

Reuben Ellison

Birth: Dec. 10, 1821
South Carolina, USA
Death: unknown
South Carolina, USA

According to the book *Black Masters: A Free Family of Color in the Old South* by Michael P. Johnson, James L. Roark (1984), Reuben is the only member of the Ellison family buried in this cemetery without a marker.

He was the son of William "April" Ellison, a former slave and free black man. Reuben's paternal grandfather was the white slave owner of William. According to the Wikipedia page for Reuben's father, Reuben was a free black person after his father purchased the freedom of Reuben, his mother (Matilda) and his brothers. Other indications from Johnson & Roark are that his father had purchased Matilda before Reuben was born so Reuben was actually born free.

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 lucrative cotton gin business. On the 1850 slave schedule William reported owning 37 slaves. (At the peak he owned 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 started having children by his slave Hannah. First there was Diana in 1853, then Susan (about 1855), next 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... married Hannah Goodwine, who was then a slave. Her husband purchased her freedom, however.... Hannah Goodwine was a daughter of Marcus and Susan Goodwine who were brought direct from Africa and purchased by the Reese Estate at Statesburg." Johnson & Roark (1984) report there is no evidence that Reuben's children were 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.

Family links:

Parents:

[William Holmes Ellison \(1790 - 1861\)](#)

[Matilda Ellison \(1764 - 1850\)](#)

Spouse:

[Harriett Ann Bonneau Ellison \(1821 - 1853\)*](#)

Children:

[Viriginia M. Ellison Goodwin Durant \(1861 - 1948\)*](#)

Siblings:

[Aliza Ann Ellison Buckner Johnson \(1750 - 1820\)*](#)

[William Holmes Ellison \(1819 - 1904\)*](#)

Reuben Ellison (1821 - ____)

*Calculated relationship

Burial:

[Ellison Cemetery](#)

Sumter

Sumter County

South Carolina, USA

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

Record added: Oct 17, 2014

Find A Grave Memorial# 137385116