

# 1323 Duke Street – From Slavery to Freedom and Service

This house, built by Emmanuel Jones by 1888, stands at the corner of a block that witnessed the extremes of 19<sup>th</sup> century African American experience. From a slave trading company to significant expressions of freedom – military service, medical care, religious services and Alexandria’s first, collective civil rights action.

The block was purchased by slave dealers in 1835 and continued to be used by a succession of such businesses until the Civil War (1861-1865). Union troops took control of the block and built L’Ouverture Hospital in 1864 to care for soldiers serving in the U.S. Colored Troops (USCT). Hundreds protested inequality in death and petitioned for burial in the military burial ground now known as Alexandria National Cemetery. The hospital’s Mess Hall was the early meeting place for the congregation that became Shiloh Baptist Church.



The 4<sup>th</sup> U.S. Colored Infantry Regiment fought in several engagements including the Battle of the Crater. Three men of the regiment died at L’Ouverture Hospital: Pvt. William Mathews, Pvt. John Henry Nicholson and Pvt. William Plato. All were from Maryland and suffered from illnesses, such as lung inflammation, rheumatism, and typhoid. Library of Congress

*“Once let the black man get upon his person the brass letters, U.S., let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder and bullets in his pockets, and there is no power on earth which can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship in the United States.”*

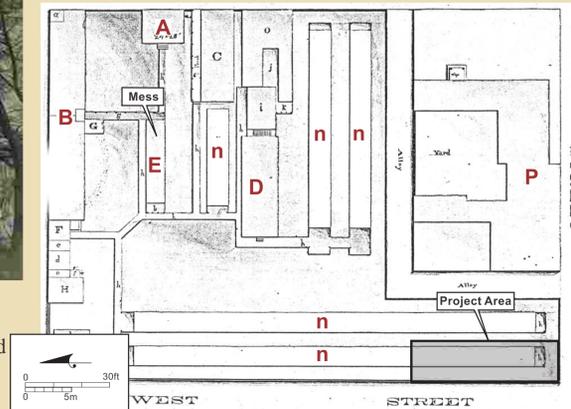
Frederick Douglass

Enlistment of African Americans in the U.S. Colored Troops (USCT) began in 1863 and resulted in the service of about 179,000 men. In the first known civil rights action in Alexandria, 423 soldiers in L’Ouverture Hospital protested their comrades’ burials in the freedmen’s graveyard and signed a petition asking for a resting place *“in ground designated for the burial of brave defenders.”* Their success resulted in the burial of approximately 280 USCT in Alexandria National Cemetery. The grave markers can still be seen today and are a solemn statement of the equality the soldiers sought through their military service --burial as soldiers, not as civilians.

*“As American citizens, we have a right to fight for the protection of her flag, that right is granted, and we are now sharing equally the dangers and hardships in this mighty contest, and should share [sic] the same privileges and rights of burial in every way with our fellow soldiers, who only differ from us in color; ... We ask that our bodies may find a resting place in the ground designated for the burial of the brave defenders, of our countries [sic] flag....”* From petition in letter from Alexandria Quartermaster Captain JGC Lee to the Quartermaster General, December 28, 1864.



Slave dealers Issac Franklin and John Armfield opened their business on the 1300 block of Duke Street in 1828. Armfield lived and worked at 1315 Duke Street, where the Northern Virginia Urban League’s Freedom House Museum is located. He purchased thousands of African Americans and shipped them to Franklin in New Orleans for auction. This 1863 photograph dates to the Union occupation and displays the name of the last slave trading firm in this building. J. Russell, Library of Congress



1865 plan of L’Ouverture Hospital (Quartermaster Department 1865), showing the project area and location of the mess where the Shiloh congregation first met.

The L’Ouverture Hospital plan shows buildings covering much of the block. Perhaps due to the elevated floors and roof vents of the canvas ward tents, most soldiers recuperated from their injuries sustained in battle and common illnesses. The hospital accommodated up to 600 patients at a time. More than 1400 soldiers were admitted from 1864 to 1865. Archaeological investigations documented that no evidence survived from the hospital. National Archives

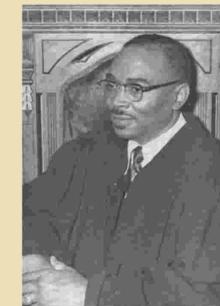
- A—Dispensary
- B—Hospital
- D—Cook house/dining
- E—Mess Hall
- n—Ward Tents
- P—former slave pen, used as jail and freedmen’s housing.



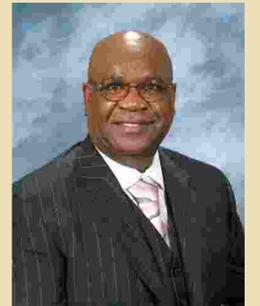
The Union hospital was named for Toussaint Louverture (1743-1803), the primary leader of the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804). A self-educated liberated slave, Louverture proved to be a brilliant military commander who led an army of slaves to drive out European armies and take control of much of the island. His constitution of 1801 abolished slavery and affirmed equal legal protection to all. The fight for independence from France resulted in the world’s first country created by liberated slaves.



Rev. Leland Warring



Rev. Moses W. Beasley



Rev. Dr. Lee A. Earl

Shiloh Baptist Church has a long history on the block. Fifty freed people gathered in the L’Ouverture Hospital mess hall as the Old Shiloh Society led by Reverend Leland Warring, Charles Rodges and E. Owens. The congregation moved across West Street after the Civil War. The clerk of the church, James Ballard, and his wife, Mary, bought 1323 Duke Street in 1920. Shiloh Baptist Church, under the pastorate of Reverend Moses W. Beasley, purchased it from widow Mary Ballard in 1957. Under the pastorate of Reverend Doctor Lee A. Earl, the church leased it to Harambee Community and Economic Development Corporation, Inc. The building was dedicated for senior housing as Beasley Square in 2010.

Shiloh Baptist Church



## Alexandria Heritage Trail

