



*This website is dedicated
to Grandma, with love*



from a recent e-mail to some distant kinfolks:

I don't know why I've felt so strongly lately about getting this material out there. I think about how cruel the world can be—how cruel each one of us can be, including myself—looking down on other people, snubbing them, restricting them, restraining their talents, blighting their gifts. We are all here for such a short moment in time—the Bible says we are like the grass that grows today and withers tomorrow, like sparks from a fire, like ashes and dust. Just one passing moment of life—how awful to have to spend it on the short end of the stick, on account of things we cannot help, had no choice in. How awful that is; how ugly.

I think too of my dear sweet little grandmother, Amanda—so hardworking (only about 5 feet tall, but she plowed many a row behind a team of oxen), so diligent (3 meals a day she cooked, every day of her life, from about age 8 to age 88), so sweet and gentle, never raised her voice—not a mean bone in her body. Only a fourth-grade education, but the pillar, the rock of the family; everybody always came to Mandy's house, in good times and in bad, or when they had nowhere else to go. She took them all in, fed them, clothed them, loved them, and though we didn't realize it—blessed us all. One of the millions of quiet, unsung household saints that hold the world together and teach us the good way by their own kind example. I know there are many jewels in her crown.

And yet Mandy was listed as Black on the 1900 census; what did that mean to her, how did it affect her life, what hurts and tears and sorrows came from that? She never said; never breathed the slightest hint to me; and never gave the slightest indication of holding any grudges. A mystery I don't think I'll ever truly understand in this life.

So I'm sorry if I've fried anyone's tomatoes here; but I believe I owe it to my dear, darling Grandma, who took me in, fed me, sheltered me, loved me, who gave me a home and many lovely memories--and to all who came before her: I want to say, look here, these are my people, and they too had a place, a voice, a story, a face, a life to live.

I hope you all understand. Peace be with you.

Bill