Valuing "Others": Free African American Neighborhoods in Antebellum Alexandria

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ABSTRACT

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The historic preservation movement over the past thirty years has developed a value-center approach to preservation. The city of Alexandria, VA exemplifies this shift. Cultural resources once considered not of public interest or importance are now essential to the ever-evolving historical narrative of the city. Alexandria, with its overwhelming wealth of cultural resources, has incorporated many examples of social and cultural resources into history, however, most of those resources date back only to the Civil War. The representation of free African Americans, who lived in Alexandria when it was part of the District of Columbia, are largely absent from that narrative.

This paper will review the history of the earliest free African American inhabitants in the city, the history of the preservation movement within Alexandria, and assess how preservation values are changing. It will make the argument that Alexandria, though a well preserved city, encounters the same issues that most historic districts encounter, issues of

gentrification, interest, and interpretation. This paper will argue that preservationist and

Alexandria residents need to reevaluate they preservation motives, moving away from the

question "how do we preserve" to the question "what are we preserving and why?"

VALUING "OTHERS": PRESERVING FREE AFRICAN AMERICAN
NEIGHBORHOODS IN ANTEBELLUM ALEXANDRIA

By

Mary Katherine Gastner

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Chapter I. Introduction:

When envisioning Virginia prior to the American Civil War, many people still picture rolling plantations landscapes with fields of tobacco tended by slaves. Virginia was unabashedly a slave state, siding with the Confederate cause, to ensure state-rights and the perpetuation of a way of life that required the institution of slavery. Yet, this view of Virginia does not capture the whole story; it overlooks the vibrant free and enslaved African American communities that thrived in Virginia cities, such as Alexandria, Richmond, and Roanoke. Close to the plantations but in completely separate worlds, enslaved and free African Americans worked in the homes, on the docks, and wharfs, and in the factories of whites, and operated and owned businesses in port cities that dotted the Atlantic and Chesapeake coasts. Alexandria was unique among Virginia cities because of its proximity and relationship to the nation's capital. As early as 1790, Alexandria had a significant African American population, who lived and worked within city limits. African American history in Alexandria can be traced through certain structures including homes businesses, churches and schools, which provided a respite for enslaved Alexandrians from the institution of slavery and for free African American from the restrictive laws passed by the state legislature and city council. Several of these structures remain standing and can provide unique witness to the lives and history of African Americans in Alexandria.

This project reviews the history of Alexandria from 1749 through 1847, examining the absence and/or presence of African Americans in that history, in order to examine how the preservation movement has incorporated that history into the Alexandrian landscape. Research relies upon historic deeds, maps, diaries, correspondence, newspapers, and images, as well as, official histories, journal articles, and existing structures to establish the free black neighborhood boundaries and buildings. Questions to be addressed include: Where were the historic free

African American neighborhoods in Alexandria during the time it was part of the District of Columbia? How did religious institutions, schools, and black owned businesses develop during a period when African Americans had virtually no rights? Settlement patterns are explored in terms of current theories about free African American migration and settlement in antebellum cities. One particular theme examined is whites' distrust of free and enslaved African Americans and how that distrust contributed to neighborhood development. Historian James Oliver Horton notes that free African American, "were always viewed as suspect and potentially dangerous to the institution of slavery," an institution on which Alexandrians depended.[1] While restrictions on free African American settlement came from laws, regulations, and a refusal of the white community to rent or sell to free blacks, this project examines how free African American neighborhoods expanded during the period of Alexandria's inclusion in the District of Columbia.

The final piece of the project examines preservation efforts throughout the twentieth and twenty-first century, comparing the structures and boundaries located in the research to the existing structures and neighborhoods to explore the way in which history of free African Americans in antebellum Alexandria is represented on the landscape and in the historical narrative. Preservation is an activity that is hardly static. The process of the preservation of structures, landscapes, and narratives is constantly evolving, due to an increase in information, location of new resources, new value systems, changing attitudes and interpretations, etc. Preservationist William J. Murtagh explains, "Preservation engages the past in a conversation with the present over a mutual concern for the future."[2] Historic preservation is a way to represent the past viewed through a present lens, anticipating the needs of the future, asking the

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[1] Horton, James Oliver. "Weevils in the Wheat: Free Blacks and the Constitution, 1787-1860." American Political Science Association and American Historical Association, 1985.

[2] Murtagh, William J. "Epilogue." <u>Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in American</u>. John Wiley and Sons: New York, 1997. p 168.

question, why is this resource significant and how will its significance contribute to the future? Preservation provides context from which meaning can be derived and adds to ever-evolving historical narratives. Preservationists in the twenty-first century, like public historians, aim to use preservation as a tool to encourage different points of view to be explored, diversity acknowledged, empathy inculcated, dialogue facilitated, and common ground defined.[3]

The goal of the second half of this project is to identify resources from that early history which are on the landscape and determine if the buildings have any type of preservation activities, for example national or state registration, easements, or plaques. The project will ask why certain cultural resources are preserved when others are not; examining what Alexandria is preserving and why, rather than focusing solely on how they are preserving cultural resources. How is preservation of social and cultural resources facilitated (who are the main actors)? Does a neighborhood-based approach to preservation succeed, when historic neighborhoods may no longer represent the race, ethnic group, or class of people who established them?

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[3] Ibid, pg. 103.

Chapter II. Colonial Alexandria 1749-1800

Alexandria's Establishment

Established in 1749, Alexandria's boundaries were laid out between the west bank of the

Potomac River and Great Hunting Creek. English founders' original vision for Alexandria was a

trading port for ships, due to its position at the head of the Potomac River and deep water for

ships. The town's original name, Belhaven, failed to obtain approval in the legislature, and by

the mid-1750s the town adopted the name Alexandria.   The town was laid out in a uniform grid

pattern, with streets set at right angles, and oriented towards the riverbank, on the former

plantation lands of the Alexander family, the town's namesake (Figure 1). During the

Enlightenment intellectuals, like John Locke, who touted rational order being imposed on nature,

influenced the planning of cities. Enlightenment theory resulted in grid patterned cities; one of

the first examples in the United States was the city of Philadelphia. Philadelphia's plan,

"intended a compact yet uncrowded settlement with a sharp distinction between the urban core

and the surrounding rural region."[4] Visitors often reflected on the similarities between

Philadelphia and Alexandria. In fact, one English visitor observed in 1824, that "Alexandria is

built precisely on the plan of Philadelphia and is indeed frequently called Philadelphia in

miniature... The houses have a mean appearance. There is ...scarcely one handsome mansion in

the place. A great many of the habitations are of wood and are called frame houses from their

being built in a frame on a moveable foundation: They are capable of being moved from one part

of the town to another, a transition which frequently takes place."[5]   The Philadelphia plan was

widely used across the country. The reason for this replication, historian of urban planning John

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[4] Reps, John. "William Penn and the Planning of Philadelphia." *The Town Planning Review.* Vol. 27, Nov.1 (Apr. 1956), p. 37.
[5] The Confessions of a Rambler," *The Repository* (London, 1824), vol. III, No. VIII, p. 278

Reps suggests, came from a strong "psychological motivation of westward migrants to duplicate a familiar community element in the midst of unfamiliar surroundings."[6]

From its founding, Alexandria employed enslaved labor. The slave population, 372 slaves in 1749, grew rapidly as the port city expanded.   Surrounded by plantations and farmland, Alexandria became a popular port for imports from the West Indies and Europe, while at the same time exporting flour and tobacco. After the American Revolution, George Washington included Alexandria in the area selected for the nation's capitol. Washington was one of the first people to survey the area that would later become Alexandrian in the 1740s (Figure 2). Incorporation into the District of Columbia, left many Alexandrians uncertain of their legal status. The United States Constitution Article 1 Section 8 paragraph 17, stated "(the) District (not exceeding ten Miles square) as may, by Cession of particular States, and the Acceptance of Congress, become the Seat of the Government of the United States, and to exercise like Authority over all Places purchased by the Consent of the Legislature of the State in which the Same shall be, for the Erection of Forts, Magazines, Arsenals, dock-Yards, and other needful Buildings."[7] To clarify how the systems of laws for the new District of Columbia would operate, and to insure Maryland and Virginia's resolve to cede territory, the Congress passed the Residency Act in 1790. The Federal Government insured Virginia and Maryland that it would assume debts incurred by the states during the American Revolution and that the states' laws would remain in effect for those territories, until the new government moved into the District of Columbia.

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[6] Reps, 38.
[7] National Archives and Records Administration, "Transcript of the Constitution of the United States."
http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_transcript.html

The same year as the Residency Act, the United States conducted its first census. The 1790 census recorded 577 African Americans in Alexandria, one-fifth of the population of the city, 52 of whom were free.[8] By 1800, Alexandria was the fifth largest town south of the Potomac River; the population of 5949 included whites, slaves, and free African Americans.[9] The Federal Government remained in Philadelphia until 1800, when it took up official residence in the District. In 1801 Virginia officially ceded Alexandria to the United States Government for incorporation into the nation's capital. Congress was slow to establish local government, so even though Alexandria residents were legally subject to District's local government, they continued to obey Virginia law.[10] Alexandrians used their position across the river from the District to their benefit, picking and choosing which state laws to follow.

Economics

Tobacco, a word synonymous with Virginia, was Alexandria's main export at the town's founding. In fact, before the town was platted, tobacco warehouses dotted the riverbanks of the Potomac. In 1730, the General Assembly passed legislation which established public warehouses for tobacco inspection. Alexandria's warehouse lay on West's Point, named after landowner Hugh West, where the water was deep enough to launch ships.[11] Twenty-five years after that legislation was passed, Alexandria merchant John West Jr. built the first wharf. Like most Virginia planters, Alexandria's farmers soon found out that tobacco rapidly depleted the North Virginian soil, forcing them to adopt different crops. During the pre-revolutionary years, farmers shifted from tobacco to grains (flour, wheat, barley, and oats) and corn. Merchants imported

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[8] Cressey, Pamela J. and Margaret J. Anderson. *Digging for the Past: Alexandria, Virginia.* Oxford University Press, 2006, p*g. 27*
[9] Hurst, Harold W., *Alexandria on the Potomac: The Portrait of an Antebellum Community*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991.Pg. 1.
[10] Brown, Letitia W. "Residential Patterns of Negroes in the District of Columbia, 1800-1860." Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington, D.C., Vol 69/70, pg. 70.
[11] Pullman, Ted. *"Alexandria's First Wharf."* Studies of the Old Waterfront, City of Alexandria, Office of Historic Alexandria, 2008, 2.

goods from England and the West Indies, and slaves from West Africa. John Michael Vlach description of antebellum Southern urban centers fit Alexandria. he notes that "these places served the region as gateways that allowed people and goods in and staple crops out." Alexandria would become the one of the United States' busiest slave trading port. Shipbuilding thrived in Alexandria thanks to the deep waters of the Potomac River. By the late eighteenth century, the port of Alexandrian was one of the ten busiest in the United States.[12] Alexandria's citizens prospered, establishing a variety of businesses including silversmiths, saddlers, blacksmiths, furniture makers, bakers, whitesmiths, tanners, brewers, seamstresses and tobacconists.[13] By the early nineteenth century, Alexandria was the third largest exporter of flour in the United States.[14]

Inhabitants

By the turn of the nineteenth century, Alexandria continued to grow. Like most Antebellum cities, neighborhoods of affluent whites were located in the center of town.[15] Living on the periphery of town was indicative of a low class status. Enslaved African Americans often lived in the homes of their masters or in adjacent outbuildings. In large urban homes, slaves slept in detached slave quarters, but it was common in smaller homes for slaves to sleep in basement rooms, hallways, or attics.[16] In the Fawcett House, slave quarters consisted of two rooms in a loft above the kitchen.[17] When work on plantation was scarce, the diverse Alexandria economy allowed slave owners to "hire out" their enslaved workers to trades people operating businesses in town. Slaves often learned trades through hiring out, and were able to save money from extra

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[12] Blomberg, Belinda. <u>Free Black Adaptive Responses to the Antebellum Urban Environment: Neighborhood Formation and Socioeconomic Stratification in Alexandria, Virginia, 1790-1850</u> (American University, Washington, D.C., 1988), 62.
[13] City of Alexandria Virginia, "Discovering the Decades: 1790s." Historic Alexandria. http://alexandriava.gov/historic/info/default.aspx?id=28296
[14] Terrie, Phillip. "Alexandria's Main Street Residents: A Social History of the 500 Block of King Street." Alexandria Archaeology Manuscript, 1979, 36.
[15] Kellogg, John. "Negro Urban Clusters in the Postbellum South." *Geographic Review,* Vol. 67, No. 3 (July 1977), 312.
[16] Vlach, John Michael. "Without Recourse to Owners: The Architecture of Urban Slavery in the Antebellum South." *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture,* Vol. 6, Shaping   Communities (1997),158.
[17] Ibid, 151.

work to purchase their freedom. During Alexandria's inclusion in the District of Columbia enslaved people who were able to buy their freedom often stayed in Alexandria, moving into the free African American neighborhoods which began to develop by about 1800. Free African Americans worked either for the trades person they learned their craft under or opened their own businesses.

