

# Virginia M. *Ellison Goodwin* Durant

Birth: Mar. 10, 1861  
South Carolina, USA  
Death: Jan. 6, 1948  
Salem  
Marion County  
Oregon, USA

Virginia's cremated remains were not initially taken after her death and were available at the Oregon State Hospital to be claimed by anyone who is related. Her ashes were claimed by a cousin 5 x removed.

Virginia was an African American born in 1861 in South Carolina to Reuben Ellison and his slave Hannah. Reuben (born 12/10/1821) and Hanna (born about 1831) were both born in South Carolina. Reuben's father was William "April" Ellison, a free black man and former slave. William's father was his white slave owner. Some researchers say Reuben was born into slavery and others say he was born free since his mother had already been freed before Reuben was born.

According author Larry Koger in *Black Slaveowners: Free Black Slave Masters in South Carolina, 1790-1860*, (1985) the Ellison family were the only black people to hold slaves in the Sumter district from 1830-1865. Reuben's father had a very lucrative cotton gin business. On the 1850 slave schedule William reported owning 37 slaves. (At the peak he owned over 60 slaves and 1000 acres.) His sons Reuben, Henry and William, Jr. also owned teenage female slaves at that time. Reuben's only slave was 19 year old Hannah.

Reuben first married free black woman Harriet Ann Bonneau but after her death in 1853 he began having children by his slave Hannah. First there was Diana in 1853, then Susan (about 1855), then Marcus (1858), John (1860) and Virginia in 1861. Reuben's father died in 1861 and his sons took over the cotton gin business.

A *History of the American Negro, South Carolina Edition* edited by A. B. Caldwell (1919) indicates "Reuben Harrison Ellison, was a gin and wheel wright. He married Hannah Goodwine, who was then a slave. Her husband purchased her freedom.... Hannah Goodwine was a daughter of Marcus and Susan Goodwine who were brought direct from Africa and purchased by the Reese Estate at Statesburg."

If Hannah was indeed free at the time of Virginia's birth, Virginia would have been born free. If not, she would have been a slave because of her mother's slave status. *Black Masters: A Free Family of Color in the Old South* By Michael P. Johnson, James L. Roark (1984) reports there is no evidence that Virginia and her siblings were born free.

Wikipedia indicates Reuben and his brothers supported the Confederacy and tried to enlist, but were refused because of their race. They donated money, bought Confederate bonds, and were made destitute by the end of the war. In Koger's book he reported Reuben died in May 1864. Others report he died in 1861.

In the census of 1880 Virginia (age 20) and her sisters Sarah (17) & Susan (24) were living with their mother Hannah Goodwin (47) in Statesburg, Sumter County, South Carolina. All four women were farm laborers and used the name Goodwin. With them were 3 girls: Lily, Hannah's 8 year old daughter as well as 6 year old Hanna and 1 year old Susan who were Hannah Goodwin's grand daughters. Because of their placement on the list it is believed these girls were Virginia's nieces (daughter of her sister Susan).

Virginia first married about 1886. It is not known who her first husband was. Between 1910 and 1920 Virginia married a widowed life insurance agent from Sumter, Sumter County, South Carolina. His name was William P. Durant (spelled with no e). He had several children by his previous marriage. He was born in South Carolina about 1865. His parents were also born in South Carolina.

In the census of 1920, Virginia lived in Sumter, South Carolina with William. They were listed in this

census as mulatto.

In the 1930 census Virginia was listed as a roomer living a a rooming house on Russell Street in Portland, Oregon. Nine of the 12 residents were African Americans. Virginia was not employed at that time and indicated she was married although her husband was not living with her. She was listed in the Portland city directory in 1931 and 1934 without William. During the 1940 census Virginia was 79 and lived on N. Larrabee in Portland with a lodger. Virginia had no occupation and she listed herself as a widow. She was listed in the Portland city directory of 1940 as the widow of William P. Durant, living on Larrabee St.

On 9/1/1945 she was admitted to the Oregon State Hospital, a residential facility in Salem, Oregon for the treatment of people with mental illness. After living there for 2 1/2 years she died of high blood pressure effecting her heart and kidneys.

Because her married name was most frequently spelled Durant and her husband's name was always spelled Durant, that is the spelling used here although her death certificate, the Oregon cremains list and the 1940 census spell it Durante.

Family links:

Parents:

[Reuben Ellison \(1821 - \\_\\_\\_\\_\\_\)](#)

Burial:

Cremated, Ashes given to family or friend.

Maintained by: [Phyllis \(Porter\) Zegers](#)

Originally Created by: [jessicado](#)

Record added: May 05, 2011

Find A Grave Memorial# 69403731