

Last Updated 01-16-2026

# **OUR BENJAMIN HARRISON FAMILY HISTORY AUDIO BOOK SUMMARY**

Our Benjamin Harrison Family History. The purpose of this brief history is to trace Benjamin's life within the Harrison family, beginning with the origins of our family in Brunswick County, Virginia and moving forward through Benjamin's childhood, marriage, parenthood, and death. This brief history will highlight his mother Sarah Jane Harrison's role as family matriarch and explain the everyday world that Benjamin and his siblings lived in during the social, racial, and economic period of the 1800s and early 1900s in Southside Virginia. To build this narrative, I will introduce the family's early presence in Brunswick County and the development of communities such as Powellton and Ante, where the Harrisons lived and farmed. The narrative will then follow Benjamin across time using U.S. federal census schedules, Virginia vital records, and land records, tracing him from a young boy in his great-grandmother Phoebe Harrison's household to a farmer, husband, and father, and finally to his death and burial in 1931. The research records, combined with county history and family oral tradition, will create a chronological framework that connects the formation of the counties

where the family lived to the full span of Benjamin Harrison's life. The narrative begins with Research Using U.S. Federal Census and Vital Records. U.S. federal census records often contain incorrect ages, birthdates, spellings, and even race or relationship details because the information was given orally and written down by census takers who sometimes misheard, guessed, or had limited spelling and literacy skills. These records are valuable but should be treated as approximate, especially for dates. More precise information about a person's birth date, birthplace, and parents is often confirmed by vital records, particularly death certificates, which usually report an exact date of birth and death and sometimes the parents' names, making them an important source for correcting or verifying errors found in census entries. Next I will discuss Brunswick County, Virginia Formation. Brunswick County, Virginia, was created in 1720 out of Prince George County and was named for the German Duchy of Brunswick-Lüneburg, a title held by Britain's Hanoverian kings. Early English settlement centered around Fort Christanna (established 1714) as a trading post and school for Indigenous children. The fort only operated a few years before colonial officials withdrew support. The Indian school lost backing by 1717, and the Virginia House of Burgesses ordered the fort abandoned; the schoolmaster, Charles Griffin, left soon after to teach at the College of William and Mary. By 1718 the fort was no longer maintained as a defensive post, and organized schooling at the site had ceased, though limited trading activity with Native peoples continued for a few more years. The county seat, Lawrenceville, was officially established in 1814 and developed into a small market and railroad town serving the surrounding agricultural region, known especially for tobacco farming. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Brunswick County saw growth with the arrival of the railroad, the rise of commercial agriculture, and the founding of Saint Paul's Normal and Industrial School which was later known as Saint Paul's College, an important educational institution for Black students. The story

of St. Paul's College in Lawrenceville, Brunswick County, Virginia. Founded on September 24, 1888, in Lawrenceville, Brunswick County, Virginia, by the Reverend James Solomon Russell of the Protestant Episcopal Church as a school for Black students that combined Christian education, teacher training, and industrial/vocational work. Over time it grew from a small normal and industrial school into a four-year college, eventually known as Saint Paul's College, and remained an important historically Black institution of higher learning in Southside Virginia. Saint Paul's College closed primarily because of long-term financial instability and the resulting loss of accreditation. Its regional accreditor, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, stripped the college of accreditation in 2012 for problems including inadequate financial resources, lack of institutional effectiveness, too few faculty with terminal degrees, and overall lack of financial stability. Enrollment had fallen to about 150 students, the school carried millions of dollars in debt, and a planned merger with Saint Augustine's University collapsed, leaving the board of trustees to vote to close the college effective June 30, 2013. Now I will discuss Brunswick County, Virginia Districtics. Brunswick County, Virginia, is divided into five magisterial (election) districts: Meherrin, Powellton, Red Oak, Sturgeon, and Totaro. These districts are used for representation on the county Board of Supervisors and for organizing local elections. The Powellton District encompasses the southeastern rural portion of the county, including tiny unincorporated communities like Ante (near the Greenville County line), Powellton itself (a crossroads populated place), and nearby spots such as Fitzhugh, Old Fitzhugh, Greentown, Wyche, and Triplet. This area has long been characterized by agriculture, timber, quiet farmlands, and scattered homes—classic of Southside Virginia's countryside. Our Harrison roots are founded in the Powellton District of Brunswick County, Virginia. Next I will discuss Brunswick County, Virginia Communities. Brunswick County, Virginia, has three

incorporated towns: Alberta, Brodnax, and Lawrenceville. Brunswick County, Virginia, includes three unincorporated rural communities— Ebony, Gasburg, and Warfield—that are treated like towns for statistical purposes but do not have their own municipal governments. Brunswick County, Virginia, is a rural Southside county characterized by many small, scattered settlements. Its 47 unincorporated communities are: Adsit, Ankum, Ante, Barrows Store, Brunswick, Callaville, Cedar Grove, Cochran, Colony Club, Concord, Cool Spring, Danielstown, Diamond Grove, Dolphin, Edgerton, Edmunds Store, Ezell, Fitzhugh, Fort Christanna, Freeman, Gholsonville, Grandy, Greentown, Hickory Run, Joyceville, Kress, Merchant, Meredithville, Naptha, Octagon, Old Fitzhugh, Ordsburg, Pea Hill Shores, Poarch Store, Powellton, Racume, Rawlings, Smoky Ordinary, Southside Shores, Sturgeonville, Tobacco, Totaro, Triplet, Valentines, Vote, Wesson, White Plains, and Wyche. Now that there is a basic understanding of how Brunswick County, Virginia, took shape and how its districts and communities are laid out, I will now share information on the life of Sarah Jane Harrison, the story of Benjamin Harrison’s birth, and the births of his siblings John, James, Samuel, Sallie, and Richard. Here’s information on the family book written by our cousin Larry Anthony Gillus. The book, *Sarah Jane, The Story of Mother is A Matriarch’s Story of Preservance*. As a young boy, the author Larry Anthony Gillus of the book, *Sarah Jane: The Story of Mother*, listened to his grandmother, Gertrude Harrison-Powell, tell stories about her maternal grandmother, Sarah Jane Harrison, and those memories inspired him to write a novel *Sarah Jane, The Story of Mother*, which began as a written account of his family lineage. Gertrude was the daughter of Sarah Elizabeth Harrison-Powell-Ellis-Merritt, who was the daughter of Sarah Jane Harrison. The Harrison family originally emigrated from England to Virginia in the seventeenth century and became known as one of the oldest and most prominent surnames in the state’s history. The name is associated with a signer

of the Declaration of Independence, a Revolutionary War soldier, and both the ninth and twenty-third presidents of the United States. However, this affluent, politically powerful Harrison line of northern Virginia was not the branch to which Sarah Jane Harrison of southern Virginia belonged. Sarah Jane Harrison, also known as Jane Harrison, was part of a different Harrison line in the nineteenth century, residing in southern Virginia along the Meherrin River alongside Native and African American neighbors. She and her family lived within a racially mixed community whose members, despite distinct cultures and strong individuality, embraced a shared national identity and cooperated in an atmosphere of mutual acceptance and support to pursue common aims. Sarah persevered in her struggle to support her small family of Anglo, African and Native Americans, living together as one people. Her story of a struggle and the vivid choices of one family in a time of great conflict. It is the story of a poor strong White woman and a strong Black family living in times of great difficulty. She was the mother to six children and the matriarch to an old American family. She chose good over bad and right over wrong in a struggle of survival. She accepted the challenge and endured the sacrifice to survive the racial hate and intolerance.

I will now share Harrison Family Birth Stories.

Here's Sarah's birth story. In May 1839, Biacca Jane Harrison gave birth to a White, baby girl. At the time, she was unmarried and living with her mother, Phoebe Harrison, on their farm in Brunswick County, Virginia. Sadly, Biacca passed away in 1840, before her daughter, Sarah Jane Harrison, reached her first birthday. The child's father was identified by the sheriff as John Hawkins, a white neighbor of Phoebe's. When John died, Sarah was left an orphan before her second birthday. The

County Court subsequently ordered the Overseer of the Poor to pay twenty dollars to Phoebe to help support and care for her granddaughter, Sarah Jane Harrison.

Here's John's birth story. In 1845, Phoebe hired Bob Malone, a free man of color, to work as a field laborer on the farm. He lived there with his daughter, Julia, whose freedom he had purchased. Sarah Jane helped care for Julia. At that time, Bob was unable to buy the freedom of his wife and son, James Malone. He was later able to purchase James freedom and they lived together in a small wooden cabin on the Harrison farm, while Julia stayed with Phoebe and Sarah in their cabin. Sarah grew up on the Harrison farm and often visited nearby farms and plantations to spend time with her friends who worked there, both free laborers and slaves. At fifteen, Sarah became pregnant and gave birth in October 1854 to a Mulatto baby boy, whom she named John Henry Harrison also known as John Henry Malone. Sarah had a relationship with James Malone, Bob Malone's son, as it was easy for her to see James while he worked on the farm with his father, and no one knew about their relationship. When Sarah became pregnant, most people assumed one of the local white boys was the father. Bob Malone, Julia Malone, and James Malone had to leave the area to protect themselves. The White people would have killed James if he had stayed and tried to be John's father. Phoebe recorded him as White on the birth certificate at the County Courthouse and did not identify the father. There was talk among the Harrison's cousins of Phoebe about Sarah being pregnant and her child being Mulatto. Many of their neighbors were family members who visited Phoebe with the local gossip while Sarah worked in the fields. The Malone family were respected people in the community. When John was older Sarah told him the story of his father and that he needed to find his family and meet his relatives. When the civil war broke out, Sarah lost connection with the Malone family.

