

*Journal of the Lepidopterists' Society*  
63(3), 2009, 154–163

THE COMPLEX HISTORY OF “INSECTS INJURIOUS TO VEGETATION” BY  
THADDEUS W. HARRIS, WITH A DATE CORRECTION AND LECTOTYPE DESIGNATION  
FOR *VANESSA COMMA* HARRIS (NYMPHALIDAE)

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**ABSTRACT.** In 1841, Thaddeus W. Harris (1795-1856) published *A Report on the Insects of Massachusetts, Injurious to Vegetation*. Three more editions of the book were issued, one posthumously. Many taxa of Lepidoptera were described in the book, including twelve butterflies. The book's complex history is reviewed and publication dates of each edition are proposed. The publication date of *Vanessa comma* Harris is corrected and a lectotype of this taxon is designated. It is also revealed that Samuel Henshaw (1852-1941) and Charles W. Johnson (1863-1932) prepared determination and type labels contained in the insect collection of T. W. Harris

**Additional key words:** Charles W. Johnson, Lepidoptera, Samuel Henshaw, Thomas Say, type locality.

In 1841, Thaddeus William Harris (1795-1856) authored a groundbreaking publication on injurious insects, which was commended for its scholarly detail and “familiar language” (Harris 1841). The work was so popular that it was revised twice and reprinted for many years. Harris' son, Edward Doubleday Harris, described the book as a “ready helper to every student of entomology in the land” (Harris 1882). Among others, it inspired the entomological pursuits of John H. Comstock and Leland O. Howard (Howard 1930, Herrick & Smith 1953). Comstock (1897) credited the book with having “done more to stimulate an interest in the study of insects than any other American work.” In addition to providing practical details on the biology of insects, it contained the descriptions of many new taxa, including Lepidoptera.

Harris' book is considered among the classics of early American zoological literature, yet its production remains poorly documented. Brown (1975) revealed that the final edition consisted of several issues. Elliott (2008) discussed some aspects of the book and its impact on the entomological community. My own analysis of this influential work exposed a complicated history that extended over 50 years. Due to confusion about the various editions of Harris' book, the description of the butterfly *Vanessa comma* Harris (= *Polygonia comma*) was repeatedly attributed to the wrong year. As an adjunct to this study, I also examined Harris' insect collection and associated manuscripts to better understand his concept of *V. comma*.

#### METHODS

Information about the book by T. W. Harris was obtained from copies in bookstores and libraries (including my own), as well as descriptions and

photographs of numerous copies for sale on the Internet. Additional facts were retrieved from historical literature sources. Relevant manuscripts were reviewed in the Ernst Mayr Library of the Museum of Comparative Zoology (MCZ), Harvard University. Copies of additional manuscripts were received from the Mayr Library and the Cambridge Historical Society. Also examined were butterfly specimens and labels in the Harris insect collection, MCZ. Label calligraphy was analyzed using handwritten letters in the Mayr Library and images from the MCZ Type Database (MCZ 2006).

#### RESULTS

**The Report.** In February 1837, the Boston Society of Natural History (BSNH) recommended to the Massachusetts Legislature that the state's animals and plants be more thoroughly surveyed (Bouvé 1880). In April of that year, after conferring with a committee from the BSNH, the Legislature authorized a geological, mineralogical, botanical, and zoological survey of the state (Emerson 1839). Following his earlier successes in compiling lists of all the known insects of Massachusetts (Harris 1833, 1835), Thaddeus W. Harris was appointed to serve as the Commissioner for the entomological segment of the new survey. Harris submitted a portion of his report to the Massachusetts Legislature in April 1838 (Everett 1838). Comprising only the Coleoptera, it was later published with several other preliminary survey reports (Harris 1838). Harris requested additional time to complete the remainder of his report (Emerson 1838).

Harris had previously expressed his disappointment in the lack of publications on American insects, stating, “There is no work on Entomology fully applicable to the

wants of the rising generation in this country" ([Calvert] 1940). With this in mind, he continued to develop his survey report, basing it on a manuscript initially entitled "Habits of some of the Insects injurious to vegetation in the vicinity of Boston, Massachusetts" (Mayr Library). On 20 January 1840 Harris wrote that he was "very busily employed" in finishing his report, which he hoped to present to the Massachusetts Legislature before the end of February (fair copy letter to E. C. Herrick, Mayr Library). Far exceeding this deadline, Harris disclosed on 12 April 1841 that his final report was "already in the press" with 240 pages printed, but "150 pages or more are still to be written." He also noted, "it must be finished before July" (draft letter to E. Doubleday, Mayr Library).

