

## Virginia Department of Historic Resources PIF Resource Information Sheet

This information sheet is designed to provide the Virginia Department of Historic Resources with the necessary data to be able to evaluate the significance of the property for possible listing in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. This is not a formal nomination, but a necessary step in determining whether or not the property could be considered eligible for listing. Please take the time to fill in as many fields as possible. A greater number of completed fields will result in a more timely and accurate assessment. Staff assistance is available to answer any questions you have in regards to this form.

<b>General Property Information</b>	For Staff Use Only DHR ID #: 44AX0151
Property Name(s): <u>Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery</u>	
Property Date(s): _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Circa <input type="checkbox"/> Pre <input type="checkbox"/> Post <span style="margin-left: 100px;">Open to Public? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Limited <input type="checkbox"/> No</span>	
Property Address: <u>4301 Braddock Road</u> City: <u>Alexandria</u> Zip: <u>22304</u>	
County or Ind. City: <u>Alexandria, City of</u> USGS Quad(s): _____	

<b>Physical Character of General Surroundings</b>
Acreage: _____ Setting (choose one): <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Urban <input type="checkbox"/> Town <input type="checkbox"/> Village <input type="checkbox"/> Suburban <input type="checkbox"/> Rural <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation Corridor
Site Description Notes/Notable Landscape Features: <u>Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery is located in Fort Ward Park. Accessed by a paved driveway, the cemetery sits on a slight grassy knoll, partially shaded by large oak and maple trees. The cemetery is enclosed by a tall wire fences.</u>
Secondary Resource Description (Briefly describe any other structures (or archaeological sites) that may contribute to the significance of the property: <u>None</u>
Ownership Category: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Public-Local <input type="checkbox"/> Public-State <input type="checkbox"/> Public-Federal

<b>Individual Resource Information</b>
What was the historical use of this resource? Examples include: Dwelling, Grist Mill, Bridge, Store, Tobacco Barn, etc... <u>Cemetery</u>
What is the current use? (if other than the historical use) <u>Cemetery</u>
Architectural style or elements of styles: _____
Architect, builder, or original owner: _____
# of stories _____ Condition: <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Fair <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> Ruins <input type="checkbox"/> Rebuilt <input type="checkbox"/> Renovated
Are there any known threats to this property? _____

**Resource Component Information**

Please answer the following questions regarding the individual components of the resource. If the component does not exist, answer "n/a." If you feel uncomfortable in answering the question, please leave the space blank. Photographs of the features can also help our staff identify specific feature components. Usually, priority is given to describing features on the primary (front) facade of the structure.

**Foundation:** Describe the foundation that supports the structure. Examples include piers, continuous brick, poured concrete.  
N/A

**Structure:** Describe the primary structural component of the resource. Include primary material used. Examples include log, frame (sawn lumber), and brick. Also include the treatment, such as a particular brick bond or type of framing, if known.  
N/A

**Walls:** Describe the exterior wall covering such as beaded weatherboard or asbestos shingles.  
N/A

**Windows:** Describe the number, material, and form of the primary windows. This includes the number of panes per sash, what the sashes are made of, and how the sashes operate (are they hinged or do they slide vertically) Have the windows been replaced?  
N/A

**Porch:** Briefly describe the primary (front) porch. List the primary material, shape of the porch roof, and other defining details.  
N/A

**Roof:** Describe the roof, listing the shape and the covering material.  
N/A

**Chimney(s):** List the number of chimneys and the materials used. Include the brick bond pattern if possible.  
N/A

**Architectural Description of Individual Resource:** *(Please describe architectural patterns, types, features, additions, remodelings, or other alterations. A sketch of the current floor plan would be appreciated.)*

Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery sits on the eastern edge of Fort Ward Park. The exact number of burials is unknown, but based on a survey completed in 1991 there are approximately 50 burials within the enclosure with three burials just outside, east of the main cemetery. Some of the earliest burials date to 1920s and the latest burials date to the 1990s.

**Significance Statement:** Briefly note any significant events, personages, and/or families associated with the property. (Detailed family genealogies are not necessary.) Please list all sources of information. It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or genealogies to this form. Normally, only information contained on this form will be posted for consideration by the State Review Board.

