



Dr Daniel Hale Williams,
Pioneering Surgeon

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Here today to talk about a historic celebrity from Janesville's history,

Dr Daniel Hale Williams

And because this is a genealogy program, we'll use

The Story of African American, Daniel Hale Williams, of Janesville and Colleague Dr Robert Boyd, of Nashville to feature some unique African American Genealogical research challenges in finding African American ancestors

I had also planned to talk about Dr Williams wife Alice

So, we will skip her, so we don't run out of time.

before the Genealogy part,



Dr Daniel Hale Williams



Why famous?

Go back 131 years

Chicago -- July 9, 1893



- July heat wave
- James Cornish stabbed in the chest
- Taken to Provident Hospital
- Bled all night; in shock by morning
- Dr Williams initiated open heart surgery



July 1893.

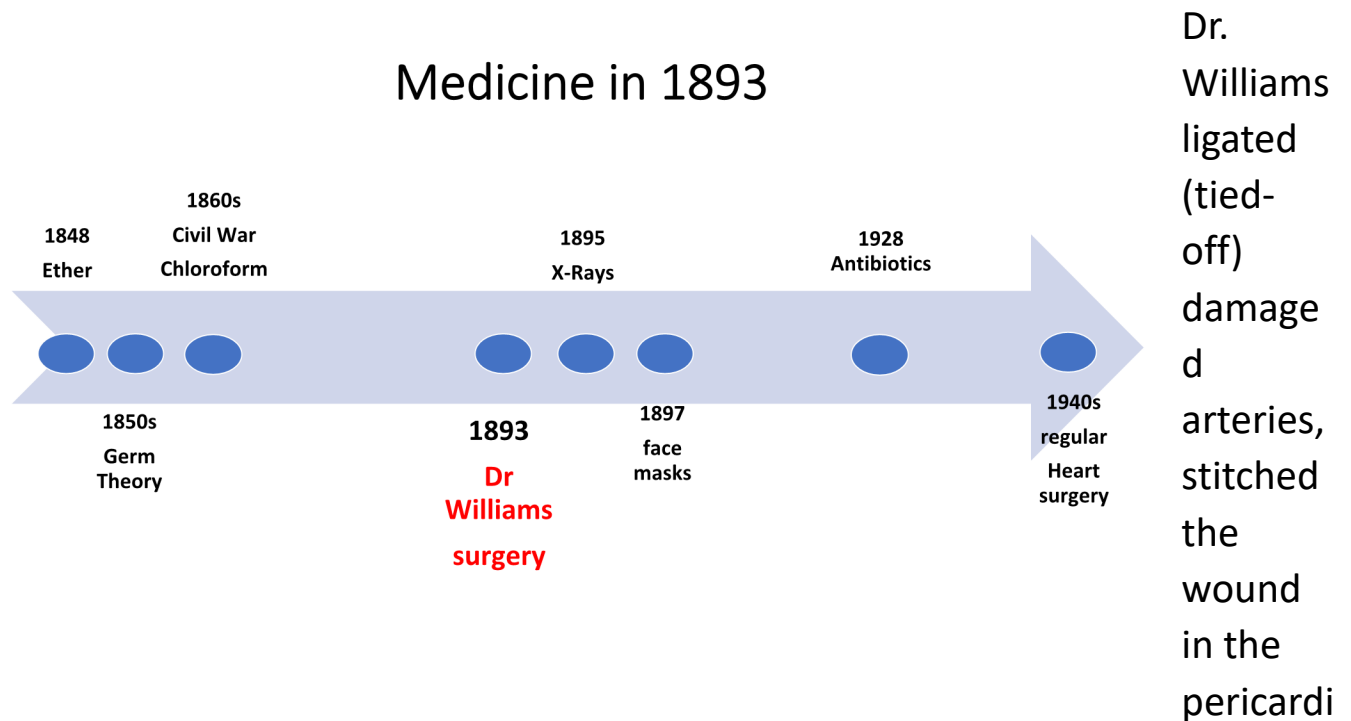
heat wave, for days - hot, sticky. Tempers short. Some sort of altercation.

An African American longshoreman, James Cornish was stabbed in the chest. He was brought to an African American hospital and watched.

His wound seems minor at first; But he bled all night; and he was in shock by morning

37 year old Dr. Daniel Hale Williams could either watch James slowly die **OR** operate. (But he didn't know what the operation going to be) Dr,

Williams needed to open the chest cavity to find out; heart surgery had never been attempted before.



um (the heart's outer membrane), and flushed the wound with a salt solution because antibiotics were still a quarter century away from discovery. He wore no mask, and had no gloves or gown - and the operating theater was not very hygienic.

Despite all the rudimentary conditions, James Cornish survived and was still in good shape 20 years after when he met the doctor on the street and thanked him for saving his life. This was one of first heart surgeries ever! Dr. Williams' Operation – way out on leading edge of medicine

During 50 years before surgery –

New scientific advancements - allowed surgery to take place

- Ether (1848) – numbs patient pain, but they were still awake
- Chloroform (by the Civil War) put patient out
- **Germ theory** was in its infancy - Learning to disinfect equipment, wash hands before surgery (minimize secondary infection) That's why he flushed the wound with a salt solution.

But Dr. Williams did not have:

- Xrays (1895)
- Surgical face masks - or head coverings, or gloves (not common until 20th century)
- No antibiotics (penicillin discovered in 1928)
- No established **procedure** for heart (or other organ) repair:

Repair things they could **SEE**, surface tumors, broken bones,

Surgery of the day – **remove (not repair)** organs and extremities.

Can't remove heart.

Repair? It's very intricate.

Heart keeps moving – 130 beats per minute

- Heart surgery was medically “out of bounds” – (World War II /D-Day before heart-related surgery became widely accepted)

He was winging it

Facility / Provident Hospital –

2 years old. Eventually its own building, but not yet

Not only that, the doctor was African American. Some people of the day, perplexed. It wasn't even 30 years since the end of the Civil War and the end of slavery in America.

How could an African American become a surgeon? Dr Williams had never been a slave, rather he was the son of a well-to-do land speculator in Pennsylvania and received an education.

As was common in the day, young Daniel Hale Williams studied at the side of an established doctor, who, after a few years, then sponsored or endorsed the young protege for formal medical school training.