Printing was nearly completed by 24 November 1841, when Harris mentioned that he had sent a "specimen" (probably unbound printed pages) to his friend Edward C. Herrick, stating, "I regret that the Report had not been more abridged before passing through the press" (fair copy letter to Herrick, Mayr Library). An incomplete advanced copy was also sent to the North American Review, prompting that publication to request a sample of the title page (undated note from T. D. Treadwell, Cambridge Historical Society). The front matter (prefatory pages) was printed after Harris supplied the printer with a handwritten example of the title page, which included instructions for the insertion of the table of contents and an introductory letter to George B. Emerson, dated 1 December 1841 (Cambridge Historical Society). Emerson served as the Chairman of the Commissioners on the Zoological and Botanical Survey of Massachusetts.

The Massachusetts Legislature authorized that 1,500 copies of each survey report be printed and distributed almost entirely within the State of Massachusetts (Massachusetts 1839). Harris was given ten copies of his own report, which was published under the title, *A Report on the Insects of Massachusetts, Injurious to Vegetation* (Harris 1841). The date of Harris' introductory letter suggests that there was insufficient time to complete the printing and binding of the *Report* before the end of December 1841. Nonetheless, Harris maintained that it was printed and submitted to the Massachusetts Legislature in 1841 (Harris 1842, 1852). This claim is supported by the State of Massachusetts (1851a). The swift publication of the *Report* was probably made possible by its inexpensive binding. Like previous survey reports by Emerson (1839), Dewey (1840), Emmons (1840), and Gould (1841), Harris' *Report* was bound in tan paper wrappers. Nearly all surviving copies of the *Report* possess later bindings of board covers, thus few modern workers have seen the

book in its original form (Fig. 1). For the purposes of the Code (ICZN 1999, Art. 21.3), a publication date of 31 December 1841 is tentatively adopted for the *Report*.

Most copies of the *Report* were probably distributed after December 1841. The Boston Society of Natural History received a copy from the Massachusetts Legislature in March 1842 ([Dillaway] 1842)]. A copy in the Library of Congress is inscribed "Presented by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts May 9th 1842." Another in the Entomology Library of the National Museum of Natural History (Smithsonian Institution) includes the notation, "Received June 12th 1843." This copy was possibly received by the U.S. District Court of Massachusetts as a record of publication (R. Greene, pers. comm.).

The *Report* was written for the benefit of agriculture, and was the first government publication on insects to be issued in the United States. Harris understood that a more comprehensive study would be scientifically valuable, but not "expected to prove either interesting or particularly useful to the great body of the people" (Harris 1841). Many new insects were described in the *Report*, including two butterflies: *Thecla humuli* Harris (= *Strymon melinus humuli*) and *Vanessa comma*. Because of their economic importance, Harris was very interested in Lepidoptera. He wrote, "There are perhaps no insects which are so commonly and so universally destructive as caterpillars" (Harris 1841). Harris devoted 162 pages of the *Report* to Lepidoptera, much more than for any other order of insects.

Harris was very critical of his *Report*, citing its "imperfections" and hoping that there was "enough of readable & practically useful matter in it to compensate for its numerous faults" (fair copy letter to E. C.

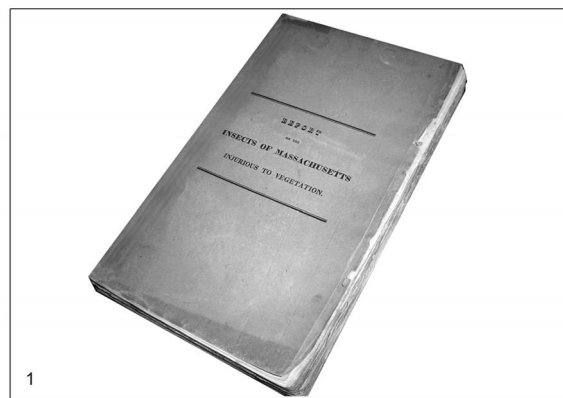


FIG. 1. *A Report on the Insects of Massachusetts, Injurious to Vegetation* by Thaddeus W. Harris, as originally issued in 1841 in printed paper wrappers (J. V. Calhoun).

