

Freedman's Village at Arlington

Adults and children read books in front of their barracks at the Freedman's Village. (NARA, ca. 1861-1865)



ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY
HISTORY EDUCATION SERIES



What was Freedman's Village?



1864 illustration of Freedman's Village. The picture originally appeared in Harper's Weekly. (LOC)

During the Civil War, and directly afterward, the population of newly freed African Americans in and around Washington D.C. increased dramatically. Newly freed people were also called “freedmen” or “contrabands.” The name “contraband” was used because in the South slaves were classified as property. Enemy property captured by the U.S. Army was considered contraband and would not be returned. (You can read more about the name and the official U.S. policy at the time here: <https://www.nps.gov/articles/fort-monroe-and-the-contrabands-of-war.htm>)

Among the difficulties faced by these displaced refugees, the needs for housing, food, and employment were primary. To address these needs, the federal government established “contraband camps” throughout the city. However, overcrowding and poor sanitation made these camps difficult places to live.

Arlington Plantation, the home of Confederate General Robert E. Lee (which was actually owned by his wife Mary Custis Lee), had been seized by the U.S. Army shortly after Virginia seceded and the Lee family fled south. The high ground overlooking Washington, D.C. was an important strategic position for the military to hold. In 1864, part of the estate became a military cemetery.

By 1863, government officials were looking for a site for a new contraband camp and ultimately choose a portion of the Arlington Estate. Unlike other camps of the time, Freedman's Village eventually became a permanent settlement for formerly enslaved persons. While residents were encouraged to learn skills, find work, and only live in the village temporarily, some chose to remain there for years. Noted abolitionist and former slave Sojourner Truth lived in the village for a year, helping to educate and train residents. Over the years, the population of the village fluctuated between 1,000 and 3,000 residents. Residents established schools, churches, a hospital and a home for the aged and infirm. The village provided many individuals with a chance to acquire necessary skills and experiences as they constructed lives outside of slavery.

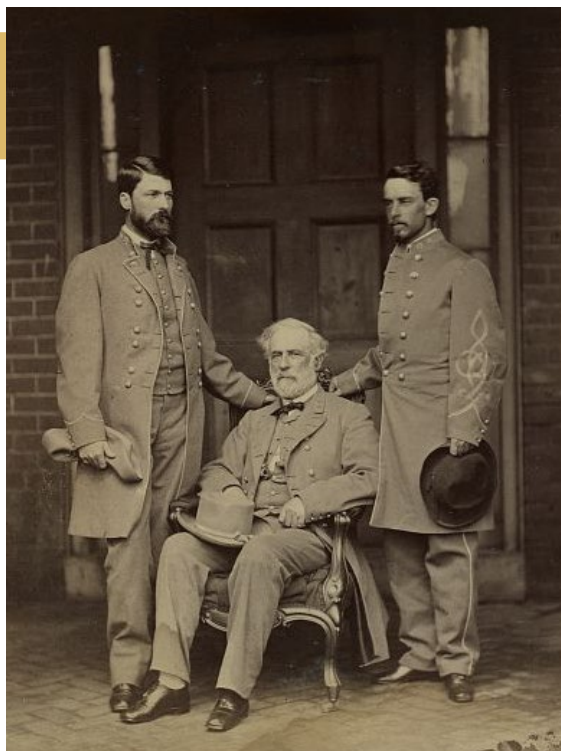
However, the village was not free of problems. Without a civil government, the residents were under military rule and then the jurisdiction of the federal government's Freedmen's Bureau, established in 1865. Residents were required to work for the federal government or to have



What was Freedman's Village? (continued)

another means of employment. The government pressured them to sign work contracts, which many African Americans were reluctant to do, fearing that they were signing their way back into slavery. Moreover, managing social services in Freedman's Village proved challenging. Conditions in the home for the aged, for example, were poor: in 1867, a hospital surgeon noted in a letter that there was insufficient heat, cleanliness, and attention to residents' needs.

As early as 1868, the federal government made efforts to close the village and move residents out. However, the village survived until 1887.



