

Preliminary Research on Hampshire Fractious

**by
Garrett R. Fesler, Ph.D.**



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In 1876 a Black man named Hampshire Fractious [Fractions, Fractins, Fractus, Fraxus] purchased at an auction a 12-acre “lot of ground” located outside the City of Alexandria (Arlington County Deed Book, D4:243-245, 348-351). Fractious paid \$264 for the property and within two years he had built a dwelling house on the land. This is the house that stands at 506 N. Overlook Drive in Alexandria. A map drafted in 1878 marks the first time the Fractious house appears on a map (Hopkins 1878) (Figure 1). Historic maps of the area prior to 1878 show the area in and around 506 N. Overlook Drive as vacant and undeveloped. The parcel boundaries are depicted in an 1869 plat map that we are in the process of acquiring. Fractious was a plasterer by trade, so he likely had a hand in the construction of his house (Fractious 1888). Indeed, plasterers were skilled craftsmen who not only plastered walls, but also created decorative plaster molding on walls and ceilings, something of an art.

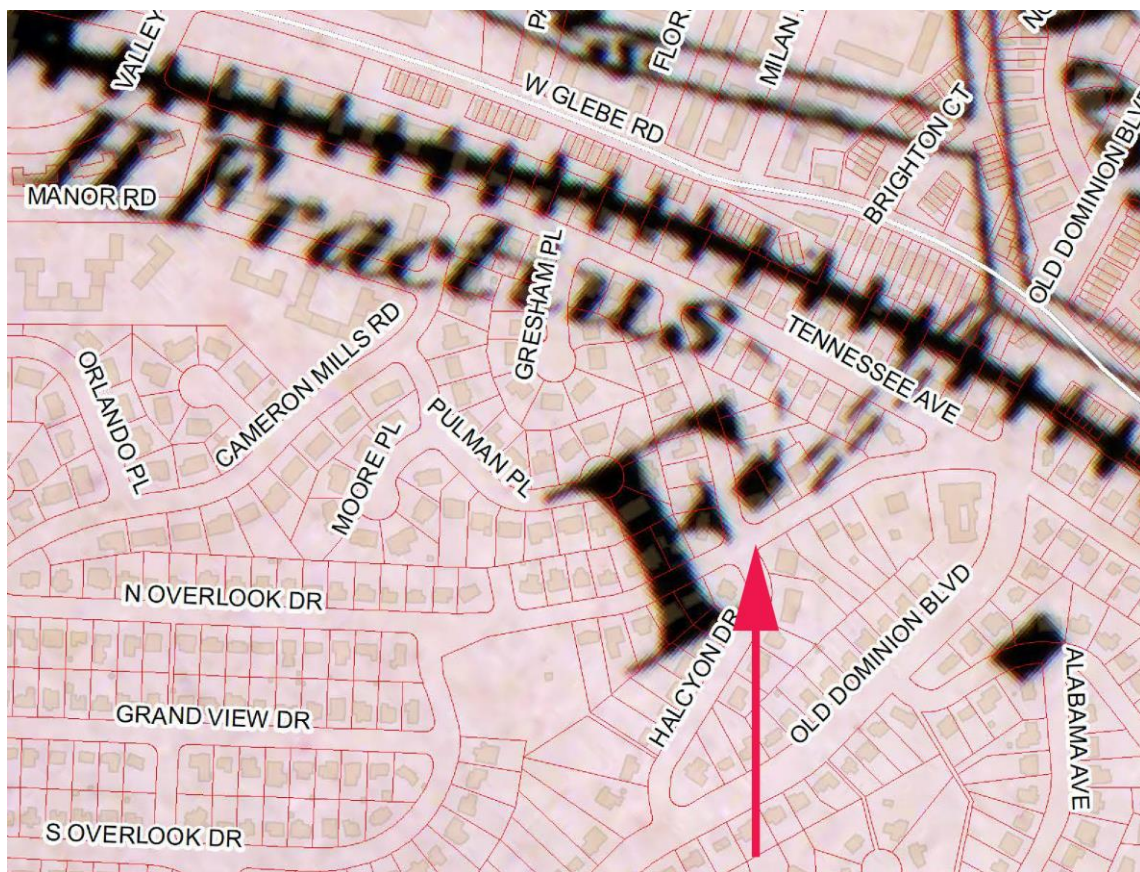


Figure 1. Hampshire Fractious house as depicted on *Atlas of fifteen miles around Washington* (Hopkins 1878).



