



NATIONAL UNDERGROUND RAILROAD NETWORK TO FREEDOM

OMB Control No. 1024-0232

Expires: 07/31/2016

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE NATIONAL UNDERGROUND RAILROAD NETWORK TO FREEDOM

GENERAL INFORMATION

Type (pick one): [X] Site [] Facility [] Program

Name (of what you are nominating): Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery at Walter Pierce Park

Address: Between Calvert Street and Adams Mill Road, NW, Rock Creek and the National Zoo

City, State, Zip: Washington, DC 20009

County: None

Congressional District: None

Physical Boundaries of Site/facility: Bounded by Rock Creek Park on the west, National Zoo on the north, Adams Mill Road on the east, alley parallel to Calvert Street on the south.

[] Address not for publication?

Date Submitted: July 13, 2015

Resubmission: [X] Yes [] No Round: 2

Is there a website? [X] Yes [] No

Address: www.walterpierceparkcemeteries.org.

Is there a visitor phone number?

[] Yes [X] No Phone number:

Summary: Tell us in 200 words or less what is being nominated and how it is connected to the Underground Railroad.

Since 2005, descendants and others have gathered annually at Walter Pierce Park in Washington, D.C., to commemorate the 8,428 African Americans buried there between 1870 and 1890, when it was Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery. In the 20th Century, headstones and some (but not all) graves were removed, and the land was sold. It became a city park in 1978.

In 2005, citizen-activists stopped a planned construction project in the park, citing potential harm to unmarked graves. To identify and protect the graves, a non-invasive archaeological survey was led by Howard University anthropologist Mark Mack. Team historians documented the names of those buried at Mt. Pleasant Plains, revealing some who risked their lives seeking freedom.

The cemetery was owned by the Colored Union Benevolent Association, whose members included Underground Railroad operatives William Bush and John H. Brent. Buried in the cemetery were: Richard and Ephraim Edmonson, who in 1848 tried to escape slavery on the schooner Pearl, Washington's largest Underground Railroad operation; Luke Carter, a Pearl operative and ally of abolitionist William Chaplin; Dennis Magruder, who escaped slavery in 1814 during the British invasion; William Tolson, Edward Marks, and



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Lewis Ferguson, who fled slavery in 1863 to join the Union Army; and Dabney and Lucy Ann Walker, who in 1862 left enslavement by crossing into Union lines in Virginia.

FOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE USE ONLY

I hereby certify that this site facility program is included in the Network to Freedom.

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Owner/Manager (Share contact information Yes No)

Name: District of Columbia Department of Parks & Recreation

Address: 1250 U Street, NW

City, State, Zip: Washington, DC 20009

Phone: 202-673-7647

Fax: 202-673-2087

E-mail: dpr@dc.gov

Application Preparer (Enter only if different from contact above.) (Share contact information Yes No)

Name: Mary Belcher (independent historian)

Address: 1869 Mintwood Place NW, #44

City, State, Zip: Washington, DC 20009

Phone: 202-462-9069

Fax:

E-mail: maryjbelcher@comcast.net

Privacy Information: The Network to Freedom was established, in part, to facilitate sharing of information among those interested in the Underground Railroad. Putting people in contact with others who are researching related topics, historic events, or individuals or who may have technical expertise or resources to assist with projects is one of the most effective means of advancing Underground Railroad commemoration and preservation. Privacy laws designed to protect individual contact information (i.e., home or personal addresses, telephone numbers, fax numbers, or e-mail addresses), may prevent NPS from making these connections. If you are willing to be contacted by others working on Underground Railroad activities and to receive mailings about Underground Railroad-related events, please add a statement to your letter of consent indicating what information you are willing to share.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: The authority to collect this information is the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Act (P.L. 105-203). We will use this information to evaluate properties, facilities, and programs nominated for inclusion in the Network to Freedom. We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. Your response is required to obtain or retain a benefit.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 25 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 I Street, MS 1237, Washington, DC 20005.



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SITES:

In addition to the responses to each question, applications must also include the following attachments:

- 1) Letters of consent from all property owners for inclusion in the Network to Freedom (see sample in instructions)
- 2) Text and photographs of all site markers
- 3) Original photographs illustrating the current appearance and condition of the site being nominated
- 4) Maps showing the location of the site

All attachments supplement, but do not replace the text.

S1. Type:

- Building Object District (neighborhood)
 Structure Landscape/natural feature Archeological site
 Other (describe): Former cemetery site; now public park

S2. Is the site listed in the National Register of Historic Places? Yes No
What is the listing name:

S3. Ownership of site:

- Private Private, non-profit (501c3)
 Public, local government Public, State government Public, Federal government

S4a. Type(s) of Underground Railroad Association (select the one(s) that fit best)

- Station Assoc. w/ prominent person Legal challenge Escape
 Rescue Kidnapping Maroon community Destination
 Church Cemetery Military site Transportation route
 Commemorative site/monument Historic District/Neighborhood
 Archeological site Other (describe)

S4. Describe the site’s association and significance to the Underground Railroad. Provide citations for sources used throughout the text. Timelines are encouraged.

From 1870 to 1890, Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery occupied the site of today’s Walter Pierce Park in Washington, D.C. It was owned and operated by the Colored Union Benevolent Association, whose members included Underground Railroad operatives William Bush and John H. Brent. Buried in the cemetery were: Richard and Ephraim Edmonson, who in 1848 tried to escape slavery on the schooner *Pearl*, Washington’s



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largest Underground Railroad operation; Luke Carter, a *Pearl* operative and ally of abolitionist William Chaplin; Dennis Magruder, who escaped slavery in 1814 during the British invasion; William Tolson, Edward Marks, and Lewis Ferguson, who fled slavery in 1863 to join the Union Army; and Dabney and Lucy Ann Walker, who in 1862 left enslavement by crossing into Union lines in Virginia. Since 2005, the names of each of these individuals and their freedom stories are told at public commemorative events at Walter Pierce Park. Descendants are among the celebrants.

Mt. Pleasant Plains was once the city's most active African American burial ground, reaching its height in the mid-1880s when 635 burials took place in a single year. At least 8,428 documented burials took place at Mt. Pleasant Plains, including re-burials from an earlier cemetery in operation from 1849 to 1869. The cemetery was closed in 1890 due to neighborhood development pressures. Parts of the cemetery land were sold first to the National Zoo and the National Park Service. By 1940, the remainder of the site was sold to private developers who tried, but failed, to build four large apartment buildings there. In 1978, community activists successfully prevailed on the city to buy the Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery site from private developers who had owned the land since 1940. The land, now apparently devoid of any cemetery markings, became a city park named after Walter C. Pierce, a neighborhood resident who led the effort to create it.

Today, Walter Pierce Park is a much-used park in the heart of the inner-city Adams Morgan neighborhood of Washington, D.C. It contains a soccer field, basketball courts, children's playground, a picnic area, and dog park. There is little obvious evidence that it was ever a cemetery.



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The Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery land underwent a series of disruptions in the 20th Century at the hands of the would-be developers and in the creation of the park itself. More disruptions were about to occur in 2005, when concerned citizens stopped the District government from undertaking a massive construction project in the park. Although public memory of the cemetery was almost lost to time, a grassroots coalition of descendants, concerned citizens, Howard University and other scholars formed to raise public awareness of the site's special history.

Since 2005, Walter Pierce Park has become a place for descendants and others to commemorate the African American men, women and children laid to rest there in the 19th Century. A much smaller, older Quaker cemetery that once abutted the African American cemetery is also honored. The volunteers who organize the commemorative events at Walter Pierce Park include the direct descendants of the families who founded both the African American and the Quaker cemeteries.

Walter Pierce Park is also an archaeological site. From 2005 to 2012, Howard University biological anthropologist Mark Mack led a student team to identify graves and any other physical evidence that remained of the cemeteries in order to protect them. No digging was done so that graves--none of which were marked--would not be disturbed. The archaeologists found the exposed remains of at least nine individuals; headstones that had sunk into the earth and scattered headstone fragments; footstones; likely grave offerings including broken ceramic and glass objects and seashells; a metal statuette of a king or Christ-like figure, which probably was a ceremonial altar piece; a carved stone bird; and land features associated with the cemeteries.



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No book or single record of burials has been found. Archaeological team historians, therefore, hand-searched more than 75,000 city death certificates to document who had been buried there. The historians identified 8,428 African American men, women and children whose burial place was Mt. Pleasant Plains between 1870 and 1890; graves from an earlier cemetery (1849-1870) were also re-interred there. The names of those buried are read aloud at the commemorative events at Walter Pierce Park and also published on a website maintained by the concerned community, www.walterpierceparkcemeteries.org. The publication of the names has helped a growing number of descendants find their ancestors at Mt. Pleasant Plains. This has made Walter Pierce Park a place of reconnection for many people.

THE ORIGINS OF MT. PLEASANT PLAINS CEMETERY

Scholars have established that the early African American schools, churches and benevolent societies of Washington, D.C., were a fundamental part of the city's Underground Railroad network.¹ In 1838, a group of free black men in the District founded the Free Young Men's Benevolent Association (later renamed the Colored Union Benevolent Association) to support one another in times of need. The group's very existence constituted an act of civil disobedience in a city that outlawed gatherings by

¹The connections of schools, churches, and benevolent societies with the District's Underground Railroad are explored in depth throughout the following works: Harrold, Stanley, *Subversives: Antislavery Community in Washington, D.C. 1828-1865*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 2003; Ricks, Mary Kay, *Escape on the Pearl: The Heroic Bid for Freedom on the Underground Railroad*, William Morrow/HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 2007; and Russell, Hilary, *The Operation of the Underground Railroad in Washington, D.C., 1800-1860, Final Research Report, July 2001*, the Historical Society of Washington and National Park Service, 2001.



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African Americans except for religious worship. Association members included founders of Washington's earliest black schools and churches, as well as men who openly defied the oppressive set of city laws known as the Black Code.

In 1848, leading members of the Association were personally involved in the city's largest known Underground Railroad operation, when 77 enslaved Washingtonians set sail for freedom on the northbound schooner *Pearl*. Less than 48 hours after the *Pearl* departed, armed slave owners intent on reclaiming their property went in pursuit by steamboat down the Potomac. They overtook the schooner at Cornfield Harbor, Maryland, about to enter Chesapeake Bay. The fugitives and crew surrendered and were taken back to Washington, where taunting mobs surrounded them on their march to the city jail. Just as the *Pearl* inflamed pro-slavery mobs locally, news reports of such a large escape attempt inflamed abolitionist passions in Congress and around the world.²

In addition to heartbreak, the failure of the *Pearl* escape resulted in a mad scramble for money to buy fugitives out of slavery and pay legal bills. It is probably no coincidence that the year following the *Pearl* escape attempt, the members of the Association in 1849 pooled their resources to buy land for a cemetery at 12th and V streets NW. The group reserved burial plots for its members and sold many more plots to the public, swelling the Association's coffers.

² Harrold, *Subversives*, pp. 116-149; Ricks, Mary Kay, *Escape on the Pearl*, passim; Russell, *The Operation of the Underground Railroad*, passim; Paynter, John H., "The Fugitives of the Pearl," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 1, No. 3, July 1916, pp. 243-264; and Pachecho, Josephine F., *The Pearl: A Failed Slave Escape on the Potomac*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2005, passim.



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An estimated 2,000 people were buried at the Association’s “Free Young Men’s Cemetery” between 1849 and 1870. In 1869, the Association bought 6.75 acres of new land from the family of John Quincy Adams, next to the late president’s mill on Rock Creek. The land also abutted a quarter-acre Friends (Quaker) Burying Ground, founded in 1807. The Association, which in 1865 changed its name to the Colored Union Benevolent Association, called its new ground “Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery.”