L-R: George Washington Custis Lee, who inherited the Arlington Estate on the death of his mother Mary, Robert E. Lee, and Walter H. Taylor, an aide of Robert E. Lee, in 1865. (LOC/Brady's National Photographic Portrait Galleries)

Ownership of Arlington

The U.S. Army controlled the Arlington property throughout the Civil War, but the Lee family retained ownership. In 1862, Mary Custis Lee attempted to pay the property tax on Arlington by sending her cousin to pay the bill in person. The commissioners refused to accept payment from anyone but Mary Custis Lee, declared the property to be in default, and sold it to the federal government at auction for \$26,800 (below the assessed value). When George Washington Custis (GWC) Lee inherited Arlington Estate on the death of his mother in 1873, he went to court because he felt that his rights as a landowner had been violated due to the way the government originally took control of the land in 1862. In 1882, the Supreme Court sided with GWC Lee, and the land was restored to Lee, who then sold it to the government for \$150,000. This was done despite the fact that Lee had served as a Confederate officer and rebelled against the U.S. government.

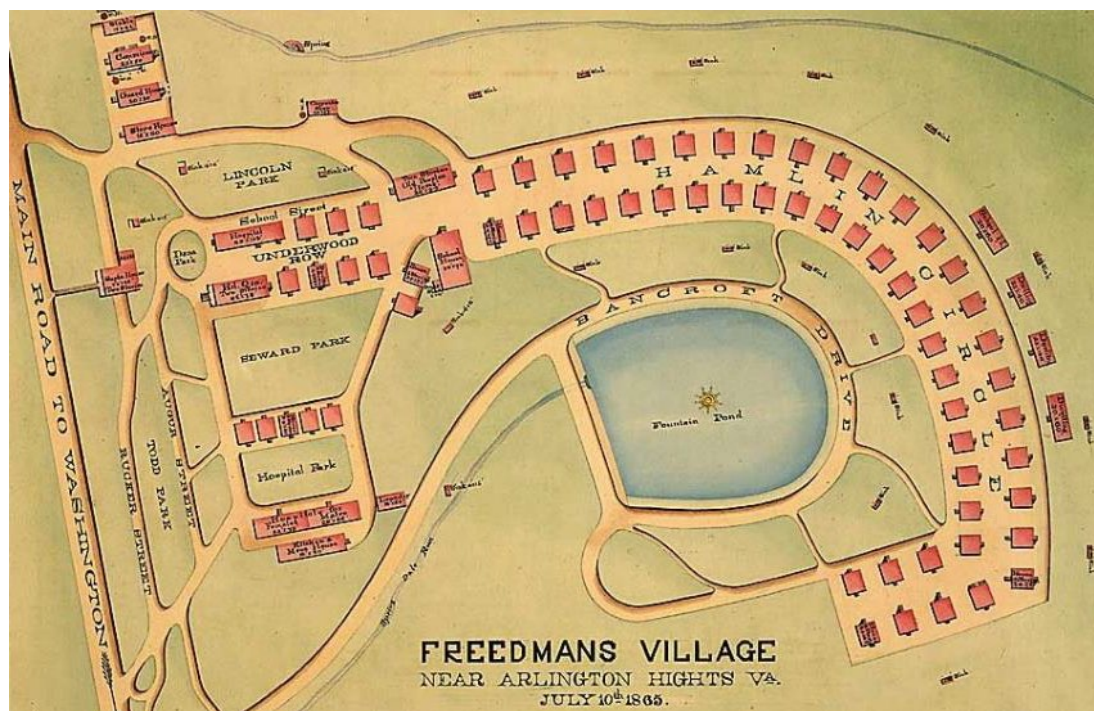
Questions to Consider:

- How does the government's treatment of GWC Lee contrast with its treatment of the villagers?
- As a society, do we sometimes prioritize some rights (such as property) over other rights? Do we prioritize some people's rights over other people's rights?
- What should be done—and whose responsibility is it to address such issues—when different groups have rights that seem to be in conflict?



The End of Freedman's Village

In December 1887, the Army informed villagers that they had 90 days to relocate. The deadline lapsed as Major Carpenter, the commanding officer at Fort Myer who was ordered to remove the villagers, called for an investigation that included a survey, a census, and an evaluation of property. As the investigation went on, however, many residents moved away. In 1888, 763 people still lived in the village. In 1890, the remaining 150 families moved, and the Army tore down the remaining buildings. In 1900, Congress appropriated \$75,000 to pay the villagers and settle the debt owed to them. Former residents or their descendants were also paid.



Map of Freedman's Village (NARA, 1865)

The official reason for closing the village was that Army regulations forbade civilians from residing on military reservations. However, contemporary newspaper reports (read some on pages 9-17) outlined other considerations that may have influenced the decision to close the village.