Here's James' birth story. A slave girl named Jane Harrison was taken away from her family and sent to work as a housekeeper at the Harrison Common House in Brunswick County, Virginia. Phoebe's cousin James Harrison, a slave owner ran the Common House, which served meals, provided liquor, gambling, slave wrestling matches, political and social meetings, a place to meet mistresses and bring slave girls for pleasure. Jane became pregnant by her enslaver, James Harrison, and in May 1854, she gave birth to a Mulatto baby boy whom she named James. Overcome with guilt, James took the baby to his cousin, Phoebe Harrison, seeking freedom for the child and asking her to raise him. Phoebe's granddaughter, Sarah Jane Harrison, took on the role of the baby's mother. From time to time, James would send his slave Jane—the baby's real mother—to Phoebe's house with a basket of apples and to help out in the garden. She was told to stay for the day and return before nightfall. During those visits to the Harrison farm, Jane got the chance to spend time with her son, James Harrison. Jane Harrison and Sarah Jane Harrison became good friends. Most colored people accepted Sarah Jane Harrison, as a friend of Jane.

Here's Benjamin's birth story. In the Autumn of 1857 a local White preacher, Reverend Jones, from the parish church came to visit Phoebe on her farm. He was a friend of the Harrison family. He brought baby Benjamin Harrison to Phoebe to raise and Sarah Jane Harrison became his mother. He said the baby was an innocent White child and the church wanted him to grow up and become a Christian man in the community. Reverend Jones asked the church to help take care of the children. In Benjamin's teenage years Sarah had a heartfelt conversation about his birth. She told him that his biological parents both had the surname Harrison and were closely related — more than just cousins. Their relationship was considered improper and sinful by the church's standards. The man

responsible for Benjamin's conception was described as weak, cruel, and evil — he mistreated his wife and other children, and the church viewed his actions as deeply wrong. Benjamin wasn't interested in seeking out his biological parents and focused on making the best of the life he has been given, leaving the painful history behind.

Here's the story of a racially mixed family. Sarah was mother to 3 boys before her eighteenth birthday. Her grandmother Phoebe feared for the future of the small children and worried about Sarah having a bad reputation among some of the local White people. Sarah did not want her family to be divided by color or race. Sarah started instilling unity by calling herself and telling her children that they were "Mulatto" to emphasize their shared humanity. She defied rejection from the white community by identifying herself as a Mulatto woman and raising children with Black heritage. Despite being isolated, facing racism, and sexism, her resilient life blended Native, African, and Anglo-American cultures into a loving family.

Here's Samuel's birth story. In 1859, Sarah became pregnant again after a secret relationship with a farm worker. Sarah cared deeply for Sam's father, a tall Colored man with a gentle nature. She admired his handsome features and strong determination to succeed in life. She was both curious about him and flattered by his attention. He was generally accepted and even liked by many White people, yet they still felt uneasy and afraid of him because of who he was. At first she only observed him from a distance, but over time they slowly grew closer and eventually became a couple, even though their relationship had to remain secret as it was forbidden by the people around them. Sarah gave birth to a Mulatto baby boy in August 1859 and named him Samuel. His birth was recorded as Mulatto on the birth certificate at the County Courthouse and did not identify the father. Sarah did



not share the full story about Sam's father with him until he was a teenager, even though he had already heard rumors about his colored father. After Sam was born, Sarah asked his father to leave the area to protect them. Some of the local colored families still remembered the man and knew he had been forced to leave before the war. Sam also learned that, before the war began, his father had lived nearby for a time and then moved to the north.

Here's a brief history of the Civil War. The American Civil War was a four-year conflict (1861–1865) between the Northern Union and the Southern Confederacy, fought mainly over slavery and states' rights, that ended with Union victory and the abolition of slavery. It transformed the United States politically, socially, and economically, and remains the deadliest war in U.S. history. As part of Confederate Virginia, Brunswick County provided soldiers and resources to the Confederate army, and local life was shaped by wartime demands such as food production and supply needs. The wider Confederate economic collapse, made worse by Union blockades and military disruption, likely contributed to shortages and hardship for both citizens and enslaved people in rural counties like Brunswick County, Virginia. After the war, emancipation ended the legal institution of slavery in Brunswick County, forcing plantation owners and small farmers to reorganize their labor systems and marking a difficult, uneven transition for freed people seeking land, rights, and security.

Here's Sallie's birth story. Charles Smith was a young Quaker merchant who traveled by horse and wagon from the northern states, visiting farms across Virginia—particularly in the southside of Brunswick County—and parts of North Carolina during the autumn months. He sold tools, utensils, clothing, and other household goods to local farmers. Although Charles believed slavery was wrong,

he understood that it was a deeply ingrained part of southern life for most White people. In his free time, Charles enjoyed fishing and often spent his days by the ponds and creeks of the area. Over time, he, Sarah, and her boys began joining each other on fishing trips. During these outings, Charles would tell her stories about his travels to the northern cities. Sarah enjoyed his company, she admired him and they became lovers. Charles planned a trip to Pennsylvania to purchase new merchandise for the local farmers and invited Sarah to join him. She declined, unwilling to leave behind her grandmother Phoebe and the boys. Charles promised her he would return to the area within a few months. Sarah found herself pregnant and gave birth to a White baby girl that she named Sarah Elizabeth in October of 1861. Sarah Elizabeth was also called Sallie. Charles did not know about the baby. Sallie's birth was recorded as White on the birth certificate at the County Courthouse and her father was not identified. Charles never came back to Sarah Jane Harrison and she didn't know what happened to him. During the civil war Sarah and Jane worked the family farm to produce food and other crops for the Confederate Army. The southern farmers were forced to grow food to feed the Confederate troops fighting the Union forces. The local legend in Brunswick County and Greensville County, Virginia, says that Dry Bread Road earned its name during the Civil War, when hungry soldiers came seeking food and the community, having little to spare, often had only dry bread to offer them. Sarah continued to grow cotton and tobacco crops for the market. She kept all of her livestock, including several pigs and chickens in the yard near the old cabin.

Here's Richard's birth story. Sarah became the unexpected mother of a baby boy, during the civil war. She named him Richard. All of the children were born without a father being reported for the records at the County Courthouse. When Richard was a teenager, Sarah finally told him the story of his birth.

She had been working as a midwife when he was given to her as a newborn baby. Richard's mother was a White woman and his father was a Colored slave, and Sarah explained that he had been taken from his mother to protect him from his White grandfather, who would have killed him rather than accept his daughter's brown-skinned child. Sarah did not know his parents name, but his mother had some Harrison blood. Richard wondered about his white mother and the Negro slave finding some type of love with so much hate between white and black people. During the civil war they were fighting a war over the rights of colored people. Sarah felt that Richard was very fair skinned and could pass for white in the northern states. Richard had thought about moving away from Brunswick County and starting his life as a white man. A white man with no family history and no old friends. Richard decided to stay in the local area and continued to be with Sarah and the family on the farm near Ante. Richard married Fannie Daniel on Wednesday, March 4, 1885, in Brunswick County, Virginia. Fannie's parents were Lewis Daniel and Henrietta Stewart-Daniel. In 1906, Benjamin Harrison, Richard Harrison's brother, was named guardian of Richard's children in the deed recording the sale of 10 acres to Richard's niece, Alice Harrison-Banks, as part of the distribution of Sarah Jane Harrison's children's estate. In 1908, Richard sold his one-fifth share of his mother's 202-acre property to his brother Samuel Harrison for \$200, and the deed identified Richard as unmarried. Research on Richard Harrison and his children is still in progress. It is believed that Richard's wife may have died in childbirth, that relatives then became guardians of his children, and that he later sold his inherited share of his mother's land and moved to the north.

Now that you have an understanding of the birth stories. Let's go over The Harrison Family

Nicknames. Sarah Jane Harrison, was also known as Jane Harrison. John Henry Harrison, was also

known as John Henry Malone. James Harrison, was also known as Jim or Jimmie Harrison.

Benjamin Harrison, was also known as Ben or Bennie Harrison. Samuel Harrison, was also known as Sam or Sammie Harrison. Sarah Elizabeth Harrison-Powell-Ellis-Merritt, was also known as Sallie.

Richard Harrison, was also known as Rich Harrison.

It's time for a summary of Benjamin's descendants. Benjamin grew up on the small Harrison Farm in rural Ante, Brunswick County, Virginia with his siblings John, James, Samuel, Sallie, and Richard.

Benjamin Harrison appears in the 1860, 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, and 1930 U.S. Federal Census records for Brunswick County, Virginia. Unfortunately, most of the 1890 Census records were destroyed in a fire at the United States Department of Commerce building in Washington, D.C., on January 10, 1921. I am currently researching the 1920 U.S. Federal Census for more information on Benjamin. Benjamin and most of his siblings later married into other local families in the surrounding communities. Benjamin, along with his siblings John and Sallie, would reside and raise their children in Brunswick County, Virginia, while James, Samuel, and Richard resided and raised their families in Greensville County, Virginia. Benjamin married Mary Powell on Thursday, March 7, 1878, in Brunswick County, Virginia. Her father was not listed on the marriage record and her mother was Harriett Phipps. Benjamin's father was listed as Charles with no last name and his mother was listed as Jane known as Sarah Jane Harrison. Benjamin and Mary were the parents of eleven children: William H. Harrison, Dora Harrison-Banks, Daniel Harrison, Claudia Harrison-Pearson, Arthur Harrison, Mary Harrison-Powell, Vanderbilt Harrison, Marie Harrison-Daniels, Eddie Harrison, Gradie Harrison, and Harriet Harrison. Benjamin and Mary's son, William Henry Harrison, called Flint, first married Frances Green-Banks on Wednesday, February 14, 1906, in Greensville

County, Virginia. Frances was the daughter of Billy Williams and Susan Green. William filed for divorce from Frances on the grounds of desertion, and the court granted the divorce on Tuesday, June 12, 1928, in Brunswick County, Virginia. William later married his second wife, Maggie Brown, on Thursday, December 13, 1928, in Brunswick County, Virginia. Maggie was the daughter of Hillard Brown and Sis Brown. Benjamin and Mary's daughter, Dora Harrison, married Wyatt Banks on Wednesday, April 11, 1900, in Greensville County, Virginia. Wyatt was the son of Wyatt Banks Sr. and Frances Banks. Benjamin and Mary's son, Daniel Harrison, married Donia Easter. Donia was the daughter of William Easter and Jane Easter. Benjamin and Mary's daughter, Claudia Harrison, married William Henry Pearson on Sunday, December 11, 1904, in Brunswick County, Virginia. William was the son of Robert, called Bob, Pearson and Sylvia Reavis-Pearson. Benjamin and Mary's son, Arthur Harrison was married to Pearl Harrison. Benjamin and Mary's son, Vanderbilt Harrison, was married twice. His first wife was Gertrude Powell, and his second wife was Martha Easter-Cain. Vanderbilt and Martha were married on Saturday, June 23, 1934, in Brunswick County, Virginia. Martha was the daughter of Andrew Easter and Martha Easter. Benjamin and Mary's daughter, Marie Harrison, married George Daniels in Brunswick County, Virginia, on Wednesday, December 12, 1923. George was the son of Lewis Daniels and Henrietta Daniels. Benjamin and Mary's daughter, Mary Harrison, married a man with the surname Powell. They did not have any children. Benjamin and Mary's daughter, Henrietta Harrison, as well as their sons Eddie Harrison and Gradie Harrison, are still being researched.