In the 1880 federal census Fractious's household consisted of 1) himself listed as 63 years of age, 2) his 53 year old wife Mariah [Maria], 3) his daughter Harriett Bailey, age 26, and 4) her infant son Taylor, 5) a 12 year old "adopted" son Joseph Fractious, 6) a 14 year old niece Luella East, and 7) an elderly man named John Lumpkins, age 80, who the census taker described as "a pauper" who was "kept by Fractious" (Fractius 1880a) (Figure 2). According to the 1880 Agricultural Schedule, Fractious's farm was quite modest and valued at \$300. The majority of his land remained wooded, and he kept two cows and a dozen chickens (Fractius 1880b). In 1888 Hampshire Fractious died at the age of 70 (Fractious 1888). A year later his widow Mariah relocated to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, along with her daughter Harriett Bailey and her son-in-law John T. Bailey, all living in the same house (Polk's Directory 1889). In 1892 the Baileys and Mariah Fractious established a deed of trust for the Alexandria property (basically refinanced it), but they appear to have never again resided in Alexandria (Arlington Deed Book, P4:111-115; see also Polk's Directory, 1890, 1891, 1892, 1893, 1894, 1895, 1896, 1898, 1899). Within the first decade of the twentieth century the Baileys sold the Alexandria property (Arlington Deed Book, 110:594; 129:413-414). Based on historical documentation, the Fractious family lived on the property at 506 N. Overlook Drive for approximately a decade, between 1878 and 1889. After 1889 they rented the property to tenants and eventually sold the property outright. A formal chain of title for the property will be necessary to fully understand its ownership history.

Hampshire Fractious first appears in historical documents in Alexandria in 1865. Prior to that, no information about him has been identified thus far, and his life up to 1865 requires additional research. According to documents, his mother Page Fractious arrived in Alexandria in 1864 at the age of 90 years old from Winchester, Virginia (Fractious, Page 1864, 1867a 1867b, 1867c). Freedmen's Bureau records indicate that Hampshire was caring for his elderly and infirm mother a year later in 1865 (ibid.). Fractious may well have accompanied his mother to Alexandria in 1864, possibly as contrabands. If so, then his absence in federal censuses and other primary documents may be because he was born into slavery. Alternatively, additional research may reveal Fractious's whereabouts before 1865 and his status as free or enslaved before his time in Alexandria.

According to his 1888 death certificate, Fractious was born in Clarke County, Virginia in 1818, just to the east of the City of Winchester, Virginia (Figure 3). Perhaps not coincidentally, Hampshire County, Virginia (now West Virginia), is located immediately to the west of Winchester, Virginia, perhaps the source of his first name. In 1834 Alexandria slave traders Franklin and Armfield shipped an enslaved man named Sy Fractins to New Orleans (Fractins, Sy 1834). Rather remarkably, a Black man named S. Fraction is listed as living in Halifax, Nova Scotia in 1838. If this is the same man who was taken to New Orleans in 1834, he may have somehow escaped enslavement and made his way to Nova Scotia, a well-known enclave for escaped slaves (Fraction, S. 1838). Some 35 years later, according to an 1870 Alexandria city directory, a Cyrus Fractions resided with Hampshire Fractions at a property on Cameron Street near its intersection with N. West Street, an indication that the two men were related, possibly as



brothers, and further suggesting that Hampshire may have been enslaved as a younger man like his possible brother Cyrus/Sy.

To complicate matters, records indicate that a 30-year-old Black man named Sirus Fractious was living in Baltimore in 1880 (Fractious, Sirus 1880). At the age of 16, this same man is on record of having worked as a laborer for the Freedmen's Bureau in 1865 in Tennessee (Fractions, Sigh 1865). And to complicate matters even further, the 1880 Federal Census lists a 65-year-old man named Cyrus Fractions living in Illinois with a wife Louisa and a granddaughter Mary (Fractions, Cyrus 1880).