Today, no trace of Freedman's Village remains at Arlington National Cemetery. While the exact boundaries of the village are unknown, part of it was situated on what are now Sections 4, 8, 20 and 34.



The Legacy of Freedman's Village: African American Communities in Arlington

While the buildings of Freedman's Village were torn down, the community that the residents built did not collapse. Residents used what they had learned during their time there to form other Black communities in the Arlington area. Three of these communities—Green Valley, Hall's Hill, and Johnson's Hill—still exist and some local families can trace their family history to Freedman's Village. They took with them the skills they had learned, the educations they had gained, and the organizations (including churches) that they had created. Organizations that began in the village and continue in Arlington today include the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows and Mt. Olive and Mt. Zion Baptist churches.



In 1959, Stratford Junior High School in Arlington became the first public secondary school in Virginia to desegregate. (LOC/ Warren K. Leffler)



A Black neighborhood in Rosslyn, an unincorporated area of Arlington County, Virginia. (LOC/ John Vachon, 1937)

Additional Reading:

More information about historically Black communities in Arlington can be found on the following websites:

- <https://projects.arlingtonva.us/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2016/09/A-Guide-to-the-African-American-Heritage-of-Arlington-County-Virginia.pdf>
- <https://library.arlingtonva.us/2018/01/31/from-freedmans-village-to-queen-city-one-communitys-evolution/>

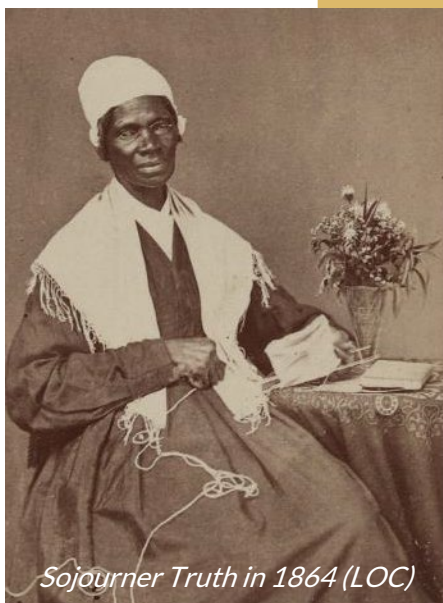


Sojourner Truth at Freedman's Village

Sojourner Truth was a prominent American abolitionist and supporter of the rights of African Americans and women. She was born Isabella Baumfree, an enslaved person, in New York state around 1797. Her first language was Dutch.

She was almost 30 when she escaped to freedom shortly before the state of New York abolished slavery in 1827. Of her escape she said, "I did not run off, for I thought that wicked, but I walked off, believing that to be all right." She changed her name to Sojourner Truth in 1843 and became a well-known proponent of the abolition of slavery and women's rights. She gave speeches around the country, and her memoirs were published in 1850. She never learned to read or write, but dictated her memoirs and letters. In 1864, she moved to Freedman's Village to instruct women in domestic duties, to offer counseling and to help people exercise their civil rights.

At this time, the law ending slavery in Maryland was being contested in court. Some slave owners had kidnapped young boys from the village and took them back to Maryland to work. The incident is described in *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, compiled by Olive Gilbert and Frances Titus and published in 1878:



Sojourner Truth in 1864 (LOC)

Liberty was a stranger to these poor people... they often submitted to grievous wrongs from their old oppressors, not presuming to expostulate. The Marylanders tormented them by coming over, seizing, and carrying away their children. If the mothers made a "fuss," as these heartless wretches called those natural expressions of grief in which bereaved mothers are apt to indulge, they were thrust into the guard-house. When this was made known to Sojourner, she told them they must not permit such outrages, that they were free, and had rights which would be recognized and maintained by the laws, and that they could bring these robbers to justice.

...her electrifying words seemed to inspire them with new life... The manhood and womanhood of these crushed people now asserted itself, and the exasperated Marylanders threatened to put Sojourner into the guard-house. She told them that if they attempted to put her into the guard-house, she "would make the United States rock like a cradle."

Truth encouraged the families to use the law and request that justice be done. Eventually the courts ordered the boys to be returned to their families.