The Death of Benjamin and Mary. Benjamin was able to read and write, in his lifetime he worked as a laborer and farmer, he owned his own farm and was listed as the head of his household living in the

Powellton District of Brunswick County, Virginia. Mary built her life alongside Benjamin as a wife, mother, grandmother, cook, washer, and midwife within the Harrison family and community. She delivered many children, and her name appears on relatives' birth records as Mary Harrison or Mollie Harrison of Ante, Virginia. The death of Mary. Mary Powell-Harrison died on Sunday, May 6, 1917, in Ante, Brunswick County, Virginia, from appendicitis complicated by general peritonitis, meaning a severely infected or ruptured appendix caused a widespread and ultimately fatal infection in her abdomen. This likely occurred when the inflamed appendix perforated, allowing bacteria to enter the abdominal cavity and inflame the abdominal lining, a life-threatening condition that can rapidly progress to sepsis and death without timely medical treatment. Her secondary condition was organic heart disease. Her date of birth was recorded as "Do not know." Her occupation was listed as cooking and washing, and her birthplace as Brunswick County, Virginia; her father was named as Buck Tatom, born in Brunswick County, Virginia, and her mother as Harriet Powell, also born in Brunswick County, Virginia. The information on her death record was reported by her husband, Benjamin Harrison of Ante, Virginia. After Mary's death Benjamin lived with his son, William Henry Harrison. The death of Benjamin. Benjamin died on Monday, March 16, 1931, in Ante, Brunswick County, Virginia, from his death record notes that he had no attending doctor. Benjamin had been ill for two or three years, and that old age was a contributory cause; no operation or autopsy was performed according to the death record. Benjamin was indicated as widowed, with his age at death 74-years-old. His occupation was listed as farmer, and his birthplace was given as Virginia; his father's name was listed as unknown, and his mother as Jane Harrison also known as Sarah Jane Harrison. The information on his death record was reported by his son, Vanderbilt Harrison, of Ante, Brunswick County, Virginia. The undertakers were listed H.W. Hall & Bro. of Emporia, Virginia. Benjamin was

buried in an unmarked grave in the Harrison Powell family cemetery located just off Brandy Creek Road in rural Ante, Brunswick County, Virginia. We are the descendants of Benjamin Harrison and this audio book was recorded in his remembrance. Here is the brief summary of the passing of Phoebe, Sarah, John, James, Benjamin, Samuel, Sallie, and Richard Harrison. Phoebe Harrison, the family's matriarch, passed away in 1865, leaving behind a legacy that would continue through her granddaughter, Sarah Jane Harrison. Sarah carried that legacy forward until her own passing in March 1905. She was laid to rest in the Harrison Powell family cemetery. Sarah's son, John Henry Harrison, also known as John Henry Malone, was the first of her children to pass away. He was buried by her in an unmarked grave. Years later, the passing of the Harrison brothers continued with James Harrison, who passed away on Thursday, June 27, 1929, in Greensville County, Virginia, at the age of seventy-seven. Less than two years later, on Monday, March 16, 1931, Benjamin Harrison passed away. The youngest brother, Samuel Harrison, lived on for another decade. Samuel passed away on Sunday, October 12, 1941, in Greensville County, Virginia. The three brothers—James, Benjamin, and Samuel—now rest beside one another in unmarked graves within the Harrison Powell family cemetery. Though their stones bear no names, their memory endures through family stories and the generations who continue to honor them. The burial of their brother, Richard Harrison, is unknown. Years later, their sister Sarah Elizabeth Harrison-Powell-Ellis-Merritt called Sallie, passed away on Sunday, November 11, 1956, in Ante, Brunswick County, Virginia. She was laid to rest in the Harrison Powell family cemetery. In this conclusion of the Benjamin Harrison Family Story. Benjamin's legacy continues through his 11 children and over 79 grandchildren, whose many descendants form a rich and wide-reaching family tree. Every person in this family today stands as living proof of Benjamin and Mary's legacy. Each child, grandchild, and future descendant carries a

piece of their story—whether through a surname, a family trait, a tradition, or the land and communities where they lived. Knowing our history matters because it restores names, faces, and lives of our ancestors. Learning about parents, grandparents, great grandparents, and more distant ancestors helps our younger generation to understand who they are and where they come from. It also builds pride, especially when the records show Black farmers who could read and write, women who worked as midwives, cooks, and caregivers, and families who owned or worked land and raised large households. Remembering family members who have passed on is a way of honoring their sacrifices and refusing to let them be forgotten. Each name—on a census, a death certificate, a marriage record, or a headstone—or even an unmarked grave like Benjamin’s in the Harrison Powell family cemetery, becomes a small act of remembrance and respect. For descendants, preserving and sharing this history is also a gift to those who come next. We are their descendants. When you, your children, and grandchildren look back at the charts, stories, and histories that trace Benjamin, Mary, their 11 children, and more than 79 grandchildren, you’ll see that we inherit more than just names—we inherit a sense of belonging, resilience, and a shared responsibility to carry our family story forward. Thank you for listening to the story of Benjamin Harrison. Please share this information with your family and plan to attend our next family reunion. You can find more details about the family reunion on our website—just type [sarahjaneharrisonfamily.com](http://sarahjaneharrisonfamily.com) into your browser. Be sure to join our Benjamin Harrison family contact list so you can stay updated on all the latest family news and events. A heartfelt thanks to our cousin, Larry Anthony Gillus, for the countless hours of research and devotion he invested in writing the novel *Sarah Jane: The Story of Mother*. Thanks to all the dedicated family history enthusiasts and genealogy researchers. And a special thanks to Ancestors, whose shared stories and memories that have been passed down through the



generations. THEY ARE REMEMBERED. Our family story continues with the lives and legacies of Benjamin and Mary’s descendants—that’s coming soon. This audio book was produced by Trinetta “Tarsha” Harrison using 11ElevenLabs.

# **OUR BENJAMIN HARRISON FAMILY RESEARCH REPORT SUMMARY**

## **Research Using U.S. Federal Census and Vital Records**

U.S. federal census records often contain incorrect ages, birthdates, spellings, and even race or relationship details because the information was given orally and written down by census takers who sometimes misheard, guessed, or had limited spelling and literacy skills. These records are valuable but should be treated as approximate, especially for dates. More precise information about a person’s birth date, birthplace, and parents is often confirmed by vital records, particularly death certificates, which usually report an exact date of birth and death and sometimes the parents’ names, making them an important source for correcting or verifying errors found in census entries (U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, 2022).

## **Research Using Brunswick and Greenville County Land Records**

Benjamin once received 33 acres of land in the Powellton District of Brunswick County, Virginia, as an inheritance from his mother, Sarah Jane Harrison; this property is listed as Map Number 76-26.

#### Brunswick County, VA - Land Ownership Records and Maps

<https://brunswick.southsidegis.org>

*Instructions: open the link, click on “OK”. click on “**Parcel Search**”, click on “**Search by map, insert, dbl cir, lot, subplot**”, use the dropdown under Query criteria for “**Page is**” select the number **76**, use the scroll bar to scroll down to locate “**Lot is**” select the number **26**, and then click on “**Apply**”. You will see information for Benjamin Harrison. **Click on the map for more details.***

#### Greensville County, VA - - Land Ownership Records and Maps

<https://www.webgis.net/va/greensville>

### **Brunswick County, Virginia Formation**

Brunswick County, Virginia, was created in 1720 out of Prince George County and was named for the German Duchy of Brunswick-Lüneburg, a title held by Britain’s Hanoverian kings. Early English settlement centered around Fort Christanna (established 1714) as a trading post and school for Indigenous children. The fort only operated a few years before colonial officials withdrew support. The Indian school lost backing by 1717, and the Virginia House of Burgesses ordered the fort abandoned; the schoolmaster, Charles Griffin, left soon after to teach at the College of William and

Mary. By 1718 the fort was no longer maintained as a defensive post, and organized schooling at the site had ceased, though limited trading activity with Native peoples continued for a few more years (County of Brunswick, Virginia, n.d.).

The county seat, Lawrenceville, was officially established in 1814 and developed into a small market and railroad town serving the surrounding agricultural region, known especially for tobacco farming. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Brunswick County saw growth with the arrival of the railroad, the rise of commercial agriculture, and the founding of Saint Paul's Normal and Industrial School (later Saint Paul's College), an important educational institution for Black students (County of Brunswick, Virginia, n.d.).