Both the Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery and abutting Friends Burying Ground were closed in 1890 due to neighborhood development pressures, including the establishment of the National Zoo which had sought to purchase part of the land. After the cemeteries’ closure, the Zoo immediately bought 1.8 acres of the land. Although the cemetery land was disrupted several times during the 20th Century, most graves were never disinterred, according to city records.³

Events of the 20th Century transformed what was once one of Washington’s most active African American burial ground into a popular city-owned park in the heart of the

³ Historians working with the Walter Pierce Park Archaeological Project, 2005-2012, hand-searched death certificates and disinterment records at the District of Columbia Archives to determine the names and number of those buried and the number of graves removed from Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery. Documented removals numbered fewer than 1,000, including two mass disinterments, one in 1940 and the second in the 1950s. Although the number of disinterments could be higher than the documents reflect, the documented burials (8,428) likely far outnumber the disinterments, the historians concluded. (See, Mack, Mark, and Mary Belcher, *The Archaeological Investigation of Walter C. Pierce Community Park and Vicinity, 2005-2012: Report to the Public, May 2013*, published by the Kalorama Citizens Association, Washington, D.C., 2013, pp. 26-28, and at www.walterpierceparkcemeteries.org.)



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Adams Morgan neighborhood. The park was created in 1978 due to efforts led by community activist Walter C. Pierce.

In 2005, citizen-activists who were aware of the site's history as cemetery land, stopped the District of Columbia government from undertaking a massive construction project in the park, citing concerns about potential harm to unmarked graves. At the time, city officials were convinced that all graves had been removed from the site, although they had no sense of the number of burials or disinterments that had occurred there. A grassroots group of concerned citizens, including descendants of those buried in both the African American and Quaker cemeteries at the park, persuaded the city to allow a non-invasive archaeological survey of the site led by biological anthropologist Mark Mack of Howard University and the African Burial Ground project in New York.

Since 2005, volunteers have held public commemorative gatherings at least once a year at Walter Pierce Park to honor those who were buried at Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery. Descendants of those buried are leaders in these events, and the history of the *Pearl* and other freedom stories are told. This Underground Railroad Network to Freedom nomination focuses on three aspects of the site's link to the Underground Railroad: (1) the Free Young Men's Benevolent Association (later renamed the Colored Union Benevolent Association); (2) The Association's and the cemetery's strong link to the *Pearl* affair; and (3) the known freedom-seekers buried in the cemetery.



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THE PEARL AFFAIR: TIES TO THE FREE YOUNG MEN’S/COLORED UNION BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION, AND MT. PLEASANT PLAINS BURIALS

In 1838, a group of free young African American men living in the District of Columbia formed the Free Young Men’s Benevolent Association, to support one another in times of financial stress, illness and death. Approximately 75 members would come and go through the group over its decades-long existence. Many of its members were linked by marriage; by affiliations in various church denominations; and by geography, with most members living in the downtown and West End sections of Washington. In 1865, the group would change its name to the Colored Union Benevolent Association.

Although all the Association’s members had to be free as a criterion of membership, each had family and friends who remained enslaved. The ties between the hopeful passengers who boarded the schooner *Pearl* in April 1848 and the men of the Free Young Men’s Benevolent Association were many and deep. At least two—and possibly four--*Pearl* fugitives were buried at Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery. Luke Carter, a key ally of white abolitionist William Chaplin, who helped plot the operation, also was buried at Mt. Pleasant Plains. The Association counted among its members several men related by marriage to the Edmonson family, which had six siblings on board the *Pearl*.

Association trustee **JOHN H. BRENT** married Elizabeth Edmonson in 1837 after buying her out of slavery with the help of “benevolent friends.”⁴ Brent and his wife acted as parental figures to the younger, still-enslaved Edmonson siblings who were hired out

⁴ Provine, Dorothy S., *District of Columbia Free Negro Register, 1821-1861*, Heritage Books Inc., Bowie, Md., 1996, pp. 326-327. The “benevolent friends” in Elizabeth Brent’s freedom certificate, which was recorded in city records on July 10, 1837, remained unnamed.



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in Washington City, because their biological parents Paul and Amelia lived in upper Montgomery County, Md. It was at John and Elizabeth Brent's home near 18th & L streets, NW, that the entire family gathered the night before the *Pearl* escape to learn that siblings Samuel, John, Ephraim, Richard, Mary and Emily were going to leave. After their return to Washington as prisoners several days later, John Brent tried to negotiate a purchase price with their owner for their freedom; instead, they were sold to slave dealers Bruin and Hill, who put them on a ship to New Orleans to fetch higher prices. Eventually, through the strenuous efforts of the Edmonson family, John Brent and prominent abolitionists, most of the Edmonson siblings were freed.

John Brent died Nov. 7, 1885, at the age of 81, and was buried at Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery. An early leader at Mt. Zion and Asbury Methodist churches, he was a co-founder of John Wesley A.M.E. Church; the occupation on his death certificate was listed as "clergyman."⁵ Elizabeth Brent died March 2, 1881, at the age of 69 and was also buried at Mt. Pleasant Plains. In 1912, descendants had their graves removed and re-interred at Harmony Cemetery.⁶

At the time of his attempted escape on the *Pearl*, **RICHARD EDMONSON** was a coach driver to Treasury Secretary Robert Walker. He, like his siblings, was hired out to work in the city by his Montgomery County, Md., owner, Rebecca Culver. Richard

⁵ Cromwell, John Wesley, "The First Negro Churches in the District of Columbia," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. VII, 1922, The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, Inc., Carter G. Woodson, Editor, Lancaster, Pa., and Washington, D.C., 1922, pp. 64-106.

⁶ All information regarding deaths and burials in this nomination comes from District of Columbia death certificates and is included in the Mt. Pleasant Plains Burials Database at www.walterpierceparkcemeteries.org.



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likely helped plan the *Pearl*. According to key operative William L. Chaplin, Richard had met beforehand with Ohio anti-slavery Congressman Joshua Giddings and Washington lawyer Jacob Bigelow, who shared deep roots in the city’s Underground Railroad.⁷ He was the first of the Edmonson siblings on board the *Pearl* to be freed, with donations raised from northern abolitionists. As the money was about to be deposited with the slave traders, Richard was already on the boat to New Orleans with his siblings, heading for sale in the Deep South. In New Orleans, Richard, whom the slave traders apparently regarded as now free, was allowed to search the city for an older brother, Hamilton, who had been sold south many years before. Richard accompanied Emily, Mary, Ephraim and John back to Baltimore after a yellow fever outbreak in New Orleans threatened their salability. Brother Samuel—also a *Pearl* plotter--was quickly sold in New Orleans and did not return. In Baltimore, “Richard was almost immediately freed and, in company with a Mr. Bigelow, of Washington, was enabled to rejoin his wife and children.”⁸

Pearl fugitive Richard Edmonson died August 23, 1879, at the age of 59, and was buried at Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery.

EPHRAIM EDMONSON was the oldest of the six siblings who boarded the *Pearl* in April 1848 with the hope of escaping slavery. After the capture, Ephraim, like his brothers and sisters, was jailed and shipped south to New Orleans for sale. He,

⁷ Harrold in *Subversives* writes that William L. Chaplin wrote about Richard Edmonson prior to the *Pearl* in letters to Gerrit Smith and to the Patriot newspaper, pp. 134-135.

⁸ Paynter, “The Fugitives of the Pearl,” pp. 253-254. John H. Paynter, the son of Association member James H. Paynter, was the first historian to write about his ancestors’ escape on the *Pearl*. He later turned his Journal article into a book of the same name. The “Mr. Bigelow” referred to by Paynter is Jacob Bigelow, a leading Underground Railroad operative in the District.



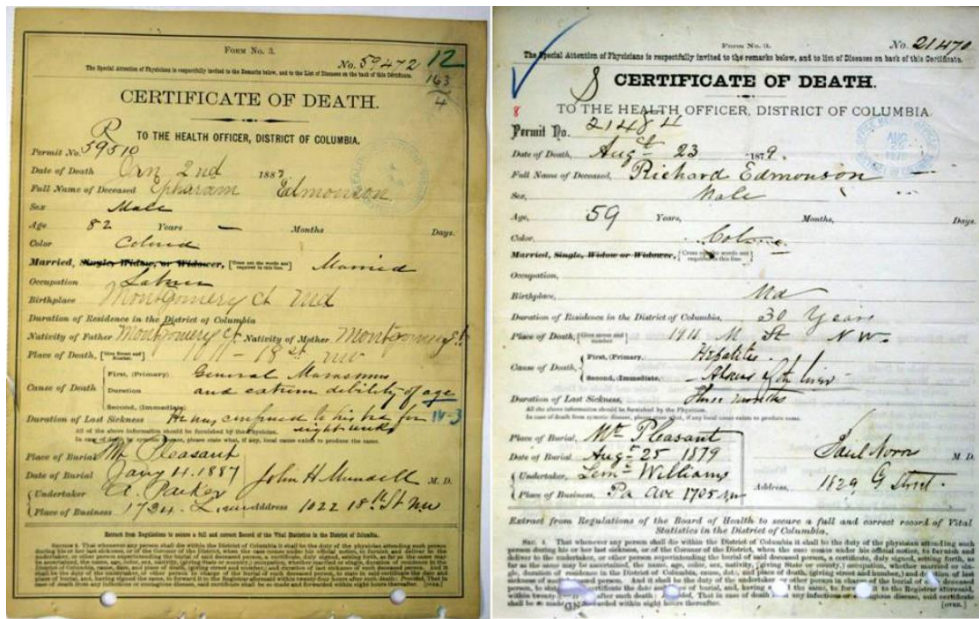
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Richard, Mary, Emily and John Edmonson were quickly shipped back to Baltimore after the outbreak of a yellow fever epidemic in New Orleans threatened his salability. Little is known about Ephraim's movements or situation in New Orleans, except that he remained enslaved there for several years. Mary Kay Ricks, in her book *Escape on the Pearl*, writes that Ephraim was likely in New Orleans, where his owner had offered to sell him back to the family for \$800. In 1854, the freed Emily Edmonson joined Frederick Douglass at The Corinthian Hall in Rochester, N.Y., to plead for donations to free one of her brothers, presumably Ephraim. Ricks' research shows that Ephraim had returned to Washington, D.C., and was a free man by 1860.⁹

Ephraim Edmonson, a coach driver like his brother Richard, died January 2, 1888, at the age 82, and was buried at Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery.



Death certificates of Ephraim Edmonson and Richard Edmonson, both of whom tried to escape slavery in 1848 in the Pearl affair.

⁹ Ricks, *Escape on the Pearl*, pp. 277-279.



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Richard and Ephraim Edmonson’s mother AMELIA EDMONSON was buried at Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery on November 4, 1874, at the age of 92. Amelia or “Milly,” as she was called, was enslaved in Maryland, but in 1852 she somehow managed to travel with her daughters Emily and Mary Jane (both formerly enslaved *Pearl* passengers) to Brooklyn, New York, to meet with author Harriet Beecher Stowe in search of funds to buy her two youngest children—Josiah and Lousia--out of slavery. Harriet, Milly, Emily and Mary Jane visited numerous meetings to tell their story hoping to secure Josiah and Louisa’s freedom.¹⁰ Harriet continued the cause after the Edmonson women returned to home, eventually raising money to free the two siblings as well as Amelia.¹¹

Amelia Edmonson was a devout Methodist enslaved by Rebecca Culver of Montgomery County, Md. Because Amelia was enslaved, her 13 children were born enslaved. She told Harriet Beecher Stowe that she was reluctant to marry and have children because of slavery. “Well, Paul and me, we was married, and we was happy enough, if it hadn’t been for that; but when our first child was born, I says to him, ‘There ‘tis, now Paul, our troubles is begun; this child isn’t ours,’” Amelia told Stowe.¹²

¹⁰ Ricks, *Escape on the Pearl*, pp. 233-238.

¹¹ Ricks, *Escape on the Pearl*, p. 258. The exact date and circumstances of Amelia Edmonson’s freedom are unknown; by 1860 she is listed in the District of Columbia Census living as a free person with her husband and other family members.

¹² Stowe, Harriet Beecher, *A Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, John P. Jewett and Co., Boston; Jewett, Proctor and Worthington, Cleveland, 1854, pp. 307-330. Stowe devotes an entire chapter of this book to the Edmonson family and the siblings’ attempted escape on the *Pearl*.