LIFE AFTER EMANCIPATION

Additional information about the lives of freed people after emancipation can be found at the following sources:

- ANC's Freedpeople of Section 27 materials: After the Civil War, freedpeople whose families could not afford burial in a private cemetery were buried on the Arlington property in what became Section 27 of the cemetery. Additional information about the lives of freedpeople after the war can be found in these materials.
- Newspaper article that details a meeting between Black religious leaders and Union military leaders to discuss the current state and future needs of newly freed African Americans in the South:
 - Transcript: <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/savmtg.htm>
 - Image: <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030213/1865-02-13/ed-1/seq-5/>
- Library of Congress resources that offer a look at life after emancipation: <https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/aahtml/exhibit/aopart5.html>
- Information on individuals searching for loved ones after the Civil War: <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/02/22/516651689/after-slavery-searching-for-loved-ones-in-wanted-ads>



Section 27 in Arlington National Cemetery. While no residents of Freedman's Village were buried in this section, it is the final resting place for other freed people who lived in the area. (ANC Education/Emily Rheault, 2019)



FIRSTHAND HISTORY

The collection of documents compiled here includes a variety of viewpoints and experiences of life during Reconstruction, the period following the Civil War when attempts were made to redress the inequities of slavery and solve the problems arising from the readmission to the Union of the 11 Confederate states. While these accounts focus on the experiences of those who lived at Freedman's Village on the former Arlington Estate, other personal accounts from the time period are recommended in the Additional Readings section. As you read through these accounts, consider what it was like to navigate such difficult circumstances and momentous changes.



Note that while these documents have been transcribed and typed for legibility, spelling and grammar mistakes have not been corrected, to retain the authenticity of the original materials.

*Left: A family gathers as a soldier reads a newspaper in "Reading the Emancipation Proclamation." (LOC/H.W. Herrick, 1864)
Bottom: A man representing the Freedman's Bureau stands between armed groups of white and Black Americans. (LOC/A.R. Waud, 1868)*





J.A. Commerford

Superintendent of Arlington National Cemetery

J.A. Commerford was the Superintendent of Arlington National Cemetery in 1887. His letter to G.B. Dandy, the Quartermaster, began the movement to evict the residents of Freedman's Village from the Former Arlington Estate.

Arlington, Va.,

National Cemetery.

November 12th, 1887.

G.B. Dandy,

Major and Qr. Mr., U.S.A.

Depot Quartermaster.

Sir:

I would respectfully report that for years past some of the colored people who live on the reservation have been in the habit of entering the cemetery during the late hours of the night for the purpose of getting wood for fuel.

On my arrival here, one year ago, I was informed that several hundred young forest trees, from 2 to 6 inches in diameter were cut down and carried away. The remains of these trees can yet be seen.

It has been the custom of these thieves, to use a cross cut saw to cut down trees. By so doing, very little noise is made, in order to avoid detection. It is said, that very few of these squatters buy any fuel, and depend mostly on what they can pick up within the enclosure. It would be necessary for a man to remain on watch all night, to arrest the guilty parties. It has been suggested, that the most effective way of preventing such thefts, is to cause the removal of these people from the reservation.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

J.A. Commerford,

Supt. Nat'l. Cemetery.



S.B. Holabird

Quartermaster General

As the Deputy Quartermaster General, Dandy sent Commerford's letter to S.B. Holabird, the Quartermaster General, for instructions on November 15, 1887. Holabird responded by sending the following letter to William C. Endicott, the Secretary of War.

2nd Indorsement.

War Department.
Quartermaster General's Office,

Washington, D.C., November 17th, 1887.

Respectfully forwarded to the Honorable, the Secretary of War. In Violation of paragraph #138 Army Regulations, amended by General Order #26, Adjutant General's Office, 1883, civilians are residing upon the Military reservation, upon which the Arlington National Cemetery and the Military Post at Fort Myer, Va., are located.

This occupation has continued many years, and since the title of the land passed to the United States by purchase, May 18th, 1883, no steps have been taken for the removal of these occupants, mostly colored people.

In consequence of the complaints now made, it would seem to be proper that they should be ordered to vacate their holdings, giving them sufficient time for moving their property to prevent suffering.

I therefore recommend that the Military Authorities at Fort Myer be directed to serve notice upon all Civilians residing on the reservation, and not employed by the Government, that they must remove therefrom, within 90 days after date of notice.

S.B. Holabird.

Quartermaster General, U.S. Army.

2447-'87.

I Enclosure,

I Endt.

Cemeterial.



William C. Endicott Secretary of War

After Endicott's approval was given, the command to remove the village was given in a series of letters.

3rd Indorsement.

