



Gene news

“A PEOPLE WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE OF ITS HISTORY, IS LIKE A TREE WITHOUT ROOTS” ~ MARCUS GARVEY

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A Message from the President:

A Historic Moment

History is a rich, ever-changing fabric woven by stories and experiences that move us, inspire us, and ultimately change us forever. History occurred in 2008-2009 with the election of Barack Obama as president of the United States. Your oral and written history should evolve around those moments with questions such as: how you were involved in the election process, what were your thoughts as you watched the election results and where were you, how did you feel after Obama was declared the winner of the election, where were you on January 20th and what went through your mind as he took the oath of office? Was there one thing about the election you absolutely can't forget? These are examples of questions that could assist you in writing your history about the election of Barack Obama and what it meant to your family.

~ Robert Scott, President

Grandison

Grandison Harris, a Gullah Slave, was 36 year old when he was purchased from an auction block in Charleston, SC. He was purchased by the dean of the Medical College of Georgia in 1852 for \$700. Grandison's "job" was to obtain cadavers for the College.

He got the freshly buried bodies from the Colored Cemetery (Cedar Grove). He was dubbed "The Resurrection Man". Grandison studied the way people laid a grave out and how the flowers were arranged. He memorized where everything was placed so that when he removed the body, he would be able to restore the grave to look exactly like it did before he touched it.

Grandison was allowed to make frequent visits to see his wife in Charleston, SC. The railroad fare, round trip, between Augusta and Charleston was \$12. In 1858 the College purchased Grandison's wife and son for \$1250. This way the College saved money, but also had Grandison always at hand.

Grandison was a flashy dresser. He wore a Panama straw hat in the spring and summer and a derby in the winter. On Sunday he wore a boutonniere in his lapel. He gave elaborate parties, copying the style of party-giving he saw when he worked at parties given by the college faculty.

Grandison was also granted many privileges. He was taught to dissect cadavers, the nature of the human body, and embalming techniques. Grandison became very proficient at anatomy instruction and dissection. He became an "unofficial teaching assistant". He was in the lab with the students, showing and instructing them. Students were told that Grandison held an honorary doctor's degree. The college employees and students were fond of Grandison. It is said Black people considered him the first black doctor at the college.

After the Civil War and emancipation, Grandison, now "free" moved to Hamburg, SC where he became a judge in the "carpetbagger" regime. When Reconstruction ended, he returned to the Medical College of Georgia as a full-time employee earning \$8 a month. In 1895 he was promoted to "janitor" earning \$15 a month during the school year and \$10 a month at other times of the year. His son was hired as his assistant. They worked as a team for 6 years. As Grandison became older his son took on more and more of his father's responsibilities. When Grandison retired, his son George was retained as janitor.

On January 21, 1905, Grandison Harris was granted a pension of \$10 a month. His last public appearance at the school was in 1908. He returned to lecture students on the practice and perils of resurrection. Grandison Harris died in 1911 and is buried in Cedar Grove Cemetery.

This story was submitted by Pat Clark. On a visit to Augusta, GA, I learned that Grandison Harris was a relative of mine.