In Antebellum Southern cities, it was common for whites and free African Americans to be neighbors. It was an unspoken understanding that, though they may be neighbors, free African Americans were of a lower social status than whites.[18] Gustave de Beaumont, French magistrate and travel companion of Alexis de Tocqueville, remarked after his travels to America in the early nineteenth century, "The freed black has almost no characteristic of a free man; in vain will the blacks receive their liberty."[19] This social hierarchy was reinforced by the institution of slavery, which was particularly strong in Alexandria due to the presence of the Franklin and Armfield slave trading office. Located in the center of town on Duke Street, the firm was the largest slave trading company in the South. Franklin and Armfield transported 1,000-1,200 slaves per year, most down to the deep South through New Orleans. Their office and slave prison served as a constant reminder to free African American s of their tenuous position in Alexandria society, and the importance of maintaining amicable relationships with whites. Though free African American's settlement was constricted to where they could acquire land or rent from whites, two African American neighborhoods emerged during the early nineteenth century.

Geographer John Kellogg's study of Southern cities examines four types of African American neighborhood settlement patters: back-alley settlements, out of the way settlements

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[18] Kellogg, 313.
[19] Janara, Laura. "Brothers and Others: Tocqueville and Beaumont, U.S. Genealogy, Democracy, and Racism." *Political Theory*. Vol. 32, No. 6 (Dec., 2004) p. 787.

(on streets near the homes of whites), homeowner/neighborhood settlements, and shantytown settlements near a city's edge.[20] Antebellum Alexandria had the first three types of settlements, and shantytowns emerged during and after the Civil War. Small settlements of free African Americans emerged in Alexandria as a result of benevolent landlords, such as the Quakers, and as a result of white residents who sought to gain a profit from renting to free African Americans. During this period, most of the residential property in Alexandria was concentrated in the hands of a small group of merchants who then rented out that property. [21] Local tradition also assisted the back-yard (back alley) residences to emerge, as back-yard settlements ensured that African Americans lived close enough to whites to provide services for them, but far enough away to maintain racial decorum.[22]

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[20] Kellogg, 311.
[21] Terrie, 27.
[22] Schnore, Leo F. and Philip C. Evenson, "Segregation in Southern Cities." *American Journal of Sociology,* Vol. 72, No.1 (July 1966), 59.
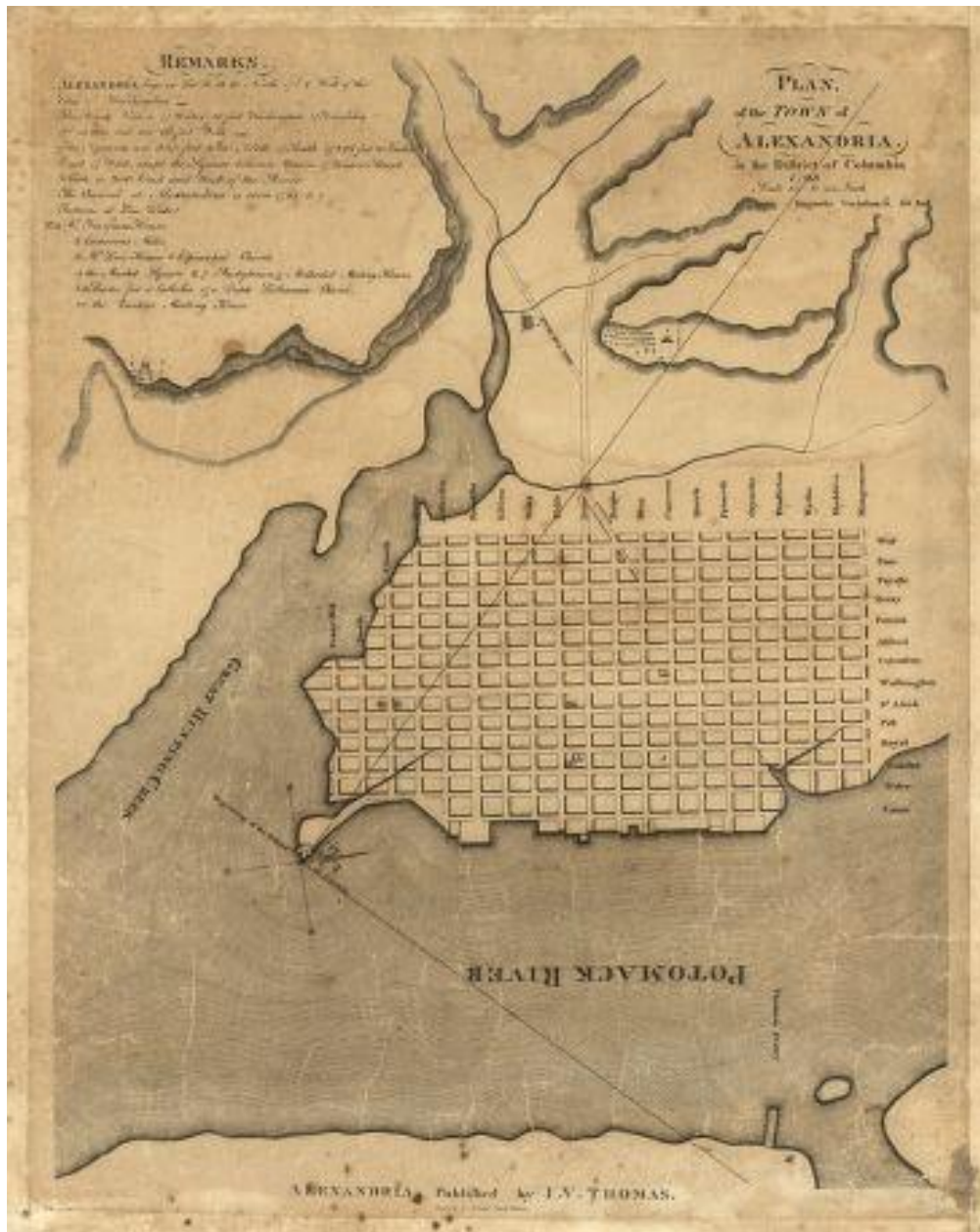
Figure 1: Plan of the Town of Alexandria in the District of Columbia, 1798, engraved by T. Clarke. (Courtesy of the Library of Congress)

Figure 2: A plan of Alexandria, now Belhaven, 1749, sketch by George Washington (Courtesy of the Library of Congress)

Chapter III. Alexandria in Transition 1800-1831

After the American Revolution, Virginia's General Assembly passed several laws relating to free African Americans and slaves. Espousing the ideals of the Revolution, the General Assembly passed the Manumission Act in 1782, allowing slave owners to grant freedom to enslaved people in their will or testament. By 1810, nine out of ten slaves who gained their freedom did so through manumission rather than a will.[23] Prior to this act, slaves only received freedom through a special act of the General Assembly. Between 1723-1782 only twenty-four slaves received their freedom in Virginia. Freed slaves often moved to urban centers where there was a demand for "skilled hands, strong backs, and domestic employment."[24] Urban areas grew rapidly after the Manumissions Act, triggering the General Assembly to follow it with several laws to maintain control over the growing population of former slaves. In 1793, the General Assembly passed a law requiring free African Americans to register annually with a city authority and it prohibited free African Americans from other states from immigrating to Virginia (Figure 3).

During this period free African Americans saved money and bought the freedom of family members. If those family members were enslaved in Virginia, they could remain in the state once freed. Whites feared a natural alliance between free and enslaved African Americans, especially the free and enslaved lived in the same dwelling.[25] This fear was compounded by Gabriel's rebellion in Richmond in 1800 and the Haitian revolution.[26] The General Assembly reacted to these events by passing a series of laws limiting free and enslaved African American's freedom.

In the first decade of the nineteenth century, state and city law makers passed legislation which reflected the paranoia whites had towards African Americans, both free and enslaved.

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[23] Nicholls, 162.
[24] Nicholls, 155.
[25] Terrier, 36.
[26] Nicholls, 156.

Alexandria was technically part of the new Capital, and therefore only subject to District of

Columbia laws. However, Alexandria's white citizens would abide by Virginia laws when it

suited their aims. Between 1800 and 1820 the population of free African Americans in

Alexandria tripled from 383 to 1168. During this population boom, free African Americans

established two neighborhoods within the city limits. In both neighborhoods, free African

Americans built small homes, tended to domesticated animals in backyards, developed orchards,

ran businesses, and shared communal wells. In the early nineteenth century, free African

Americans were self-employed as seamstresses, coopers, market gardeners, blacksmiths,

boatmen, barbers, hucksters, fishermen, porters, carpenters, soap makers, tavern owners, grocery

owners, and domestics.[27] Those who weren't self employed worked in manufacturing jobs,

making rope, bricks, sugar, and glass on the town's wharfs, fisheries, or in factories. Each year

on New Year's day African American laborers congregated into the west end of Alexandria to

bargain with employers and contractors an opportunity for a year's work.[28]

The first African American neighborhood in Alexandria was known as the Bottoms, later

the Dip. Established in 1798 by two free African American families in two small frame houses

on South Alfred Street, the neighborhood was located in the southwest area of town on swampy,

marginal land. A couple streets over from the Bottoms was a parcel of land owned by Quaker

businessman Mordecai Miller. Miller inherited the parcel, the northwest quarter of the block

bounded by Wolfe and S. Royal St, from his grandmother. While most of his Alexandrian

neighbors had slaves and lived in fear of insurrections, Miller built nine small frame houses on

that block and rented them to free African Americans (Figure 4). When Miller's son Robert

married in 1823, Robert and his wife moved into a property on Wolfe St. where they were

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[27] Cressey, 32.
[28] Hurst, 37.

neighbors with seven free African American families. Robert inherited the land from his father and built additional homes, eventually selling all the homes to the free African Americans who rented them, effectively turning the block into a community of homeowners.[29] Property ownership was symbolic for many free African Americans as a way to obtain a better life, regardless of the racial tension that existed in the antebellum South. Owning land, property, and businesses gave a sense of security, better equipping free African Americans to protect their families, assert their rights in court, and gain the goodwill of whites.[30] When Robert Miller died his obituary in the *Alexandria Gazette* read, "What he thought right that he did with his whole heart."[31] The homes became the foundations for the free African American neighborhood named Hayti.

African Americans built or rented homes that were made of wood or brick. Spanning twenty city blocks, most of the homes in the Bottoms neighborhood were wood frame with wooden clapboard siding. Hayti was more centrally located in town and owned by wealthier free African Americans, who could afford buying or building brick homes (Figure 5). The homes free African Americans built reflected the local building traditions, attitudes, and available materials.[32] For example, George Seaton, a free African American master carpenter, built many buildings and homes throughout the city which he sold or built for other free African American.