Herrick, 24 Nov. 1841, Mayr Library; Harris 1841). Nonetheless, other opinions were very favorable, forging Harris' reputation as a competent entomologist. The British lepidopterist Edward Doubleday informed Harris, "We are all delighted with your *Report*." Doubleday also requested that a few more copies be sent "as presents for your English correspondents" (letter dated 30 April 1842, Mayr Library). Another British entomologist, John Curtis, considered it to be the best book of its kind ever published (letter from E. Doubleday, 16 April 1846, Mayr Library). Published reviews praised the *Report*, asserting that it would "induce many more to assist in reaping the large harvest which lies before American entomologists" (Anon. 1842). Despite this positive reception, some readers bemoaned the book's lack of illustrations. Morris (1846) believed that figures would have been helpful to those who "do not easily recognize an insect from a bare description, however accurate." Reviewers also complained about the restricted availability of the *Report*, which induced one critic to complain that it was "only furnished to a number which must be small in comparison with the number of those who would wish to read it" ([Peabody] 1842).

**The first *Treatise*.** Before the *Report* was completed, Harris realized its significance and decided to reissue the book at his own expense. The *Report* was intended primarily for the Massachusetts Legislature, thus Harris desired to provide a version "for more general circulation, and to meet the wishes of some of his friends" (Harris 1842). Because many of the insects in the *Report* occurred throughout New England, Harris decided to give the book "a more comprehensive title" (Harris 1852). He no longer considered it to be a mere report, but rather *A Treatise on some of the Insects of New England which are Injurious to Vegetation* (Harris 1842).

On 1 January 1841, Harris stated that publication of the *Treatise* had been delayed "in order that the '*Report*' may be first issued by the Secretary of State" (letter to E. C. Herrick, Mayr Library). However, the delay continued into the following year, well beyond the issuance of the *Report*. Harris hinted at political pressures, remarking, "it is enough to say, perhaps, that there were strong reasons inclining me to submit to a delay, not of my own seeking." He also admitted that he did not want to "interfere with the distribution of the State document by an untimely or overhasty publication of my own edition" (fair copy letter to E. C. Herrick, 3 Nov. 1842, Mayr Library). Harris did not expect to sell more than fifty copies of the *Treatise* at first, after which he would keep the remainder "till they are called for, & if no demand is made for them I can give them away

you know, or sell them to the trunk makers" (fair copy letter to E. C. Herrick, 1 Jan. 1841, Mayr Library).

Harris chose John Owen to be the publisher of the *Treatise*, possibly because Owen was a fellow Harvard graduate who had an interest in insects (Harris 1841, 1842). Owen is best known for publishing the early works of another Harvard graduate, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (Wilson & Fiske 1900). Only 250 copies of the *Treatise* were printed (Elliott 2008) and Harris paid extra to bind them in cloth boards. They were available for distribution on 20 October 1842, which is hereby adopted as the date of publication. Two weeks later, Harris granted permission to his friend, E. C. Herrick, to help sell copies for two dollars apiece (fair copy letter to Herrick, 3 Nov. 1842, Mayr Library). A reviewer of the *Treatise* proclaimed, "Much knowledge may be gained on this topic from the pages of the work before us, and many valuable hints suggested" (Anon. 1843).

Harris presented copies of his *Treatise* to various societies and libraries. The Boston Society of Natural History received a copy from Harris in January 1843 ([Dillaway] 1843). Probably around this same time, Harris provided a copy to the Massachusetts Horticultural Society (M. Horn pers. comm.). Harris also distributed copies outside of Massachusetts, as demonstrated by his inscription in my own copy that reads, "Bowdoin College Library from the Author." Bowdoin College is located in Brunswick, Maine. This copy may have influenced the entomologist Alpheus S. Packard, Jr., who grew up in Brunswick and attended Bowdoin College. Harris probably also sent copies of the *Treatise* to his foreign correspondents, as this title was included in the library of his good friend, Edward Doubleday (Stevens 1850). Despite his modest expectations, Harris had little trouble dispensing copies of the *Treatise*.