### **St. Paul's College in Lawrenceville, Brunswick County, Virginia**

Founded on September 24, 1888, in Lawrenceville, Brunswick County, Virginia, by the Reverend James Solomon Russell of the Protestant Episcopal Church as a school for Black students that combined Christian education, teacher training, and industrial/vocational work. Over time it grew from a small normal and industrial school into a four-year college, eventually known as Saint Paul's College, and remained an important historically Black institution of higher learning in Southside Virginia. Saint Paul's College closed primarily because of long-term financial instability and the resulting loss of accreditation. Its regional accreditor, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), stripped the college of accreditation in 2012 for problems including inadequate financial resources, lack of institutional effectiveness, too few faculty with terminal degrees, and overall lack of financial stability. Enrollment had fallen to about 150

students, the school carried millions of dollars in debt, and a planned merger with Saint Augustine's University collapsed, leaving the board of trustees to vote to close the college effective June 30, 2013).

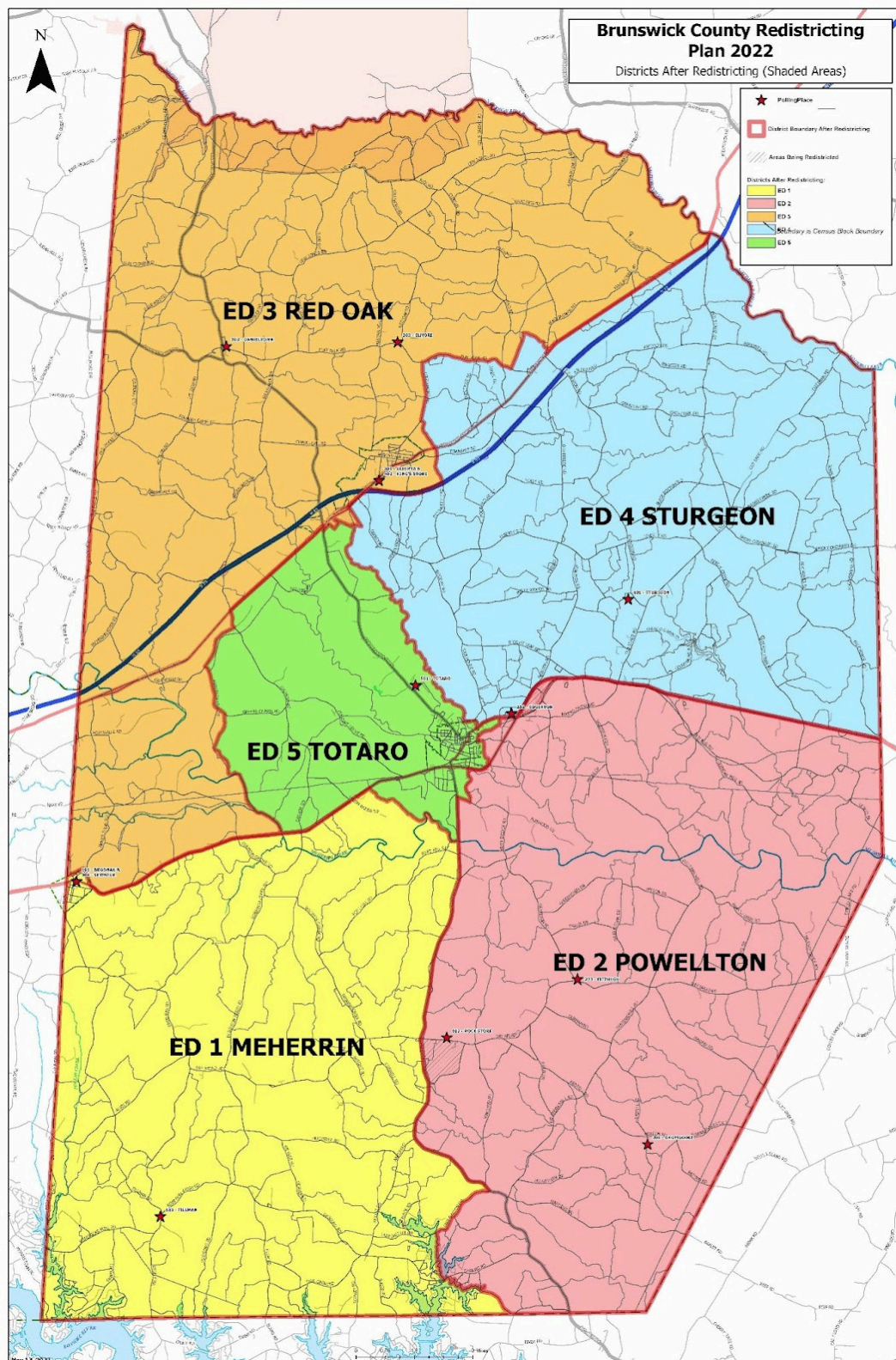
## **Brunswick County, Virginia Communities**

Brunswick County, Virginia, has three incorporated towns: Alberta, Brodnax, and Lawrenceville. Brunswick County, Virginia, includes three unincorporated rural communities—Ebony, Gasburg, and Warfield—that are treated like towns for statistical purposes but do not have their own municipal governments. Brunswick County, Virginia, is a rural Southside county characterized by many small, scattered settlements. Its 47 unincorporated communities are: Adsit, Ankum, Ante, Barrows Store, Brunswick, Callaville, Cedar Grove, Cochran, Colony Club, Concord, Cool Spring, Danielstown, Diamond Grove, Dolphin, Edgerton, Edmunds Store, Ezell, Fitzhugh, Fort Christanna, Freeman, Gholsonville, Grandy, Greentown, Hickory Run, Joyceville, Kress, Merchant, Meredithville, Naptha, Octagon, Old Fitzhugh, Ordsburg, Pea Hill Shores, Poarch Store, Powellton, Racume, Rawlings, Smoky Ordinary, Southside Shores, Sturgeonville, Tobacco, Totaro, Triplet, Valentines, Vote, Wesson, White Plains, and Wyche (Brunswick County, n.d.).

## **Brunswick County, Virginia Districts**

Brunswick County, Virginia, is divided into five magisterial (election) districts: Meherrin, Powellton, Red Oak, Sturgeon, and Totaro. These districts are used for representation on the county Board of Supervisors and for organizing local elections. The Powellton District encompasses the southeastern rural portion of the county, including tiny unincorporated communities like Ante (near

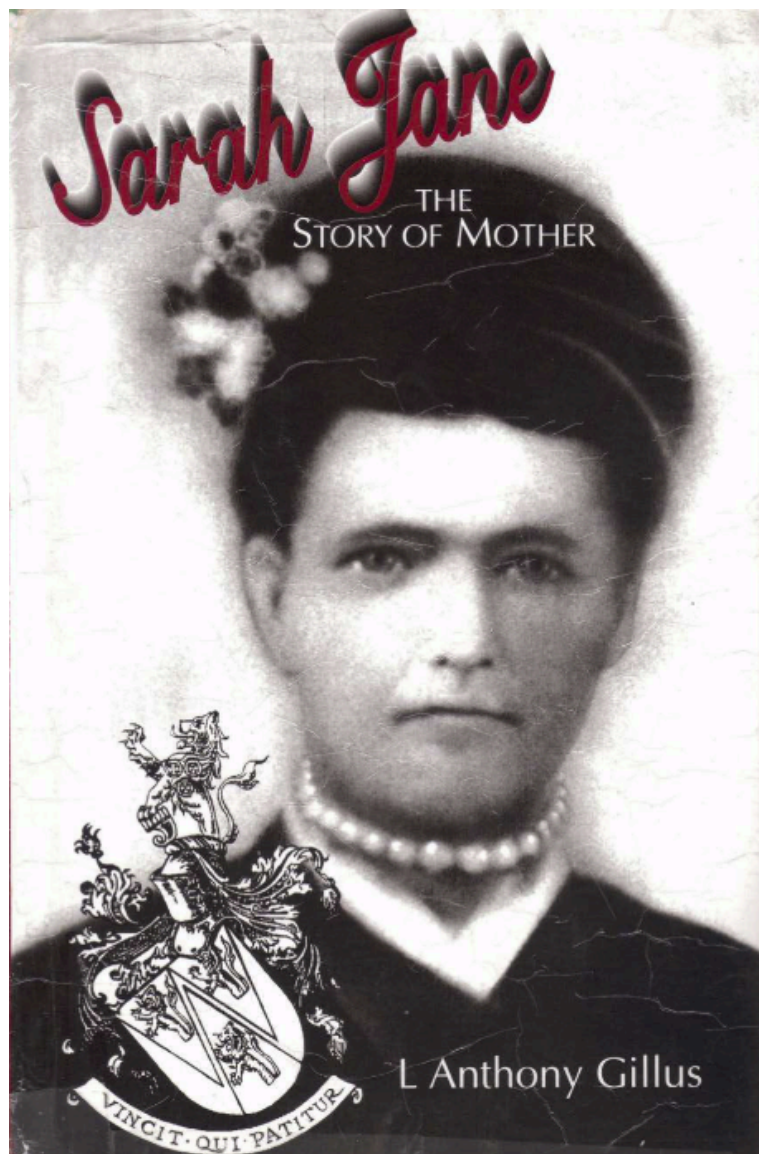
the Greenville County line), Powellton itself (a crossroads populated place), and nearby spots such as Fitzhugh, Old Fitzhugh, Greentown, Wyche, and Triplet. This area has long been characterized by agriculture, timber, quiet farmlands, and scattered homes—classic of Southside Virginia's countryside. Our Harrison roots are founded in the Powellton District of Brunswick County, Virginia (Brunswick County, n.d.).



