

GRINNELL SINCERELY MOURNS MUMPFORD

Aged Negro, a Town Institution For
So Many Years, Dies Friday
At 8 1/2 Evening 1916
BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN
ABOUT 108 YEARS OLD

He Was Brought To Grinnell By Geo.
M. Christian in 1871 To Work In
Old Grinnell House.

"There's no more work for poor Uncle
Ned,
For he's gone where de good niggers
go."

Let these lines, taken from one of
the plaintive folk songs of his own
people, serve to convey the intelli-
gence that Mumpford is dead. One of
Grinnell's characters for these many
years, a negro typifying the best qual-
ities of his race, faithfulness, indus-
try and affection, has crossed the river
and rests under the shade of the trees.

The life of Mumpford Holland meant
more to Grinnell than many people
realized. He was the one link, even
though a humble one, through which
Grinnell was brought into touch with
the romance and the glamour of the
Old South, before the war.

Not that there was much glamour in
Mumpford's own experience. He only
reflected it from those who had been
his masters in the days when men had
masters. For Mumpford had been a
slave. He had experienced all the vic-
issitudes of a slave. He was born a
slave, near Princeton, Ky. His first
master was named William Bush and
was the owner of a tannery. Like
other slaves Mumpford was sold many
times. When he reached man's estate
he married, but in one of the upheav-
als which came into his life his wife
was sold away from him and he never
saw her again.

When the Mexican war broke out
he went to the front as body servant
for his master, and at the outbreak of
the Civil war he was again called up-
on to serve in a similar capacity.
Down in Texas somewhere, according
to the story, he was captured, prob-
ably not making any serious resist-
ance, and soon he cast in his fortunes
with the "old list" as



UP FROM SLAVERY: Resi-
dents of the Grinnell of years
ago will all remember Mumpford,
"Mumf" for short. Nobody knew
whether he had any other name.
He was "Mumf" to everybody.
He was one of the colorful in-
dividuals who make life inter-
esting in every small town.
"Mumf" had been a slave. Pres-
umably he came to Grinnell
after the close of the Civil war,
but that is guess work. Any-
how he came. For a good many
years he was a man of all work
about the Henry Spencer place.
His shambling gait, his pleasant,
deferential smile, his twinkling
eyes all helped to give him an
individuality of his own. He liv-
ed a long time. When he died,
Grinnell lost something.



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7/23/17/19

Editor's Note: The
following article is a reprint
from the 1916 Grinnell
Register, submitted to the
Herald-Register because it
was 57 years ago Saturday
that Mumpford Holland died.
Note the flowery style used in
news articles of that time.

DEAD AT 108

Mumpford Holland is dead.
He died Friday evening, July
28, 1916, at 6:45. Mumpford
Holland was a colored man and
from the facts that have been
learned, he was probably the
oldest man in the State of Iowa.

Mumpford Holland was born
a slave near Princeton, Ken-
tucky. The exact date of his
birth is not known, as he had no
official record, but as nearly as
can be figured out by old
acquaintances, he was born
about the year 1808. His first
master was the owner of a
tannery by the name of
William Bush. He, with many
other slaves, was sold many
times and saw many hard-
ships. He was a servant of an
army officer during the
Mexican war. Later during the
civil war he enlisted and
served as a cook in the Union
Army. At the close of the war
he was mustered out at
Davenport.

In 1870 or 1871 Hon. George
M. Christian brought him to

Grinnell where he worked for
him for many years. All
these years he has made
Grinnell his home. He has been
an industrious and honest
citizen. He bought property in
South Grinnell and lived in his
own home many years prior to
his death. He was converted
and joined the Salvation Army

early in the eighties and was a
faithful member of that
organization. He has lived a
Christian life ever since. He
was respected by all who knew
him. He was a patient sufferer
for more than a year and died
in the triumph of the living
faith. He had no family, being
sold from his wife in slavery.

cook. He was mustered out of the
service at Davenport when the war
was over.

In 1871 George M. Christian was
conducting the old Grinnell house here
and was in need of a porter and gen-
eral factotum. He had known Mump-
ford in Davenport and knew he
was industrious and honest. He
sent for the negro
to Grinnell. When he

report Mumpford was then, he was sixty-
years old and his hair and beard were
already touched with gray.