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By the time of the *Pearl*, several of Amelia and Paul’s daughters had been bought out of slavery by their husbands, several of whom were Colored Union Benevolent Association members: John Brent, husband of Elizabeth Edmonson; Forrester Young, husband of Martha Edmonson; and possibly Benjamin Little, believed to have been the husband of Henrietta who was probably an Edmonson sister. William B. Ingram, who was the brother of Association member Washington Ingram, bought his wife Emeline Edmonson’s freedom.

Paul Edmonson, Amelia’s husband, was free since at least the early 1830s.¹³ Paul’s freedom allowed him to travel to New York in 1848 with William L. Chaplin to raise \$2,250 to free his daughters Emily and Mary. Paul Edmonson appeared on stage at the Broadway Tabernacle with abolitionist Rev. Henry Ward Beecher. “This episode created a bond between the Edmonson and Beecher families as well as between the Beechers and others within Washington subversion community,” Stanley Harrold noted.¹⁴ Like Paul, other Edmonson family members, became active abolitionists after attaining their freedom.

At least 23 members of the extended Edmonson family were buried at Mt. Pleasant Plains. It is unknown whether Paul Edmonson, Amelia’s husband, was buried there also; there are large gaps in the city death records during the Civil War, the time period in which he died.

¹³ Ricks, *Escape on the Pearl*, pp. 67-68.

¹⁴ Harrold, *Subversives*, p. 137.



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Above, Edmonson family descendants gather at Walter Pierce Park in 2008 to commemorate and honor their 23 ancestors who were buried at Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery. (Photo by Barbara Bates)

Two other *Pearl* passengers—**CAROLINE BELL AND JOHN BELL**—might have been buried at Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery, but additional research is needed to identify whether they are the same two individuals with those names who boarded the schooner in 1848. The Bells, like the Edmonsons, had several family members on the *Pearl*, including two siblings named Caroline and John. A woman named Caroline Bell, age 40, died June 3, 1867, and was buried at the Free Young Men’s Cemetery, the graves from which were moved to Mt. Pleasant Plains in 1873. A man named John Bell, age 25,



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died November 19, 1858, and was buried at the Free Young Men’s Cemetery, the graves from which were moved to Mt. Pleasant Plains in 1873.

LUKE CARTER and his wife Sarah were close allies of Underground Railroad operative William Chaplin.¹⁵ They hid *Pearl* freedom-seekers in their small home in Washington’s West End. Luke Carter was a respected member of Washington’s early free black community, an active Methodist, and neighbor to a core group of Free Young Men’s Benevolent Association members, including the Shorters, Brents, Ingrams, Muses, Wrights and Freemans who lived between the White House and Georgetown.¹⁶

Luke Carter married Sarah, who was enslaved, after he began working in 1820 as a coach driver for Sarah’s owner, Thomas Munroe. Munroe, a former postmaster general, was a wealthy man who owned the slave pen which was leased by William H. Williams. Luke and Sarah, their children and grandchildren lived in a small house behind Munroe’s house near 20th and I streets, NW. In 1845, Munroe sold Sarah and 12 of her children and grandchildren to the slave trader Williams, who quickly sent them to Richmond.

“Poor [Luke] Carter had not an opportunity to say farewell, or shed a father’s and husband’s tear over them at parting,” William L. Chaplin reported in the *Albany Patriot*. Chaplin, a newspaper correspondent, not only worked closely with Luke and Sarah

¹⁵ Harrold, *Subversives*, pp. 103-105, 115, 128, 133; and Ricks, *Escape on the Pearl*, p. 37.

¹⁶ According to Luke Carter’s freedom certificate, recorded in 1843, he was already a free man when he went to sea in 1815. (Provine, *District of Columbia Free Negro Register*, pp. 450-451.)



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Carter, he used their personal stories to illustrate for readers the inhumanity of slavery in the nation's capital.¹⁷

Luke Carter, although a free man, undertook a dangerous trip to Richmond to first locate and then try to buy his family out of slavery. He was successful in purchasing Sarah's freedom, but their children and grandchildren were sold south. The Carters and William Chaplin continued trying to re-unite the family, enlisting the help of former War Secretary John Eaton and his wife Peggy O'Neale Eaton, who were close neighbors of the Carters and Thomas Munroe. Chaplin alluded to the Eatons in one of his journalistic posts from Washington, reporting, "The immediate neighbors of Mr. Munroe, who know all about this case, would be unwilling to have their names published. He [Munroe] is a man of wealth and hot temper, and has the means of annoyance. People here who hate slavery cordially, are afraid of each other and conceal their sentiments for years, living side by side."¹⁸

According to the 1850 Census of Free Inhabitants for the District of Columbia, Luke Carter, age 75; Sarah Carter, 56; and Richard Carter, 29, shared a household.¹⁹ It is not known what happened to the Carter family members who were sold south.

¹⁷ Chaplin, William L. "Slavery in the District," by W.L.C., *The Albany Patriot*, Dec. 30, 1845.

¹⁸ Chaplin, William L., "The Carter Family of Washington," *The Emancipator and Republican*, Boston, February 25, 1846.

¹⁹ Federal Census of Free Inhabitants for the District of Columbia, 1850.



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Luke Carter died August 17, 1857, at the age of 84, and was buried at the Free Young Men's Cemetery, the graves from which were moved to Mt. Pleasant Plains in 1873. It is unknown when Sarah Carter died and where she was buried.

OTHER KNOWN FREEDOM-SEEKERS BURIED AT MT. PLEASANT PLAINS CEMETERY

DENNIS MAGRUDER'S FLIGHT TO FREEDOM IN THE WAR OF 1812

DENNIS MAGRUDER, a 40-year-old carpenter, on August 17, 1814, ran away from a farm near Upper Marlboro, Prince George's County, Md., marching off with the invading British forces. With him were three younger enslaved men.²⁰ By 1815, Magruder had arrived in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, according to records in the Nova Scotia Archives.²¹

The invading British forces had promised enslaved Americans freedom if they enlisted; they took others to Canada to re-settle as refugees. It is unknown whether Dennis Magruder, already middle-aged when he escaped slavery, would have joined the British military, but his name appears on Canadian refugee documents.²²

²⁰ Claim of Benjamin W. Allen, Prince George's County [Md.] Case No. 728, Case Files, ca. 1814-1828, entry 190, Record Group 76, National Archives, College Park. The Maryland State Archives' Legacy of Slavery in Maryland website has Allen's claim and additional information on Benjamin W. Allen and Dennis Magruder, which is the source of the information contained here unless otherwise noted. Go to <http://slavery.msa.maryland.gov/>.

²¹ Commissioner of Public Records Nova Scotia Archives RG 1 vol. 305 no. 7, microfilm no. 15387, and vol. 419 no. 93.

²² Commissioner of Public Records Nova Scotia Archives RG 1 vol. 305 no. 7, microfilm no. 15387, and vol. 419 no. 93.



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Magruder’s former master Benjamin W. Allen in 1821 filed a claim against the British government for the loss of four enslaved men during the War of 1812, including Dennis Magruder, 40; Tom Magruder, 19; Davy Gant, 18; and Sam Tyler, 29. Allen testified that the men “departed from his service and that he verily believes they absconded with or were taken off by the British army under the command of Genl. Ross which marched that morning from the town of Upper Marlboro about one mile distant from his ... residence. That he has no knowledge of the said slaves being with the British at the time of the exchange of the ratification of the treaty of Ghent, nor it is within his power to produce any other testimony of the fact. But from the situation and operation of the British forces from the time of the departure of the said slaves to the time of the peace it may strongly be presumed that such is the fact.”²³

Allen’s attorney William Brent stated that the names of Tom Magruder, Sam Tyler, and Davy Gant did not appear in “British Documents,” which listed enslaved individuals taken during the War of 1812. Brent noted, however, that the name “Dennis McGuire” did appear. He argued, “The name is not unlike Dennis Magruder in sound to the eye there is a much stronger resemblance the alteration from Magruder to McGuire might have occurred in copying the names for the Log Book, the probability is increased by the fact that it is the only place where the Christian name of Dennis appears on the British Documents.”²⁴

²³ Claim of Benjamin W. Allen, Prince George’s County [Md.].

²⁴ Claim of Benjamin W. Allen, Prince George’s County [Md.].



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The lawyer’s argument was a good one. The Nova Scotia Archives has published a series of documents on-line that describe the arrival and settlement of Black Refugees to Canada during the War of 1812. A document dated Autumn 1815 and titled “List of Names of the Black Men, Women, and Children from the Chesapeake in Halifax” includes 340 names. In the column “Men without Families,” the 19th name on the list is “Dennis McCruther.” A separate, undated document titled “A list of Black Refugees willing to settle on lands at Preston [Canada]” lists “Dennis Magruder, [age] 47.”²⁵

The U.S. Department of State, handling claims against the British, awarded Benjamin Allen \$1,120. But he died in 1823 before receiving payment. Allen’s estate was divided equally between his wife Sarah, with whom he had no children, and his sister Elizabeth Allen.²⁶

Some time after 1823, Dennis Magruder apparently returned to Maryland. In 1831, Elizabeth Allen--the sister and heir of Benjamin Allen--freed Dennis Magruder in her will. His certificate of freedom was filed in the Prince George’s County Court on March 1, 1833. It states: “Dennis Magruder is about 5 feet 8-1/4 inches tall. He has a scar on the right side of his face, a scar on his left hand, and a scar on his left wrist. He was freed by the will of Elizabeth Allen dated 5 November 1831.” Allen did not state

²⁵Commissioner of Public Records Nova Scotia Archives RG 1 vol. 305 no. 7, microfilm no. 15387, and vol. 419 no. 93. These documents can be found on-line at <http://novascotia.ca/archives/virtual/africanns/>.

²⁶ The Maryland State Archives, *op. cit.*



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Magruder's age, but she did of the others who were also free by her will: Alfred Addison, 24; Henry Magruder, "a boy;" Lavinia, 28; Cornelia, 28; Charlotte, 38; and Rachael, 41.²⁷

Dennis Magruder died at age 95 on September 17, 1867. He was buried at the Free Young Men's Cemetery at 12th and V streets, NW, and later removed and reinterred at Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery in 1873. Dennis's widow Nellie Magruder died at age 99 on August 14, 1882, and was buried at Mt. Pleasant Plains.

LEWIS FERGUSON, WILLIAM TOLSON, AND EDWARD MARKS: FINDING FREEDOM ON THE FRONT LINES

In the spring of 1863 in Washington, D.C., the federal government began enlisting African Americans in the military. Although several state regiments already had been formed, the 1st Regiment of the U.S. Colored Infantry became the first black federal fighting force. Recruitment began in churches throughout the city. Colored Union Benevolent Association trustee Gurden Snowden presided over rallies at Asbury Methodist Church and elsewhere.²⁸ At least 40 U.S. soldiers and sailors were buried at Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery, according to Pension and service records. Three ran away from slavery to join the front lines in the District's 1st Regiment.²⁹

²⁷ Provine, Dorothy S., *Registrations of Free Negroes, 1806-1863, Prince George's County, Maryland*, Columbian Harmony Society, Washington, D.C., 1990, pp. 123-124.

²⁸ Gibbs, C.R., *Black, Copper and Bright: The District of Columbia's Black Civil War Regiment*, Three Dimensional Publishing, Silver Spring, Md., 2002. This book describes the formation and service of the First Infantry Regiment of the U.S. Colored Troops in detail.

²⁹ Their escapes from slavery and enlistment in the military were recounted in detail by themselves or their survivors in pension applications, which are cited individually in subsequent footnotes.



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LEWIS FERGUSON, ALIAS WILLIAM HENSON, age 15, was working as a porter at B.W. Reed’s grocery store in downtown Washington at 14th and F streets NW in 1863, when his employer sent him on an errand. He never returned. Instead, he enlisted in Company E of the 1st Regiment U.S. Colored Infantry on June 17, 1863, calling himself “William Henson” and claiming to be 18.³⁰

Ferguson was owned by Allison Naylor of Montgomery County, Maryland, and hired out in the District of Columbia to B.W. Reed. Although all enslaved people—including those hired out—were to be freed in the District in April 1862, Naylor apparently continued to hold Lewis Ferguson enslaved to collect wages from Reed for Ferguson’s employment. Ferguson believed he was enslaved, according to a statement made by his widow Patsey in her Widow’s Pension deposition. She said Mrs. Reed “sent him for some beef stock and he kept right down the street and enlisted under the name of Henson so that his mistress would not be able to find him.”³¹

Although several state and regional militias were in place by 1863, the 1st Regiment of the U.S. Colored Infantry was the first federal regiment of African American soldiers. Ferguson was mustered into service on Mason’s Island by Col. William Birney, a Yale-educated lawyer and son of a prominent southern abolitionist.