*Brunswick County, VA Election District Map (Brunswick County, n.d.)*

## **A Matriarch's Story of Preservance**





As a young boy, Larry Anthony Gillus listened to his grandmother, Gertrude Harrison-Powell, tell stories about her maternal grandmother, Sarah Jane Harrison, and those memories inspired him to write a novel *Sarah Jane, The Story of Mother*, which began as a written account of his family lineage. Gertrude was the daughter of Sarah Elizabeth (“Sallie”) Harrison-Powell-Ellis-Merritt, who was the daughter of Sarah Jane Harrison (Gillus, 1998).

The Harrison family originally emigrated from England to Virginia in the seventeenth century and became known as one of the oldest and most prominent surnames in the state’s history. The

name is associated with a signer of the Declaration of Independence, a Revolutionary War soldier, and both the ninth and twenty-third presidents of the United States. However, this affluent, politically powerful Harrison line of northern Virginia was not the branch to which Sarah Jane Harrison of southern Virginia belonged (Gillus, 1998).

Sarah Jane Harrison, also known as Jane Harrison, was part of a different Harrison line in the nineteenth century, residing in southern Virginia along the Meherrin River alongside Native and African American neighbors. She and her family lived within a racially mixed community whose members, despite distinct cultures and strong individuality, embraced a shared national identity and cooperated in an atmosphere of mutual acceptance and support to pursue common aims (Gillus, 1998).

Skin colors played a key role in the life of Sarah, with her ancestors being White and her descendants being Black, as the White majority established the social order. Most people claimed their European ancestry as Caucasian people. Many of the Black people claimed their African ancestry as Negroid people. Some people of color claimed racially mixed lineage, with Black and White ancestors, as a matter of pride (Gillus, 1998).

The tragic story of Sarah Jane Harrison was about racism and sexism in a time of freedom and opportunity. Skin colors were used, during her life, as a true indication of political status, personal character and legal rights. The skin colors were the basis for social divisions, as the Whites controlled the Blacks with deception and intimidation. Sarah persevered in her struggle to support her small family of Anglo, African and Native Americans, living together as one people (Gillus, 1998).



Her story of a struggle and the vivid choices of one family in a time of great conflict. It is the story of a poor strong White woman and a strong Black family living in times of great difficulty. She was the mother to six children and the matriarch to an old American family. She chose good over bad and right over wrong in a struggle of survival. She accepted the challenge and endured the sacrifice to survive the racial hate and intolerance. Our family matriarch was Sarah Jane Harrison (Gillus, 1998).

### **Harrison Family Birth Stories**

In May 1839, Biacca Jane Harrison gave birth to a White, baby girl. At the time, she was unmarried and living with her mother, Phoebe Harrison, on their farm in Brunswick. Sadly, Biacca passed away in 1840, before her daughter, Sarah Jane Harrison, reached her first birthday. The child's father was identified by the sheriff as John Hawkins, a white neighbor of Phoebe's. When John died, Sarah was left an orphan before her second birthday. The County Court subsequently ordered the Overseer of the Poor to pay twenty dollars to Phoebe to help support and care for her granddaughter, Sarah (Gillus, 1998).

In 1845, Phoebe hired Bob Malone, a free man of color, to work as a field laborer on the farm. He lived there with his daughter, Julia, whose freedom he had purchased. Sarah Jane helped care for Julia. At that time, Bob was unable to buy the freedom of his wife and son, James Malone. He was later able to purchase James freedom and they lived together in a small wooden cabin on the Harrison farm, while Julia stayed with Phoebe and Sarah in their cabin. Sarah grew up on the Harrison farm and often visited nearby farms and plantations to

spend time with her friends who worked there, both free laborers and slaves. At fifteen, Sarah became pregnant and gave birth in October 1854 to a Mulatto baby boy, whom she named John Henry Harrison also known as John Henry Malone. Sarah had a relationship with James Malone, Bob Malone's son, as it was easy for her to see James while he worked on the farm with his father, and no one knew about their relationship. When Sarah became pregnant, most people assumed one of the local white boys was the father.

Bob Malone, Julia Malone, and James Malone had to leave the area to protect themselves. The White people would have killed James if he had stayed and tried to be John's father. Phoebe recorded him as White on the birth certificate at the County Courthouse and did not identify the father. There was talk among the Harrison's cousins of Phoebe about Sarah being pregnant and her child being Mulatto. Many of their neighbors were family members who visited Phoebe with the local gossip while Sarah worked in the fields. The Malone family were respected people in the community. When John was older Sarah told him the story of his father and that he needed to find his family and meet his relatives. When the civil war broke out, Sarah lost connection with the Malone family (Gillus, 1998).

A twelve-year-old enslaved girl named Jane Harrison was taken away from her family and sent to work as a housekeeper at the Harrison Common House in Brunswick County, Virginia. Phoebe's cousin James Harrison, a slave owner ran the Common House, which served meals, provided liquor, gambling, slave wrestling matches, political and social

meetings, a place to meet mistresses and bring slave girls for pleasure. Jane became pregnant by her enslaver, James Harrison, and in May 1854, she gave birth to a Mulatto baby boy whom she named James. Overcome with guilt, James took the baby to his cousin, Phoebe Harrison, seeking freedom for the child and asking her to raise him. Phoebe's granddaughter, Sarah Jane Harrison, took on the role of the baby's mother. From time to time, James would send his slave Jane—the baby's real mother—to Phoebe's house with a basket of apples and to help out in the garden. She was told to stay for the day and return before nightfall. During those visits to the Harrison farm, Jane got the chance to spend time with her son, James Harrison. Jane Harrison and Sarah Jane Harrison became good friends. Most colored people accepted Sarah, as a friend of Jane (Gillus, 1998).

In the Autumn of 1857 a local White preacher, Reverend Jones, from the parish church came to visit Phoebe on her farm. He was a friend of the Harrison family. He brought baby Benjamin Harrison to Phoebe to raise and Sarah Jane Harrison became his mother. He said the baby was an innocent White child and the church wanted him to grow up and become a Christian man in the community. Reverend Jones asked the church to help take care of the children. In Benjamin's teenage years Sarah had a heartfelt conversation about his birth. She told him that his biological parents both had the surname Harrison and were closely related — more than just cousins. Their relationship was considered improper and sinful by the church's standards. The man responsible for Benjamin's conception was described as weak, cruel, and evil — he mistreated his wife and other children, and the church viewed his actions as deeply

wrong. Benjamin wasn't interested in seeking out his biological parents and focused on making the best of the life he has been given, leaving the painful history behind (Gillus, 1998).

Sarah was mother to 3 boys before her eighteenth birthday. Her grandmother Phoebe feared for the future of the small children and worried about Sarah having a bad reputation among some of the local White people. Sarah did not want her family to be divided by color or race. Sarah started instilling unity by calling herself and telling her children that they were "Mulatto" to emphasize their shared humanity. She defied rejection from the white community by identifying herself as a Mulatto woman and raising children with Black heritage. Despite being isolated, facing racism, and sexism, her resilient life blended Native, African, and Anglo-American cultures into a loving family (Gillus, 1998).

In 1859, Sarah became pregnant again after a secret relationship with a farm worker. Sarah cared deeply for Sam's father, a tall Colored man with a gentle nature. She admired his handsome features and strong determination to succeed in life. She was both curious about him and flattered by his attention. He was generally accepted and even liked by many White people, yet they still felt uneasy and afraid of him because of who he was. At first she only observed him from a distance, but over time they slowly grew closer and eventually became a couple, even though their relationship had to remain secret as it was forbidden by the people around them. Sarah gave birth to a Mulatto baby boy in August 1859 and named him Samuel. His birth was recorded as Mulatto on the birth certificate at the County Courthouse and did

not identify the father. Sarah did not share the full story about Sam's father with him until he was a teenager, even though he had already heard rumors about his colored father. After Sam was born, Sarah asked his father to leave the area to protect them. Some of the local colored families still remembered the man and knew he had been forced to leave before the war. Sam also learned that, before the war began, his father had lived nearby for a time and then gone north (Gillus, 1998).

Charles Smith was a young Quaker merchant who traveled by horse and wagon from the northern states, visiting farms across Virginia—particularly in the southside of Brunswick County—and parts of North Carolina during the autumn months. He sold tools, utensils, clothing, and other household goods to local farmers. Although Charles believed slavery was wrong, he understood that it was a deeply ingrained part of southern life for most White people (Gillus, 1998). In his free time, Charles enjoyed fishing and often spent his days by the ponds and creeks of the area. Over time, he, Sarah, and her boys began joining each other on fishing trips. During these outings, Charles would tell her stories about his travels to the northern cities. Sarah enjoyed his company, she admired him and they became lovers. (Gillus, 1998).

Charles planned a trip to Pennsylvania to purchase new merchandise for the local farmers and invited Sarah to join him. She declined, unwilling to leave behind her grandmother

Phoebe and the boys. Charles promised her he would return to the area within a few months (Gillus, 1998).

The American Civil War was a four-year conflict (1861–1865) between the Northern Union and the Southern Confederacy, fought mainly over slavery and states' rights, that ended with Union victory and the abolition of slavery. It transformed the United States politically, socially, and economically, and remains the deadliest war in U.S. history (Britannica, 2025).

As part of Confederate Virginia, Brunswick County provided soldiers and resources to the Confederate army, and local life was shaped by wartime demands such as food production and supply needs. The wider Confederate economic collapse, made worse by Union blockades and military disruption, likely contributed to shortages and hardship for both citizens and enslaved people in rural counties like Brunswick. After the war, emancipation ended the legal institution of slavery in Brunswick County, forcing plantation owners and small farmers to reorganize their labor systems and marking a difficult, uneven transition for freed people seeking land, rights, and security (Britannica, 2025).

Sarah found herself pregnant and gave birth to a White baby girl that she named Sarah Elizabeth in October of 1861. Charles did not know about the baby. Her birth was recorded as White on the birth certificate at the County Courthouse and did not identify the father. The

civil war started the fighting between the states. Charles never came back to see her and she doesn't know what happened to him.