**The second *Treatise*.** In November 1842, Harris wrote, "Should the [*Treatise*] sell readily, and a call is made for another edition, I may think it best to issue one" (fair copy letter to E. C. Herrick, 3 Nov. 1842, Mayr Library). Harris explained, "In the course of eight years, all the copies of the *Report*, and of the other impression were entirely disposed of. Meanwhile, some materials for a new edition were collected" (Harris 1852). In 1850, the Massachusetts Legislature ordered that 2,000 copies of a second edition of the *Treatise* be published, and that Harris "be authorized to secure the copyright of all future editions for the benefit of himself and his heirs" (Massachusetts 1851a, 1851b). As compensation for updating the text and supervising its printing, Harris received \$150 (Massachusetts 1851a) (usually misquoted as \$175). Although this sum seems trivial, it is equivalent to over \$4,000 today.

Harris completed the changes for this edition by 23 February 1852, when he wrote, “notified the Secretary that I was ready for the printer” (Harris notes, Mayr Library). Although he received the third proof from the printer on 7 April 1852, the date of the preface indicates that the book was not available until after 15 October 1852 (Harris 1852). Harris filed for the copyright before the title pages were printed. A publication date of 31 October 1852 is tentatively adopted for the second edition of the *Treatise*.

Copies of this edition were bound in tan paper wrappers with brown cloth spines. As with the *Report*, few surviving volumes possess their fragile original wrappers, which bore the incorrect title “Report on Insects Injurious to Vegetation.” Copies were primarily distributed to agricultural and horticultural societies in Massachusetts. Harris received 200 copies (Massachusetts 1851a, 1851b). Few of the remaining books were available for purchase (Anon. 1853).

Harris was again critical of his work, describing the *Treatise* as “very homely” and worrying that it was “beneath the dignity of a naturalist” (draft letter to J. O. Westwood, 1854, Mayr Library). Despite this modesty, reviewers commended the book as “neither exclusively scientific, nor exclusively practical” (Anon. 1853). This edition was depleted and the book remained in high demand.

**The third *Treatise*.** In 1858, two years after Harris’ death, a committee was formed by the Boston Society of Natural History to explore the possibility of reissuing the *Treatise*, “if possible with illustrations” (Anon. 1859). The committee recommended that the society lobby the Massachusetts Legislature and “take the steps necessary to procure a new edition” (Parsons 1859). In April 1859, the Massachusetts Legislature ordered the production of no more than 2,500 copies of a third edition at a cost not exceeding \$8,000 (Massachusetts, 1859a, 1859b, 1861a, 1861b). Published in 1862, it was edited by Charles L. Flint, Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Agriculture. Flint was authorized to “procure such assistance as may be necessary” (Massachusetts 1859a). He solicited the help of several entomologists, including the lepidopterist John G. Morris, who reviewed sections and contributed footnote comments. Flint targeted an even greater audience by removing “New England” from the title and adding over 270 wood cut engravings and eight hand-colored steel plate engravings, all created exclusively for the book under the supervision of the celebrated zoologist Louis Agassiz.

The Massachusetts Legislature resolved that the new edition would also incorporate “suitable additions” (Massachusetts 1859b). At the urging of the entomologist Samuel H. Scudder, Flint inserted

additional text on butterflies (Scudder 1889). This text, which included the descriptions of ten new taxa, was resurrected from Harris’ draft manuscript. This manuscript was acquired after Harris’ death by the Boston Society of Natural History, whose museum evolved into the Boston Museum of Science. The manuscript was gifted in 1992 to the Ernst Mayr Library along with numerous other Harris documents (Calhoun 2007). It is apparent that Harris wrote his entire segment on butterflies prior to 1841, but crossed out extensive passages before publishing his *Report*. Harris admitted that he left out more than 30 pages from his *Report* to achieve a “less voluminous size” (letter to E. C. Herrick, 24 Nov. 1841, Mayr Library). Flint restored the section on butterflies as originally written by Harris, adding nearly 33 printed pages to the *Treatise* (all or portions of pgs. 266–269, 272–278, 280–295, 298, and 302–306). The third edition incorporated 46 more butterfly taxa than previously.