Free African American neighborhoods contained both residences and businesses. Unlike the white owned businesses, whose storefronts dotted the Alexandrian streetscape, free African Americans operated businesses out of their homes. Free African American businesses served a

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[29] McCord, T.B., Jr. <u>Across the Fence but a World Apart. The Coleman Site 1795-1907.</u> Alexandria, VA: Alexandria Urban Archaeology Program, 1985, 25-26.
[30] Schweninger, 530.
[31] Cressley, Pamela. "The Miller Family: Quakers and Merchants (108-110 S. St Asaph Street)." Alexandria Archaeology. http://alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/historic/info/archaeology/AR500BlockMiller.pdf accessed September 2011.
[32] National Park Service, "National Register of Historic Places, Multiple Property Documentation Form: African American Historic Resources of Alexandria, Virginia." Section F, Page 19.

primarily white clientele. Popular businesses included barbering, blacksmithing, draying, gardening, shoemaking, and laundering. For example, Violett Nutt and Sophia Williams, both operated successful laundry businesses. Nutt bought her freedom, while Williams sued for hers.[33] Those who owned businesses were especially careful in their relationships. Many free African Americans feared white clientele would perceive their relationships with friends and family in bondage as a threat to social stability. Business owners, who participated and contributed to churches and self help organizations, did so with the knowledge and acquiescence of their white clientele.[34]

As more free African Americans migrated to the city and established homes and businesses, slave owners saw this as an opportunity to get their slaves out of their homes. Urban slave owners rarely owned more than two slaves, making it feasible for slaves to live with their owners. However, this was not a desirable situation, unless the slaves lived in outbuildings. The restricted landscape and economy of Alexandria ensured that whites and free and enslaved African Americans "spatial domains" overlapped.[35] Nevertheless, slave owners strove to insure whites and African Americans remained in their own spheres of work, maintaining racial decorum. Urban slave owners allowed slaves to "live out," often in the homes of free African Americans or in rented homes with other slaves. The concentration of free and enslaved African Americans only exacerbated white's paranoia of a slave rebellion.

In 1804 the General Assembly declared all gatherings of slaves at any meeting house an unlawful activity.[36] While free African Americans were legally free to exercise their right to congregate, the white legislature continued to limit their freedom. In urban settings, where whites

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[33] Nicholls, Michael L. "Strangers Setting Among Us: The Sources and Challenge of the Urban Free Black Population of Early Virginia." *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography,* Vol. 108, No. 2 (2000), 168.
[34] Schweninger, 531.
[35] Vlach, 158.
[36] Jackson, 82.

and African Americans constantly interacted with each other and occupied the same space, whites were unable to distinguish between free African Americans and slaves; this was exacerbated by slaves and free African Americans living and working in the city's neighborhoods.[37] Two years after limiting slave's freedom to congregate, the General Assembly passed a law which permitted private manumissions but required any slave freed after May 1, 1806 to leave the state within a year of their manumission or risk being reenslaved. Few freed slaves abided by this law and Alexandria authorities did not have to enforce it because it was not a law in the District of Columbia. Municipal leaders in Alexandria were fearful of the influx of free slaves from elsewhere in Virginia, and appointed a committee to advise on measures to protect the town from a population increase.[38]

Alexandria's unique legal situation and array of employment options attracted a large population of free African Americans. The end of the international slave trade in 1808 prompted many slaves, with the help of family members and abolitionist societies to sue for their freedom. The Alexandria council passed an ordinance in 1809 requiring free African Americans to possess a "certificate of freedom" and obtain a license from the town council permitting him to reside within the borders of the municipal corporation (Figure 6).[39] Those residing in Hayti and the Bottoms needed a certificate insuring their "good behavior." Their certificate could be revoked at the will of the council if they failed to behave. Free African Americans who lost their certificates became vagrants. In addition to requiring a certificate, free African Americans were prohibited from assembling, unless for religious purposes, and from playing cards, dice, or any game of chance, and could not obtain liquors on Sunday. The legal landscape settled down for the next two decades, and during this period free African American neighborhoods grew steadily. By

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[37] Nicholls, 170.
[38] Nicholls, 178.
[39] Hurst, 38.

1820 free African Americans accounted for fourteen percent of Alexandria's population, slaves for seventeen percent.[40] With few other freedoms available to them, free African Americans and some slaves, looked to religious institutions as a way to congregate, socialize, and establish leadership within their community.

Religious Freedom/Restriction

Several religious denominations opened their doors to free and enslaved African Americans in Alexandria, and facilitated the development of all- African American churches. Membership in antebellum churches came from the city and from the rural areas surrounding the city.[41] Masters brought enslaved workers from the countryside, who were able to interact with free African Americans. Though churches provided an important venue for African American Alexandrians to socialize, social structure within churches were far from equal. Like most Southern congregations, free African Americans and slaves in Alexandria occupied the galleries and rear seats in integrated services. The Quaker, Methodist, and Baptist churches within the town were the first to open their doors to integrated services. Church libraries were often the only place free African Americans had access to books and other reading and educational materials. Quakers were the earliest group to assist free and enslaved African Americans, requiring their members to manumit their slaves. Quaker Edward Stabler also formed the first anti-slavery society in Alexandria, the Alexandria Society for the Relief and Protection of Persons Illegally Held in Bondage. Practicing what they believed, Quakers opened the first Sunday school for free and enslaved African American children in 1796, but were forced to close it in 1801 after the General Assembly passed laws forbidding the education of slaves.

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[40] City of Alexandria, VA. "Discovering the Decades: 1820." Historic Alexandria. http://alexandriava.gov/historic/info/default.aspx?id=28392 accessed September 2011.

[41] Jackson, Luther P. "The Planting of Negro Churches." *The Journal of Negro History,* Vol. 6, No. 2 (April 1931), 188.

The call for a congregation that met the needs of its African American members lead to the establishment of the first all- African American congregation at Davis Chapel, later Roberts Memorial United Methodist Church. Trinity Methodist Church member and prominent merchant William Veitch funded the project. The original building site for the church was abandoned because of white Alexandrian's fear of slave insurrections after the Nat Turner Rebellion. In light of this, church leaders chose a new site on S. Washington Street, in between the Bottoms and Hayti neighborhoods. The two-story brick structure with standing seam metal roof and vernacular basilica sanctuary plan was completed in 1834(Figure 7). Though Davis Chapel was run by a white minister (its namesake) from the mother congregation at Trinity, it had several African American preachers whose influence on the congregations and position as leaders extended from the church and into the African American communities. Davis Chapel also held Sunday school and secular school, which were taught by free African Americans.[42] The District of Columbia did not have laws prohibiting African Americans from operating their own schools, whereas Virginia laws prohibited African Americans from reading and preaching.[43] Again, Alexandria's unique position as part of the District of Columbia facilitated the religious and educational development in African American communities. Davis Chapel also had a library and a missionary society. Between 1790 and 1860 African Americans in Alexandria accounted for one-third to one-half of the city's total Methodist church membership.[44]

African American Baptists in Alexandria found a place to worship at First Baptist Church, established in 1803 by a group of twelve white Alexandrians, on S. Washington Street. First Baptist was integrated from its founding, attracting many slaves who could participate in

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[42] Virginia African American Heritage Program, "Heritage Sites & Organizations: Roberts Memorial United Methodist Church." http://www.aaheritageva.org/search/sites.php?site_id=491
[43] Jackson, 185.
[44] Hurst, 59.

religious exercises.[45] African American Baptist preachers found themselves limited in how much and what they could preach. In 1806 African American members established the Colored Baptist Society of Alexandria, which welcomed both free and enslaved members.[46] In 1818 African American members of First Baptist Church acquired the funds to lease lands from white residents, the Lawasons, members of the Alexandria Baptist Society. On this land, First Baptist erected a small meeting house in 1819, known as the Alfred Street Baptist Church. Like Davis Chapel, they had a white minister, Rev. William Evans, and remained conjoined with the Alexandria Baptist Society. The following year the church started a Sabbath School for both adults and children. In 1830 the church expanded to include a formal school, however after the Nat Turner Rebellion the school was forced to close.[47] After eighteen years of leasing the building under the watchful eye of their mother congregation, the African American congregation purchased the site in 1842. Five years later Alexandria was retroceded to Virginia, and the all African American congregation was once again subject to the laws of Virginia which forbade gatherings. Congregations continued to meet, but only did so if a white member from a mother congregation was present. The church continued operation and in 1850 the Colored Baptist Society was granted independence from Alexandria Baptist Church, giving members complete control over their church. Five years later, African American craftsmen designed and built the original sanctuary, and the mortgage was paid off in 1857(Figure 8).[48] Historian Luther P. Jackson describes the typical pattern of antebellum African American church establishment: "The free Negro trustees of certain churches purchased their own land, received a deed for it, and

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[45] Jackson, 199.
[46] Alfred Street Baptist Church, "Church History." http://www.alfredstreet.org/asbc-history.htm
[47] Virginia African American Heritage Program, "Heritage Site & Organizations.: Alfred Street Baptist Church." http://www.aaheritageva.org/search/sites.php?site_id=495
[48] Ibid.

afterwards built houses of worship on it out of funds raised themselves."[49] Again, as seen with residential property, property ownership was paramount for free African American to assert their power within society. Religion provided an important outlet for African American community members, giving them the opportunity to become leaders in their communities. "The man who is, therefore passed over in every-day secular affairs, turns to an organization in which he find that very expression which is otherwise denied him."[50]

Educational Opportunities

Free African Americans also gained the opportunity to be leaders in their community through education. During the period of time when Alexandria was a part of the District of Columbia, free and enslaved Alexandrians had opportunities to gain an education through several venues. Churches provided both religious and secular instruction and businesses and shops provided instruction in crafts and trades. Under District laws it was legal for a white person to educate free and enslaved African Americans.

Though there is sparse documentation, African American were also able to obtain education through schools held in the private homes of residents. Private residence schools used one or two rooms in the house as class rooms. Four of the earliest private schools were operating before the War of 1812. Two schools were run by white women out of their homes; one named Mrs. Cameron's was on the corner of Fairfax and Duke St and Mrs. Tutten's on the corner of Pitt and Prince Streets. Two schools were run by free African Americans out of their homes; Joseph Ferrell out of his home located on an alley street in between Duke and Prince Street and Sylvia

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[49] Jackson, 193.
[50] Jackson, 198.

Morris out of her home on S. Washington Street.[51] After the restrictive laws passed in the 1830s limited the ability of African Americans to congregate, smaller educational institutions allowed African Americans to hide their educational activities. African American run schools were often located on the inner fringes of African American neighborhoods. [52]

After the War of 1812, an association of free African Americans founded a free school on the third floor of Alexandria Academy (Figure 9). The association's membership consisted of "the most substantial colored people of the city."[53] Reverand James H. Hanson, a Methodist minister, conducted classes in the Academy from 1812 through 1823, when the school was sold. Over 300 students attended the school, and it fostered an appreciation for education which free African Americans instilled in the city's youth after the schools closure. One of Hanson's pupils, Alfred Parry, saw the need for education in his community and became a teacher and opened his own night school in the 1830s, in violation of laws that forbad teaching free African Americans and enslaved people. Perry was eventually forced to close his night school in 1837, after the General Assembly passed a law prohibiting the assembly of free African Americans at night. To skirt the law, Perry hired a white man to be present during the day, and opened Mount Hope Academy on Duke and Wolfe St., as a day school. The school remained open for the education of free and enslaved African Americans until 1843 when Perry moved to Washington, DC.[54] Multiple white churches also offered free day schools to African American children, such as a Quaker school taught by Benjamin Davis, and a Catholic school, St. Francis Xavier Academy,

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[51] Katz, William Loren, ed. "History of School for the Colored Population**."** The American Negro: His History and Literature. Arno Press, Inc. 1969, P. 273

[52] National Park Service, "National Register of Historic Places, Multiple Property Documentation Form: African American Historic Resources of Alexandria, Virginia." Section E, Page 9.

[53] Ibid, Section E, Page 9.