In 1939 the land for the “Oakland Church lot” was conveyed by Samuel Jarvis to the members of Oakland Baptist Church. He donated the land after the death of his wife Florence McKnight Jarvis who had inherited the property from her mother, Harriet Stuart McKnight Shorts, one of the founders of the church. The Shorts-Mcknight family was one of the principal founding families of the “The Fort”, a post-Civil War African American Community. Family members continued living on some of the original Shorts land until the 1960s. Three McKnight family graves are the earliest known in the cemetery and predate church ownership of the land. (James, W. Terrell, Maria, McKnight Blackburn (1925) and Burney Turrell (1930).

“The Fort” Community was established by African Americans after the Civil War, in the early 1870s, and the community continued throughout the 1960s. The name was derived from its location adjacent to Fort Ward, a Civil War Fortification. In 1955 the City of Alexandria purchased most of the land in the Fort neighborhood in order to establish a park to commemorate the Civil War activities on the site. Oakland Baptist Church reportedly began as Oakland Baptist Mission in the 1880s and eventually expanded into Oakland Baptist Church. The original Oakland Baptist Church was constructed in 1891 and two years later the congregation moved to its current location at 3408 King Street. The church expanded in 1939, the same year Jarvis conveyed the land for the cemetery. The land is believed to be north of the “Old Grave Yard”. The land was used as a cemetery for many years prior to Oakland Baptist church ownership.

James William Terrell, founder of Oakland Baptist Church and wife Burney are two of the first burials. Mollie Nelson, another founder of Oakland Baptist Church was buried in the cemetery in 1976. She was a midwife for the Fort Community. Two boys Morris Leroy and Richard Johnson, ages 9 and 11, are buried at Oakland Cemetery. Morris and Lonnie drowned after taking a “boat” made out of cardboard boxes out on the Potomac River. At this time African American children could only take a bus to Washington D.C. to swim or they could swim in the River or Hunter’s Creek. After the death of these two boys, Alexandria opened Johnson Memorial Pool for African Americans.

Additional families associated with Fort and members/founders of Oakland Baptist Church are buried in this cemetery.

The cemetery is being considered under Criterion A, Ethnic Heritage, Social History and Criterion Consideration D. Oakland Baptist Church cemetery is associated with the settlement of an area by an ethnic group that had significant impact on the area and the cemetery is one of the only tangible reminders of the “Fort Community” still extant. The period of significance begins in 1939 and ends in 1966.

**Legal Owner(s) of the Property** (For more than one owner, please use a separate sheet.)

Mr.  Mrs.  Dr.   
Miss  Ms.  Hon.  \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name) (Firm)

(Address) (City) (State) (Zip Code)

(Email Address) (Daytime telephone including area code)

Owner's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
**• • Signature required for processing all applications. • •**

In the event of corporate ownership you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.

Contact person: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Telephone: ( )

**Applicant Information** (Individual completing form if other than legal owner of property)

Mr.  Mrs.  Dr.   
Miss  Ms.  Hon.  \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name) (Firm)

(Address) (City) (State) (Zip Code)

(Email Address) (Daytime telephone including area code)

Applicant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Notification**

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for DHR to confer with or notify local officials of proposed listings of properties within their jurisdiction. In the following space, please provide the contact information for the local County Administrator or City Manager.

Mr.  Mrs.  Dr.   
Miss  Ms.  Hon.  \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name) (Position)

(Locality) (Address)

(City) (State) (Zip Code) (Daytime telephone including area code)

Please use the following space to explain why you are seeking an evaluation of this property.

Would you be interested in the State and/or the Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits? Yes  No   
Would you be interested in the easement program? Yes  No

## A Tale of Two Communities, and of How the Tale Gets Told



### TOOLBOX



Resize

Print

E-mail

Reprints

By Marc Fisher

Sunday, March 15, 2009

With its rolling lawns and secluded glens, Fort Ward looks like a lovely place to take a walk. Turns out, it's far more than a park in Alexandria -- it's one history sacrificed to make way for another, a Civil War military installation that has become a contemporary battleground over whose story gets told.

