VLR 9-10-3
NRHP 1-16-4

NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

OMB No. 1024-0018

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name Alfred Street Baptist Church
other names: African Baptist Church, First Colored Baptist Church
site number: DHR #100-5015-0001

2. Location

street & number 313 South Alfred Street not for publication N/A city or town Alexandria vicinity N/A state Virginia code VA county Alexandria (Independent City) code 510
zip code 22314

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide X locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

12/2/03

Signature of certifying official Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.
(___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:
___ entered in the National Register
___ See continuation sheet.
___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ See continuation sheet.
___ determined not eligible for the National Register
___ removed from the National Register
___ other (explain):

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

X private
_ public-local
_ public-State
_ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

X building(s)
_ district
_ site
_ structure
_ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing African American Historic Resources of Alexandria, Virginia

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RELIGION Sub: religious facility, church school
EDUCATION school

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RELIGION Sub: religious facility, church school

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)
MID-19th CENTURY

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	BRICK	other	
roof	METAL		
walls	BRICK		

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

_X_ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

___ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

___ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

___ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

_X_ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

___ B removed from its original location.

___ C a birthplace or a grave.

___ D a cemetery.

___ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

___ F a commemorative property.

___ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)
ETHNIC HERITAGE Sub.: Black
EDUCATION

Period of Significance 1818-1953

Significant Dates 1818

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Unknown

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (See footnotes in Architectural Description and Statement of Significance Sections.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

___ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
___ previously listed in the National Register
___ previously determined eligible by the National Register
___ designated a National Historic Landmark
___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
___ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

___ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
___ Other
Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 40,976 square feet

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1 18	321990	4296870	2		
3 ___	_____	_____	4 ___	_____	

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

Alexandria, VA: Map 74.03, Block 04, Lot 01.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the city lot which is historically associated with this property.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth Calvit and Barbara B. Ballentine for the Office of Historic Alexandria
organization City of Alexandria date August 1994, updated 2001
street & number 301 King St., P.O. Box 178 telephone 703-838-4554
city or town Alexandria state VA zip code 22313

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ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Summary Description

The historic Alfred Street Baptist Church, a two-story brick structure located at the southwest corner of Duke and South Columbus streets, was originally built in 1855. The Alexandria Gazette, August 23, 1855, printed, "New Church–The colored people belonging to the Baptist Church in this city have erected a handsome, and commodious Brick Church on the site of the old meeting house on Alfred Street." Alterations in the 1880s included a new vestibule and facade on the east and an organ chamber on the west. In 1994, a new sanctuary was built and the historic church became an adjunct to the new church, however, the exterior of the original building was preserved. The church complex is the largest structure, and the only church, in the block which is located within "the Bottoms," the oldest African American neighborhood in Alexandria. Distinctive features of the historic church include large stained-glass windows, decorative brickwork, and ornamental finials.

Detailed Description[1]

The church as built in 1855, was a freestanding rectangular structure measuring approximately 40'x60' and set back from the street. Alterations during the 1880s consisted of the addition of a small chamber for organ equipment projecting from the rear and a full-width vestibule in the front as well as the excavation of the basement for functional access. The building now measures 40'10"x71'5" and abuts the street right-of-way. The brick bearing walls are of common moulded brick on three sides and pressed brick on the facade, all laid in common bond. All masonry surfaces are now painted red and all wood and other decorative elements are white. The side and rear walls are planar with a simple brick terminus on the sides and a flat board fascia on the rear. The roof is a shallowly pitched gable. Historically, the roof was covered with metal. Recent alterations replaced a composition roof with a painted, standing-seam metal roof and removed a chimney flue from inside the north wall. The south elevation has five bays with four evenly spaced windows in the original section and one in the addition. The windows have tall double hung sash with colored glass inserts, flat arch lintels and are set into shallow reveals. Segmental arches span the basement windows that probably date from the 1880s. The north elevation mirrors the south elevation, although the westernmost three bays have been obscured by the recent addition to the structure. The west elevation is penetrated only by a small round arched commemorative window.

[1]C. Richard Bierce, "National Registration Nomination form: Colored Baptist Church,"(Alexandria, Va., 1980), 2. (Building was declared eligible, but nomination was not presented to the board for consideration.)