[54] Virginia African American Heritage Program, "Heritage Sites & Organizations: Alexandria Academy." http://www.aaheritageva.org/search/sites.php?site_id=458

run by the Sisters of Charity.[55] The laws that limited African Americans' freedom, though

enforced by Alexandria officials, were seldom followed. Free African Americans simply hid

their schools, and both adults and children concealed the fact that they could read and write from

whites.
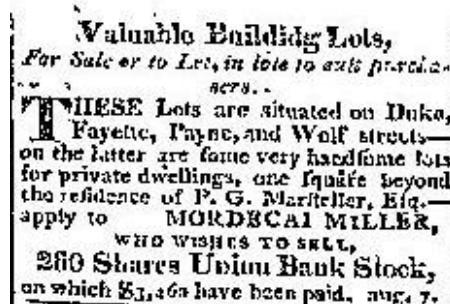
Figure 3: *Alexandria Gazette*, Advertisement for Miller Property c.1813
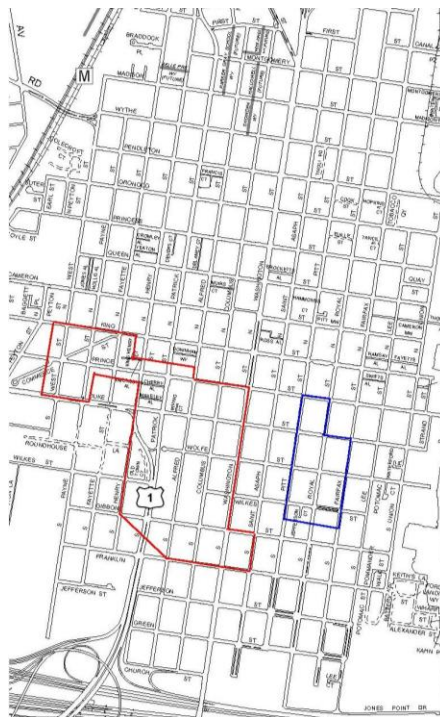
Figure 4: Map of the Bottoms (Red) and Hayti (Blue) Boundaries in Old Town Alexandria

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[55] Allen, Gloria Seaman. "Equally Their Due: Female Education in Antebellum Alexandria," *Historic Alexandria Quarterly*. Summer 1996, Vol. 1 No.2, pg. 8.

Figure 5: Davis Chapel, 2011

Figure 6: Historic Marker for Alfred St. Baptist Church, 2011
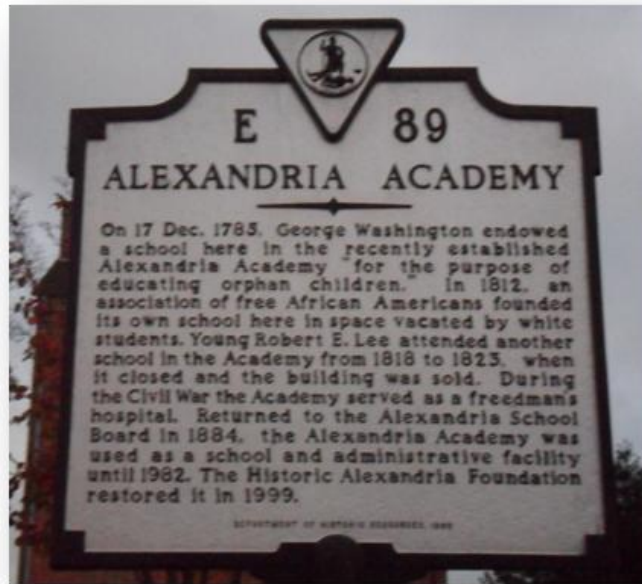
Figure 7: Historic Marker for Alexandria Academy, 2011

Chapter IV. Alexandria Prior to Retrocession 1831-1847

As free African American neighborhoods flourished during the early nineteenth century due to the influx of freed slaves, the economy experienced many ups and downs. Alexandrians blamed the unsteady economy on the District of Columbia's government favoring Washington City. For free African Americans who depended upon commerce, recessions could make or break businesses. Community members relied upon each other to make it through difficult times. In January 1827 Alexandria experienced a devastating fire which destroyed forty homes and several stores and warehouses. Alexandria rebuilt over the years, and in the 1830s the economy was thriving again. New industries, like fishing, helped the economy. The economy also thrived because of the lucrative slave trading operation run by the Franklin and Armfield firm (Figure 10).

In 1831, slave bondsman and preacher Nat Turner led a rebellion in Southern Virginia. The rebellion killed fifty whites, and sent shock waves through the nation. White Virginians reacted to this rebellion by calling a state-wide convention to discuss slavery. Free African Americans in Alexandria witnessed the distrust of whites, even though they had been neighbors for decades. In response to the fears of white neighbors, forty-three free African Americans signed a petition which stated they would be informants if slaves planned a rebellion in Alexandria. The petition, presented to the mayor of Alexandria noted that they would, "defending the authorities of the town and community against whatsoever enemy should rise up against them and … promptly give public information of any plot, design, or conspiracy that might come to their knowledge to Disturb the peace and jeopardize the safety of the

community." [56] Despite efforts of free African Americans, the General Assembly passed a law prohibiting African American ministers from preaching to their congregations without a white minister present, and only allowed services to be held during the day. In 1832 the General Assembly passed a law prohibiting slaves and free African Americans from writing or printing anything advising people of color to commit insurrections or rebellion.[57] Restrictive laws continued throughout the 1830s, clamping down on the freedoms of African Americans.

During the 1840s, Alexandria council members started a movement to gather support for the retrocession of the city back to Virginia. Alexandria remained a thriving port, the ninth busiest in the nation. The 1840s was a decade of increasing industrialization for the port. The Alexandria Canal project was completed in 1845, tying the city to the Chesapeake and Ohio canal, and two shipyards, two iron foundries, a cotton factory, large cabinet making shops, a coach making factory, and the largest brewery in the South all set up shop in Alexandria. Early efforts supporting retrocession failed, but by 1846 support had grown as Alexandrians were tired of Congress' restrictive banking policies and their lack of representation in Congress. In September of 1846, a referendum was held in Alexandria, the vote to retrocede won, and in March of 1847 the District of Columbia retroceded Alexandria to Virginia.

After retrocession Alexandria became a city subject to the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Once a haven for free African Americans to live, work, and establish communities, Alexandria officials cracked down on free African Americans who continued to follow the freedoms allowed them under the District's laws. Free African Americans who wished to remain in the city were forced to attend a hearing to determine if they possessed "good character" and

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[56] National Park Service, "National Register of Historic Places, Multiple Property Documentation Form: African American Historic Resources of Alexandria, Virginia." Section E, Page 3.
[57] Peters, Joan W. "An Introduction to Black Laws of Virginia." From *Black Laws of Virginia* by June Guild, 1995.

were peaceable, sober, orderly, and industrious person[s]."[58] Secular schools and religious

Sunday schools, like those conducted at Davis Chapel, were forced to close and free African

Americans had to observe a 10pm curfew in public spaces. Although Virginia laws of the 1830s

restricted the freedoms of African American to congregate and teach, religious, educational and

social activities were conducted under secretive conditions.

Retrocession did not mean the end of free African American neighborhoods, in fact, from

1847 until the Civil War, Hayti and the Bottoms continued to grow, and other neighborhoods

were established. Retrocession did mean a shift in lifestyle for most free African Americans.

Freedoms they enjoyed during the period when Alexandria was part of the District of Columbia,

were quickly stripped away. The Civil War, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow eras ushered in

different settlement patterns for both whites and African Americans, segregating them, and

shifted African Americans' business clientele from primarily white, to only African American.

After retrocession additional African American neighborhoods developed and thrived in

Alexandria. The history of those neighborhoods is represented on the landscape and incorporated

into the official narrative. The narrative of vibrant communities like Hayti and the Bottoms is

lost in Alexandria's history, overshadowed by larger historical themes, and a value system

dominated by military and political history. Until recently, preservation activities in Alexandria

focused on preserving structures that attributed their significant to that official narrative.

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[58] National Park Service, "National Register of Historic Places, Multiple Property Documentation Form: African American Historic Resources of Alexandria, Virginia." Section E, Page 2.
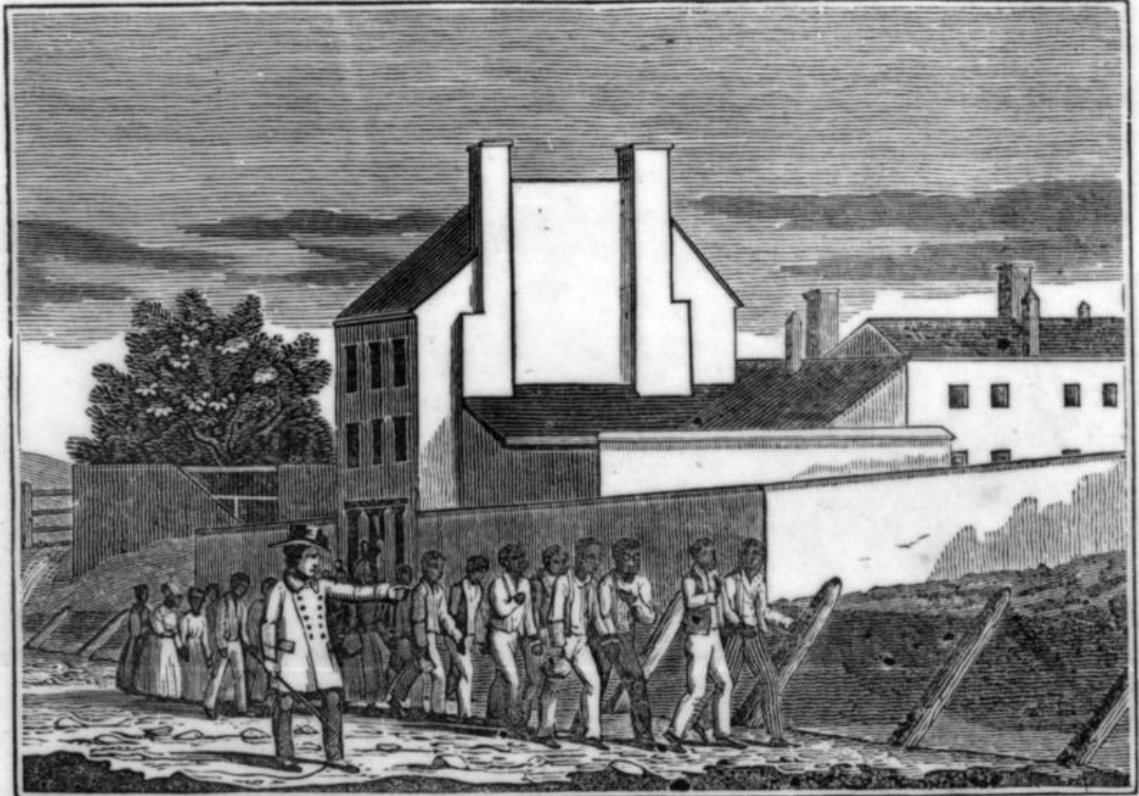
Figure 8: Depiction of Franklin and Armfield Office and Slave Pen, 1836 , William Dorr, Published by the American Anti-Slavery Society. (Courtesy of the Library of Congress)

Chapter V. Preservation Movement in Alexandria

Historic preservation efforts in Alexandria flourished during the twentieth century, in part as a reaction to the national preservation movement, growth in government during World War II, and rapidly expanding development and urban renewal. Over the past thirty years, the focus of preservation in Alexandria has shifted from only considering significant architecture, to the preservation of communities and history of people. Preservation in Alexandria began early in the twentieth century. Interest in buildings and the history of the people who inhabited them was stimulated by the restoration of George Washington's Mount Vernon, by the Mount Vernon Ladies Association in 1858 and by the nation's centennial celebrations in 1876. In 1889 the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities was formed, establishing the nation's first statewide historic preservation group. Americans began collecting items as a way to show their patriotism and wealth. Collectors, and later preservationists, focused their efforts on items and structures that were associated with famous people or events, particularly those related to the Revolution and early national period. Structures that represented histories of ethnic minorities were believed to be "not of broad public interest or importance."[59] Alexandria was certainly no exception to this trend, quickly advertising itself as the hometown of George Washington. In 1903, citizens formed the Society for the Restoration of Historic Alexandria, which bought and "restored" individual properties for "public educational purposes."[60] Several structures received plaques from the Society, memorializing the buildings' direct connection with George Washington. When the news of Rockefeller's plan to restore Colonial Williamsburg broke in late

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[59] Hayden, Dolores. "Placemaking, Preservation and Urban History." *Journal of Architectural Education.* Vol. 41, No. 3 "Urban History in the 1980s." Spring 1988. p.46.

[60] Smith, Peter H. "The Beginnings of Historic Preservation in Alexandria- Moving Toward the Creation of the Old and Historic District." *The Alexandria Chronicle¸* Alexandria Historical Society, Inc. Winter 1996, Vol. IV, No. 4., p.2.

1928, a plan which included buffer zones the a restoration area for visual protection, Alexandria

residents began the political push for the preservation of their own colonial town.