Officially, Fort Ward is, as the city of Alexandria puts it, "the best preserved of the system of Union forts and batteries built to protect Washington, D.C., during the American Civil War." That's fascinating enough: a Union fort in Confederate Virginia.

But Fort Ward is also Adrienne Washington's ancestral home. Her great-grandmother lies buried there, the headstone standing crooked and forlorn in the middle of a scruffy city maintenance yard along one edge of the park -- a painful symbol of a community of black families that was forced off the hillside in the early 1960s when the city bought the land to stop a housing development.

Fort Ward is also Tom Fulton's back yard, literally. Fulton, a retired Interior Department deputy assistant secretary who has delved into the history that lies behind his house, and his next-door neighbor, a National Park Service retiree named Glenn Eugster, are part of a group of residents trying to do what the city never did -- learn about those who lost out when Alexandria took these 44 acres across Braddock Road from Episcopal High School, reconstructed the old fort and made a park out of someone else's neighborhood.

## Advertisement

Now the city of Alexandria is trying to figure out Fort Ward's future: Should the park be used more intensively -- already, it's a site for big corporate picnics -- or protected as a site for reflection? And which story should the park and its museum tell -- that of the Civil War fort, or the black community that called this home?

The debate has brought together two sets of residents who previously barely knew each other existed: The immediate neighbors, who want to curb the loud parties that have been held in the park since alcoholic drinks were allowed in its picnic groves, and the families who want to recover their relatives' buried stories of life "on the fort." The two groups have united in support of a park that tells a different history -- quietly.

"It's just a shame when you have to go through two locked gates to see one of the graves of your ancestors," then find them surrounded by trucks, tools and piles of mulch, says Washington, a columnist at the Washington Times who is researching the history of the Fort Ward settlement where her family lived through much of the 19th and 20th centuries.

For a long time, the city operated a trash transfer station right where Washington's great-grandmother, Clara Adams (1865-1952), was laid to rest. Her headstone -- and, historians say, the unmarked grave of her husband -- now sit smack in the center of the maintenance yard, an offense to history that the city could solve easily, Washington says.

Neighbors who want the park to tell the full story of Alexandria's past have been gearing up for a fight. "Our park services have always had a discomfort with the tension between African American history and Civil War history," Eugster says. "But what started for us as a literally not-in-my-backyard battle because the city had put dumpsters behind our houses led us to explore what really is one story of both the Civil War and the black community that was here afterwards."

During the Civil War, you could stand atop Fort Ward and see Confederate soldiers at Baileys Crossroads three miles away, and those black flecks in your spyglass certainly looked like cannon (though you'd later learn that they were really tree trunks painted black to fool Union spies into thinking that the enemy was armed and dangerous).

After the war, freed slaves settled on abandoned land around the fort. Those workers who built and maintained the Virginia Theological Seminary (of Seminary Road fame) are the people whose graves are now believed to be scattered throughout Fort Ward Park. Just last week, says Lance Mallamo, director of the Office of Historic Alexandria, city historians used old maps to discover an area where still-visible depressions in the ground indicate some of the old residents are buried.

Thanks to pressure from people such as Eugster, Fulton and Washington, the city says it is looking at Fort Ward much as the neighbors do. After a community meeting Wednesday, the city will move to stop the issuing of alcohol permits, reduce the size of picnic groups and number of picnic areas, and look for ways to tell the black community's history, says Kirk Kincannon, Alexandria's recreation and parks director.

The broken headstones are a reminder that the city rebuilt Fort Ward when "there was probably not much thought about more contemporary history," Mallamo says. But since the '60s, "the history of ordinary people has become as important as the history of the heroic."

No one expects to find the money anytime soon to conduct the archaeological digs needed to flesh out Fort Ward's full story. But it should be possible to protect the graves and the row of cedar trees that once led to the long-gone houses, and to use the park's tours and museum to tell a history of the fort that you can still see and the community that you can't.

*E-mail: [marcfisher@washpost.com](mailto:marcfisher@washpost.com)*