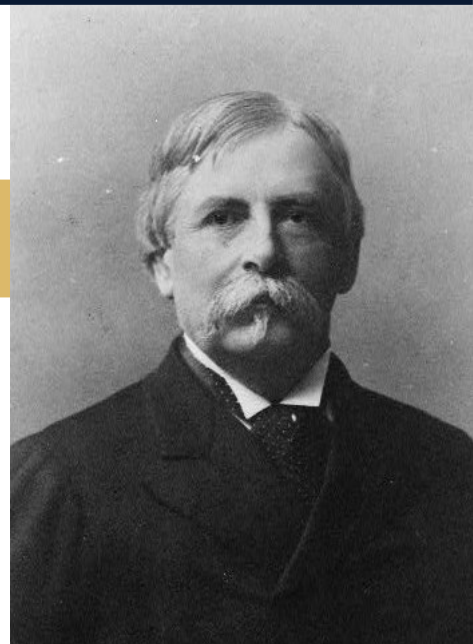
War Department.

November 22nd, 1887.

Approved as recommended by the Quartermaster General.

By order of the Secretary of War.

John Tweedale.
Chief Clerk.



*Photo of William C. Endicott
in 1886. (LOC)*

4th Indorsement

War Department.

Quartermaster Generals Office.

Washington, D.C., November 26th, 1887.

Respectfully forwarded to the Adjutant General of the Army, with request, that the orders necessary in this case, be given the proper Military Authorities.

S.B. Holabird,
Quartermaster General,
U.S. Army

2447-'87.
Cemeterial.



John B. Syphax Freedman's Village Resident

John B. Syphax was a member of a prominent African American family. His parents had been enslaved on the Arlington plantation and his family settled on 17 acres bequeathed to Syphax's mother Maria by George Washington Parke Custis, her father. When the residents of the village learned that the government planned to close the village, they held a meeting to discuss what they should do. John B. Syphax was chosen to write the following letter to Endicott. In it, he laid out the experiences and claims of the villagers.

Arlington, Va. Jan-18th-1888

The Honorable,
Wm. C. Endicott,
Secretary of War,
Washington, D.C.

Sir: Having been chosen by the colored renters living on the Arlington reservation as their representative to adjust their relation with the general government, I beg leave to present, for your honorable consideration, the following facts. As the army advanced, during the war, several thousand colored people, men, women, and children, of all ages, and every condition, were quartered on this place by the agents of the government. Many of this number were employed by the United States, a portion of their pay being withheld for the support of the aged and infirm. When buildings were erected, Gen. O.O. Howard entered into contract with each tenant, demanding payment in money for rent of land. After the abolition of the Freedmen's Bureau, they were required to work out rent at Fort Myer which they have continued to do until the present time.

Agents representing the government fully impressed upon the people the idea that in some way they would come to possess a valid claim to a part of Arlington.

When many of them were taken with a colony to Hayti, and returned after the scheme was exposed, and their sufferings made known, they were told, perhaps as an apology that they would remain here.

Many began to plant trees, and make such other improvements as their scanty means would permit. They paid in ready money for their houses, churches, and other buildings, which were all sold to them by the government through its agent. About nine years ago, Lieut. R.P. Strong, then commanding at Fort Myer, gave permission to erect a brick church on the reservation, costing nearly two thousand dollars, and here again, they were made to believe that their stay would be indefinitely prolonged, therefore, several houses were [CONTINUED]



John B. Syphax, continued

Freedman's Village Resident

[CONTINUED] built, and the spirit of improvement again revived. Many of these people have been soldiers, teamsters, workers on fortifications and sufferers by the freedmen's bank swindle. Although no taxes have been paid on the Arlington land, yet the colored people have been fully taxed upon their general property, and have been no unjust burden upon the community, because the small amount paid for labor enabled others to help in the work of education and care of the helpless. Coming from the shades of the past, these people have proven, in their new condition of self reliance, more thrifty, and less vicious than could be reasonably anticipated; and they have never failed, after the teachings, and traditions of their fathers, to implore Almighty God for help and protection.

There are about one hundred families here, who own their dwellings. Nearly all of these houses are so constructed, and in such condition of decay, as to be useless to take down and move away; besides, contemplated improvements such as the Memorial-Bridge, Mount Vernon Avenue, the Aquaduct, and the Potomac flats, have made the price of land, in this vicinity, beyond the reach of the poor. I know not what may be the purpose of the government, or the pleasure of the Honorable Secretary in the premises, but if it be to take this property wholly for National use, I most respectfully ask that an appropriation be recommended of not less than three hundred and fifty dollars a-piece for each owner of a house, but to be apportioned according to merit, and the various conditions and circumstances by the "Board of Protection", consisting of five of their number which they have chosen to look after their local interests.