Before his 1878 purchase of the 13 acres near Four Mile Run, Hampshire Fractious resided in the City of Alexandria. According to an 1865 tax list Fractious owned a house and lot on Queen Street valued at \$2,100, placing him among the wealthiest Black property owners in Alexandria (Fractious, Hamshier, 1865). (Note: we have not yet examined the original document, having only seen the transcribed version of the tax list.) By early 1866 Fractious held a deed of trust from Oscar C. Whittlesey with money provided by L.E. Chittenden of Tarrytown, New York (Alexandria City 1866). The deed included two properties described as "One certain house, composed partly of brick and partly of wood, located on the north side of Cameron Street, between Payne and West Streets, on lot owned by Mrs. Jane Thomas, also one other certain house built wholly of wood situated on the west side of West Street between King and Cameron, on lot owned by Mrs. Sommers, in said city of Alexandria, also two waggons and two horses" (ibid.). Fractious seems to have held both properties for the next decade, residing in the house on the north side of Cameron Street, and presumably renting out the other property around the corner on N. West St. (see Boyd's Directory 1870, 1871; Fractious, Page 1867a; Alexandria Gazette 1872).

In the 1870 federal census, Fractious is listed as renting a house in Ward 3 in the vicinity of Cameron and Queen streets, near N. West Street (Fractions 1870). His age is listed as 60 years old, his occupation as a plasterer, he was not able to read or write, he owned \$100 of personal property, but not the land or house. (Fractious may not have owned his properties outright by the deed of trust he took out in 1866 [Alexandria City 1866].) He resided with his 46-year-old wife Mariah, listed as keeping house, and illiterate. Eighteen-year-old daughter Harriett was living at home, and able to read and write. Five-year-old Joseph Fractious also lived in the household. Syllas Laws (age 27) and Thomas Laws (age 15) lived under the Fractious roof, both listed as laborers, and both able to read, but not write. Ten-year-old Mary Rich also lived in the Fractious household. The relationship between the Fractious family and Mary Rich remains unclear. However, members of the Laws family appear to be extended kin. A Black woman named Mary Fractious (born 1823) married a Black man named Thomas Laws and they resided in Clarke County, Virginia (Fractious, Mary, Ancestry.com). Mary may have been a younger sister to Hampshire Fractious, and therefore the young Thomas Laws could have been her son, Hampshire's nephew. (Note: a comment on Ancestry.com infers that Mary



Fractious Laws was the offspring of Philip Burwell, a white Clarke County planter, but this has not been substantiated.)

Fractious also had an adult daughter, Sylvie [Sylvia, Sylva] who married Edward Jones in Alexandria in 1865 at the age of 20 (Factions, Sylva, 1865). Where the Joneses were living in 1870 is not yet known, but Sylvie gave birth to a child in Alexandria, Edward Jones Jr., in 1876 (Jones, Edward Jr. 1876). By 1880 Edward and Sylva Jones lived in the household adjacent to Sylva's father Hampshire Fractious with an 8-year-old son John (see Figure 2). Edward and Sylvie continued to reside in the Alexandria area according to the 1900, 1910, and 1920 Federal censuses (Jones 1900, 1910, 1920). Edward Jones died in 1915, and Sylvie passed ten years later in 1925 (Jones, Edward 1915; Jones, Sylvia 1925). Sylvie Fractious Jones and Edward Jones both are buried in Douglass Cemetery in Alexandria. According to some of the census data, Sylvie gave birth to more than a dozen children over her lifetime, but in 1900 only one was living, a son named Silvesta [Sylvester] born in Pennsylvania in 1882/3 (Jones 1900, 1910). Tragically, Sylvester Jones died in 1916, a little over a year after his daughter Sylvia Jones died in an accidental fire (Jones, Sylvia 1915; Jones, Sylvester 1916). The connection that the Joneses had in Pennsylvania may explain why Sylvie Jones's mother Maria Fractious relocated to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania after her husband's death in 1888. None of the documentation regarding Edward and Sylvie Jones suggests that they resided in the house at 506 N. Overlook Drive.

