest contribution I made to my community so far and one in which I grew as an individual and as a young adult. Through the help of my fellow scouts and my community's generosity I collected roughly over a thousand different electronic entertainment media, ranging from movies, DVD players, music tapes, games and game consoles, to actual television sets. Originally my goal was to donate to the Coast Guard Foundation, but my collection drive was so successful I was able to expand it to benefit the local Veterans Hospital and Shelter for Homeless Veterans. My leadership roles have also extended into my high school as I took part of many different programs. During my junior and senior years, I was a part of the Freshman Advisory Leadership program as well as a freshman mentor program. Through these programs I was able to contribute as an upperclassman in guiding high school freshmen through their first year, which can be very difficult at times. I am happy to say that these experiences allowed me to become someone that

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(Faizal Westcott Essay, continued)

the underclassmen could look up to and I seek to do the same when I enter college.

Stukely Westcott paved his way to a new life through his belief in liberty, and in many ways, John McMahon did the same. During Stukely's time, freedom was not something you were given; you had to have strong convictions and you had to fight for it and that's what Stukely did. I cannot say that I have experienced a life that inhibits freedom since I have been privileged to live a life that is not oppressed, thanks in part to Stukely, but it's essential that I value these freedoms that I have and use them to their fullest in the career I choose and in my life in general. Last September I participated in the People's Climate March in New York City. This march was the largest demonstration calling attention to climate change in history, with over 400,000 people participating in NYC. I had never been a part of a demonstration before,

let alone a march that big, and it was definitely a life-changing moment to see so many people expressing their freedom of speech and coming together for something they believe in. Climate change is arguably the biggest factor of change facing the future of our country and the planet. I strongly believe that the future of our country's progress must take into account the health of the environment and make it a central focus. I am planning my college studies towards a career in environmental science to help make an impact in finding solutions to improve the environment both for the immediate future and for future generations. While Stukely Westcott established new free communities and John McMahon Westcott helped build and strengthen existing ones, I hope by their example to serve my community and my country by making our environment a healthier place for all of us.