The Alexandria Chamber of Commerce was the first institution to make steps towards a city-

wide preservation plan. Chairman of the Chamber's Committee on Architecture, DuBois

Brookings, devised a proposal called *Alexandria's Architectural Charm and How to Preserve It.*

This proposal encouraged growth in Alexandria that would not detract from the city's

architectural charm. In 1929, the city and the Federal government reached an agreement to route

the proposed George Washington Memorial Parkway along South Washington Street directly

through the city, which would stimulate the local economy by bringing tourists through the city

on their way to Mount Vernon. The Chairman of the Fine Arts Committee used Brookings

proposal to justify the preservation of historic structures along the proposed parkway route, and

suggested that new structures should replicate "colonial traditions."[61] Even the Federal

government was onboard with the preservation effort, requiring the town to create specific

zoning measures to maintain the "memorial character of the parkway."[62] The preservation fever

cooled quickly when the stock market crashed in October 1929, and the Chamber of Commerce

shifted its focus to attracting industry to Alexandria, rather than attracting tourists.

Despite the crash, the city and citizen-led preservation societies continue to steer the

course of preservation. A year after the crash, the Garden Club of Alexandria began a letter

writing campaign against the sale and destruction of city landmarks. The city quickly reacted,

hiring Irving Root, a city planner from the National Capital Parks and Planning Commission, to

create a master plan and zoning ordinance for the city. Passed in 1931, the zoning ordinance

relied heavily on preservation tenets, mandating all new construction, additions to buildings and

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[61] Smith, 3.
[62] Ibid, 4.

signs be reviewed and approved by both the zoning and planning commission and the city

council. The master plan had similar requirements, such as, new construction needed to

harmonize with the old and maintain the colonial atmosphere of the community. The American

Legion undertook a three year renovation project to save one celebrated historic Alexandrian

structure, Gadsby's Tavern. The legion bought the building in 1929 to preserve it from

demolition. The reopening was a grand affair, including a costume ball celebrating the

bicentennial of George Washington's birth.

In 1932, several events occurred which demonstrated the growing awareness of the need for

preservation and using it as a tool for economic growth. The George Washington Memorial

Parkway opened in 1932, connecting Washington, D.C. to Mount Vernon, through Alexandria.

Author of the master plan, Irving Root, described the construction of the parkway as an

opportunity to put "our city on display" and encouraged the city to use zoning as a tool to ensure

the historic character was maintained along the road. A private organization, the Alexandrian

Association was formed to act as an advocate for preservation, accomplishing tasks such as

improving the physical environment of the city, stopping industrial development along the

waterfront and eliminating polluting industries. In 1933, the Federal government established the

first Federal preservation program. The Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) was

created to document America's architectural heritage, its creation fueled by growing concern of

the rapid disappearance of historic and architectural resources, as a job creation program during

the Depression, as well as private preservation efforts occurring in Williamsburg and through the

Society for Preservation of New England Antiquities. HABS created many preservation

strategies still used today such as surveying, listing, compiling documentation on historic

properties, development of comprehensive contextual information, and establishing national

standards for documentation. HABS documentation of Alexandria's architecture began in 1936

and continued through the 1960s. During a three-year span between 1936-1938 thirty-three

buildings were photographed, and eight of those buildings received full documentation,

including plans, elevations, and details (Figure 11). HABS work fostered an awareness among

Alexandrians of the national significance of the structures within the city, and gave them

guidelines and standards to complete preservation work.

With an active master plan in place, citizens began participating in the preservation

discussion. The *Alexandria Gazette*, the city's oldest newspaper, published a large supplement to

the newspaper in 1937 featuring editorials which propagandized preservation efforts as a way to

stimulate the city's economy. The Alexandria Association wrote letters to city council and

Maryland National Capital Parks and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) when new construction

or renovations projects within the city looked too modern. They also contacted companies, like

Sears, Roebuck and Company, when it was rumored a company was going to build a retail store,

to make sure the company knew that their stores must follow eighteenth-century building

tradition. Individual preservation efforts continued during World War II, but most formal

institutional efforts were temporarily halted.

During World War II the number of government workers grew, and so did Washington

suburbs. Alexandria quickly became a "bedroom community," adding new housing specifically

for workers of the war effort. The war effort brought thousands of workers to the district,

including designers and architects, who wrote articles and books on the architecture in

Alexandria in their spare time. In addition to worker housing, National Airport was constructed

on Alexandria's northern edge. With the influx of people and new development, Alexandria

residents feared the historic character of the neighborhoods would be irreparably altered. Several

lots were rezoned from residential to commercial along the George Washington Memorial Parkway. The National Park Service and MNCPPC threatened to condemn and demolish properties along the Parkway, which was under their jurisdiction. NPS also threatened to construct an elevated road along the waterfront, to avoid traffic on the parkway caused by the city's rezoning measures. An elevated road would take business out of the community by rerouting traffic and destroy sources of revenue for the city. The city quickly responded by establishing the Old and Historic Alexandria District Ordinance in 1946, modeled off the Charleston, South Carolina, which had the nation's first historic district. While citizens objected to certain rezoning proposals, for commercial entities that would alter the interior of historic structures, since he ordinance only protected facades. Commercial entities objected to the ordinance because it limited what they were able to do with their own property. The Old and Historic Alexandria district was the third historic district in the United States and protects all buildings dated 1846 or older from demolition or renovation out of character with its history or surroundings. Since its passage, the ordinance is amended regularly.

Development continued around the historic district, on the George Washington Memorial Parkway, the Capital Beltway, and the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. In 1954 a group of concerned citizens formed the Historic Alexandria Foundation to, "preserve, protect and restore structures of historic and architectural interest in and associated with the City of Alexandria, Virginia, to preserve antiquities and generally to foster and promote interest in Alexandria's heritage." [63] The Foundation's first project was a comprehensive survey of the city's early buildings, which resulted in the publication of *Historic Alexandria, Street by Street: A Survey of Existing Early Buildings* (Figure 12). Historic Alexandria Foundation also created several historic preservation

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[63]Historic Alexandria Foundation, "Our History: A Thumbnail History of the Historic Alexandria Foundation." http://historicalalexandriafoundation.org/about/history.aspx

programs including a plaque administration program for historic homes, securing grants for historic preservation, information and legal assistants for donating easements, and assistance for homeowners on care for historic properties (Figure 13).

Like most American cities, urban renewal came to Alexandria and planners sought to redevelop downtown or Old Town. Through use of its Historic District ordinance, zoning, and strong preservation advocacy, the Historic Alexandria Foundation with the support of the Old Town Civic Association, successfully lobbied to limit the scope of the Urban Renewal project to only three blocks along King St. [64] The Smithsonian Institution conducted archaeological investigations on the redeveloped blocks on King Street from 1965-1973 (Figure 14). Though urban renewal destroyed three blocks of Old Town's main business center, several landmarks were saved, and the preservation movement gained support. In 1966, the National Historic Preservation Act was passed. That same year, Alexandria was nominated as a National Historic Landmark for its examples of eighteen[th] and nineteen[th] century urban architecture: "while the historic district of Alexandria does contain many individual buildings of national significance, the district as a whole is extremely important as it is one of the very few urban areas in the state where enough of the old buildings have survived so that one can grasp a sense of early town environment."[65] Two years later Alexandria was listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register.

The preservation movement began to shift in Alexandria during the 1970s as the city's archaeological office, Alexandria Archaeology, continuing the work they did with the Smithsonian downtown Old Town, also began archaeological investigations in other parts of the city. In 1975 the City established the Alexandria Archaeological Commission, the first of its

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[64] Ibid.
[65] National Register of Historic Places Inventory- Nomination Form, "Alexandria." United States Department of the Interior-National Park Service. Nov. 11, 1966.

kind in the United States. Alexandria Archaeology began collecting and managing artifacts from

archaeological sites, many of those artifacts once belonging to Alexandria's earliest inhabitants.

From 1978 to 1981 the office conducted an urban survey, focusing on Native American sites and

early African American neighborhoods, excavating the Bottoms in 1979 and Hayti in 1980

(Figure 15).

During the 1980s preservation of archaeological resources continued to gain a wide range of

support, and preservation groups used the artifacts collected to document vernacular buildings,

social and cultural history, and the preservation of neighborhoods within the city. One example

was the Alexandria Society for the Preservation of Black Heritage (ASPBH), which formed in

1980. The Society's first project was the preservation of the Alfred Street Baptist Church, which

Alexandria Archaeology excavated in 1991. In 1983 the Society joined forces with the Alumni

Association of Parker-Gray School to petition the city council to create a historic district in the

Uptown neighborhood. One year later, the Parker-Gray Historic District ordinance was created,

becoming the city's first African American historic district and the second regulated historic

district (Figure 16). ASPBH and the Parker-Gray Alumni also created the Alexandria Black

History Research Center in the formerly segregated Robert Robinson Library. By 1987 the city's

Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA) offered to place the research center under the direction of

the OHA, providing funding for staff and a larger building. The new building became the

Alexandria Black History Museum completed in 1989. The City also enacted an Archaeological

Protection Ordinance in 1989, protecting archaeological resources threatened by development.

Though preservation was becoming more inclusive and the city was offering more resources for

historical research, all the sites listed on the Virginia and National Registers throughout the

1980s were examples of significant architecture, associated with a famous person, or an historic event.

In 1992, the city created a new master plan, replacing the seventy-year-old plan that saved much of the city during Urban Renewal and provided economic justification for the preservation of architectural resources. The new plan contained an entire chapter dedicated to historic preservation, exploring the need for identification and designation of structures outside of the two historic districts. Irving Root, the author of the 1931 master plan, flirted with the idea of preserving viewscapes along the George Washington Memorial Parkway, but did so informally in town meetings, not in the 1931 master plan. In the 1992 plan preservation was again justified as a means for increased tourism, and therefore revenue for the town. The plan proposed 4 goals; 1) to identify historic resources through Alexandria 2) to protect and preserve historic resources through sensitive management that prevents their destruction, damage, and neglect 3) to guide development in a manner that is compatible with the historic character and resources of the site and surrounding neighborhood 4) to promote public awareness and appreciation of historic resources in Alexandria. [66] For the majority of the twentieth century, historic preservation in Alexandria, and the nation as a whole, focused on the preservation of buildings of architectural significance. In Alexandria preservation efforts focused on large homes, social and religious establishments frequented by colonial elite, as well as sites of engineering and commerce and trade significance.

The first part of this project discussed the thriving free African American communities that existed in Alexandria before the Civil War, however, from the preservation efforts described in the second half of the project, those neighborhoods were absent from the historical narrative and

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[66] City of Alexandria, VA. "Historic Preservation." *Alexandria Master Plan.* Alexandria, VA, Adopted 1992.

historic landscape until the beginning of the twenty-first century. The next section will analyze

the representation of free African American neighborhoods during the time period Alexandria

was part of the District of Columbia. There are also extensive preservation projects throughout

Alexandria on African American sites from the Civil War, through segregation, and during the

Civil Rights movement, but those efforts fall outside of the scope of this project.