Lewis Ferguson, alias William Henson, worked as a cook for the 1st Regiment as it moved through Virginia and North Carolina, seeing action at Petersburg, Wilson’s

³⁰ U.S. Widow’s Pension Application of Patsy Henson (alias Ferguson) [sic], No. 455288, National Archives. The details of Lewis Ferguson’s enslavement, his employment in the District, his service in the military, and his marriage are contained in the widow’s pension file.

³¹ U.S. Widow’s Pension Application of Patsy Henson (alias Henson).



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Wharf, Chaffin's Farm, Richard, Fair Oaks, Wilmington, Raleigh, and elsewhere along the Eastern Seaboard. After being mustered out with the rest of the 1st Regiment in September 1865, Ferguson returned to B.W. Reed's grocery store, now a truly free man.

Ferguson and his wife Patsey Willis were married in 1871 by the founding minister of the Fifth Baptist Church, Rev. John H. Brooks. After Ferguson's death, Pension officials questioned a series of witnesses about his military service, including the son of B.W. Reed, who could not explain why Lewis Ferguson would need to use an alias. Despite the testimony, officials claimed they couldn't verify Ferguson's service primarily due to his use of an alias, leaving his widow and a son without a pension.³²

Lewis Ferguson died April 22, 1885, at the age of 40 and was buried at Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery.³³

WILLIAM TOLSON, ALIAS JOHN GRAY, ran away from the Prince George's County, Maryland, plantation of Margaret Skinner in 1863 to enlist in Company D of the 1st Regiment U.S. Colored Infantry on Mason's Island. He was mustered into service by Col. Birney on June 14, 1863, under the alias "John Gray."³⁴

Margaret Skinner, the widow of Benjamin Skinner, held 27 people enslaved at her plantation near Brandywine, Maryland, according to the 1860 Slave Census. William

³² U.S. Widow's Pension Application of Patsy Henson (alias Henson).

³³ Biographical database of Burials at Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery, Mack and Belcher.

³⁴ U.S. Invalid's Pension Application of William Tolson, No. 312285; and father Henry Tolson, Survivor's Pension Application No. 344279, combined into one pension file following Tolson's death. The details recounted in this nomination of William Tolson's enslavement, escape, and military service are contained in these pension documents.



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Tolson told Pension officials that he assumed an alias “because, being a slave, he was afraid of being returned to his master.” Tolson’s father Henry said his son took the name “John Gray” because that was the name of a free man who lived near them in Maryland.³⁵

Tolson was one of a wave of men leaving the plantations of Prince George’s County for the District of Columbia during the Civil War. He, like others, chose the risks of war over the certainty of slavery. In addition to the usual dangers of death, injury and illness, black soldiers faced the threat of capture by Confederates, who were under orders to treat them as fugitive slaves. Even within their own camps, black troops faced hardships, including sometimes severe disciplinary tactics administered by white officers.³⁶

In March 1864, Tolson was getting ready for a dress parade in New Bern, N.C., when a captain accused him of talking in the ranks. When Tolson denied it, the captain struck him with a sword. Tolson kicked back. The captain sent him to a stream to be “water bathed.”³⁷

“When they first commenced, they stood him up against a post by the bridge and men went on the bridge and poured water down on him,” said Richard Makall, a black soldier on guard duty at the time. “He was so rambunctious that they had to lay him down in the water and hold him down and dashed the water in his face. The Officer of the Day held him down with his sword when he was being punished. Why they got through with

³⁵ William and Henry Tolson pension applications.

³⁶ William and Henry Tolson pension applications.

³⁷ William and Henry Tolson pension applications.



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him he was so weak that he could not get up. He had to be helped up and carried back to camp and was not able to do anything for nearly two months.”³⁸

Tolson was mustered out of service with the rest of the 1st Regiment in September 1865. He was still a teenager. He returned to Washington and lived in rented homes in northwest Washington in today’s Shaw neighborhood. In civilian life, Tolson continued to suffer from asthma and other respiratory problems contracted in the Army. He was treated by Dr. John Rapier at Freedmen’s Hospital and other doctors; by the 1870s, he told Pension officials, he had become a student of medicine and was treating himself.³⁹ On a Freedmen’s Bank Account in 1874, he listed his occupation as “student,” and signed his name. To the credit of Pension officials, they tracked down the doctor on duty during Tolson’s punishment at New Bern. The doctor confirmed that some men were subjected to the “water bath” and that he was “required to attend as a medical officer to see that the punishment was not carried out to a dangerous point.”⁴⁰

After leaving the Army, Tolson ran a store out of a home he shared with his father at 1758 T Street. He received an invalid’s pension because of the injuries he sustained at New Bern; his father later received a survivor’s pension. Tolson, 39, died July 2, 1886, from phthisis pulmonalis (tuberculosis) and was buried at Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery.

³⁸ William and Henry Tolson pension applications.

³⁹ William and Henry Tolson pension applications.

⁴⁰ Information about Tolson’s residences and occupations comes from Pension, Census and Freedmen’s Bank Records. His Freedmen’s Bank Record entries are #6780 dated March 6, 1871, and #20490, dated January 24, 1874. William and Henry Tolson pension applications.



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EDWARD MARKS ran away from slavery in Dinwiddie, Virginia, about 15 miles south of Petersburg, arriving in Washington with his brother John in 1863. He was among the very first to join the 1st Regiment U.S. Colored Infantry, enlisting in Company B on May 19, 1863, which was the first day of the regiment’s official existence. He gave his true name and age, 27. He had left behind a wife and family in Virginia.⁴¹

“Edward and I ran away from our master, and he enlisted, and I drove team until I got here and have lived here ever since,” John Marks told Pension officials. Unlike his brother, John Marks assumed an alias upon his arrival in D.C. and continued to use the name “John Ellis.”⁴²

Edward and John Marks were owned by farmer Bill Smith of Dinwiddie, Virginia. In 1860, Smith owned eight slaves, according to Census records. The Marks brothers lived in the “Horse House” on Mare Hill at the farm. Among their duties was to haul wheat and corn to Petersburg.

Before the war, Edward Marks married a woman named Maria who was owned by Robert Rainey of nearby Sussex, Va. “I was present when Edward came into the house one Saturday night and asked Master Bill Smith ... if he could have a wife—Mr. Rainey’s servant girl,” his brother told Pension officials. “So they were married by slave law.” Maria Marks described her wedding this way: “My husband went and asked Massa

⁴¹ U.S. Widow’s Pension Applications for Maria Marks, No. 399906, and Annie Marks, No. 519951, National Archives, combined into one pension file. The details recounted in this nomination of Edward Marks’ enslavement, escape, military service, and life after the service are contained in these pension applications.

⁴² Widows’ pension applications of Maria Marks and Annie Marks.



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Rainey if he could marry me and he said yes and had [us] to come into the parlor where he read the Bible to us and said, ‘Now you must live loving together.’” Although the couple lived on separate farms, they had five children.⁴³

After joining the Army, Edward Marks got a furlough, retrieved his family and put them on a boat to New York, according to Pension documents. Maria Marks worked in the home of a wealthy dairy farmer in Queens. The 1870 Census shows Maria Marks, 45, living as a domestic in the home of Edward and Elizabeth Willis of Oyster Bay.

Marks eventually brought his family back to Washington, but, Maria said, her husband “went astray.” Although already married, Edward wed another woman, Annie. Both wives vied for a widow’s pension after Edward Marks died. Pension officials upheld the legitimacy of the slave marriage, awarding the pension to Maria Marks.⁴⁴

Edward Marks died of a stroke March 24, 1889, at Freedmen’s Hospital. He was buried at Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery.

DABNEY AND LUCY ANN WALKER: FROM ENSLAVEMENT TO SCOUT AND SPY

Like thousands of other enslaved Virginians, Dabney Walker in 1862 gained his freedom by crossing into Union lines near Fredericksburg. His wife, Lucy Ann, apparently remained enslaved for some time longer. According to newspaper accounts of the time and first-hand military memoirs written shortly after the War, Dabney and Lucy Ann Walker provided invaluable service to the U.S. Army: he as a scout and she as a spy.

⁴³ Widows’ pension applications of Maria Marks and Annie Marks.

⁴⁴ Widows’ pension applications of Maria Marks and Annie Marks.



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After fleeing slavery, Dabney Walker in 1862 became a scout for the Army of the Potomac, providing remarkably accurate descriptions of enemy territory. According to news reports, he was known as “The Dreaded Scout of the Rappahannock,” causing Confederate forces put a price on his head of \$1,500 for his capture.⁴⁵

Dabney’s wife Lucy Ann Walker reportedly remained enslaved behind enemy lines near Fredericksburg, working as a laundress in Confederate camps and acting as a spy for the Union.⁴⁶ According to those familiar with her efforts, she sent coded messages to her husband by hanging laundry in ways that communicated the planned movements of her Confederate employers. Col. William H. Paine described the system this way:

“When our army lay watching the enemy in Fredericksburg, from the north side of the Rappahannock, Dabney [Walker] conceived and successfully carried out a system of telegraphing through the medium of a clothes line, by which he kept the colonel posted in relation to plans at the confederate headquarters, where his cooperator was a colored washerwoman. Through the body servant of the principal officers, she kept him advised about what was discussed in their tents.

Her keeping clothes on the line all the time attracted no attention. These clothes of different colors and in different positions were changed from time to time

⁴⁵ “Dabney, The Scout of the Rappahannock,” *Boston Evening Transcript*, August 4, 1862. The article was a reprint of a report that originally appeared in the *New York Evening Post*; other northern newspapers ran the same report. Also, “From Fredericksburg: What ‘Contrabands’ are Good for,” *New York Tribune*, May 25, 1862.

⁴⁶ Although Dabney Walker crossed into Union lines in 1862, exactly how and when Lucy Ann Walker escaped slavery is unknown. At least one record suggests that it was at the same time or soon after her husband did so. According to her District of Columbia death certificate of June 12, 1880, she had resided in the District of Columbia for 18 years, or since 1862.



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according to the message to be signaled. Dabney would read off the signals with a telescope and report.”⁴⁷

Dabney Walker in the 1870s mounted a difficult fight for \$1,525 in back pay for his service. For intermittent assignments amounting to a year’s worth of work between 1862 and 1864, he was paid only \$360. Brevet Major General Abner Doubleday in a letter to Congress supported Walker’s claim, providing details of his service:

“One of the first measures ordered by General Pope, upon assuming command of the Army of Virginia, June 26, 1862, was, that the cavalry attached to King’s division should endeavor to break up the Virginia Central Railroad. In obedience to this order, our cavalry made frequent and successful incursions against the road. They burned the depot at Beaver Dam station, (July 20, 1862) and tore up several miles of rails. They also had a severe contest with Stuart’s cavalry, and defeated it, near Carmel church. These raids inflicted much damage upon the enemy, and probably retarded his advance for a considerable length of time.

Dabney Walker acted as guide and scout on these occasions. His thorough knowledge of the country enabled him to lead our troops to the most vulnerable points in the enemy’s line of communications, and who were so much incensed

⁴⁷ “A REMARKABLE MAN, Interesting Reminiscences of the Late Col. William H. Paine,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 14, 1891. Paine does not identify the washerwoman as Lucy Ann Walker, but other sources do. Norman Schools in his book “Virginia Shade: An African American History of Falmouth, Virginia,” states that Lucy Ann Walker crossed into Union lines with her husband in 1862 but asked to go back to work in the Confederate camp. See: Schools, Norman, “Virginia Shade: An African American History of Falmouth, Virginia,” iuniverse books, Bloomington, Indiana, 2012, pp. 160-163.



