

Benjamin Thomas Biography

Report by the Alexandria Community Remembrance Project Research Committee, July 2020

Benjamin Thomas was born around 1883 in Alexandria¹. His parents were George Thomas, a laborer, and Elizabeth Washington, a laundress. They were married in Washington, D.C. on March 3, 1864.²

Elizabeth Washington was the daughter of Violet Washington. The Washington family members were all born in Virginia, while George Thomas and his parents were all born in Maryland. Benjamin Thomas's siblings included James H., Ella, and Julia.³ Julia died at the age of two from 'spasms'⁴.

It is likely that all of the Thomas and Washington family members living prior to the Civil War were enslaved, as none appeared as free people of color on either the 1850 or 1860 Federal Census. Although newspaper articles at the time reported his age as 20 or 21 years old, Benjamin Thomas was really only 16 at the time of his murder. Two years earlier at Shiloh Baptist Church, he had been baptized and "received the right hand of fellowship," at age 14. Prior to his death, Thomas resided with his mother, Elizabeth, at 700 North Patrick Street, next-door to the Kloch Family⁵.

¹ *Washington Times* (Washington, D.C.), August 29, 1899, page 4.

² Ancestry.com. District of Columbia, Marriage Records, 1810-1953 [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2016; Original data: Marriage Records. District of Columbia Marriages. Clerk of the Superior Court, Records Office, Washington D.C.; 1880 United States Federal Census, Ancestry.com, Year: 1880; Census Place: Alexandria, Alexandria, Virginia; Roll: 1351; Page: 355B; Enumeration District: 004. Record for George Thomas; 1870 United States Federal Census Place: Alexandria Ward 3, Alexandria (Independent City), Virginia; Roll: M593_1632; Page: 99A; Record for Elizzie Washington.

³ *Virginia*; Roll: M593_1632; Page: 99A; Record for Violet Washington; 1880 United States Federal Census, Ancestry.com, Year: 1880; Census Place: Alexandria, Alexandria, Virginia; Roll: 1351; Page: 355B; Enumeration District: 004. Record for George Thomas. Benjamin Thomas's siblings included James H., Ella, and Julia. [1880 United States Federal Census, Ancestry.com, Year: 1880; Census Place: Alexandria, Alexandria, Virginia; Roll: 1351; Page: 355B; Enumeration District: 004. Record for George Thomas].

⁴ [Wesley E. Pippenger, Alexandria, Virginia Death Records, 1863-1868 (The Gladwin Record) and 1869-1896 (Westminster, MD, Willow Bend Books, 2000).

⁵ *Times* (Washington, D.C.), August 9, 1899, page 2.