Figure 9: Historic American Building Survey, 103-133 Prince Street, Alexandria, VA. 1933
(Courtesy of the Library of Congress, http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-
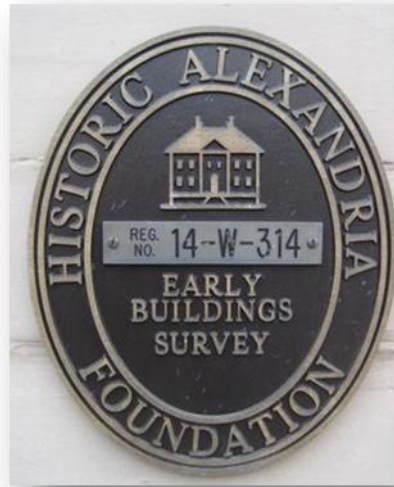bin/query/D?hh:22:./temp/~ammem_666d)

Figure 10: Historic Alexandria Foundation, Early Building Survey Plaque
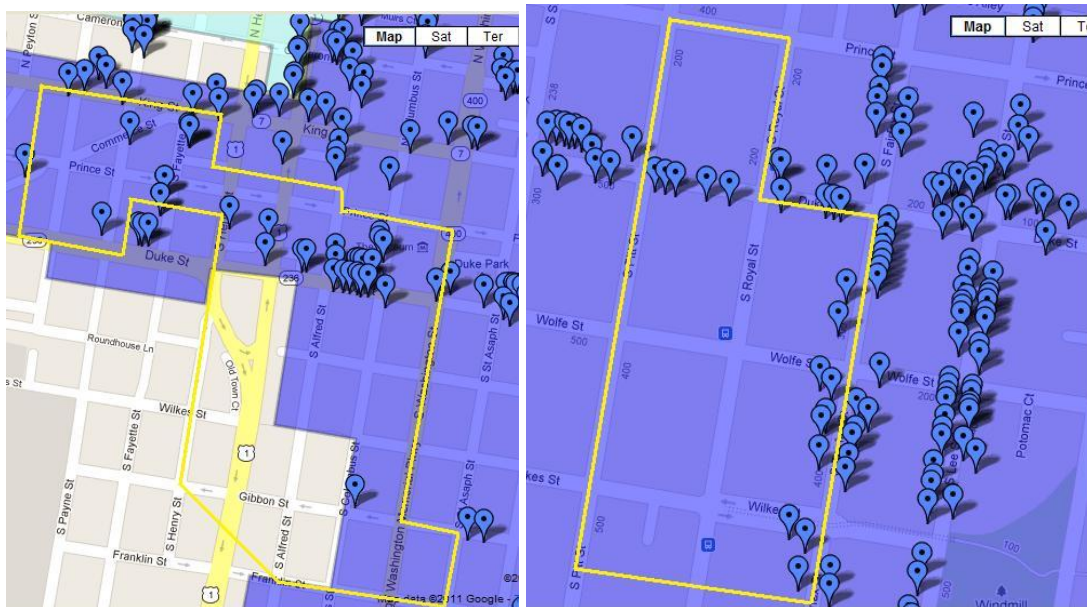

Figure 11: Historic Alexandria Foundation, Early Building Survey Plaqued Houses (Figure on the left is the Bottoms outlined in yellow, figure on the right is Hayti outline in yellow)

Chapter VI. Preservation Analysis

Preservation is a value-driven process that operates in a bureaucratic world. Preservation has been used as a tool by, "politicians seeking fame or favor, businessmen exploiting the commercial advantages of specific locations, and architectural critics establish their own careers by promoting specific persons or styles."[67] Many of the preservation efforts in Alexandria have results from all the examples above. The earliest preservation efforts within Alexandria focused on saving buildings associated with military and political figures, as well as examples of early Federal and Georgian architecture. Efforts to save these structures were driven by patriotic values and fear of losing ties to the colonial period. Historical and preservation values shifted in the United States starting in the 1960s and 1970s as a result of the Civil Rights and feminist movements. Structures associated with military and political events and people are still preserved, but the focus of preservation shifted to value structures that are representative of American social and urban history. Alexandria exemplifies this shift. For the past fifty years, the city's archeological and historical offices incorporated the exploration social and cultural history into their mission. Historic preservation efforts in the city facilitate by the Office of Historic Alexandria, shifted to neighborhood-based initiatives through the city's 1992 Master Plan.

Listed Properties Associated with Early African American Neighborhoods of the Bottoms and Hayti- 1960-1990

Many of the grand structures nominated to the registers from 1960 to1990, the Lyceum, Carlyle House, Christ Church, and Lloyd House to name a few, were constructed by slaves living in Alexandria. These structures, varying in significance based on their architectural history, commercial history, or association to a person or event, were places where slaves lived and worked, but hardly reflected the neighborhoods where slaves attended church or lived-out, in the

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[67] Hayden, 46.

homes of free African Americans. Much of the narrative about African Americans in Alexandria focuses on those people who were living in bondage. Few structures were nominated to the National or Virginia Landmark Registers that represented life in the early free African American communities of Hayti and the Bottoms, even though both neighborhoods lie within the Old and Historic District (Figure 17). In fact, only two structures nominated to the registers during that thirty year period had ties to the free African American community. The Franklin and Armfield Office and slave pen is significant for many reasons, one reason being the fact that the building representative of the fears free African Americans had for potential re-enslavement living in a white controlled society. The Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Shop completely loses the importance to the African American communities within its National Register nomination, which derives its significance from commerce and medicine.

Franklin and Armfield Office: Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978 and becoming a National Historic Landmark in the same year, the Franklin and Armfield Offices were home to one of the nation's largest slave trading firms (Figure 18). The office, an L-shaped, Adamesque style three-story structure, is located at 1315 Duke Street within the boundaries of the Bottoms neighborhood.[68] The office operated from 1828-1836, imprisoning slaves in a walled pen behind the office while they waited to be sold down to New Orleans and Natchez. The office specialized in buying slaves from Northern Virginia and surrounding areas and selling them in the deep South for a large profit. The building became a jail during the Civil War, the Alexandria Hospital after the war, and was then converted to apartments; it was renovated as offices in 1984. The building was nominated to the National Register and as a National Historic Landmark because of its significance to the history of American commerce and trade. In the

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[68] Virginia African American Heritage Program, "Heritage Sites and Organizations: Franklin & Armfield Offices." http://www.aaheritageva.org/search/sites.php?site_id=476 *accessed November 2011.*

early 2000s the building was bought by the North Virginia Urban League which established the Freedom House Museum. The museum received a Save America's Treasures grant in 2005 for over $73,000 and a special projects grant from Department of Housing and Urban Development. The museum aims to, "preserve the story of the thousands of men, women, and children who passed through these walls on a harrowing journey to lives of bondage and hard labor in the deep South." [69]   Though the museum strives to tell the story of enslaved African Americans who were held in bondage in the building, it does not include the narrative of those living with the building in their neighborhood. Free African Americans detained without certificates of freedom risked being enslaved. In actuality, the Office and slave pen served as a constant reminder to the free African Americans in the Bottoms neighborhood of the fragility of their freedom.

Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Shop: Located on 105 South Fairfax Street, two blocks outside of the Hayti neighborhood, the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Shop was owned by Quaker Edward Stabler who rented the building in 1796 (Figure 19). By 1805, Stabler purchased the 105 S. Fairfax building and then expanded his operation in 1829 by purchasing the adjacent building at107 S. Fairfax St. Originally from Philadelphia, where he was exposed to the antislavery movement within the Quaker faith, Stabler quickly established the Society for the Relief of People Illegally Held in Bondage, which sued for the freedom of enslaved individuals, when their legal status was in doubt.[70] Stabler himself purchased many enslaved individuals and freed them. This apothecary business remained successful for a century and was managed within the family until 1933 when it declared bankruptcy. The Landmarks Society of Alexandria

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[69] Freedom House Museum, "Legacy of Triumph, Foundation of Future." http://freedomhousemuseum.org/ *accessed November 2011*

[70] Alexandria Convention & Visitors Association, "A Remarkable and Courageous Journey: A Guide to Alexandria's African American History." http://alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/historic/info/blackhistory/BHCourageousJourney.pdf accessed September 2011.

purchased the building in 1933 and renovated it with the help of restoration architect Thomas Waterman, turning it into a museum. The museum was listed on the Virginia Landmark Register in March 1981 and National Register in November 1982, for its significance to American commerce, health/medicine, and for its architecture. The Museum received a Save America's Treasures Grant in 2005 for over $49,000. One year later the Landmarks Society turned ownership of the building over to the City of Alexandria.[71] Missing from the significance is the shop's importance to the development of Hayti and the Bottoms. Owner Edward Stabler contributed to the development of both neighborhoods through his practice of emancipating slaves, a practice dependent on the success of his business. Many slaves freed by Stabler later became residents of the neighborhoods. Stabler also developed of the Society for the Relief of People Illegally Held in Bondage, which brought awareness of the anti-slavery movement to Alexandria.

Listed Properties Associated with Early African American Neighborhoods of the Bottoms and Hayti- 1990-2000

In recent years African American history in the larger Alexandria narrative has flourished and the representation of early African American neighborhoods, structures, and prominent citizens is being incorporated on the city's landscape. Several structures have been preserved and nominated to the National Register and the Virginia Landmark Register and several walking tours and trails were developed to share that narrative with Alexandria residents and visitors. Individuals, city offices, and the state run programs have all contributed to the continually evolving narrative. The city's Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA) is perhaps the biggest contributor to the historic preservation efforts for antebellum African American structures and

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[71] City of Alexandria, "Apothecary History." http://alexandriava.gov/historic/apothecary/default.aspx?id=36978 *accessed November 2011.*

sites. In 1994 the OHA prepared a National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form for African American historic resources in Alexandria; the nomination was updated in 2000 and 2001. Properties nominated were significantly important to the growth of Alexandria's African American community from 1790-1953 and represented one of three contexts, educational, residential, or communal. Because of urban renewal, gentrification, and development, most of the original wooden structures within the neighborhoods of the Bottoms and Hayti are gone. However, four existing structures from those neighborhoods were listed on the multiple property documentation form.

Alfred Street Baptist Church: Located in the Bottoms, Alfred Street Baptist Church was the first all- African American Baptist church in Alexandria, in the oldest African American neighborhood in Alexandria (Figure 20). OHA nominated the church, meeting the National Register Criterion A, "property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history." [72] Though the two-story brick structure that stands on the lot today was built in 1855, its significant date is listed as "1818" on the nomination form. The site's use as a religious and educational gathering place began in 1818, when the Colored Baptist Society built a smaller wooden structure on the site. The original structure was torn down and replaced in 1855 by the two-story brick structure. In the 1880s a new vestibule and Romanesque Revival façade were added on the east, and an organ chamber on the west. In 1980 the Society for the Preservation of Black Heritage formed with the specific purpose of rehabilitating the church. By 1994, renovation efforts were in full swing, preserving the historic sanctuary, but creating a larger sanctuary addition as well as lowering the basement floor level several feet and inserting an additional floor in the two-story sanctuary space. The

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[72] National Park Service. National Register of Historic Places- Registration Form, "Alfred Street Baptist Church." Completed by Elizabeth Calvit, and Barbara Ballentine for the Office of Historic Alexandria, August 1994, updated 2001

church was listed on the Virginia Landmark Register in September 2003 and the National Register in January 2004.

Davis Chapel (Roberts Memorial United Methodist Church): Also located in the Bottoms, Davis Chapel, later renamed Roberts Memorial United Methodist Church was erected in 1834 (Figure 21). Like the Alfred Street Baptist Church, Davis Chapel meets National Register Criterion A, "property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history."[73] Built as a two-story, brick, vernacular Gothic Revival-style structure, with standing-seam metal roof, and vernacular basilica plan with a raised platform, the church was renovated in 1894, adding a new façade, entrance, narthex, and stained glass window. Roberts Memorial United Methodist Church is the oldest African American church building in Alexandria, as well as the site for one of the oldest schools in the city. The church's patrons included many prominent African American businessmen, such as Moses Hepburn, who owned several properties throughout Alexandria. The architectural history of the building demonstrates "the evolution of the building from 1834-1953."[74] Roberts Memorial United Methodist Church was listed on the Virginia Landmark Register in September 2003 and the National Register in January 2004.

George Lewis Seaton House: This three-bay, two-story, side-hall-plan brick rowhouse was constructed during the Civil War in the Hayti neighborhood. The significance associated with the house is not solely based on its architectural history but rather its association with the person who occupied it (Figure 22). The house meets the National Register Criterion A, "property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our

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[73] National Park Service. National Register of Historic Places- Registration Form. "Davis Chapel." Completed by Elizabeth Calvit, for the Office of Historic Alexandria, August 1994.
[74] National Park Service. National Register of Historic Places- Registration Form. "Davis Chapel." Completed by Elizabeth Calvit, for the Office of Historic Alexandria, August 1994. Section 8 page 4.

history," Criterion B, "property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past," and Criterion C, "property has yielded or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history."[75] George Lewis Seaton, a master carpenter, who was also a civic and political leader with the African American community, bought the structure in 1866. Seaton constructed several homes and civic buildings in Alexandria from 1850 to 1870 and also managed a grocery store in the center of town. The period of significance for the home is listed as 1795-1881. Though Seaton only lived in the home from 1871 through his death in 1881, archaeological investigations on the grounds yielded several artifacts from the first half of the nineteenth century.   The Hayti neighborhood began in the early 1800s as an African American neighborhood, and after the Civil War, new construction on the lots in Hayti created nicer building stock. Archaeological discoveries may "represent the earliest record of material culture for free African Americans in Alexandria."[76] Hayti remained an African American neighborhood through the redevelopment during and after the Civil War, attracting prominent African American business owners and leaders, who could afford high-cost property. The house is an example of the evolution of the neighborhood, reminder of the contribution Seaton made to Alexandria, as well as the representation of residential life for Alexandria's prominent African American citizens. The George Lewis Seaton House was listed on the Virginia Landmark Register in September 2003 and the National Register in January 2004.