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against him that they offered a heavy reward for his head. I know nothing of the contract or agreement under which Dabney acted, but I can testify that his services were of great value, and that through his instrumentality our men captured public animals and property far exceeding the amount of his claim. I commanded a brigade in King's division at the time referred to, and am personally cognizant of the circumstances."⁴⁸

Another Walker advocate was Representative William D. Kelley of Pennsylvania, who took Walker to meet with General Ulysees S. Grant after the War to seek corroboration of his claim: "The General listened to his [Walker's] statement, and at its close said that he had a very remarkable memory, and must have been present at the several movements of troops of which he spoke, as he named them in their order, and gave the details as accurately as if he had kept a daily journal. He also remarked that the statement showed that he had been in confidential relations with the officers taking the several movements."⁴⁹

In 1880, the House Committee on War Claims tabled Walker's back pay claim.⁵⁰

In civilian life, Dabney Walker was one of the seven freedmen in 1866 who co-founded Washington's Fifth Baptist Church (later Vermont Avenue Baptist Church).⁵¹

⁴⁸ Congressional Serial Set Vol. No. 1624, House Report 399, "Dabney Walker," April 11, 1874.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Congressional Serial Set Vol. No. 1936, House Report 931, April 8, 1880.

⁵¹ "Vermont Avenue Baptist Celebrates 33rd Anniversary," *The Washington Evening Star*, May 15, 1899.



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Lucy Ann Walker died at the age of 66 on June 12, 1880, and was buried at Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery. Dabney Walker died at age 74 on April 23, 1885, and was buried at Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery.

REFUGEES OF WAR (CONTRABANDS) AT MT. PLEASANT PLAINS CEMETERY

Lucy Ann and Dabney Walker were just two of an unknown number of self-emancipated refugees of the Civil War (contrabands) who came to Washington, died, and were buried at Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery. The demographics of the cemetery's burials indicate that the number of refugees could be in the hundreds. About 62% of the 8,428 documented burials were of children born after the Civil War and Emancipation. About 38%--roughly 2,700--were adults who might have been born enslaved. Of the adults, about 60% came from the neighboring state of Virginia and 20% from Maryland; others came from points farther south. The D.C. death certificates included space for information about the duration of time one lived in the Washington, but it was not always recorded. It is apparent that hundreds of adults buried at Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery came to the city during and immediately after the Civil War. The ability to choose one's burial place was a fundamental right of freedom.

Research has only just started to compare names on the Mt. Pleasant Plains Burial Database with names on documents from Freedmen's camps in and near Washington. Although we're unlikely to ever know the exact circumstances of each person's emancipation, a clearer picture of Mt. Pleasant Plains as the final resting place for Civil War refugees should emerge.



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S5. Provide a history of the site since its time of significance to the Underground Railroad, including physical changes, changes in boundaries over time, archeological work, or changes in ownership or use. Be sure to describe what is included in the present application and how that compares to what the site was historically.

Both the Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery and the much smaller, abutting Friends (Quaker) Burying Ground were closed in 1890 due to neighborhood development pressures led by the National Zoo, which sought to purchase part of the land from a resistant Colored Union Benevolent Association.⁵² After the cemeteries' closure, the Zoo immediately bought 1.8 acres of the 7-acre site. The graves from the Zoo land were moved into the remaining part of the cemetery.⁵³ Although the cemetery land was disrupted several times during the 20th Century, most graves were never disinterred, according to official city records.⁵⁴

⁵²Colored Union Benevolent Association Minutes Book, entry dated April 24, 1889. National Archives Record Group 21. The Association refused to sell voluntarily; the land sought by the Zoo was condemned (See Condemnation proceedings, U.S. District Court of the District of Columbia, Case 358, 1890, National Archives Record Group 21).

⁵³William B. Webb to Frank Baker, December 8, 1890, Smithsonian Archives Record Union 74, Box 110.

⁵⁴Historians working with the Walter Pierce Park Archaeological Project, 2005-2012, hand-searched death certificates and disinterment records at the District of Columbia Archives to determine the names and number of those buried and the number of graves removed from Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery. Documented removals numbered fewer than 1,000, including two mass disinterments, one in 1940 and the second in the 1950s. Although the number of disinterments could be higher than the documents reflect, the documented burials (8,428) likely far outnumber the disinterments, the historians concluded. (See, Mack, Mark, and Mary Belcher, *The Archaeological Investigation of Walter C. Pierce Community Park and Vicinity, 2005-2012: Report to the Public, May 2013*, published by the Kalorama Citizens Association, Washington, D.C., 2013, pp. 26-28, and at www.walterpierceparkcemeteries.org.)



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After the cemetery was closed, the Colored Union Benevolent Association voted to suspend member benefits. The last surviving trustee, Charles H. Shorter, in 1913 asked the D.C. Supreme Court to devise a plan to respectfully remove the graves so that the land could be sold and the proceeds divided among the heirs of Association members. Following Shorter's death in 1916, the court case continued. Congress, which had chartered the Association in 1865, dissolved the charter in 1923. Three trustees were appointed to sell the land. The first sale was in 1929, when a section of the cemetery was sold to the federal government as buffer land for the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway.

By the early 1930s, what had once been the site of one of Washington's busiest burying ground had become a forlorn-looking place, with just "a few fallen tombstones and an empty and crumbling vault ... still to be seen."⁵⁵

In 1940, the court-appointed cemetery trustees attempted to clear the remaining cemetery land to prepare it for sale. Only 129 graves were located and removed to Woodlawn Cemetery in southeast Washington, along with 13 headstones that remained at the site.⁵⁶ In the early 1940s, private developers bought the land to build a large apartment complex on it. The developers disrupted the land and removed an unknown number of graves, although they finally abandoned their construction plans in the

⁵⁵ Gatchel, Theodore Dodge, "Rambling Through Washington: An Account of Old and New Landmarks in Our Capital City, Washington, D.C.," Washington Journal, 1932.

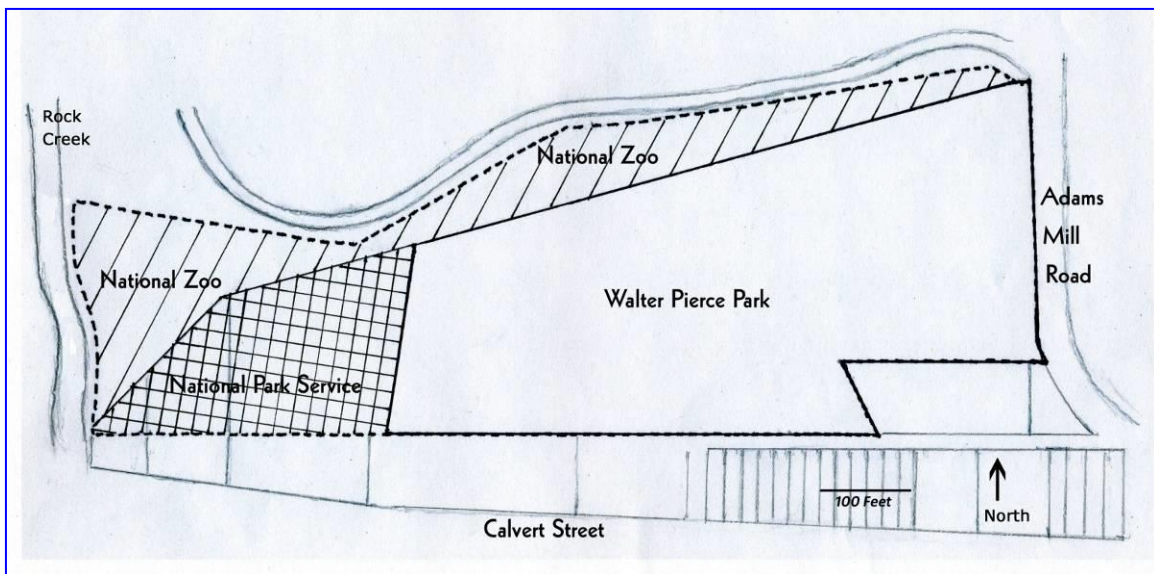
⁵⁶ City Health Inspector T.M. Galloway memo March 28, 1940, D.C. Equity Cause 46405, National Archives Record Group 21.



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1960s.⁵⁷ In 1978, neighbors led by local activist Walter C. Pierce persuaded the to buy the land to create a park.

Today, Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery’s historical boundaries straddle the entirety of city-owned Walter C. Pierce Community Park and small parts of Rock Creek National Park and the Smithsonian Institution’s National Zoo. The National Park and National Zoo



Map showing the historical boundaries of Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery today encompassing all of Walter Pierce Park (3.2 acres) and extending into land owned by the National Park Service (1.4 acres) and National Zoo (1.8 acres). (Map from “*The Archaeological Investigation of Walter C. Pierce Community Park*,” Mack, Belcher.)

sections of the historical cemetery land currently are inaccessible to the public. Public commemorative gatherings are held in Walter Pierce Park, which is why this nomination seeks to designate Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery at Walter C. Pierce Community Park as a National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom site.

⁵⁷ For information about the cemeteries’ closure and subsequent site disruptions, see Mack and Belcher, *The Archaeological Investigation*, pp. 33-53.



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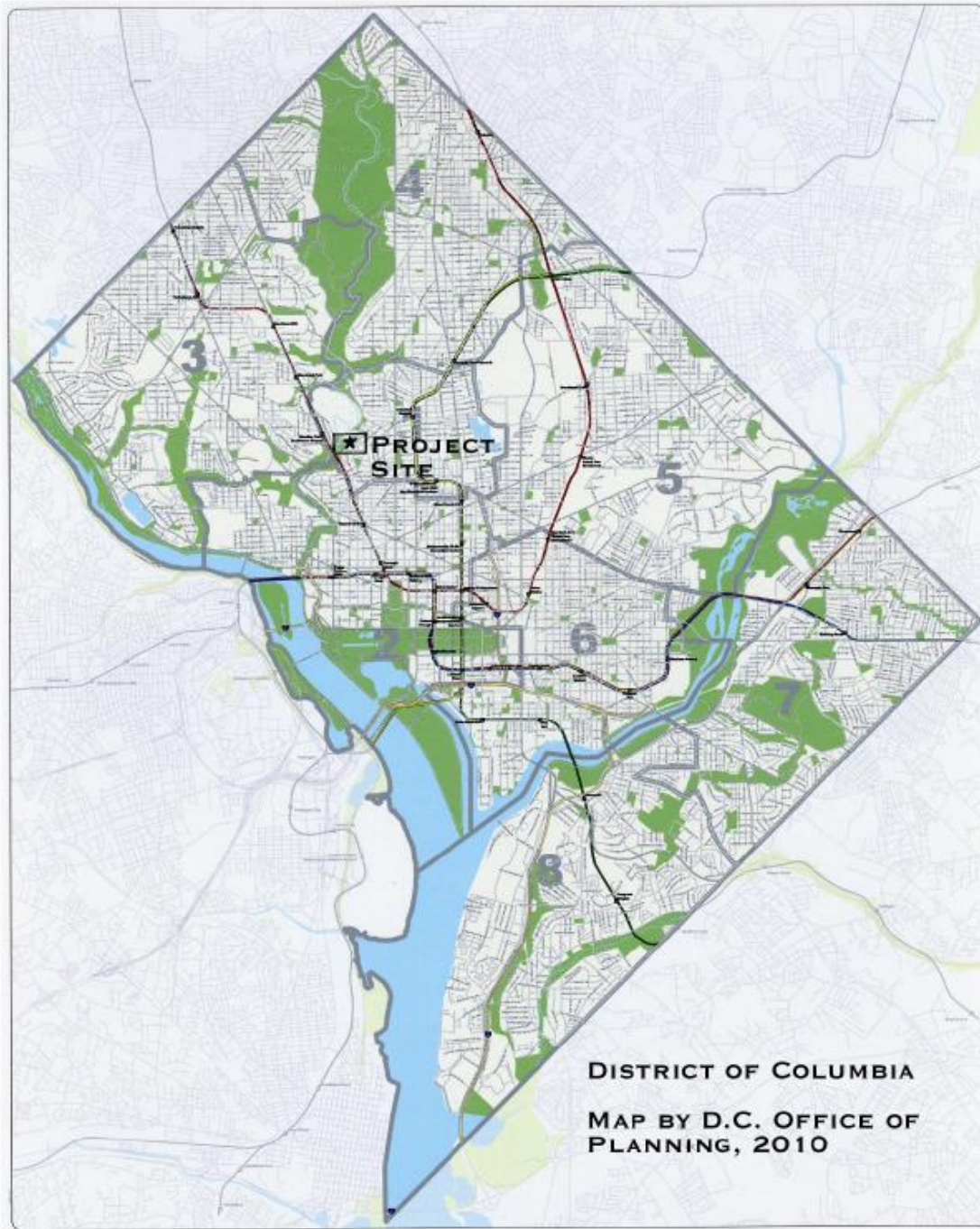
The Cemetery Site, Then and Now

Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery reached its height as a burial ground in the mid-1880s, when as many as 635 burials took place in a single year. Some graves were marked with expensive granite headstones, others with wooden headboards bearing painted messages. Some graves were covered with seashells and broken pottery. Almost 60% of the burials were of children under age 5; on their graves loved ones placed dolls, toy trains, and fragments of children's tea sets. Some funerals involved dozens of horse-drawn carriages, brass bands, and social-organization members decked out in full regalia; others were simple affairs funded by the donations of friends with city-supplied coffins for the poorest.