In 1876 Fractious released the deed of trust on the brick house on Cameron St. to Jefferson Tacey and O.C. Whittlesey, described as "a frame tenement, 2 stories in height, the first story being in brick, situated on Cameron Street near the intersection of West Street, north east" (Alexandria City Deed Book, 6, p. 50). According to the 1878 deed of trust for the 12 acres Fractious purchased around Overlook Drive, he acquired the property via public auction in May 1876, a few weeks after relinquishing his property on Cameron Street (Arlington County Deed Book, D4:243-245, 348-351).

Further research may yield additional information about Hampshire Fractious prior to 1865, but the documents strongly suggest that Fractious did not live in Alexandria before 1864/1865. Censuses and documents in Clark and Hampshire counties, as well as Winchester, Virginia (and surrounding Frederick County) may yield new information. A William and Lucy Fractious are listed in the 1860 federal census as living in Frederick County, Virginia, but a connection between them and Hampshire Fractious has not been established. There also may be Fractious connections in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania where Mariah Fractious and Harriett Bailey relocated in 1890, perhaps returning to familiar climes after Hampshire's death.



Alexandria City Courthouse
1866 Alexandria City Deed Book X-3, p. 98.

1876 Alexandria City Deed Book 6, p. 50.

Alexandria Gazette

1872 Sale of Property for Non-Payment of Taxes, 1 June 1872, p. 3.

Arlington (Alexandria) County Courthouse

1878 Arlington County Deed Book D-4, pp. 243-245, 348-351.

Boyd's Directory of Washington, Georgetown and Alexandria

1870 Hampshire Fractions, p. 414.

1871 Hampshire Fractions, p. xlvi

Hopkins, Griffith Morgan, Jr.

1878 *Atlas of fifteen miles around Washington, including the counties of Fairfax and Alexandria, Virginia*. Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins, 1879, 1879. Map.
<https://www.loc.gov/item/map53000779/>.

Polk's Greater Harrisburg, Pennsylvania City Directory

1889 Polk's Greater Harrisburg, Pennsylvania City Directory, p. 448, 464.

Polk's Greater Harrisburg, Pennsylvania City Directory

1890, 1891, 1892, 1893, 1894, 1895, 1896, 1898, 1899

<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2469/>

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1880 Federal Census. *Villa Ridge, Pulaski, Illinois*; Roll: 243; Page: 168B; Enumeration District: 088. (NARA microfilm publication T9, 1,454 rolls).

Fractions, Sirus

1880 Federal Census. *Baltimore, Baltimore (Independent City), Maryland*; Roll: 502; Page: 480C; Enumeration District: 135. (NARA microfilm publication T9, 1,454 rolls).

Hampshire[Hamshier, Hamphery, H.] Fractions/Fractions (chronological order)

Fractions, Hamshier

1865 Alexandria Real and Personal Property Taxes Paid by African Americans, 1865.
<http://www.freedmenscemetery.org/resources/documents/1865taxes.shtml>

Fractions, H.

1870 Federal Census. *Jefferson, Alexandria (Independent City), Virginia*; Roll: M593_1632; Page: 206A; Family History Library Film: 553131.

Fractions, Hampshire

1880a *Jefferson, Alexandria, Virginia*. 1880 Federal Census. Roll: 1351; Page: 438C; Enumeration District: 007. Tenth Census of the United States, 1880. (NARA microfilm publication T9, 1,454 rolls).

1880b *Jefferson, Alexandria, Virginia*; 1880 Agricultural Census. Archive Collection Number: T1132; Roll: 20; Page: 4; Line: 1; Schedule Type: Agriculture U.S., Selected Federal Census Non-Population Schedules, 1850-1880 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010.

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Mary Fractious

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Page Fractious/Fractions (chronological order)

Fractious, Page

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1867b Freedmen's Bureau Field Office Records, 1865-1872.

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Jones, Edward

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