This edition of the *Treatise*, with its attractive illustrations, was described as “magnificent” (Cady 1862, Hoyt 1862). Hinks (1862) declared, “No one need desire a more pleasing book for his library than Dr. Harris’s work in its present form.” One reviewer admired the color plates, claiming to perceive “the down on a butterfly’s wing” (Anon. 1862a). The plates evoked admiration from a popular magazine; “All creeping and flying things seem harmlessly swarming in vivid beauty of color over its pages. Such gorgeous moths we never saw before out of the flower-beds, and there are some butterflies and caterpillars reposing here and there between the leaves that must have slipped in and gone to sleep on a fine warm day in July” (Anon. 1862b). Not everyone, however, was happy with the illustrations. The Ohio lepidopterist Eugene Pilate described the wood cut engravings as “very poor, coarse, indistinct, confused, and Black indeed” (letter to H. Strecker, 23 Dec. 1874, Field Mus. Nat. His.). Such criticism notwithstanding, an entire section of the whimsical book *Catoninetales* (Linton 1891) was based on this edition of the *Treatise*; “It is that insect Harris book, Ma said, the nasty insect book put maggots in your head. . . The more curious may look in this book for private circulation ‘Of the Insects injurious to vegetation’.” Harris’ work had finally reached beyond farmers and entomologists, earning recognition within trendy society.

The publication of the third edition of the *Treatise* was complicated. Brown (1975) recognized multiple issues, but this notion was rejected by Gatrell (2002). Although some details remain obscure, additional evidence exposes a complex production history that embraces at least five issues and numerous reprintings.



Progress on the third edition of the *Treatise* was considered “satisfactory” by 5 January 1861 (Andrew 1861). It was in press and expected to be issued during the ensuing summer. It was delayed, however, until early January 1862 when copies were “nearly ready for delivery” (Flint 1861, Andrew 1862). Harris’ widow, Catherine H. Harris, filed the copyright before the title pages were printed in 1862. This edition was available by 22 January 1862 (Flint 1862), which is tentatively adopted as the publication date.

Initial copies of the third edition were, by law, gratuitously distributed to every town in Massachusetts, as well as all agricultural and horticultural societies in the state. This was intended to bring the book “within the reach of most farmers who desire to possess it” (Flint 1862). Flint referred to this first issue as the “edition for the Commonwealth,” but it was also known as the State Edition (Harris 1862a, French 1862, Brown 1975). These copies were elaborately bound in dark brown embossed cloth with the state seal of Massachusetts on the spine. In February 1862 the Massachusetts Legislature determined how the copies would be distributed (Massachusetts 1862). Among the many recipients was the Boston Society of Natural History, who received 15 copies a few days later (Scudder 1862). Twenty-five copies were given to the legal representatives of T. W. Harris (Massachusetts 1861c). I possess a neatly rebound presentation copy that was inscribed in 1864 by “C. Harris” (probably Catherine Harris or her son, Charles Harris) to William Minot, a prominent Boston attorney.

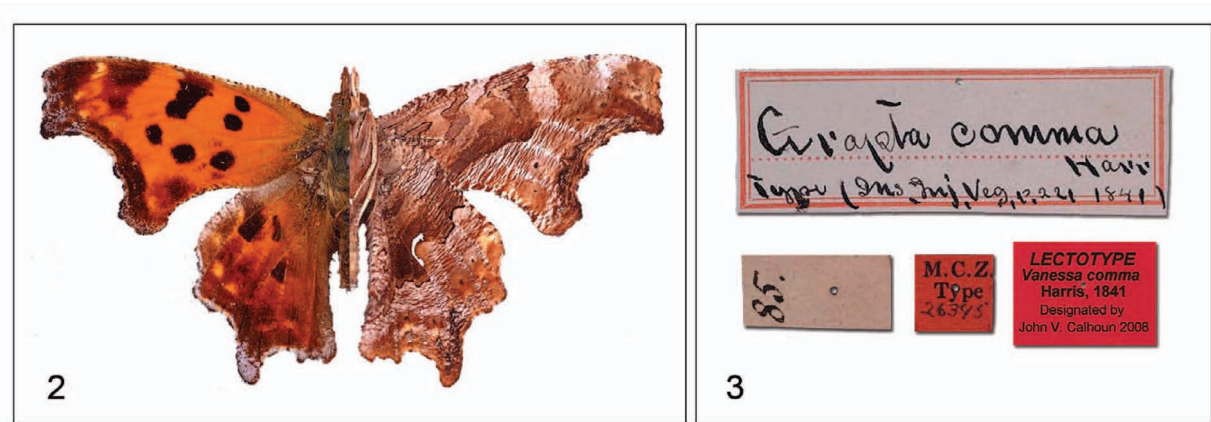
Pending the success of the first issue, the Massachusetts Legislature made provisions in April 1861 to authorize the printing of additional issues “for the benefit of the heirs of the late Dr. Harris, but without any further expense to the Commonwealth” (Massachusetts 1861c). The anticipated popularity of the State Edition prompted C. L. Flint to amend the original preface in January 1862 to announce the publication of “one or more editions designed for a wider circulation than that for the State can be expected to have” (Harris 1862a). In this case, Flint used the term “editions” to denote slightly different versions, or issues, of the same book.