In 1978, community activists successfully prevailed on the city to buy the Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery site from private developers who had owned the land since 1940. Today, Walter Pierce Park is a much-used park in the heart of the inner-city Adams Morgan neighborhood of Washington, D.C. It contains a soccer field, basketball courts, children's playground, a picnic area, and dog park. There is little obvious evidence that it was ever a cemetery.



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**WALTER PIERCE PARK IN NORTHWEST WASHINGTON, D.C.,
IS MARKED "PROJECT SITE" ON THE MAP ABOVE.**

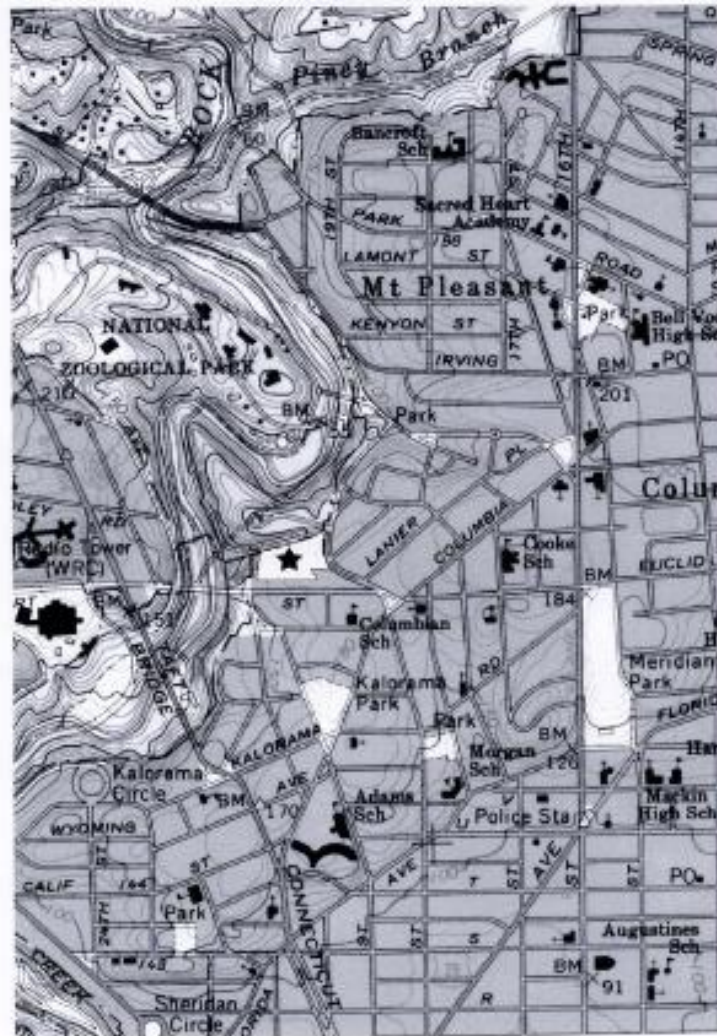


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WALTER PIERCE PARK IN NORTHWEST WASHINGTON, D.C., SITE OF MT. PLEASANT PLAINS CEMETERY, MARKED WITH STAR (U.S. Geologic Survey Map, 1965)



The grassroots effort to raise public recognition of the site's historical and spiritual importance began in 2005, when concerned citizens persuaded city officials to halt plans for a major earth-moving project at Walter Pierce Park, warning that unmarked graves might be harmed. At the time, there was almost no public awareness of the site's history. City officials, who did not know how many people had been buried there, agreed to allow an archaeological investigation of the site.



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The concerned community—including descendants of those buried and those who were active Colored Union Benevolent Association members--and Howard and American University faculty and students worked together to study and make public the facts of Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery. Free walking tours and events raised awareness. The non-invasive (no digging) archaeological team was led by biological anthropologist Mark Mack of Howard University from 2005 to 2012.

The archaeological survey documented the exposed remains of at least nine individuals, gravestones and gravestone fragments, and numerous cemetery-related artifacts and land features. In addition, independent historians and students culled D.C. death certificates to produce a database containing the names of an biographical information for 8,428 people buried at Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery. The archaeological report and database can be read at www.walterpierceparkcemeteries.org.⁵⁸



At left, members of the Howard University archaeological team in 2010 clear a hillside of underbrush at Walter Pierce Park for the non-invasive survey. (Photo by Mary Belcher.)

⁵⁸ Mack and Belcher, *The Archaeological Investigation of Walter C. Pierce Community Park*, passim.



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TWO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY PHOTOS (by Mary Belcher)



Headstones appear on North Slope; no inscriptions visible.



NORTH SLOPE

Finds: Numerous landscape features; seashells; fragments of worked stones; blown glass; ceramic shards; smashed porcelain dolls heads or figurines



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S6. Include a bibliography or list of citations for sources used through the document. Discuss the reliability of historical sources of information and briefly discuss how you used them

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S7. Describe current educational programs, tours, markers, signs, brochures, site bulletins, or plaques at the site. Include text and photographs of markers.

At least once a year there is a public commemorative event for all who were buried at the Mt. Pleasant Plains and the Quaker cemeteries. Members of the public read aloud the 8,428 names, simultaneously, from separate lists, with short biographical stories sprinkled among them. The event is organized by volunteers and supported by the Kalorama Citizens Association, a non-profit neighborhood group. Among those most active in commemoration efforts are the descendants of the Shorter and Edmonson/Brent families, whose ancestors as members of the Colored Union Benevolent Association, established Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery. Descendants of the Quaker cemetery's founder are also active. The African American Civil War Museum generously sends re-enactment



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troops to the event to honor the more than 40 soldiers and sailors buried in the cemetery.



“FREEDOM SONGS” AT WALTER PIERCE PARK, MAY 5, 2012, featured the All Souls Unitarian Church Choir (top left) and U.S. Colored Troops re-enactors from the African American Civil War Museum (left.) Participants read aloud the names of 8,428 men, women and children buried at Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery from separate lists (above right and below). *Photos by Gretchen Roberts Shorter.*





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Public walking tours of the site have been organized and led by concerned community members and descendants for the past decade. Smithsonian Associates tour groups have visited the site six times in recent years to learn about the cemeteries at Walter Pierce Park. School groups of all ages have visited the site. Members of the concerned community have made public presentations at Washington D.C. Historical Studies conferences, Martin Luther King Jr. Library, and other special meetings.



LEFT: CAPITOL CITY PUBLIC CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS gather to learn about Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery at Walter Pierce Park in 2011. *(Photo by Gretchen Roberts Shorter)*

BELOW: E.L. HAYNES PUBLIC CHARTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS tour the site on a special expedition. *(Photo by Mary Belcher)*





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Currently, the only signage in the park commemorating its special history as a cemetery are on placards on the park's bulletin board, posted and maintained by volunteers. They are placed there all the time, and they are replaced when necessary. There is no city signage marking the history of the park. (See S8 for the content of the signage posted by volunteers.)

In 2013, volunteers created a website, www.walterpierceparkcemeteries.org, describing the significance of the Mt. Pleasant Plains and Quaker cemeteries at Walter Pierce Park. The website includes a biographical database containing 8,428 documented names of those whose burials took place in the cemeteries. The archaeological report is also on the website. Some descendants of the buried have discovered their personal connection to the cemeteries through the website.

Members of the concerned community in the fall of 2015 will begin planning how to more permanently commemorate the African American and Quaker cemeteries at Walter Pierce Park. Descendants and others are now discussing how best to proceed. They hope to work with the National Park Service, the National Zoo, and the D.C. Department of Parks & Recreation to achieve this goal.

S8. Describe any local, State, or Federal historic designation, records, signage, or plaques at the site.

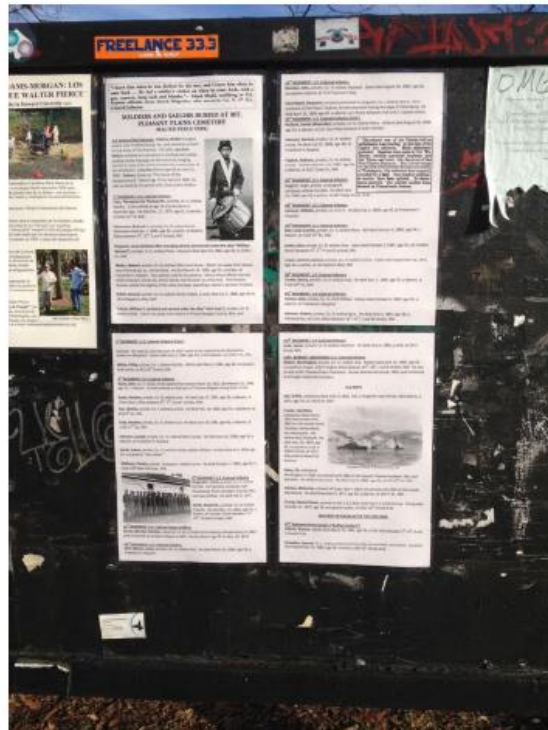
The graves at the Mt. Pleasant Plains site are not marked. There is only volunteer-maintained signage identifying Walter Pierce Park as former cemetery land (see S7). More permanent, commemorative signage is contemplated by the concerned community. The content of the signage posted by volunteers follows on the next page.



**MT. PLEASANT PLAINS CEMETERY AT WALTER PIERCE PARK,
WASHINGTON, D.C., ATTACHMENTS: TEMPORARY SIGNAGE
(PLACARDS ON BULLETIN BOARD)**



Temporary placards on the park's bulletin board are posted and maintained by volunteers. Graffiti and stickers on the bulletin board are occasionally removed. There is no city or other signage marking the history of the park. *(Photos by Mary Belcher)*





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MT. PLEASANT PLAINS CEMETERY AT WALTER PIERCE PARK, SIGNAGE CONTENT, POSTED IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH

**ARCHAEOLOGY IN ADAMS MORGAN:
SURVEYING THE CEMETERIES
IN WALTER PIERCE PARK, 2005-2013**

IN 2013, HOWARD UNIVERSITY ARCHAEOLOGISTS, working with concerned citizens, completed a seven-year survey of Walter C. Pierce Community Park. Their goal: To identify and protect two 19th Century cemeteries--the Colored Union Benevolent Association Cemetery, which operated from 1870 to 1890; and the city's first Quaker cemetery, in use from 1807 until 1890.



The remains of more than 8,400 people were buried here. Most of the graves were never removed.

At the request of concerned citizens, Howard University Professor Mark Mack and a student team worked in the park to identify where vulnerable graves still exist. In the first phase of their work—which involved no digging—they surveyed the surface of the park in gridded sections, mapping, photographing and cataloging their finds. They found the exposed remains of at least nine individuals.

Professor Mack, who died in 2012 after completing the field work and data analysis for the survey, was director of the W. Montague Cobb Biological Anthropology Laboratory at Howard and a noted expert on African American cemeteries. He was laboratory director of the landmark African Burial Ground Project in Lower Manhattan for more than a decade.