Twenty-four years residence at Arlington, with all the elements involved in this case inspire the hope that full and ample justice will be done even to the weakest members of this great Republic.

As many of the farmers desire to prepare their land for spring work, and are in doubt as to another year, I will be glad, as early as possible, to receive a reply to this letter.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

John B. Syphax



The New York Herald

Herald Bureau, Thursday December 8, 1887

The following article appeared in the New York Herald after Endicott had approved the removal of the villagers and before Syphax's letter was written. The article covers not only the recent developments, but the history of the village and some of the presumed reasons for closing the village. Ellipses (...) indicate portions of text that were illegible in the original.

From the New York Herald
Thursday December 8, 1887

Industrious Colored People To Be Evicted to Satisfy
Speculators.

HOMES ON GOVERNMENT LAND.

Fair Rental Value Paid but They Must Go
Nevertheless.

TO APPEAL TO CONGRESS.

[FROM OUR REGULAR CORRESPONDENT.]

Herald Burkau,
Corner Fifteenth and G Streets, N.W.,
Washington, Dec. 7, 1887.

An attempt to deprive several hundred colored families of their homes is being made in this vicinity in the interest of several speculative jobs.

It is proposed by these speculators that those poor and helpless colored men, women, and children shall be driven out of their little homes next February in the bleakest part of the winter—homes in which they have lived undisturbed for nearly a quarter of century and which in every case they have paid for.

By some curious trick, which remains to be explained, the War Department had been deluded into issuing an order favoring those speculators and inhumanly evicting these poor and helpless people- all of them honest laboring people- from their little homes.

They are the residents of freedman's village, a settlement opposite Washington, and have been ordered by the Secretary of War, through Major General Schofield, commanding the Department of the Atlantic, to vacate their homes within ninety days.

The news of this order has caused the greatest consternation among a thousand poor negroes who for so long have not only occupied the ground unmolested, but under government protection and sanction.

TRUMPED UP CHARGES

The charges which are made the basis of military interference at this late day are believed to be wholly unfounded. The settlement existed before the cemetery, and for twenty years no one has ever before heard a word of complaint that it was thought had reasonable foundation.

The charge that the settlers are now guilty of desecrating the graves by cutting an occasional stick of timber, is regarded as a mere subterfuge for the basis of the order.

It may be true that as squatters on a government reservation they are subject to the order of the War Department. Nevertheless they bought their houses from the government and yearly have paid rent for the occupation of the ground.



The New York Herald, continued

Herald Bureau, Thursday December 8, 1887

The government cannot deprive them of property it has sold without making them compensation and yet none is proposed. No public ... is alleged to exist for ordering their removal and unless the War Department ... the Secretary of War will countermand the approval of the order.

AN IN.... MEETING

About two hundred of the villagers assembled in the church this evening to consider what action they should take in response to the secretary's order.

"Why we don't buy land and own our own homes ... to work more than ... months in the year and it ... enough to live. We are thankful if we can eat ... keep life in our bodies. We are ..."

Others present spoken briefly upon the subject ... They spoke as only men can speak whom all is at stake.

One of the speakers referred to the injustice of branding them all as thieves because one or two unknown members of these community had cut down an occasional stick of timber in the national burying ground. The mentioned ... in conclusion, that he would submit to being driven away from the house had had inhabited for the past quarter of a century, but that he would insist upon begin give a certificate of good standing at the same time provided the second applause of the evening.

Another speaker congratulated the meeting that they were but not entirely helpless. He said the Lord was with them. He had raised up a friend for them in the NEW YORK

HERALD, the leading newspaper of America. IF the HERALD was on their side they need not fear all the politicians and land syndication that could be gathered in Washington. At the conclusion of his remarks three cheers for the HERALD were proposed and given with a will.

A COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY

It was finally agreed that the following resolution be accepted as the... of the meeting: -

"Resolved. That a committee of five be appointed to visit the Secretary of War and most respectfully solicit from him the information as to whether any reports, as stated in the public print, charging the colored people of this county with theft of wood from the Arlington Cemetery, are true and whether such reports furnish the basis upon which they are ordered to leave said reservation."

The committee was then appointed to call upon Secretary Endicott tomorrow and report on Friday night. If they shall be officially informed that the order has been issued, then an appeal will be made to Congress and in other directions to prevent its provisions from being carried into effect.