Moses Hepburn Row Houses: Four brick row houses built by Moses Hepburn, a prominent Alexandria African American businessman, sometime during the 1850s, are located in a neighborhood called the Berg (Figure 23). The Berg was established after Alexandria was

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[75] National Park Service. National Register of Historic Places- Registration Form., "George Lewis Seaton House." Completed by Elizabeth Calvit, for the Office of Historic Alexandria, August 1994, revised by Pamela Cressey, Francine Bromberg, and Steven Shephard, November 2001.

[76] Ibid.

retroceded from the District of Columbia. The four units were originally identical; however 206 N. Pitt St. was updated in the late nineteenth century with Victorian decorative elements. Similar to the George Lewis Seaton house, these row houses derive their significance from their association with a person, rather than architectural significance, meeting National Register Criterion A and B "property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history," and "property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past."[77] Moses Hepburn was a prominent African American businessman, who was the son of William Hepburn, a white businessman, and his slave and mistress Esther. Moses' aunt, Hannah Jackson, bought Esther and her children from William Hepburn, and freed them. William supported his children throughout his life, including sending Moses to school in Philadelphia, and left Moses much of his estate in his will. Moses became an entrepreneur, buying and selling properties, and civic leader, as one of the nine men to purchase the property that became the founding of Davis Chapel. The North Pitt St. properties were purchased from Quaker Robert Miller in 1850; Miller was the man who aided the creation of Hayti by renting and selling properties to free African Americans throughout the first three decades of the nineteenth century. The period of significance for these properties is listed on the nomination form as 1850-1853. Moses bought the land and constructed row houses after Alexandria was retroceeded from the District of Columbia to Virginia. Laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia were incredibly restrictive against African Americans, and Hepburn's ability to operate as a businessman during this period, "illustrates his depth of character and determination as a well as his standing in the community."[78] These row houses represent the ability of African Americans

77 National Park Service. National Register of Historic Places- Registration Form. "Moses Hepburn Rowhouses." Completed by Elizabeth Calvit, Francine Bromberg, and Barbara Ballentine for the Office of Historic Alexandria, August 1994, revised October 2000, and Summer 2001.

78 Ibid.

to overcome hardships during the nineteenth century, and operate successful businesses and the ability to acquire land. The Moses Hepburn Row houses were listed on the Virginia Landmark Register in September 2003 and the National Register in January 2004.

Odd Fellows Hall: African American fraternal orders, like the Odd Fellows, were popular in the nineteenth century as places where "blacks could hone their business and economic skills, as well as socialize."[79] Early free African American neighborhoods in Alexandria had few places to socialize besides churches, due to legal restrictions on gatherings. Free African Americans worked to achieve a charter from a White Odd Fellow organization; American White Odd Fellow organizations objected to African American chapters. Free African American worked around American organizations, and received the first African American Odd Fellow charter from an English order in 1846. In 1870, the order hired George Lewis Seaton, a prominent African American carpenter, to renovate a building located in the Bottoms neighborhood. Odd Fellows Hall was three story brick building with a slate mansard roof and decorative Second Empire detailing above the entrance and window frames, located on S. Columbus Street (Figure 24). The hall was converted to condominiums in 1980s, but stands as a testament to free African Americans' ability to work around restrictive laws during the first half of the nineteenth century and create spaces within their community to gather and socialize. The Odd Fellows Hall was listed on the Virginia Landmark Register in September 2003 and the National Register in January 2004.

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[79] Virginia African American Heritage Program, "Heritage Sites and Organizations: Odd Fellows Hall." http://www.aaheritageva.org/search/sites.php?site_id=487 *accessed November 2011.*

Non-Listed Properties Associated with Early African American Neighborhoods of the Bottoms and Hayti

Many structures from the early Hayti and the Bottoms neighborhoods are still on the landscape today, and while covered by preservation easements, do not have Virginia Landmark or National Register designations. Until the 2000s, these structures were not incorporated into the official narratives and tour guides for visitors. The Virginia African American Heritage Program (VAAHP) was established in 2000 as a joint venture between the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and the Virginia Tourism Corporation to encourage tourism to African American heritage sites through a growing database of over 400 African American sites, and an African American Heritage trails program.[80] The program highlights both existing and absent sites. Thirty-eight heritage sites exist in Alexandria, several are located in Hayti and the Bottoms, including all four properties listed on the National Register.

Alexandria Academy: Originally the home of the Washington Free School, this three story brick building with a stone foundation became a school for African American children after the War of 1812 (Figure 25). The school remained open until 1823, when the building was sold. The school has been many things since its creation including a hospital during the Civil War, an administrative facility, and a training institution.[81] In 2001 the National Park Service granted $200,000 to the Historic Alexandria Foundation, through the Save America's Treasures program, for the preservation of the Alexandria Academy. The building still stands on the 600 block of Wolfe St, the historic marker outside the building gives credence to the efforts made by free African American to establish a school.

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[80] Virginia African American Heritage Program, "African American Heritage: About the Program." http://aaheritageva.org/about/about.php. accessed November 10, *2011.*
[81] Virginia African American Heritage Program, "Heritage Sites and Organizations: Alexandria Academy." http://www.aaheritageva.org/search/sites.php?site_id=458 *accessed November 2011.*

Hannah Jackson Property: Hannah Jackson, a free African American laundress, bought a house from Quaker Mordecai Miller in 1820 in the center of the Hayti neighborhood on 406-408 South Royal Street. Jackson bought many of her relatives out of slavery, including her nephew Moses Hepburn, who later became a prominent Alexandria businessman. The house Jackson most likely lived in was a wood frame structure, with a wood frame back house, which was mentioned in her will.[82] Currently a two-story brick structure occupies the lot (Figure 26).

Dominick Barecroft Public House and Home: Dominick Barecroft acquired his freedom in 1800 and quickly established a grocery store and tavern on North Fairfax Street, which was later the Berg neighborhood. By 1817, Barecroft bought a home for his family on 315 Cameron St.[83] Though the public house and Barecroft's home were located outside of both Hayti and the Bottoms, Barecroft was a prominent African American businessman who had strong ties to both African American communities. His home, located in a historically white neighborhood, is also a prime example of how African Americans and whites lived amongst each other in the early nineteenth century and relied upon each other for goods and services. The public house no longer stand, but Barecroft's three-story brick home on Cameron Street is now retail space, which is unoccupied (Figure 27).

The Bottoms spans approximately twenty five city blocks, the majority of those blocks laying within the Historic District, yet only two properties have preservation easements and two properties with National Register designation that derive their significance from the African American neighborhood which was once there. Hayti spans approximately six city blocks, all blocks located within the Historic District, but the neighborhood has one preservation easement

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[82] Virginia African American Heritage Program, "Heritage Sites and Organizations: Hannah Jackson." http://www.aaheritageva.org/search/sites.php?site_id=482 *accessed November 2011.*
[83] Virginia African American Heritage Program, "Heritage Sites and Organizations: Dominick Barecroft Public House." http://www.aaheritageva.org/search/sites.php?site_id=470 *accessed November 2011.*

and one National Register designation (Figure 28). Both neighborhoods are located within the Alexandria Old and Historic District, and are protected from demolition or renovation out of character with its history or surroundings; however, protection of a property does little good if its history is unknown, underutilized, or incongruous with the lives those inhabiting the building. If current owners do not value social and cultural history, because they do no perceive that history as their own, preservation that incorporates the early history of the neighborhoods, will not happen.

Preservation Issues

Preservation in Alexandria has been used as a tool for the city to generate tourism and stimulate the economy. Preservation as an economic solution is the reason the city is so excellently preserved. The 1946 Historic District Ordinance ensured viability of the city as a tourism hub, requiring the city to maintain its building stock, and in turn avoided a lot of potential damage during urban renewal. Historic District designations lead to an increase in property value and sociological changes, in fact, "no American neighborhood zoned as a historic district has ever decreased in value."[84] Alexandria no longer relies on tourism as one of the main sources of revenue, through tourism is still popular in the city. As a Washington, D.C. commuter suburb with a large government presence, there is no shortage of capital in the city. On a larger national scale, preservation of social and cultural sites in urban areas has been used as tool to revitalize areas blighted by "vandalism, abandonment, arson, and homelessness."[85] This is clearly not the case in the most affluent part of Alexandria, Old Town.

Alexandria's affluence is probably the reason the earliest cultural resources in Alexandria have not received the recognition they deserve. The social homogeneity of the current owners,

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[84] Murtagh, 111.
[85] Hayden, 47.

resulting partially from of the historic district establishment, does not reflect the inhabitants of

the neighborhood during the earliest periods of the city's history. Other cities struggle to produce

examples of historic buildings because neighborhoods which represent social and cultural history

struggle with political representation, experience redevelopment, and have a wide array of

inhabitants pass through as the neighborhood evolves naturally. Histories of urban

neighborhoods overlap and intersect.[86] This is one of the problems historical archaeology faces,

to decide whether the "artifacts they excavate relate to past ethnic, racial, or class designations

derives from the simple reality that these typological threads are never really separate in

American life."[87] Preservationist encounters the same issues of interpretation. Neighborhoods

have layered history, do preservationists have to limit that history to one layer or can all layers be

incorporated into the historic narrative? Neighborhood based preservation requires consultation

and collaboration with political and economic actors who may have different value systems and

interpretations of what the public narrative should be than inhabitants of those neighborhoods.[88]

These problems are experience at throughout the nation in cities and small towns, and on a

national scale. Alexandria has no shortage of historic resources, and while several aspects of

recent social and cultural history are preserved on the landscape and preserved by archaeologists,

and incorporated into the city's narrative, examples of Alexandria's earliest social and cultural

history are largely absent from that narrative.

     The same issues that stymied preservation efforts in the early twentieth century,

challenge preservation in Alexandria today. Preservationists operate in a bureaucratic world,

relying on the support of local politicians and their constituents to accomplish preservation work.

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[86] Hurley, 49.

[87] Orser Jr., Charles E. "The Challenges of Race to American Historical Archaeology," *American Anthropologists,* New Series, Vol. 100 No. 3 (Sept. 1998), 663.

[88] Hurley, 21.

Alexandria residents, as a whole, support preservation, but much of the neighborhood-based preservation work that could be completed, is not viewed as relevant by the inhabitants who occupy those neighborhoods. Like history, neighborhoods and structures change. Inhabitants come and go and neighborhoods change ownership, often reflecting changes is in racial and ethnic make-up. Historian Ruth Little, in her article, "The Other Side of the Tracks: The Middle-Class Neighborhoods That Jim Crow Built in Early-Twentieth-Century North Carolina," has posed the questions, "Can a rental neighborhood built by white landlords for African American tenants be considered an example of African American architecture? Can a neighborhood built for white residents but now occupied by African American residents be considered African American architecture?"[89] Alexandria must confront similar questions. The city has examples of buildings from almost all periods of American history, but lacks officially recognized structures that are representative of all aspects of its early social and cultural history. If historic neighborhoods and buildings settled by a minority group are currently owned by white owners, how do preservationist engage those owners in the preservation process, if the history of the house is not **their** history. Dolores Hayden tackled this problem in her work in Los Angeles, described in her book **Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History.** She suggests that public history must deal with issues like "slavery, internment, deportation, and economic exploitations, as well as prosperity," and warns that when different ethnic groups occupied the same spaces over time it is not that groups', "exclusive responsibility for preserving and interpreting its own history."[90] The introduction of this paper established that the goal of twenty-first century preservation is to encourage different points of view be explored, diversity

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[89] Little, Ruth. "The Other Side of the Tracks." **Exploring Everyday Landscapes: Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture.** University of Tennessee: Knoxville, TN.,1997. Pg. 269.
[90] Hayden, Dolores. "Los Angeles: Public Pasts in the Downtown Landscape," Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History. M.I.T. Press: Cambridge, MA, 1997. Pg. 98.

acknowledged, empathy inculcated, dialogue facilitated, and common ground defined. Preservationists are the facilitators who can bridge the disconnect between current owners' history and that of the house or neighborhood. Preservationists can create buy-in from inhabitants and local politicians by "compromise(ing) aspects of interpretation that bears directly on the needs and concerns of local populations."[91] Resources which embrace a significance that reflects multiple values, for example social, architectural and cultural history, will have more relevance for the future.

