James Madison Harvey was born on September 21, 1833, near Salt Sulphur Springs (Monroe County), Virginia, now part of West Virginia; son of Thomas Harvey, a farmer, and Mary Walker Harvey, 4 brothers; educated at common and select schools in Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa and trained as a surveyor and civil engineer; military experience in Civil War, captain, also brigadier general in state militia; married Charlotte Richardson Cutter, 1854, 4 sons and 5 daughters, all born in Riley County; died 15 April 1894, of Bright's disease, at his farm home near Vinton; buried in Highland Cemetery, Junction City.

James Madison Harvey was the first Kansas governor to serve two full terms and the first to serve in the United States Senate. He was also the first to occupy the capitol, moving into the newly completed east wing early in his first term. During all four years as governor, Harvey lived at the Tefft House at Seventh and Kansas Avenue, while his wife, Charlotte, stayed at the Harvey farm near Vinton most of the time.

When living in Adams County, Illinois, Harvey had joined a party heading west, lured by the stories of the Pike's Peak gold strike. His caravan met so many disappointed miners that near Fort Kearney, Nebraska, he turned back to Riley County, Kansas, where he got a
preemption claim near Vinton, now within the borders of the Fort Riley military reservation. He earned money to pay for his claim by teaching school, quarrying rock, and driving freight wagons. He added to his land after he became a full-time farmer-rancher.

Originally a Whig, Harvey was a Republican by the time he settled in Kansas. He was elected to the state house of representatives (1865–66) and to the senate (1867–69). In 1868 he was nominated for governor by the Republican state convention, and he won with 29,795 votes against the 13,881 received by George Washington Glick, the Democratic candidate. He was reelected in 1870 with 40,667 votes; his opponents were Isaac Sharp, Democrat, who garnered 20,496 votes, and the Workingman candidate W. R. Laughlin, who won 108 votes from two southeastern counties.

The Republican party worked harmoniously during Harvey’s two administrations. Two early issues involved claims filed as a result of Indian raids and land conflicts in southeastern Kansas. Additional business included settling the claims from the Civil War raid of Sterling Price; replenishing the military and contingency funds; strengthening bribery laws; creating new judicial districts; and establishing new counties, one of which was named Harvey. Although Kansas voters failed to approve suffrage for black males in 1867, the state legislature in 1869 made Kansas the first state to ratify the Fifteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. New state institutions and a reorganized State Board of Agriculture were other accomplishments of Harvey’s administrations.

“Old Honesty” Harvey—a nickname he carefully guarded—did not seek a third term but retired instead to his Riley County farm in Vinton. When Alexander Caldwell resigned as United States senator, Harvey was elected to fill that post by the state legislature on 2 February 1874 to serve until 3 March 1877. He spent three years in the early 1880s in New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, and Nevada as a government surveyor. Then, seeking a milder climate, he moved his family back to Virginia for six years but returned in 1890 to his Vinton farm. Although he did leave again the following year to work as a government surveyor in the Oklahoma panhandle, the Vinton site remained his home until his death.
REFERENCES: Carlin and Richmond, 1982; Crawford, 1911; Knauer, 1953; Riley County Genealogical Society, 1976.