HOW THE VILLAGE GREW

The freedmen's village grew from the influx of fugitive slaves into Washington, which began in the fall of 1862, and swelled to a flood after the emancipation proclamation. Even before the President's preliminary proclamation of September 1, 1862, the War



The New York Herald, continued

Herald Bureau, Thursday December 8, 1887

Department had begun to employ negroes as laborers and teamsters in the camps, corrals and depots about Washington, and the pay rolls of the depot and department quartermasters bore the names of fully ten thousand by the fall of 1863.

These men were paid \$10 per month and one ration per day, and from the monthly pay of each a deduction was made for the support of aged, infirm and young blacks who, for sanitary and disciplinary reasons, were hutted together on a part of the Arlington estate, and governed and supplied by military officers, partly under the commanding general of the Department of Washington and partly under the Quartermaster and Commisary departments.

Upon the establishment of the Freedmen's Bureau the freedmen's village was turned over to General Howard, the chief of that bureau, and was administered as an establishment of that bureau till the bureau itself was discontinued. Since that time the village has had no other connection with the War Department than arises from its presence within the limits of a military reservation, as the Arlington estate is considered to be for practical purposes.

PROSPERITY WITHOUT PROPRIETORSHIP

A HERALD correspondent visited the place to-day and talked with the poor people.

The village lies along the river front, three-quarters of a mile southeast of Arlington Cemetery. It contains a population of 350 souls. The houses are frame structures of one and two stories in height. With few

exceptions they are neatly whitewashed, and their general appearance is indicative of respectability and thrift.

A pretty little brick church stands at the further extremity of the village, in which weekly services are held. The church could not have cost less than \$1,500 or \$1,800, all the expense of which was born by the communicants.

When the HERALD correspondent visited the village to-day the old fashioned bell outside the schoolhouse was calling the children to their afternoon exercises. A glance indoors showed them to be as bright and intelligent a set of youngsters as could be found in any school, white or black in the land. Their ages ranged from little ... of six and eight to twelve and fourteen years. The children were neatly dressed and apparently interested in their lessons.

The announcement that they were to be evicted reached the people yesterday. It produced all ... village folk beyond anything since the emancipation. They would not believe it at first, but when the news was confirmed by a ... of village patriarchs who visited the post Fort Myer their grief knew no bounds.

... RIGHTS

Many of the older people have lived in the village or its immediate vicinity for a quarter of a century. Most of them have seen their children and children's children grow up around them. The quiet little church yard over or beyond the hill contains their dead. To leave the old spot... homes and hospital for



The New York Herald, continued

Herald Bureau, Thursday December 8, 1887

such of the inhabitants as are too aged or infirm to provide themselves with new houses.

It should be remembered that some of the people hold their homes by right of inheritance. In all cases the houses were purchased of the government originally and a ... rent of \$30 a year has been paid by the head of each household in labor about the ... It is not to be wondered therefore that the inhabitants should, as years rolled by, come to regard their title as a fixed and legitimate one.

THEIR OWN IMPROVEMENTS

In this belief they built additions to their homes. They economized from their scanty savings and erected a church wherein they might worship God after the fashion of elder and more populous communities. They purchased text books and sent their children to school

All this they did out of the money earned by them during the long spring and summer as laborers in the employ of a brick yard near by. At the present time they are lying idle for lack of ...

The officers of the garrison at Fort Myer do not desire the removal of the colored people. Much of the labor about the fort and the quarters of the officers and men is performed by these black laborers, and the settlement for it is easy, since it can be arranged as part of the annual rent paid for their small places. It is one of the conditions of this annual payment that it can be paid in labor at the fort.

The village and the rest of the colored residents are so settled on the reservation as not to be near enough to any of the other occupants to raise annoyance.

The complaint on which the Secretary of War based his order comes from the superintendent of the Arlington Cemetery. He complains that the colored people steal wood. He even claims that they cut down trees on the cemetery grounds. This would be impossible if he and his employees did their duty in watching the limited portion of the reservation under their charge.

THE OBNOXIOUS ORDER

Following is the indorsement of the report of the superintendent of the Arlington Cemetery by the Quartermaster General:--

"November 17, 1887.