During the war Sarah and Jane worked the farm to produce food and other crops for the Confederate Army. Southern farmers were forced to grow food to feed the rebel troops fighting the Union forces. Sarah continued to grow cotton and tobacco crops for the market. She kept all of her livestock, including several pigs and chickens in the yard near the old cabin (Gillus, 1998).

Sarah became the unexpected mother of a baby boy, during the civil war. She named him Richard. All of the children were born without a father being reported for the records at the County Courthouse. When Richard was a teenager, Sarah finally told him the story of his birth. She had been working as a midwife when he was given to her as a newborn baby. Richard's mother was a White woman and his father was a Colored slave, and Sarah explained that he had been taken from his mother to protect him from his White grandfather, who would have killed him rather than accept his daughter's brown-skinned child. Sarah did not know his parents name, but his mother had some Harrison blood. Richard wondered about his white mother and the Negro slave finding some type of love with so much hate between white and black people. During the civil war they were fighting a war over the rights of colored people. Sarah felt that Richard was very fair skinned and could pass for white in the northern states. Richard had thought about moving away from Brunswick County and starting his life

as a white man. A white man with no family history and no old friends. Richard decided to stay in the local area and continued to be with Sarah and the family on the farm near Ante. Richard married Fannie Daniel on Wednesday, March 4, 1885, in Brunswick County, Virginia. Fannie's parents were Lewis Daniel and Henrietta Stewart-Daniel. In 1906, Benjamin Harrison, Richard Harrison's brother, was named guardian of Richard's children in the deed recording the sale of 10 acres to Richard's niece, Alice Harrison-Banks, as part of the distribution of Sarah Jane Harrison's children's estate. In 1908, Richard sold his one-fifth share of his mother's 202-acre property to his brother Samuel Harrison for \$200, and the deed identified Richard as unmarried. Research on Richard Harrison and his children is still in progress. It is believed that Richard's wife may have died in childbirth, that relatives then became guardians of his children, and that he later sold his inherited share of his mother's land and moved north (Gillus, 1998).

### **The Harrison Family Nicknames**

Sarah Jane Harrison, also known as Jane Harrison

John Henry Harrison, also known as John Henry Malone

James Harrison, also known as Jim or Jimmie Harrison

Benjamin Harrison, also known as Ben or Bennie Harrison

Samuel Harrison, also known as Sam or Sammie Harrison



Sarah Elizabeth Harrison-Powell-Ellis-Merritt, also known as Sallie

Richard Harrison, also known as Rich Harrison

## **Benjamin Harrison found in the U.S. Federal Census**

### **1860 U.S. Federal Census - Summary**

Benjamin Harrison was listed as a 4-year-old Mulatto boy born about 1856 in Brunswick County, Virginia. His great grandmother Phoebe Harrison, was a 76-year-old White woman born about 1784 in Virginia, appears in the 1860 U.S. Census for the Meherrin District of Brunswick County, Virginia, with the post office listed as Benton. Phoebe was recorded as a farmer who owned real estate valued at \$300 and personal property worth \$100. Phoebe headed dwelling 458, family 451, where she resided with her granddaughter, Sarah Jane Harrison, and great-grandchildren John Malone (6), James (6), Benjamin (4), and Samuel (1).

### **1870 U.S. Federal Census - Summary**

*The family surname was incorrectly listed as HARRIS in the 1870 United States Federal Census.*

Benjamin Harrison was listed as a 14-year-old Mulatto boy, born about 1856 in Brunswick County, Virginia, who appears in the 1870 census living in Meherrin District, Brunswick County, Virginia. Benjamin lived in dwelling 631 in the household with his mother Sarah Jane Harrison and

siblings James, John, Samuel, Sallie, and Richard, and was recorded as unable to read or write. He worked as a laborer.

## **1878 Vital Record Summary**

Benjamin Harrison married Mary Powell, also known as Mollie Powell, on Thursday, March 7, 1878, in Brunswick, Virginia. Her father was not listed and mother was Harriett Powell-Phipps on their marriage records. Benjamin's father was listed as Charles (last name unknown) and mother was listed as Jane (Sarah Jane Harrison).

## **1880 U.S. Federal Census - Summary**

Benjamin Harrison was listed as a 23-year-old Mulatto farmer, born about 1857 in Virginia, who appears in the 1880 census as the married head of his own household in Powellton, Brunswick County, Virginia. He lived with his 20-year-old wife, Mary (Mollie) Powell-Harrison, and their one-year-old son, William H. Harrison, and reported that both of his parents were also born in Virginia.

Mary Powell-Harrison, also known as Mollie Harrison, was listed as a 20-year-old Mulatto woman born about 1860 in Virginia. In the 1880 U.S. Census, she is recorded in Powellton, Brunswick County, Virginia, as the married wife of Benjamin Harrison. Mary worked as a housekeeper and was noted as unable to write. She lived with her husband and their one-year-old son, William H. Harrison. The census also indicates that both of her parents were born in Virginia.

William H. Harrison was listed as a 1-year-old Mulatto boy, born about 1879 in Virginia, who appears in the 1880 census as the son of Benjamin and Mollie Harrison in Powellton, Brunswick County, Virginia. His parents, both born in Virginia, are listed as head and wife in the same household, and William is described simply as a child at home (a “homeworker”), indicating he was not yet engaged in any outside labor.

### **1890 U.S. Federal Census - Summary**

Benjamin Harrison was not found in the census because most of the 1890 U.S. Federal Census was destroyed after a catastrophic fire and subsequent water damage in the basement of the Commerce Department building in Washington, D.C., on January 10, 1921. Although some fragments survived, the damaged volumes were later judged unsalvageable, and Congress authorized their disposal in 1933, leading to the near-total loss of this census and a major gap for genealogical research.

### **1900 U.S. Federal Census - Summary**

*The family surname was incorrectly listed as HARISON in the 1900 United States Federal Census.*

Benjamin Harrison was listed as a 33-year-old Black man, born in May 1867 in Brunswick County, Virginia, who appears in the 1900 census as the married head of household in Hicksford, Greensville County, Virginia. He owned his farm free of mortgage, worked full-time as a farmer, could read, but was unable to write. Benjamin had been married to his wife Mary since about 1878 (22 years).

Mary Powell-Harrison, also known as Mollie Powell-Harrison, was listed as a 30-year-old Black woman, born in February 1870 in Brunswick County, Virginia, who appears in the 1900 census as the married wife of farmer Benjamin Harrison in Hicksford District of Greensville County, Virginia. She had been married to Benjamin since about 1878 (22 years) and reported having 10 children, all of whom were still living, several of whom—Daniel, Claudia, Arthur, Vanderbilt, Eddie, Gradee, Mary, and infant Harriett—were listed in the household. Her children William and Dora were married and were living in their own households. Mary could read, but unable to write, and both of her parents were also born in Virginia.

Daniel Harrison was listed as a 16-year-old Black boy, born in March 1884 in Virginia. Daniel lived in the Hicksford District of Greensville County, Virginia, on the family farm with his parents and siblings—Claudia, Arthur, Eddie, Gradee, Mary, and Harriett. He was recorded as able to read and write, and was recorded as having been unemployed for two months during the census year.

Claudia Harrison was listed as a 13-year-old Black girl, born in April 1887 in Virginia. Claudia lived in the Hicksford District of Greensville County, Virginia, on the family farm with his parents and siblings—Daniel, Arthur, Eddie, Gradee, Mary, and Harriett. She was recorded as able to read and write, and having been unemployed for one month during the census year.

Arthur Harrison was listed as a 11-year-old Black boy, born in October 1888 in Virginia. Arthur lived in the Hicksford District of Greensville County, Virginia, on the family farm with his parents and siblings—Daniel, Claudia, Eddie, Gradee, Mary, and Harriett. He was recorded as unable to read or write, and having been unemployed for three months during the census year.

Vanderbilt Harrison, also known as Van Harrison, was listed as a 10-year-old Black boy born in February 1890 in Virginia. Van lived in the Hicksford District of Greensville County, Virginia, on the family farm with his parents and siblings—Daniel, Claudia, Arthur, Eddie, Gradee, Mary, and Harriett.

Eddie Harrison, possibly named Edward Harrison, was listed as a 8-year-old Black boy, born in January 1892 in Virginia. Eddie lived in the Hicksford District of Greensville County, Virginia, on the family farm with her parents and siblings—Daniel, Claudia, Arthur, Vanderbilt, Gradee, Mary, and Harriett.

Gradee Harrison was listed as a 7-year-old Black boy, born in March 1893 in Virginia. Gradee lived in the Hicksford District of Greensville County, Virginia, on the family farm with her parents and siblings—Daniel, Claudia, Arthur, Vanderbilt, Eddie, Mary, and Harriett.

Mary Harrison was listed as a 4-year-old Black girl, born in October 1895 in Virginia. Mary lived in the Hicksford District of Greensville County, Virginia, on the family farm with her parents and siblings—Daniel, Claudia, Arthur, Vanderbilt, Eddie, Gradee, and Harriett.

Harriett Harrison was listed as a Black infant, about four months old, born in January 1900 in Virginia. Harriet lived in the Hicksford District of Greensville County, Virginia, on the family farm with her parents and siblings—Daniel, Claudia, Arthur, Vanderbilt, Eddie, Gradee, and Mary.

*The family surname was incorrectly listed as HARASON in the 1910 United States Federal Census.*

Benjamin Harrison was listed as a 34-year-old Mulatto man, born in 1856 in Virginia, who appears in the 1910 census as the married head of household in Powellton, Brunswick County, Virginia. He rented and worked a farm, was employed as a farmer for wages, and could read and write. Benjamin had been married about 30 years and lived on North Belfield Road with his wife May and their children Arthur, Vanderbilt (Van), Gradie, Mary, Harriett, and Marie.