Issues of the third edition that were designed for wider circulation were collectively recognized as the Flint Edition (see Banks 1900). Flint altered the title to include references to the added text and illustrations. A limited issue was initially made available to Flint expressly for private circulation (Harris 1862b). Issues for general release (Harris 1862c) included early copies that were printed on premium paper that sold for \$6.00 each (Hoyt 1862). A more affordable issue was available

by May 1862, offered with uncolored or colored plates for \$2.50 and \$3.50, respectively (Cady 1862, French 1862, Hoyt 1862). This issue was hugely popular. Although the Governor of Massachusetts had stated that the book would “not be reproduced for another twenty years” (Andrew 1862), the later issue of the Flint Edition was reprinted by four different publishers in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. New impressions appeared in 1862, 1863, 1869, 1880, 1883, 1884, and 1890. The publishers were commended for reprinting the book without alteration ([Walsh & Riley] 1869). Copies were bound in tooled boards of green, brown, burgundy, or blue cloth, with an image of the moth *Eumorphia achemon* (Drury) on the cover, based on the engraving for Plate V, fig. 3 in the book. This issue is the most common incarnation of the *Treatise*.

**Confusion.** Because of their complex publication histories, various aspects of the *Report* and *Treatise* were misconstrued. Some authors (e.g. [Dillaway] 1842, Hagen 1862, Drake 1872, Dyar 1902) provided incorrect dates of publication. Others treated the *Report* and *Treatise* as a single series, confusing the editions and even alluding to a “4th edition” (Osten-Sacken 1878, Strecker 1878, Holland 1898, Gatrell 2002). The State of Massachusetts (e.g. 1851a, 1862b) casually referred to the *Treatise* as the “Report,” which may explain why the cover of the second edition of the *Treatise* bore an improper title. More recently, the University of Michigan Library and Hard Press began offering print-on-demand copies of the third edition of the *Treatise* under the title of the second edition.

Mistakes also found their way into original description citations. Kirby (1871) and Beccaloni *et al.* (2003) wrongly attributed the descriptions of *T. humuli* and *V. comma* to the 1852 edition of the *Treatise*. Probably following Kirby (1871), Scudder (1875) stated that *V. comma* “was not named until 1852.” Perhaps the result of a typesetting error, Morris (1862) attributed the description of *V. comma* to 1842, rather than 1841. This error proved pervasive. The description of *V. comma* was attributed to 1842 in subsequent checklists and catalogs by Strecker (1878), Skinner (1898), Dyar (1902), dos Passos (1964), Miller & Brown (1981, 1983), Ferris (1989), Opler & Warren (2002, and later editions), and Pelham (2008). Most authors correctly attributed the description of *T. humuli* to 1841. In his bibliography of original descriptions, Bridges (1984) expressly recorded “Harris 1841” for *T. humuli* and “Harris 1842” for *V. comma*. Countless other publications have unwittingly reiterated this error. The correct citations for these taxa should read as follows: *Thecla humuli* Harris, 1841, Rpt. Ins. Mass. Inj. Veg.:215–216; *Vanessa comma* Harris, 1841, Rpt. Ins.



FIGS. 2–3. Lectotype of *Vanessa comma*. **2**, dorsal (left) and ventral aspects. **3**, associated labels, including the “type” label by C. W. Johnson. Images courtesy MCZ

Mass. Inj. Veg.:221.

