

1: Villagers to Government



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 ... I beg leave to present... 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... When buildings were **erected**, Gen. O. O. Howard entered into contract with each tenant, demanding payment in money for rent of land...

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...

Many began to plant trees, and make such other improvements... 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, [Lieutenant] Strong... 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 built, and the spirit of improvement again revived...

quartered: housed
erected: built **ready money:** cash
indefinitely prolonged: without a set end



1: Villagers to Government, cont'd



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...

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... have made the price of land, in this **vicinity**, beyond the reach of the poor... 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...

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

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John B. Syphax." The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

contemplated: proposed
vicinity: area
appropriation: money set aside for a payment



2: Cemetery, Army, Gov't



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.

reservation: property that the U.S. government has exclusive control over
detection: being caught
enclosure: area inside the cemetery



2: Cemetery, Army, Gov't, cont'd



From Dandy's office, the letter was sent to the Quartermaster General's Office on Nov. 15.

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.

residing: living
vacate: leave
sufficient: enough





FREEDMAN'S VILLAGE FAST FACTS

Village Location

- Located on the Arlington estate in Virginia
- Arlington had been the home of Confederate General Robert E. Lee
- In 1887, Arlington also had a national cemetery and a military fort
- Wooden frame houses were built for residents

Life in the Village

- The government provided housing, education, medical care, and training in job skills
- Provided a home for freed people
- Residents were encouraged to move out when they could support themselves

Important Years:

- 1862:** Fugitive slaves (called contrabands) came to Washington D.C.
- 1863:** "Contraband Camps" in D.C. were crowded and unsanitary
- 1863:** The government opened the Village with the first 100 settlers
- 1887:** The Secretary of War ordered the closing of the Village

By the Numbers

- Rent was **\$3** a month
- Population ranged between **1,000-3,000**
- Each house held **2-4** families

Problems in the Village

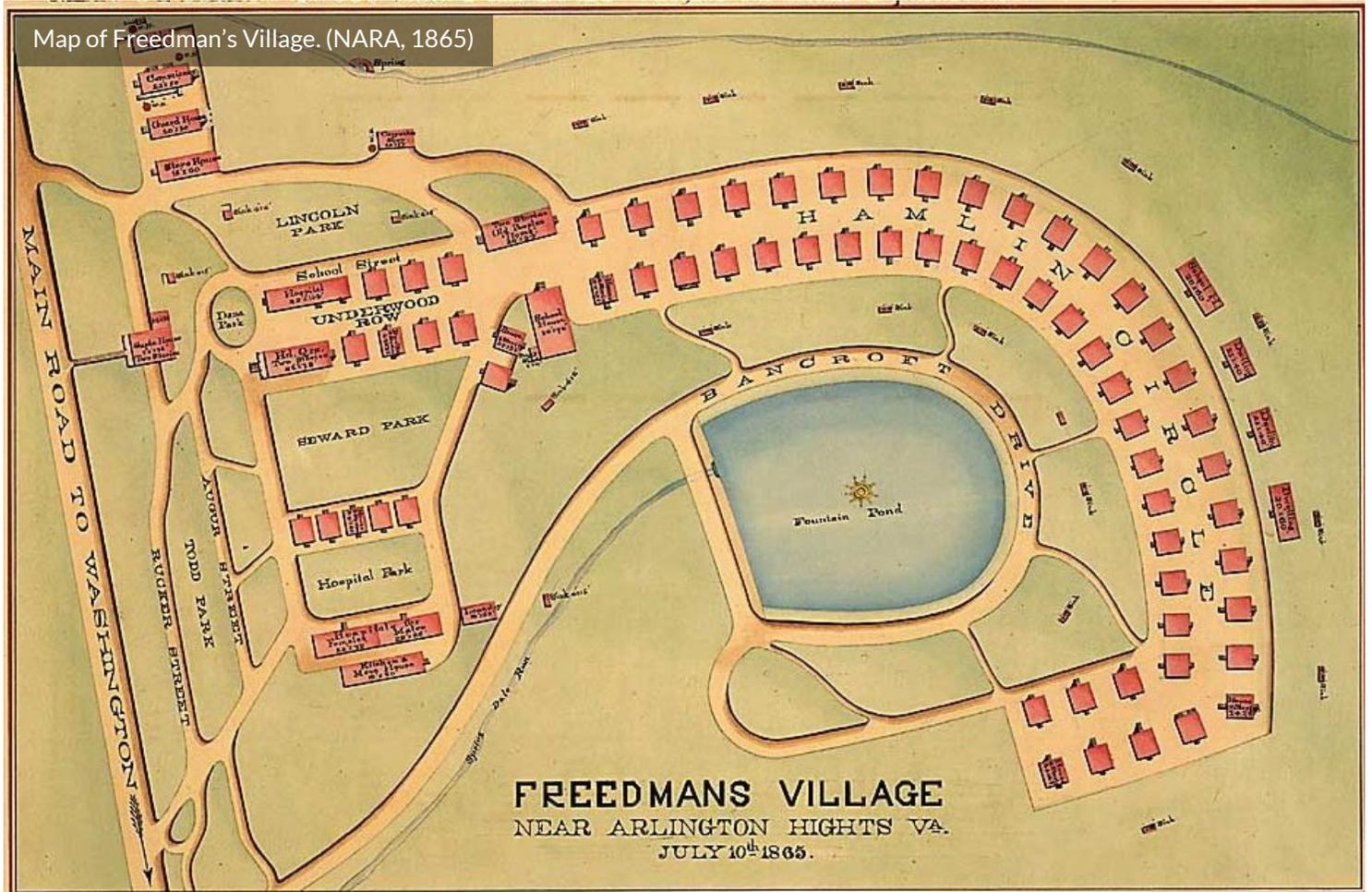
- The village home for the aged wasn't well heated or cleaned
- There were problems with neighbors: reports of stealing and threats

Panoramic view of Freedman's Village, Arlington, Virginia. (LOC, 1864)





Map of Freedman's Village. (NARA, 1865)



Buildings:

Besides the wooden framed houses, other buildings included:

- a school
- stores
- a hospital
- workshops
- churches
- a home for the elderly

Residents made improvements while living there, including:

- building outhouses
- digging wells
- planting trees
- digging gardens

Name:



WHAT WAS FREEDMAN'S VILLAGE?

Who lived there?	When was it started?
Where was it? Why that location?	Why was the village built?
What were benefits of living there?	What were some of the problems?
What improvements did residents make?	What problems were residents accused of?
When did it close?	Why did it close?
Image:	

Name: _____



VILLAGERS TO GOVERNMENT

1. If the residents are forced to move, what does Syphax ask the government to give them?

2. What is Syphax's opinion about closing the village? Do you agree with him? Why or Why not?

CEMETERY, ARMY, GOVERNMENT

1. What's the attitude of Commerford toward the villagers? Use examples to support your opinion.

2. What are the opinions of the cemetery, army, and government about closing the village? Do you agree with them? Why or Why not?

Reasons to Continue Freedman's Village	Reasons to Close Freedman's Village

REFLECTION QUESTION

What's your opinion? Should the residents of Freedman's Village be removed from Arlington? If so, should they be paid? Are there other solutions or compromises that could help both groups?