The African American and Quaker cemeteries in 1907.

Who established the cemeteries? Land for the Quaker cemetery, which is located at the southeast corner of the park's ball field, was given to the Society of Friends (Quakers) by Jonathan Shoemaker in 1807. The Colored Union Benevolent Association in 1870 bought their land from the son of John Quincy Adams.

Both cemeteries were forced to close in 1890 due to neighborhood development pressures.

Who was buried here? They were government workers, servants, laborers, educators, nurses and activists. Also buried here were thousands of formerly enslaved people who came to Washington as refugees of the Civil War. The archaeological team documented the name, age and other information of every person buried in the Walter Pierce cemeteries, working from death certificates at the D.C. Archives.

Were my ancestors buried here? You can find the names at www.walterpierceparkcemeteries.org.

How can I be involved? The Walter Pierce Project depends on public participation. The Kalorama Citizens Association and Washington Parks & People have special events at the site. To read the archaeological report or to stay informed, go to www.walterpierceparkcemeteries.org.



In April 2008, Edmonson family descendants honored their ancestors who are buried at Walter Pierce Park.



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**MT. PLEASANT PLAINS CEMETERY AT WALTER PIERCE PARK,
CONTENT OF SIGNAGE (Continued)**

“I knew him when he was drafted for the war, and I knew him when he came back ... He had a soldier’s clothes on when he came back, with a gun, canteen, knap sack and blanket.”-- Lloyd Mudd, testifying to U.S. Pension officials about Enoch Magruder, who served in Co. F, 4th U.S. Colored Infantry.

**SOLDIERS AND SAILORS BURIED AT MT.
PLEASANT PLAINS CEMETERY
(WALTER PIERCE PARK)**

U.S. Army of the Potomac: Dabney Walker escaped slavery near Fredericksburg, Va., and served as a scout for the Army of the Potomac. His wife, Lucy Ann Walker, worked as a laundress in Confederate camps, sending coded messages to the Union by hanging laundry in ways that communicated the movements of her employers. Lucy Ann died at age 66 on June 12, 1880. Dabney, known as “The Scout of the Rappahannock,” died at age 74 on April 23, 1885; he was survived by his second wife, Rosey Dean Walker.



1st REGIMENT, U.S. Colored Infantry

Crier, Thompson (or Thomas) M., private, Co. C; widow Martha. Crier enlisted at age 13 and served as a drummer boy. He died Dec. 11, 1878, age 31, a painter, at 1613 12th St. NW.

Edmonson, Richard Jr., private, Co. B; widow Sarah. Edmonson died Jan. 3, 1889, age 45, a waiter, at Baptist Alley between 9th, 10th, E and F streets, NW.

Ferguson, Louis (enlisted after escaping slavery and served under the alias “William Henson”), private, Co. E; widow Patsy. Ferguson died April 22, 1885, age 40, at 1343 S St., NW.

Marks, Edward, private, Co. B; widows Maria and Annie. Marks ran away from slavery near Petersburg, Va., and enlisted. He died March 14, 1889, age 55, a barber, at Freedmen’s Hospital. Two widows vied for his pension: Maria, whom Marks married while enslaved, and Annie, whom Marks married later as a free man. The Pension Bureau upheld the legality of the slave marriage, awarding a widow’s pension to Maria.

Noble, Samuel, private, Co. K; widow Fannie. Noble, a cook, died July 3, 1888, age 48, at 1214 Blagden’s Alley, NW.

Tolson, William E. (enlisted and served under the alias “John Gray”), private, Co. B; widow Lettie. Tolson ran away from slavery in Prince George’s County, Md., and



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**MT. PLEASANT PLAINS CEMETERY AT WALTER PIERCE PARK,
CONTENT OF SIGNAGE (Continued)**

1st REGIMENT, U.S. Colored Infantry (Cont.)

enlisted. He used an alias because he didn't want to be captured and returned to slavery in Maryland. Tolson died July 2, 1886, age 39, a storekeeper, at 1758 T St., NW.

White, Philip, private, Co. I, widow Martha. White died May 2, 1884, age 48, occupation hod carrier, at 410 18th Street, NW.

2nd REGIMENT, U.S. Colored Infantry

Boyd, John, Co. C. Boyd, emancipated from slavery April 16, 1862, died March 31, 1868, age 22, a laborer. He had worked on the farm of Thomas Blagden along Rock Creek.

Davis, Reuben, private, Co. B; widow Jane. He died July 27, 1887, age 39, a laborer, at 1706 Glick's Alley between 6th, 7th, S and T streets, NW.

Fox, Charles, private, Co. I; widow Lucinda. He died Feb. 10, 1886, age 53, a plasterer, at 618 3rd St., SW.

Gray, Reuben, private, Co. E; widow Lucy. He died June 18, 1886, age 46, a laborer, at 1736 17th St/, NW.

Johnson, Joseph, private, Co. H.; widow Maria Louisa. He died June 10, 1889, age 56, a laborer, at Freedmen's Hospital.

Smith, Adam, private, Co. C; mother Fannie, father William. He died March 5, 1866, age 25, occupation "late soldier."

Williams, Charles, private, Company I; widow Carrie. He died October 7, 1885, age 40, a cook, 632 New York Ave., NW.



4th REGIMENT, U.S. Colored Infantry

Magruder, Enoch, private, Co. F; widow Harriet. He had been enslaved near Piscataway, Prince George's County, Md., and was drafted. He died Feb. 6, 1871.

Smith, Robert M., private, Co. D; widow Priscilla. He died Dec. 15, 1882, age 55, a barber, at Foundry Place between 13th, 14th, G and H streets, NW.

11th REGIMENT, U.S. Colored Heavy Artillery

Burley (Berley), Fletcher, corporal, Co. M, enlisted at Providence, Rhode Island, in 1863 and mustered out at New Orleans in 1865. Burley died at age 27 on Nov. 29, 1873.

22nd REGIMENT, U.S. Colored Infantry

Weir (Ware), James, private, Co. A; widow Amy. He died March 10, 1890, age 54, at Freedmen's Hospital.



**MT. PLEASANT PLAINS CEMETERY AT WALTER PIERCE PARK,
CONTENT OF SIGNAGE (Continued)**

23rd REGIMENT, U.S. Colored Infantry

Boon(e), John, private, Co. H; widow Elizabeth. Boon died August 26, 1887, age 68, occupation laborer, at 713 Freeman's Alley.

Churchwell, Benjamin, corporal promoted to sergeant, Co. I; widow Maria. Born enslaved at Port Royal, Virginia, he was wounded during the siege of Petersburg. He died April 16, 1883, age 45, a laborer, on I Street between Half and S. Capitol streets.

23rd REGIMENT, U.S. Colored Infantry (cont.)

Holland, Sandy (Alexander), private, Co. G; widow Mary. Holland died August 30, 1888, age 52, a laborer, at 121 First Alley between K and L streets.

Johnson, Samuel, private, Co. K; widow Louisa. He died July 20, 1888, age 48, at Freedmen's Hospital.

Triplett, Addison, private, Co. A; widow Louisa. Triplett died Jan. 15, 1887, age 48, a laborer, at 1817 Cedar St., NW.

25th REGIMENT, U.S. Colored Infantry

Baggott, Hugh, private, unassigned company; widow Cornelia. He died June 28, 1888, age 49, a janitor, at 481 Ridge Street, N.W.

The colored men of the District held an enthusiastic mass meeting in the rear of the Capitol this afternoon. Much enthusiasm prevailed. Speeches were made by Col. Wm. Berney, recently appointed Inspector, and Col. Turner and Lieut. Col. Raymond of the First District Regiment. The colored troops for the first time marched through the streets of Washington, fully uniformed and equipped, preceded by a band. One hundred additional recruits have been enlisted. No disturbance occurred. The colored soldiers were cheered on Pennsylvania Avenue.

28th REGIMENT, U.S. Colored Infantry

Johnson, William, private, Co. K or H. He died July 3, 1884, age 45, at Freedmen's Hospital.

32nd REGIMENT, U.S. Colored Infantry

Bell, Louis (Lewis), private, Co. E; widow Mary. Bell died January 3, 1886, age 56, a laborer, at 1334 15th St., NW.

Lewis, John, private, Co. B; widow Amy. Lewis died October 2, 1882, age 42, on Franklin Street between 4th, 5th, P and Q streets, NW.

Taylor, Andrew Jackson, private, Co. D; widow Emma. Taylor died September 22, 1876, age 45, a waiter, at 210 Jackson Alley, NW.

38th REGIMENT, U.S. Colored Infantry

Turner, Henry, private, Co. K; widow Julia. He died Dec. 7, 1884, age 55, a laborer, at 1510 10th St., NW.

43rd REGIMENT, U.S. Colored Infantry

Hatton, John, private, Co. G; child William. Hatton died October 4, 1887, age 45, a laborer, at Freedmen's Hospital.

Johnson, Robert, private, Co. K; widow Mary. He died June 3, 1884, age 48, a whitewasher, at Union Alley between 14th, 15th, L and M streets, NW.



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**MT. PLEASANT PLAINS CEMETERY AT WALTER PIERCE PARK,
CONTENT OF SIGNAGE (Continued)**

107th REGIMENT, U.S. Colored Infantry

Cook, James, private, Co. B; widow Charlotte. He died June 5, 1883, a cook, at 313 L Street, NW.

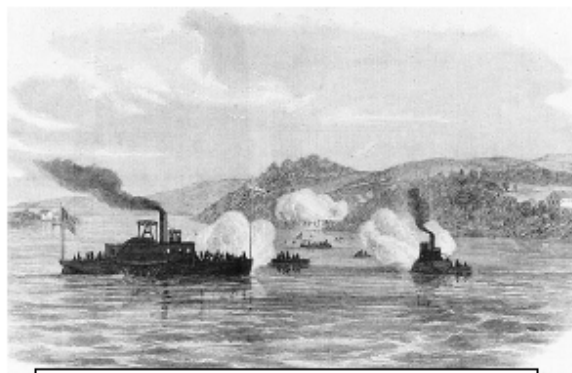
CAPT. BARNES' UNASSIGNED U.S. Colored Infantry

Walker, Washington, private, Co. A.; widow Jane. Walker died April 15, 1886, age 62, occupation cooper, at 917 Hughes Alley between 25th, 26th, I and K streets, NW. He was buried at Mt. Pleasant Plains Cemetery. He was disinterred June 8, 1895, and reinterred at Arlington National Cemetery.

U.S. NAVY

Ball, Griffin, enlisted at New York in 1862. Ball, a longtime coach driver, died March, 4, 1875, age 70, at 1710 K St., NW.

Frazier, Hamilton, enlisted at New York in 1864 and served until 1865 on the vessels *North Carolina*, *Horace Beals*, and *Wyandank*. His widow was Elizabeth. He died July, 30, 1876, age 45, occupation cook at Ebbitt House, at 1313 Alley behind New York Avenue.



The U.S.S. gunboat "Freeborn," part of the Potomac Flotilla

Gales, Eli, enlisted at Washington in 1864 and served until 1865 on the vessels *Thomas Freeborn*, *Ella*, and *Resolute*. His widow was Laura. He died June 6, 1889, age 46, at 1533 4th St., NW.

Holmes, McKenzie, enlisted off Cape Fear in 1862 and served until 1864 on the vessel *Maratanza*. He died November 4, 1877, age 40, a laborer, at 1817 T St., NW.

Lucas, Elijah, served on the *Western World* and the *Macedonian*. He died at age 50 on January 30, 1878, on Columbia Road near 16th Street.

Young, Edward Owen, served on the *U.S.S. Bibb*, with the U.S. Coast Survey. Young died October 21, 1875, age 29, occupation waiter, at 1013 18th Street, N.W.

MILITARY VETERANS AFTER THE CIVIL WAR:

10th Regiment Army Cavalry ("Buffalo Soldiers")

Abbott, Wesley. Abbott died March 29, 1882, age 53, in the alley between 7th, 8th, R and S streets N.W.

Snowden, Samuel, Co. L, widow Sophronia (first wife Fannie Willis, deceased). Snowden died September 12, 1889, age 38, a waiter, a 400 21st Street N.W.