The wealth of historic resources in Alexandria should not be a disincentive for preservation. In fact, the shift in values, from the grand structures of by-gone eras to the vernacular buildings that represent social and cultural history, should stimulate the reassessment of the significance of historic resources. The significance of a resource evolves, and Alexandria is in a unique position to lead the preservation charge for reevaluating their value systems and how their history is interpreted on the landscape. Alexandrians and preservationists alike must reevaluate their preservation motives, moving away from the question of "how to preserve, either politically, economically, or technically," and start examining "what they are preserving and why."[92] Preservationists should return to the ideals followed by the Society for the Restoration of Historic Alexandria, preservation for the purpose of public education.

One way that city and state organizations have attempted to incorporate education and preservation in Hayti and the Bottoms is through visitor tours. The Alexandria Heritage Trail, created by Alexandria Archaeology, consists of ten trail segments and eight off trail segments. The trail creation project is ongoing, historical markers can be found along the trail. The Hayti trail is 1.33 miles long, winding through the streets of Old Town, in what was once the

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[91] Hurley, 21.
[92] Murtagh, 166.

neighborhood of Hayti (Figure 29). The trail highlights the Wilkes St. Tunnel, Wilkes St.

Pottery, the Bottoms, Odd Fellows Hall, Franklin & Armfield Office and Pen, and has a church

detour to the Old Presbyterian Meeting House, Trinity United Methodist Church, St. Mary's

Catholic Church, and St. Paul Episcopal Church. Though the trail highlights the two oldest

African American neighborhoods, it fails to take the visitor by Roberts Memorial United

Methodist Church or Alfred Street Baptist Church, perhaps the most significant sites within those

neighborhoods. The two sites represent African Americans' ability to overcome restrictive laws

and socialize, become leaders within the community, and were the impetus for neighborhood

growth.

The Alexandria Black History Museum created a self guided tour of African American

sites. The majority of the sites on the tour focus on the time period after Alexandria's

retrocession from the District of Columbia. The tour explains where Hayti and the Bottoms were

located and their significance as two of the first African American neighborhoods. It includes

stops at the Alexandria Academy, Roberts Memorial United Methodist Church, Alfred Street

Baptist Church, and the Franklin and Armfield Office and Slave Pen. [93] The tour, which guides

the visitor through the streets of Alexandria with a six-page pamphlet, is short and gives the

visitor a small snippet of the history of each site. Alexandria Colonial Tours, a for-profit

business, offers an Alexandria African-American History Tour. The tour leads the visitor through

thirty-six city blocks of Old Town, explaining, "the saga of African-Americans from an enslaved

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[93] Alexandria Black History Museum. "African American Historic Sites: Self Guided Tour." Alexandria, VA: Alexandria Black History Resource Center.
http://alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/historic/info/brochures/OHABrochureAfricanAmericanSelfGuidedTour.pdf *accessed September 2011.*

people to leadership positions in business, government, and the arts."[94] Starting from the Alexandria Black History Resource Center, visitors tour Market Square, Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Show, Carlyle House, Dominick Barecroft Public House, Gadsby's Tavern, Franklin and Armfield Slave Pen, L'Ouverture Hospital and the Freedman's Bureau, and African American Heritage Park. The tour emphasizes the history of Alexandria's enslaved African American population. More often than not, the African American history incorporated into the memory of Alexandria, is that of enslaved American Americans. The narrative and cultural resources which represent free African Americans in the city are from the Civil War era and later, overlooking the over seventy years of history, prior to the Civil War.
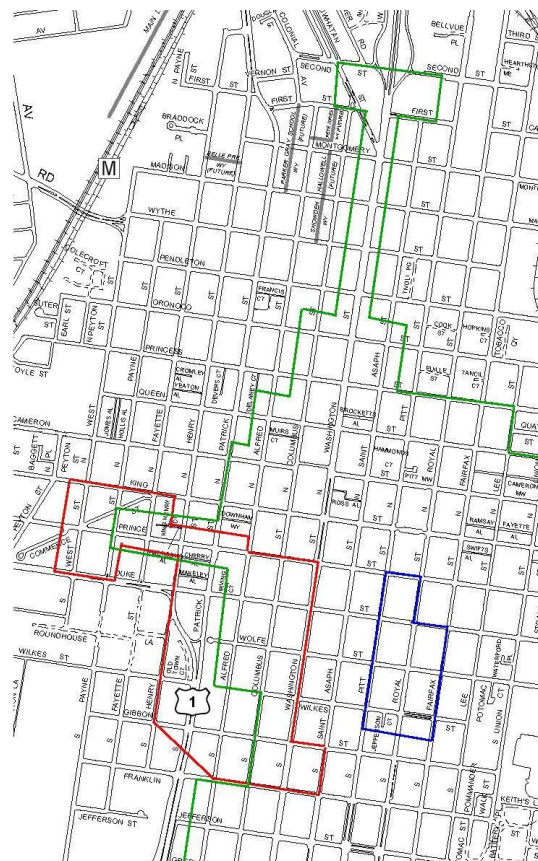

Figure 12: Outline of the Historic District (Green), Bottoms (Red), and Hayti (Blue)

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[94] Alexandria Colonial Tours, "Alexandria African-American History Tour." Alexandria, VA. http://www.alexcolonialtours.com/african.html accessed November 2011

Figure 13: Freedom House, formerly the Franklin and Armfield Office and Slave Pen, 2011

Figure 14: Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Shop and Museum, 2011

Figure 15: Alfred Street Baptist Church, 2011

Figure 16: Davis Chapel, now Roberts Memorial United Methodist Church

Figure 17: Moses Hepburn Row Homes, 2011

Figure 18: Odd Fellows Hall

Figure 19: Alexandria Academy, 2011

Figure 20: Former Site of the Hannah Jackson Property, 2011
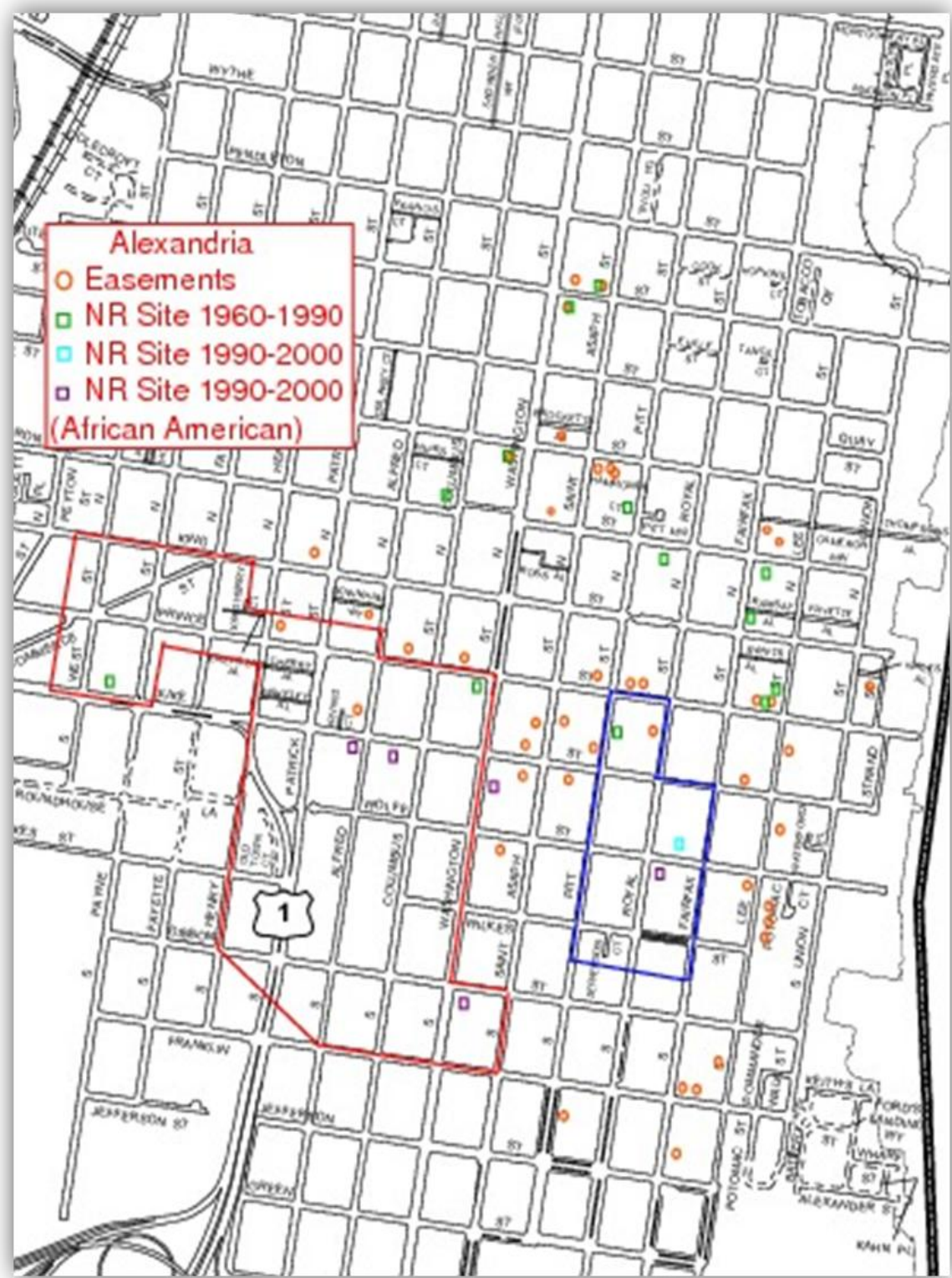
Figure 21: Dominick Barecroft Home

Figure 28: Easement and National Register Sites within the Bottoms and Hayti

Figure 23: Wilkes Tunnel, site along the Hayti Trail, 2011

Chapter VI. Conclusion

Named one of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's 2011 Distinctive Destinations, Alexandria is a city which embraces its roots as a colonial port town. Though the city's boundaries expanded over the past two hundred and fifty years, Old Town Alexandria remains an attraction for tourists visiting Washington, D.C. Tourists travel to Old Town to walk the cobblestone streets, and dine and shop in historic structures. National Trust President Stephanie Meeks explains, "It is a must see for history buffs, art lovers, foodies, and any visitor of the Washington, D.C. area." [95] Home to the third historic district in the U.S., a newly designated African American Historic District, forty-two National Register of Historic Places sites, fourteen Save America's Treasures grant recipients, and forty-seven easements, it is clear, Alexandria residents preserve their history. Yet, that history does not tell the full story.

There exists a large portion of the early social and cultural history that has yet to be explored in Alexandria. City and state preservation offices are working towards uncovering that history and incorporating it into the city's historical narrative, but often the preservation and archaeology of a building is only initiated at the behest of the owner. There are also issues of legal compliance, such as local ordinances which necessitate archaeology prior to construction or building, which many owners either cannot afford, or do not want the paperwork headache. Most of the preservation movement in Alexandria over the past century has focused on grand-scale preservation, similar to the preservation movement as a whole in the United States. Many building owners in Alexandria's oldest African American neighborhoods might be unaware of the gold mine of history that their building or lot represents and how that history could enrich the city's narrative. Even properties where the original structure no longer stands, like the Hannah

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[95] Preservation Nation, "National Trust for Historic Preservation Selects Alexandria, Virginia, as one of American's Dozen Distinctive Destinations for 2011." Washington, DC, 2/14/2011. http://www.preservationnation.org/about-us/press-center/press-releases/2011/dozen-alexandria.html

Jackson properties or the Dominick Barecroft Public House, the significance of who those people were and what they accomplished, holds meaning very relevant to Alexandria's history and can educate Alexandrians and visitors about society today. For the past twenty-years Alexandrians worked dutifully to improve the preservation of the city and continue to expand the narrative. Alexandria was, and continues to be, a forerunner for the preservation movement. City offices and residents have a unique opportunity to change the preservation dynamic, to inculcate values of vernacular and underrepresented history.

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