For all the years since 1871, Mump-
ford has been a fixture in Grinnell.
He worked for Mr. Christian many
years and later worked for himself
being odd jobs about town. The sight
of Mumpford in his dilapidated old wa-
gon with the old horse which dragged
one foot as he walked was once too
familiar to excite comment. Men who
are now engaged in active business
here have known Mumpford all their
lives and have considered him as one
of the imperishable institutions of
Grinnell.

It almost seemed that Mumpford
couldn't die. The years passed by
and seemed to leave little impression
upon him. Always there were the same
quaint stooping walk, the same
deferential greeting, the flash of white
teeth from behind the gray, woolly
beard. In the old days when Mumpford
was about the streets everybody teas-

...ped it and those old Grinnell boys
... No one could estimate obtainable places
... his age at time of death in his health
... During the war he was seen no more
... on the streets. He was confined in
... his little home, thought and paid for
... one of the substantial things and he was
... and loved to keep it neat
... and clean. During the past few years
... of intense heat Friday evening at 7:30
... the funeral was held from
... the First Street Baptist Church, who
... conducted by J. B. Jacobs. Mump-
... ford's body sleeps in Hazelwood Hill last
... night his first great beyond the wire
... when he had "lived" long since and
... lost "able" was occurred and joined
... Mumpford's name in the early eight-
... ties and remained an earnest student of his
... of that organized an earnest student of his
... and at his funeral he "died" in the
... triumph of the living faith.

"Old Mumf"

In connection with a story about Edward Delaney, former slave, who is buried in Hazelwood cemetery near his "white folks," one is reminded irresistibly of another former slave who lived for many years in Grinnell. Really, no story about Edward Delaney is complete without mention also of Mumford Holland, a familiar figure, known generally as "Mumf" to townpeople and college students of the late nineties and thereabouts.

"Mumf" was a tall, gangling Negro, with a golden smile, industrious, sober and a friend to everybody. He was by way of being a town character during his long years of residence here. For the following information regarding him we are indebted to Mrs. O. F. Parish and the Grinnell museum.

"Mumf" was brought to Grinnell by George M. Christian in 1891 to work in the old Grinnell House, which once stood on the Rock Island tracks across the street south from the Monroe hotel. He was born a slave near Princeton, Ky., and was sold many times. He married and his wife was sold away

from him and he never saw her again.

When the Mexican War broke out he went to the front as body servant for his master and at the opening of the War between the States he served another master in the same capacity. He was captured and then enlisted as a cook in the Union army, finally being mustered out at Davenport.

Mr. Christian knew him in Davenport as a good worker and when he needed a porter for the Grinnell House he brought "Mumf" to Grinnell.

No one knew his age, but it was estimated at the time of his death that he was 103 years old. He owned his own home in south Grinnell and was buried from the Uncle Sam's club. His funeral service was conducted by Rev. E. W. Cross, assisted by J. B. Lucas. For many years he was a member of the Salvation Army.

In the long history of Grinnell it occurs to us that "Mumf," the former slave who made for himself so large a place in the community, is entitled to his humble niche. He should not be forgotten.

GRINNELL, IOWA,

More About Mumford

As a result of running a picture of Mumford, the old Negro, in the paper the other day, we know more about him than we did, including his last name. It was Holland. A letter which just blew in from H. O. Shaw in Rock Rapids says that Mumford was a member of the Salvation Army in the early nineties and it is his best recollection that he was registered under that name. "He claimed to be an old man," writes Mr. Shaw, "but when asked his age would say 'One hundred or one hundred fifty' which left doubt as to his real age, but in the 90's he was credited with being in his eighties. I

recall with pleasure my association with him."

Mrs. S. J. Pooley recalls that George M. Christian was responsible for bring Mumford Grinnell originally, she then from Davenport, and Mr. Pool recalls that Mumford was janitor of the old First National bank when Mr. Pooley was employed there as a bookkeeper back in 1892, just after he graduated from college. That is, S. graduated, not Mumford.

We are glad to hand on additional information about unusual character of early Grinnell.