Mary Harrison-Powell, also known as Mollie Harrison-Powell, was listed as a 48-year-old Mulatto woman, born in 1862 in Virginia,. She was married to Benjamin Harrison who was listed head of household. Mary could read and write, and reported that both of her parents were also born in Virginia. The census notes that she and Benjamin had been married about 30 years and that she had birth 11 children, 10 of whom were still living—Arthur, Vanderbilt (Van), Gradie, Mary, Harriett, and Marie —were listed in the household with them on North of Belfield Road. William, Dora, Daniel, and Claudia were married, living in their own households.

Arthur Harrison was listed as a 21-year-old Mulatto man, born in 1889 in Virginia. Arthur lived with his parents and siblings on North Belfield Road and worked as a wage-earning laborer in a sawmill, while also being able to read and write.

Vanderbilt Harrison, also known as Van Harrison, was listed as a 19-year-old Mulatto man, born in 1891 in Virginia. He lived with his parents and siblings on North of Belfield Road and worked as a wage-earning farm laborer, while also being able to read and write.

Gradie Harrison was listed as a 14-year-old Mulatto boy, born in 1896 in Virginia. Gradie lived with his parents and siblings on North of Belfield Road, attended school, and worked as a wage-earning laborer in a sawmill while being able to read and write.

Mary Harrison was listed as a 12-year-old Mulatto girl, born in 1898 in Virginia. Mary lived with her parents and several siblings on North of Belfield Road, attended school, and could read and write.

Harriett Harrison was listed as a 10-year-old Mulatto girl, born in 1900 in Virginia. Harriett lived with her parents and several siblings on North of Belfield Road, attended school, and could read and write.

Marie Harrison was listed as a 6-year-old Mulatto girl, born in 1904 in Virginia. Marie lived with her parents and older siblings on North of Belfield Road and was noted as attending school.

## **MAY 1917 Summary**

Mary Powell-Harrison died on Sunday, May 6, 1917, in Ante, Brunswick County, Virginia, from appendicitis complicated by general peritonitis, meaning a severely infected or ruptured appendix caused a widespread and ultimately fatal infection in her abdomen. This likely occurred when the inflamed appendix perforated, allowing bacteria to enter the abdominal cavity and inflame the abdominal lining, a life-threatening condition that can rapidly progress to sepsis and death without timely medical treatment. Her secondary condition was organic heart disease. Her date of birth was

recorded as “Do not know.” Her occupation was listed as cooking and washing, and her birthplace as Brunswick County, Virginia; her father was named as Buck Tatom, born in Brunswick County, Virginia, and her mother as Harriet Powell, also born in Brunswick County, Virginia. The information on her death record was reported by her husband, Benjamin (Ben) Harrison of Ante, Virginia. Death Certificate Number 1917011251.

At the time of Mary’s passing, Benjamin’s and Mary’s children’s ages were as follows: her eldest son, William H. Harrison, was 28, followed by her daughter, Dora Harrison-Banks, who was 26, and her son Daniel Harrison, who was 23. Her daughter Claudia Harrison was 20, her son Arthur Harrison was 18, and her son Vanderbilt Harrison was 17, while Eddie Harrison was 15 and Gradee Harrison was 14. Her younger daughters were Mary Harrison, age 11, and the youngest, Harriett Harrison, age 7.

## **JUNE 1917 Summary**

*The U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917–1918 collection contains draft cards for about 24 million men who registered for the draft between May 1917 and May 1919, roughly 23% of the U.S. population at the time. Under the Selective Service Act of 1917, males in the United States within the specified age ranges were legally required to register for the World War I draft. Initially, all men aged 21 to 30 had to register, and in 1918 the law was amended to include men aged 18 to 45. Registration compliance was very high, with about 24 million men (nearly all eligible men) completing draft registration cards*



Benjamin's son was required to register for the World War I Draft. On the draft card, Arthur Harrison, race was listed a Negro, born in 1887 in Virginia, USA, was married and lived in Ante, Brunswick County, Virginia. He was described as tall with a medium build, auburn hair, and brown eyes according to the U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918. He was a farmer and had a wife and two children. The date of registration was Tuesday, June 5, 1917.

### **1920 U.S. Federal Census - Summary**

*The 1920 census record for Benjamin Harrison has not been located; the database is still being researched.*

### **1930 U.S. Federal Census - Summary**

Benjamin (Ben) Harrison was listed as a 73-year-old Black man, born around 1857 in Virginia. He lived in the Powellton District of the unincorporated township of Ante in Brunswick County, Virginia. His son, William Henry Harrison, was the head of the household. Benjamin was literate and reported that both of his parents were also born in Virginia. He worked for wages as a laborer on a general farm. Living with him were his 53-year-old son, William Henry Harrison; his 28-year-old daughter-in-law, Maggie (Becky) Brown-Harrison; his 23-year-old widowed daughter, Marie Harrison-Daniels; and his grandchildren, Georgia (5) and Edward (1).

William Henry Harrison, also known as Flint, was listed as a 53-year-old Black man born around 1877 in Virginia. He was the head of his household in the Powellton District of the unincorporated township of Ante in Brunswick County, Virginia. Harrison owned and lived on a farm, he could read and write, and worked independently as a general farmer. His household included his 28-year-old second wife, Maggie; his 73-year-old father, Benjamin (Ben) Harrison; his 23-year-old widowed sister, Marie Daniels; his 5-year-old niece, Georgia; and his 1-year-old nephew, Edward.

Maggie (Becky) Brown-Harrison was listed as a 28-year-old Black woman, born around 1902 in Virginia. She appears in the 1930 census as the married wife of household head William Harrison in Powellton, Brunswick County, Virginia. Maggie was listed as a homemaker and noted that this was her second marriage, which occurred at about age 27. She could read and write, and both of her parents were born in Virginia.

Marie Harrison-Daniels was listed as a 23-year-old Black woman, born around 1907 in Virginia. She appears in the 1930 census as a widowed sister in the household of her brother William and sister-in-law Maggie Harrison in the Powellton District of the unincorporated township of Ante in Brunswick County, Virginia. Marie was married at the age of 18. She could read and write, and worked for wages as a laborer on a general farm. Also in the household were her two children, Georgia, age 5, and Edward, age 1, along with her father, Benjamin (Ben) Harrison.

Georgia Daniels was a 5-year-old Black girl, born about 1925 in Virginia. In the 1930 census, she is recorded as living in the Powellton District of the unincorporated township of Ante in Brunswick County, Virginia as the niece of her uncle William and aunt Maggie Harrison. Also, living

with her 23-year-old mother, Marie Harrison-Daniels, and her 1-year-old brother, Edward Daniels, and grandfather, Benjamin (Ben) Harrison.

Edward Daniels was listed as a Black boy, about one year old (recorded as 1 year and 6 months), born around 1928–1929 in Virginia. In the 1930 census, he is recorded as living in the Powellton District of the unincorporated township of Ante in Brunswick County, Virginia as the niece of her uncle William and aunt Maggie Harrison. Also, living with her 23-year-old mother, Marie Harrison-Daniels, and his 5-year-old sister, Marie Daniels and grandfather, Benjamin (Ben) Harrison.

## **1931 Summary**

Benjamin died on Monday, March 16, 1931, in Ante, Brunswick County, Virginia, from his death record notes that he had no attending doctor, had been ill for two or three years, and that old age was a contributory cause; no operation or autopsy was performed. He was recorded as widowed, with his age at death noted as 74. His occupation was listed as farmer, and his birthplace was given as Virginia; his father's name was listed as unknown, and his mother as Jane Harrison (Sarah Jane Harrison), also born in Virginia. The information on her death record was reported by Vanderbilt Harrison, of Ante, VA. Burial location in Brunswick County, VA on March 17, 1931. Undertakers was H.W. Hall & Bro. of Emporia, VA. Death Certificate Number 1931006093. Benjamin is buried in an unmarked grave in the Powell/Harrison Family Cemetery, located just off Brandy Creek Road in rural Ante, Brunswick County, Virginia.

At the time of their father Benjamin's death in 1931, his children were approximately the following ages: his eldest son, William H. Harrison, was about 42 years old, and his daughter, Dora Harrison-Banks, was about 40. Daniel Harrison was about 37, Claudia Harrison about 34, Arthur Harrison about 32, and Vanderbilt Harrison about 31. Eddie Harrison was about 29, Gradee Harrison about 28, Mary Harrison about 25, and the youngest, Harriett Harrison, was about 21 years old.

### **Marriage Information:**

**William H. Harrison** married Frances Green-Banks on Wednesday, February 14, 1906, in Greensville County, Virginia. Frances' parents were Billy Williams and Susan Green.

**Dora Harrison** married Wyatt Banks on Wednesday, April 11, 1900, in Greensville County, Virginia. Wyatt's parents were Wyatt Banks and Frances Banks.

**Daniel Harrison** married Donia Easter according to the U.S. Federal Census. Donia's parents were William Easter and Jane Easter. Their marriage record is being researched.

**Claudia Harrison** married William Henry Pearson on Sunday, December 11, 1904, in Brunswick County, Virginia. William's parents were Robert "Bob" Pearson and Sylvia Reavis-Pearson.

**Arthur Harrison** was married to Pearl Harrison according to the U.S. Federal Census. Their marriage record is being researched.

**Vanderbilt Harrison** was married to his 1st wife Gertrude Powell. Vanderbilt “Van”

Harrison married 2nd wife Martha Easter-Cain on Saturday, June 23, 1934, in Brunswick County, Virginia. Martha’s parents were Andrew Easter and Martha Easter.

**Eddie Harrison** information is being researched. He was found in the 1900 household census of Benjamin Harrison.

**Gradie Harrison** information is being researched. He was found in the 1900 and 1910 household census of Benjamin Harrison.

**Harriet Harrison** information is being researched. She was found in the 1900 and 1910 household census of Benjamin Harrison.