***Vanessa comma*.** Harris (1841) did not suggest a type locality for *V. comma*. Miller & Brown (1981) proposed “New England,” but the description of *V. comma* in the *Report* makes Massachusetts a more suitable choice. Pelham (2008) suggested “Massachusetts” for this reason. Moreover, all the new descriptions of butterflies that appeared in the *Report* and *Treatise* were derived from a manuscript on the insects of Massachusetts (Calhoun 2007). Unless another (or more specific) type locality was suggested by Harris, all such taxa should tentatively be attributed to Massachusetts.

Referring to *V. comma*, Harris (1841) wrote, “The butterflies appear first in the beginning of May; I have obtained them from the chrysalids in the middle of July, and on the first of September.” These records presumably correspond to three male specimens and one pupal exuvia of *Polygonia comma* in the T. W. Harris insect collection, MCZ. One of these specimens is a ventral mount and another currently has a detached right forewing. Although all three specimens lack data, Harris documented them in his “Index Lepidopterum,” a manuscript catalog that is also preserved in MCZ. Harris numbered his specimens in accordance with the entries in his “Index.” His entry for *V. comma* (no. 85) lists records for “Sept. 1, 1827,” “May 1, 1828,” “from pupa July 15, [18]29,” and “Sept. 10, 1841.” Given that Harris supposedly possessed three specimens prior to 1841, I did not assign the latter record to any of the surviving specimens. Although Harris (1841) implied that his specimen from 1 September was obtained ex-pupa, he made no mention of this in his “Index,” and there is only one pupal exuvia in his collection. The specimen with a detached right forewing probably served as the model for the illustration of *P. comma* on

Plate IV of the third edition of the *Treatise*.

Unlike Boisduval & Le Conte (1829–[1837]), who believed that specimens of the then undescribed *P. comma* were applicable to the Old World butterfly *Polygonia c-album* (L.), Harris wrestled with the identity of his *Polygonia* specimens for many years. As early as 1826, he and the naturalist Nicholas M. Hentz discussed the likelihood that the “American butterfly is a distinct species” from *P. c-album* (letter from Hentz, 1 January 1826, Mayr Library; Scudder 1869). In his “Index,” Harris originally identified his specimens of *P. comma* as “Progne?” (i.e. *Polygonia progne* (Cramer)). Harris also identified them as *Vanessa progne* among a series of small papers that he used in 1837 to record the species of North American butterflies in his collection (Mayr Library). He observed that these specimens were “certainly much like *c-album*,” but he made no allusions to another species of *Polygonia* except *P. interrogationis* (F.). Dates in his “Index” suggest that Harris became convinced that he possessed another species after August 1839 when he actually collected adults of *P. progne*. He then created a new entry in his “Index” for *progne*, noting that he “formerly confounded” this species with another, which he subsequently named *Vanessa comma*. Harris’ collection contains four adult specimens and two pupal exuviae of *P. progne*. Harris gave no localities in his “Index” for *P. comma* or *P. progne*, but he did not always record this information for specimens that he presumably collected in the vicinity of Boston, Massachusetts. When Harris obtained his specimens of *P. comma* during the 1820s, his field explorations were almost entirely confined to the vicinity of Milton, Massachusetts where he resided (Elliott 2008).

Harris’ Latin name, *comma*, reflects his proposed English name of “Comma Butterfly,” derived from the

silvery comma-shaped markings on the ventral hindwings of the adult insect (Harris 1841). This name has its roots in England, where *P. c-album* has been known as the “Comma” since the early 18th century (Salmon 2000). The English naturalist Philip H. Gosse was the first to apply this name to the North American species, referring to the then undescribed *P. comma* as the “Orange Comma” (Gosse 1840). This name may have influenced Harris, who received a copy of Gosse’s book from Edward Doubleday in 1840 (letter from Doubleday, 27 May 1840, Mayr Library). Coincidentally, Millard (1821) created the name *Papilio comma alba* for *P. c-album*, and Rennie (1832) proposed the genus *Comma* for the same species. Harris, who had limited access to European publications, probably was unaware of these earlier names.

Pinned next to the best dorsal specimen of *P. comma* in the Harris collection is a large handwritten ink label that reads, “*Grapta comma* / Harr / Type (Ins. Inj. Veg. p. 221 1841)” (Figs. 2, 3). Fifty-five similar red-bordered labels are found in the Harris butterfly collection. Most are determination labels, but some also denote “type” specimens of taxa that were described by Harris. Careful inspection revealed that none were written by Harris, nor were they prepared during his lifetime. For example, one label refers to the genus *Mitoura* Scudder, which was proposed sixteen years after Harris’ death. I was able to identify the authors of these labels using other labels in the MCZ insect collection, as well as several handwritten letters and documents. It is very important to understand the provenance of labels to avoid misconceptions about the status of historical specimens.