"Quartermaster General submits suggestion of J. A. Commerford, superintend Arlington National Cemetery, that the colored people on the Fort Myer reservation be removed on account of their stealing wood and cutting young trees, and for reasons stated recommends that the military authorities at Fort Myer be directed to serve notice upon all civilians residing on the reservation, and not employed by the government, that they must be removed therefrom within ninety days after date of notice."

"Approved as recommended by the Quartermaster General.

"By order of the Secretary of War.



The New York Herald, continued

Herald Bureau, Thursday December 8, 1887

"JOHN TWEEDALE, chief clerk War Department.

"November 24, 1887."

THE LAND GRABBERS DID IT

There are at least three schemes which are believed to be back of this strange order. There is a project of a great park to be established on the south side of the Potomac on the Arlington estate and this cannot be carried out without evicting the colored people.

This Arlington Park is one part of the project for a memorial bridge over the Potomac, which gained some head way toward the close of the last Congress. The plan is to build the bridge from a point west of the White House to a point near the river entrance to Arlington.

Another project which seems to be connected with this affair is that of building Mount Vernon avenue from Georgetown to the new memorial bridge to Mount Vernon. There is also a large syndicate purchase of real estate, which would be benefited by the contemplated eviction.

There is also a political element in the case. The votes cast by the colored citizens on the Arlington reservation have several times controlled the elections of Alexandria County.

A GREAT PARK JOIL

The *Post*, referring to the order, says: --

"When the squatters have been removed the Arlington Park scheme will be revived. There are between eleven hundred and twelve hundred acres in the old Arlington estate, two hundred of which are enclosed within the cemetery walls, a few acres are used by the military authorities at Fort Myer and the balance, some ... hundred acres, would be available for a public park, at a very slight expense. The ground is already owned by the government and can easily be reached by the aqueduct bridge. This proposed memorial bridge would also make the property easy to access.

... the elevation on which the old Lee mansion and Fort Myer stand is a level area, compromising some two hundred acres, and this has already been suggested as a magnificent parade ground. It would be fitted for this purpose at the expense of a small ... Mount Vernon Avenue, if it is ever connected, would run through the park. General Lee, the representative from the Alexandria district, is thought to favor the idea.



ADDITIONAL READINGS

This collection is only a small sample of the many firsthand accounts related to life after Emancipation. If you are interested in learning more, check out this collection of transcribed primary documents related to Emancipation: <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/sampdocs.htm>

This is a large collection of transcribed documents, and topics of particular interest include:

Treatment of African Americans

- <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/Head.htm>
- <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/Hopkins.html>
- <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/Webber.htm>
- <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/MHoward.html>
- <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/Hill.html>
- <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/Roxborough%20et%20al.html>
- <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/Robison.html>
- <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/Cook%20et%20al.html>
- <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/Fulton.html>
- <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/Lucas.html>
- <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/Barker.html>

Black Codes:

Legislation that limited the rights of Black Americans

- <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/we%20the%20Colorde%20people.html>
- <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/Holly.html>
- <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/cozzens.htm>
- <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/Kamper.html>
- <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/Penick.html>
- <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/McIntosh.html>
- <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/Elon%20resolutions.html>
- <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/Opelousas.html>
- <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/Williamson.htm>
- <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/Martin.html>



ADDITIONAL READINGS

Other topics and primary documents include:

Exercising New Rights:

- <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/DHWilliams.html>
- <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/French.html>
- <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/Norvall.html>
- <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/Randall.html>
- <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/J%20Johnson.htm>
- <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/Sweeny.html>
- <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/Edisto%20petitions.htm>

The Syphax Family:

- <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/how-african-american-syphax-family-traces-its-lineage-martha-washington-180968439/>
- <https://www.c-span.org/video/?414115-101/syphax-descendants-interviews>

Further Reading

- Summary of life after emancipation: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbaapc.01700/?sp=13>
- Report on leasing abandoned southern lands:
<https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbaapc.32000/?sp=7>
- Collection of letters from military leadership about the “contrabands” under their command: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbaapc.08200/?sp=1>
- 1890 newspaper article about the closure of the village:
https://www.newspapers.com/clip/5669754/evening_star/
- 1877 paper on “The Color Question” that proposed sending freed Blacks to colonize in Africa: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbaapc.14100/?sp=4>
- 1872 speech by Frederick Douglass defining self-made men and the importance of work
- <http://www.frederick-douglass-heritage.org/self-made-men/>
- Speech by historian Jean Edward Smith about Ulysses S. Grant:
<https://www.fpri.org/article/2013/05/let-us-have-peace-remembering-general-ulysses-s-grant/>



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