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S9a. Is the site open to the public? Yes No Days and Hours of Operation: **All days and hours**

S9b. If open, describe accessibility conditions under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The park is handicapped accessible.

S10. Describe the nature and objectives of any partnerships that have contributed to the documentation, preservation, commemoration, or interpretation of the site.

The Kalorama Citizens Association, an all-volunteer non-profit neighborhood group, has supported the preservation effort since 2005, helping to obtain funding from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the D.C. Humanities Council, the Association of Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia, and private donors. The non-profit group Washington Parks & People administered a city grant to support the archaeological work at the site from 2009-2012.

The ongoing goal of the concerned community is to protect from disturbance the graves, artifacts and cemetery-related land features that remain at the site. Raising public awareness of the site's history is essential to ensuring its protection.

S11. Additional data or comments. (Optional) These brochures and excerpts from sources do not replace the required narrative.

ASSOCIATION MEMBER WILLIAM BUSH : UNDERGROUND RAILROAD OPERATIVE

Another *Pearl* operative, **WILLIAM BUSH**, joined the Free Young Men's Benevolent Association in April 1848, the same month as the *Pearl* escape attempt. Bush and his wife Lucinda were implicated in the plot but were never charged with a crime. Lucinda—who, like her husband was free--was suspected of having gathered the fugitives to take them to the schooner. A year after the *Pearl*, in 1849, the Bushes moved



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to New Bedford, Mass., making William Bush's time as an Association member very limited.⁵⁹ In New Bedford, William Bush became one of that city's most active Underground Railroad operatives.

It is not known whether William Bush was related to Association member James Bush (ca. 1824-ca. 1868). James Bush was the name of one of William Bush's sons of about the same age. The 1850 Federal Census for Washington, D.C., lists a James Bush, born in Virginia about 1824, as the head of his own family and working as a hackman. The 1850 Census for New Bedford, Mass., lists a James Bush, born about 1826 in the District of Columbia, living in a household headed by William Bush.⁶⁰ It is very likely that Association members James Bush and William Bush were related in some way, because birthright and marital ties were common among Association members.

William Bush died in New Bedford, Mass, in 1866. He is named in this nomination because of his membership in the Free Young Men's Benevolent Association and his involvement in the *Pearl*.

⁵⁹ In New Bedford, William Bush was one of the city's most active Underground Railroad operatives. In 1857, a tragic event supported the likelihood of his involvement in the failed escape attempt nearly a decade before: he was the last person to see *Pearl* Captain Daniel Drayton alive, before Drayton committed suicide in a New Bedford hotel room; the newspapers described Bush as "an old friend" of Drayton's. William and Lucinda Bush were written about extensively in Kathryn Grover's book *The Fugitive's Gibraltar*. See: Grover, Kathryn, *The Fugitive's Gibraltar: Escaping Slaves and Abolitionism in New Bedford, Massachusetts*, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 2001; a profile of William Bush on the New Bedford Historical Society website, www.nbhistoricalociety.org; Harrold, *Subversives*; Ricks, *Fugitives of the Pearl*; Russell, *Underground Railroad in Washington, D.C.*

⁶⁰ The 1850 Federal Census of Free Inhabitants for Washington, D.C., and the 1850 Federal Census of Free Inhabitants for New Bedford, Mass.



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ASSOCIATION TRUSTEE CHARLES H. BROWN: AIDING MANUMISSIONS

Association trustee **CHARLES H. BROWN**, the first Sunday school superintendent of Asbury Methodist Church, was an early fighter for Civil Rights. Brown in 1843 sued a policeman for beating and imprisoning him after being arrested for breaking the city's black curfew. Brown was a coach driver for Massachusetts Senator Daniel Webster at the time. Brown's attorney David A. Hall argued, unsuccessfully, that an employee of a temporary resident (Webster) was exempt from the curfew.⁶¹ Brown lost his case, but he didn't lose his courage. In 1855, Charles H. Brown was arrested again with a group of men meeting secretly to raise money to free an enslaved Virginia woman named Eliza Howard for \$650. Among those who had pledged money were several prominent anti-slavery members of Congress and abolitionists. Anti-slavery publications, including Frederick Douglass's *North Star*, reprinted the *Washington Evening Star's* account of the secret meeting and the arrest of Charles H. Brown and others. Frederick Law Olmstead recounted the story a year later in his widely circulated book *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States; With Remarks on Their Economy*.⁶²

The *Evening Star* on April 3, 1855, reported:

⁶¹David A. Hall, a prominent attorney, was an Underground Railroad operative who frequently provided legal help to Washington's black community including the fugitives of the *Pearl*. He transacted business with other Association members, including John Brent and Henry Pleasants.. Charles H. Brown would also be Webster's coach driver after Webster became Secretary of State. The case was titled *Charles H. Brown vs. Robert B. Robertson* in District Circuit Court, decided April 7, 1843. National Archives Record Group 21, Entry 6, Civil Trials 99, March term 1843.

⁶² Olmstead, F. L., *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States; With Remarks on Their Economy*, New York; London: Dix and Edwards; Sampson Low, Son & Co., 1856, pp. 14-15.



NATIONAL
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NETWORK TO FREEDOM

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“CAPTURE OF A SECRET SOCIETY—Last night, between nine and ten o'clock, information was given to the police that a number of male colored persons were meeting, in secret conclave, in the cellar of a house on D street, between Ninth and Tenth streets, which they had rented of the white proprietor of the premises. Accordingly, a police posse proceeded thither. The door was opened in obedience to the rap of one of the officers, when he and his companions made a forcible entry. The members of the society exhibited much alarm when they saw the white faces rushing into their midst, and the officers of the association at once removed their glittering regalia, and hastily gathered up their books and archives. The entire party were, without ceremony, escorted to the watch-house. Placed in the partitioned enclosure in the business office of that establishment, they presented the spectacle, not of a company of loafers but apparently genteel colored men.

“Captain Birch read to them the law which prohibits free or slave blacks and mulattoes from assembling unlawfully or meeting in secret; the smallest fine for which offence is five dollars. The municipal statute likewise subjects police officers to a fine of fifty dollars in the event of their failing to enter and break up such associations.

“The fact that the prisoners had assembled in secret or private meeting was proved, and also that all those who were present at the watch-house were in the cellar in D street, with the door locked.



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“The Captain having asked them whether they had anything to say, one of the blacks requested the examination of certain books which he placed on the desk, which consisted of the Holy Bible, Seneca's Morals, and Life in Earnest. Among the private papers was one in the form of subscription for the purchase of a slave woman named Eliza Howard, the value set on her by her owner being \$650. To the liberating fund, Hon. Gerrit Smith paid \$30, and the Hon. W. H. Seward \$5; Hon. J.R. Giddings was 'down' for \$1, but the cash was not paid. Several of our respectable citizens had likewise contributed. There were scraps of poetry in manuscript, including 'The Lone Indian's Dream,' and the printed constitution of a society called 'The *Daughters* of Jerusalem,' similar to the one the 'colored folks' have in Richmond, Va., the object of which, as stated in the preamble, is to 'relieve the sick and bury the dead.' The contents of a paper box was also examined by the Captain, consisting of sets of handsome regalia for the officers of the society.

“At the suggestion of an officer, the negroes, twenty-four of them in number, were severally searched, each one in turn going down stairs for that purpose; but nothing tending to implicate them in crime was found on their persons.

“According to their own statement, they had met for benevolent purposes.

“Some of them were released last night, and the other cases were disposed of this morning. The following are the names of the persons arrested:

“Slaves - Walter Clements, Charles Mason, Richard Henry Sanders, and Joseph Jones.



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“Free - James Williams, Joseph Johnson, John E. Bennett, Chester Taylor, Chas.

Brown, James Curtis, Henry Dunlap, William Simonds, Geo. W. Gaines, Lewis

Norton, Daniel Williams, Peter Hemsley, Aaron Jones, Reuben Boss, Edmund

Duckett, George Sands, James Clagett, George Lee, Grafton Johnson, and Aquilla

Barton.

“Bennett, Taylor, Lee, and Barton, were sent to the work-house, Joseph Jones

received six lashes, and the others were released on the payment of the fine and

costs - \$5.58 each.

“The occurrence to which we have above referred created this morning quite an

interest among the colored population of the city.”⁶³

⁶³ “Capture of a Secret Society,” *The Washington Evening Star*, April 3, 1855. See also “The Slave Code in Washington,” *The National Era*, April 19, 1855; and “Negroes in Council--Danger Ahead--Imprisonment, Stripes and Fines,” *The North Star*, Rochester, New York, April 13, 1855. Based on the names of the men who were present at the meeting to free Eliza Howard, it was not a meeting of the Free Young Men’s/Colored Union Benevolent Association.



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MEMBERS OF THE FREE YOUNG MEN’S/COLORED UNION BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION, 1838-1923



Members of the Free Young Men’s Benevolent Association and the Colored Union Benevolent Association (1838-1923)

The Free Young Men’s Benevolent Association was founded in Washington, D.C., in October 1838. In 1865, it changed its name to the Colored Union Benevolent Association. The group was dissolved in 1923. These names were compiled from documents in the National Archives, Record Group 21. Birth and death dates are based on information from death certificates, Free Negro Registries, federal Census records, and other sources.

Sandy Alexander (ca. 1815-1902)	Charles G. Hawkins	Denis Orme (---- - 1871)
Henry Bell	Alexander Hays (ca. 1803-1870)	James H. Paynter
Hanson Bell (ca. 1812 - ----)	James F. Herbert (ca. 1827-1912)	Henry Pleasants (ca. 1818-1860)
Daniel Bond (---- - ca. 1851)	Anthony Hickman (ca. 1815-1895)	
Ignatius Bond (ca. 1805-1876)	William Hill	Charles H. Shorter (1844-1916)
Frederick Bonner (ca. 1839-1876)	Washington Ingram (ca. 1820- ----)	Charles W. Shorter
John H. Brent (ca. 1804-1885)	George Jackson	John Shorter (ca. 1814-1885)
John S. Brent (1843-1917)	William Jasper (ca. 1815-1883)	Joseph Shorter (ca. 1823-ca. 1910)
Henry Brooks (ca. 1818-1896)	Alfred Jones (ca. 1816-1877)	Guorden Snowden (ca. 1809-1885)
Chas. H. Brown (ca. 1805-1868)	John B. Jones	Wm. H. Smallwood
Robert Brown	Solomon Jones	Stephen Smith
Thomas Brown		
James Bush (---- - ca. 1868)	Gillis Key (ca. 1820-1917)	Alfred Taverns
William Bush	William Landrick (ca. 1829- ----)	Henry Taylor
Andrew Carroll (ca. 1823-1900)	James H. Lewis (ca. 1831-1905)	William Taylor
John [A.R.?] Chase	Benjamin Little	James Terrell
Isaac Clarke (---- - 1892)	Henry Logan (ca. 1813-1899)	Alfred Thomas
Charles F. Datcher (ca. 1822- ----)	William Louden (ca. 1820- ----)	John C. Thomas (ca. 1819-1872)
Hilleary Davis (ca. 1832-1901)	Hamilton Martin (ca. 1812-1897)	Samuel Thomas
James W. Day (ca. 1820-1878)	Aaron [John?] Mason	John Thornton
Ephraim Dorsey	Benjamin Minor (ca. 1810-1868)	Charles Tinney (ca. 1813-1884)
John E. Dorsey (---- - 1900)	Perry Mitchell	Robert Wilkinson (c. 1772-1872)
Tilghman Ford	Lindsay Muse (ca. 1803-1888)	Charles Wilson (ca. 1823-1900)
Thomas H. Fox (ca. 1813 - ----)	Henry Neale (ca. 1825 - ----)	James H. Wright (c. 1820-1891)
Benjamin C. Freeman (ca. 1814-1865)	Benjamin H. Nugent	Edward O. Young (ca. 1846-187
George H. Garrison (ca. 1808-1881)	Eli E. Nugent Sr. (ca. --- 1861)	Forrester Young (ca. 1810 - ----)
James Griffin	Eli E. Nugent Jr. (ca. 1832 - ----)	John Young
	Richard H. Nugent (ca. 1818 - ----)	