The T. W. Harris insect collection arrived at MZC in 1941 (Darlington 1941). It was previously in the possession of the BSNH after being purchased in 1858 from Harris’ widow, Catherine Harris ([Binney] 1859, Creed 1930). Samuel H. Scudder (1837–1911) served as Curator of the BSNH entomological collections from 1859 to 1870 (Bouvé 1880). Although Scudder “revised and arranged” the Harris butterfly collection in 1870 (Scudder 1871), none of the existing labels are in his hand, nor is the nomenclature consistent with his published writings. During the period 1876–1892, Samuel Henshaw (1852–1941) served as a general assistant in the BSNH museum (Hyatt 1900, Wade & Hyslop 1941). Henshaw worked up to “seven hours daily” with the Harris collection and other insects in the BSNH, chores that included “naming and labeling” (Hyatt 1877, Bouvé 1880, Henshaw 1895). Writing about Harris’ specimens of Hemiptera in 1878, Henshaw indicated that he was attempting to “finish the arrangement of the collection” (fair copy letter to P. R.

Uhler, 16 April 1878, Mayr Library). Based on the handwriting in two of Henshaw’s letters from 1878, he created 41 of the large determination labels for butterflies in the Harris collection. The nomenclature is consistent with Edwards (1877), thus these labels were probably prepared around 1880.

The remaining 14 determination and type labels, including that of *Grapta comma* (Fig. 3), were prepared by Charles W. Johnson (1863–1932), who was Curator of Insects and Mollusks at the BSNH from 1903 until his death. Johnson’s label calligraphy is very distinctive, something that Melander (1932) described as “neatly written.” In addition, the labels that Johnson employed for many of his own specimens of Diptera in the MCZ, with red dotted lines across their centers, match those in the Harris collection. Johnson possessed a “keen sense of curatorial duties,” resulting in a “methodical arrangement of specimens” (Brooks 1932). The Latin names that Johnson used suggest that he created at least some of the labels for Harris’ butterflies around 1925 when he published a catalog of the Diptera in the Harris collection (Johnson 1925). Labels by Henshaw and Johnson are also associated with other Harris specimens, as well as insects in the MCZ that were collected by the pioneer entomologist Thomas Say (1787–1834). Mawdsley (1993) wrongly credited Harris for some of these type labels.

Affixed to the “type” specimen of *V. comma* is a small red label that reads, “M.C.Z. / Type / 26345” (Fig. 3). Despite this label, all three of Harris’ specimens (syntypes) shared equal status as components of the name-bearing type (ICZN 1999, Art. 73.2). The “type” specimen (Fig. 2) is in good condition and represents the overwintering form, which is consistent with the original description in Harris (1841). To establish this specimen as the sole name-bearing type of *Vanessa comma* Harris, 1841, it is designated as the lectotype and labeled accordingly (Fig. 3). The type locality is suggested to be the vicinity of Milton, Massachusetts. Additional research is necessary to evaluate the status of other such “type” specimens of taxa described by Thaddeus W. Harris.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are extended to Philip D. Perkins (MCZ) for granting access to the T. W. Harris insect collection. Robert Young (Ernst Mayr Library, MCZ) allowed me to examine the Harris manuscripts and bestowed other valuable assistance. Ted Hansen supplied copies of documents from the Cambridge Historical Society (Cambridge, Massachusetts). Beverly Pope (Div. Plant Industry Library, Gainesville, Florida) helped to locate publications. Naomi Allen (State Library of Massachusetts), Richard Greene (National Museum of Natural History Library, Smithsonian Institution), Maureen Horn (Massachusetts Horticultural Society), Tracy Potter (Massachusetts Historical Society), and librarians of the Library of Congress assisted in searching for



books and documents. David M. Wright alerted me to the existence of the "Index Lepidopterum." Finally, I thank David Wright and an anonymous reviewer for commenting on than manuscript.

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*Received for publication 5 June 2008; revised and accepted 3 February 2009.*