**Mary Harrison** married Junius Powell and relocated to Chesapeake, Virginia. Their marriage record is being researched.

**Marie Harrison** married George Daniels on Wednesday, December 12, 1923 in Brunswick County, Virginia. George’s parents were Lewis Daniels and Henrietta Stewart-Daniels.



# BENJAMIN HARRISON DESCENDANTS

- **WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON**

- *Lelia Banks-Pair*
  - *Alfred Pair*
  - *Henderson Pair*
  - *Jonas Pair*
  - *Rupert Pair*
  - *Rufus Pair*
  - *Gracie Pair*
  - *Ollie Ruth Pair*
  - *Isabelle Pair*
  - *Thomas Pair*
  - *Dorothy Pair-Webb*
- *Nephus H. Banks*
  - *Solomon P. Banks*
- *Fierce "Peter" Harrison*
  - *Annie Idell Harrison-Atkins*
  - *Frances Harrison-Malone*
  - *John Lee Harrison*
  - *Christine Harrison-Ervin*
  - *William Harrison*
  - *Charles Harrison*
  - *Alvin Cornell Harrison*

- *Vickie D. Harrison-Easter*
  - *Louise Williams*
- *Ora Harrison-Lundy*
  - *Lindberg Lundy*
- *Marvin Harrison*
  - *Betty J. Harrison-Jones*
  - *Marvin Harrison, Jr.*
  - *Christina Harrison*
  - *Hedy L. Harrison-Mason*
  - *Marva F. Harrison-Robinson*
  - *Gloria J. Harrison-Walker*
  - *Teretha H. Adams*
  - *Roy L. Harrison*
  - *Dennis W. Harrison*
  - *Robert Newell*
  - *Rena M. Harrison*
  - *James T. Harrison*
- *Curtis Harrison*
  - *Fannie Ruth Harrison*
  - *Betty Jean Harrison-Stukes*
  - *Gloria Harrison-Lewis*
  - *Barbara Harrison-Jordon*
  - *William Harrison*
- *Gladys Harrison-Ross*
  - *Polly Ross-Morgan*
  - *Katie Ross-Washington*
  - *Wesley T. Ross, Jr.*
  - *Ella Ross-Cook*
  - *Ryland Ross*
  - *Willie Ross*
  - *Bessie Ross-Chambliss*
  - *Charlie Ross*
  - *Hattie Odell Ross-Jones*
  - *Gladys Ross-Bradley*
  - *Regina Ross-Vessels*
- *Willie Harrison*
  - *Anita Harrison-Scott*
- *Roy E. Harrison*
  - *Stella Harrison-Morris*
  - *Pernell R. Harrison*
  - *Cooper D. Harrison*
  - *Rose Harrison-Bennett*
  - *Velma Harrison-Savage*
  - *Faye Harrison-Harris-Franklin*

- *Jeremiah Harrison*
  - *Everette Harrison*
  - *Vesta Harrison-Jackson*
- *Lillian Harrison-Jefferson*
  - *Andrew L. Jefferson*
- *Sylena Harrison-Cooper*
  - *Nadirah Muhammad (Christine Cooper)*
  - *Kirby A. Cooper*
  - *Jerry L. Cooper*
- **DORA HARRISON-BANKS**
  - *Sarah Banks-Williams*
    - *Samuel Williams*
  - *Daniel Banks*
    - *James Banks*
    - *William Banks*
    - *Jeanette Banks*
  - *Dora Banks- Adams-Lee-Atkins*
    - *Dorothy Mae Adams-Avent*
    - *Rosa O. Adams-Lee*
    - *Elsie Marie Adams-Bynum*
    - *Wilbert J. Adams*
    - *Addie Pearl Adams*
    - *Elma Adams-Allen*
    - *Ruben Adams*
    - *Betty Jean Adams*
  - *Alice Banks*
    - *Researched / No Children*
  - *Rassie Banks*
    - *Frances Banks*
    - *Erline Banks*
  - *Robert Banks*
    - *Luther Banks*
  - *Ethel Banks-Lee*
    - *Vernie Lee, Jr.*
    - *Wilson Lee*
    - *Wilma Lee-Harrell*
    - *William Henry Lee*
    - *Queen Lee-Johnson*
    - *Wiley Lee*
    - *Wyatt Lee*
  - *Mary Eva Banks-Brown*
    - *Marjorie Brown-Wilshire*
    - *Herbert Brown*
    - *Phillip Brown*



- *Darlene Brown*
  - *McKenny Brown*
  - *Lucinda Brown*
- *Elizabeth Banks-Robinson*
  - *Rosetta Robinson-Jackson*
  - *Willie Lee Robinson*
  - *Martha Ruth Robinson-Powell*
  - *Moses Wendell Robinson*
  - *James Wesley Robinson*
  - *Percival “Percell” Robinson*
  - *Jean Elizabeth Robinson-Carter*
- **DANIEL HARRISON**
  - *Mamie Mendoza Harrison-Mayes*
    - *Researching Information*
  - *Jessie Harrison*
    - *Researching Information*
  - *Gracie Harrison*
    - *Researching Information*
- **CLAUDIA HARRISON-PEARSON**
  - *Helen Pearson-Phipps*
    - *Maurice Phipps-Graham*
    - *Charlie Phipps*
    - *Evelyn Phipps-Collins*
    - *Bernice Phipps-Singleton*
    - *Annetta Phipps*
    - *Claudette Phipps-Lundy*
    - *Otis Phipps*
    - *Marvin Phipps*
    - *Velma Phipps-Williams*
  - *Sylvia Pearson-Toombs*
    - *Audrey Mae Toombs-McGowan*
  - *Fannie Pearson-Freeman-Purcell*
    - *Researching Information*
  - *Minnie Pearson-Blizzard*
    - *Researching Information*
  - *Alfred N. Pearson*
    - *Marvis Pearson-Thomas*
    - *Alfred Pearson, Jr.*
    - *Gloria Pearson-Mabry*
  - *Clarence W. Pearson*
    - *Calvin Pearson*
    - *Clarence Pearson, Jr.*
    - *Claudia Pearson-Wooden*
    - *George Pearson*

- *Kenneth Pearson*
  - *William Pearson*
- *Charlie Pearson*
  - *Researching Information*
- *Stuart Pearson*
  - *Stuart Pearson, Jr.*
  - *Michael Pearson*
  - *Shawneequa Pearson-Wyche*
- *George Pearson*
  - *Researching Information*
- *William Byrd Pearson*
  - *Researching Information*
- **ARTHUR HARRISON**
  - *Fannie V. Harrison-Davis*
    - *Researching Information*
  - *Gertrude Harrison-Gillus*
    - *Researching Information*
  - *James Harrison*
    - *Researching Information*
  - *Goretha Harrison*
    - *Researching Information*
- **VANDERBILT “Van” HARRISON**
  - *Paul Harrison*
  - *Samuel Harrison*
  - *John Harrison*
  - *Bettie Harrison*
  - *James Cephas Harrison*
  - *Meade Harrison*
  - *Essie Harrison-Council*
  - *Isoria Harrison-Burke-Smith*
  - *Van L. Harrison*
- **EDDIE HARRISON**
  - *Information is being researched*
- **BENJAMIN GRADIE HARRISON**
  - *Information is being researched*
- **HARRIETT HARRISON**
  - *Information is being researched*
- **MARY HARRISON-POWELL**
  - *Did not have children*
- **MARIE HARRISON-DANIELS**
  - *Georgia O. Daniels-Ferebee*
  - *Edward T. Daniels*



New projects coming soon

## **Family Stories for:**

- WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON
- DORA HARRISON-BANKS
- DANIEL HARRISON
- CLAUDIA HARRISON-PEARSON
- ARTHUR HARRISON
- VANDERBILT “VAN” HARRISON
- EDDIE HARRISON
- BENJAMIN GRADIE HARRISON
- HARRIETT HARRISON
- MARY HARRISON-POWELL
- MARIE HARRISON-DANIELS

## **Family Webpage:**

**<https://sarahjaneharrisonfamily.org/benjamin-harrison-family>**

## References:

Brunswick County. (n.d.). *Brunswick County GIS*. <https://brunswick.southsidegis.org>

Brunswick County. (n.d.). *Election district map*. Brunswick County, Virginia.

[https://www.brunswickco.com/government/board\\_of\\_supervisors/election\\_district\\_map](https://www.brunswickco.com/government/board_of_supervisors/election_district_map)

Brunswick County. (n.d.). *Townships*. Brunswick County, Virginia.

<https://www.brunswickco.com/community/townships>

County of Brunswick, Virginia. (n.d.). *Early history of Brunswick County: Fort Christanna and colonial settlement*. Brunswick County Government. [https://www.brunswickco.com/about\\_us](https://www.brunswickco.com/about_us)

Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2025, August 23). *United States: The Civil War*. In *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/place/United-States/The-Civil-War>

Encyclopedia Virginia. (2021, December 21). *James Solomon Russell (1857–1935)*. Virginia Humanities. <https://encyclopediaivirginia.org/entries/russell-james-solomon-1857-1935/>

Gillus, L. A. (1998). *Sarah Jane: The story of mother: A biographical novel*. L. A. Gillus. <https://sarahjaneharrisonfamily.org/the-story-of-mother>

Greensville County. (n.d.). *Greensville County GIS*. <https://www.webgis.net/va/greensville>

United States Federal Census collection. (n.d.). *Ancestry*.

[https://www.ancestry.com/search/categories/usfedcen/?\\_gl=1\\*ecx09\\*\\_up\\*MQ..\\*\\_gs\\*MQ..](https://www.ancestry.com/search/categories/usfedcen/?_gl=1*ecx09*_up*MQ..*_gs*MQ..)

U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. (2022, August 23). *20 tips for census research success*. <https://www.archives.gov/research/census/20-tips-for-census-research-success>