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The east elevation, also from the 1880s, contains the principal exterior decorative embellishment. It has a variety of surface modeling and recalls the Romanesque Revival in certain aspects of its detailing. It consists of two narrow bays flanking a wider central bay which are defined by narrow flat pilasters. These are rusticated for about 1/3 of their height above which are corbelled niches. The center pilasters terminate flush with the outer plane of the corbelled raking cornice. The end pilasters are topped by paneled and pedimented blocks from which rise octagonal pinnacles topped with fleur-de-lis finials. A moulded cornice sits atop the masonry one and terminates somewhat awkwardly in the paneled blocks. The flanking bays contain short round arched double hung windows at the upper level and recessed panels at the lower. The latter are topped with raised segmental arches and a Greek Cross motif. The center bay has a pair of round-arched paneled entry doors with fanlight transoms. A central, arched double-height window opening extends above the doors. The window has two sets of double hung sash separated by a wooden spandrel. The earlier cornerstone was placed in the gable of the church when it was remodeled in the 1880s. The stone reads "The First Colored Baptist Church of Alexandria, Virginia, June 28, 1855."

In 1880 the Number One Working Club was organized by the church to raise funds to excavate a basement under the church, add a vestibule, a new church facade,[2] and a small chamber for organ equipment to the rear of the church. The church history states that under the leadership of Reverend Adkins (1920-1963) the church purchased a new pipe organ, new pews, and installed art glass windows.

Interior Description

While the exterior shell of the historic sanctuary was preserved during the 1994 adaptive reuse and new sanctuary addition, the historic interior spaces have been modified extensively several times since the church was originally constructed. The 1994 interior renovation gutted the original sanctuary, lowered the basement floor level several feet and inserted an additional floor in the previous two-story tall sanctuary space. The present interior consists of a chapel and reception area on the basement level; a music and choir rehearsal area on the main level; and classrooms in the attic. The original roof framing is intact and unaltered except for the addition of steel angle braces. The building system consists of queen post trusses at 8'-6" on center with principal chords measuring 9"x12".

The organ pipes were removed and relocated to the new adjacent sanctuary. A tripartite stained glass window, in memory of Reverend S.W. Madden, was relocated during the 1994 renovation from the northwest corner of the church to the west wall niche formerly occupied by a fresco and the organ pipes.

[2] "History, 1803-1979," Alfred Street Baptist Church, 2.

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The late Victorian period stained margin glass windows used on all four walls of the historic church building were removed, set in new wood sash and reinstalled in the original frames during the 1994 renovation. The brick north wall of the 1855 building, now encapsulated in the hyphen connection to the 1994 addition, is exposed in the new interior space and the full height of the stained glass windows are exposed by the use of a cut-out through the new second floor. Additional stained glass windows, previously removed from the historic sanctuary when the new sanctuary was constructed, were returned to the historic portion of the building. Early-20th-century, oak, side aisle pews, purchased used in 1923 for use in the historic sanctuary, were reused in the new first-floor chapel.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary Statement

The Alfred Street Baptist Church is the oldest African-American congregation in Alexandria and one of the oldest in the Washington area. It is significant because of its association with African Americans in educational and civic developments, including both social and religious. The church's educational branch was organized by 1820, providing both religious and secular learning opportunities for both children and adult African Americans. The school played a major role in Alexandria's free Black community prior to the Civil War despite the state restrictions on the assembly of African Americans. Its library was one of the first open to African Americans. The church has been associated with its current site since 1818, but it is believed the congregation is much older, having been formed in 1803, with the earlier meetings held in the homes of its members, or along the banks of the Potomac River. It is one of the two oldest existing church structures in the city associated with African Americans, both free blacks and enslaved people. It is located in the City's Old and Historic District and in the neighborhood known as "the Bottoms," the oldest African American neighborhood in Alexandria.[3] Except for use as a hospital during the Civil War, the building has been in continuous use for religious purposes since 1855 and the site since 1818. The large and active congregation continues to play a major cultural and educational role in the life of the City.

The building is a good example of the vernacular tradition prevalent in much of the architecture of the city, a tradition that often borrows from the academic and transposes its elements to suit a particular circumstance. The 1880's facade is reminiscent of the Romanesque Revival, of which there are few examples in any form in Alexandria. Nothing is known about the configuration of the original facade but it is possible to surmise from the massing and roof pitch, original window proportions and its date, that it many have been Greek Revival in feeling. It is highly likely that it was designed and built by black craftsmen although no individual designer or overseer is known. The church is one of two extant ante-bellum black churches in the city, a period represented by no other known black institutional structure.[4]

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[3] C. Richard Bierce, "Outline Chronology and Observations - Alfred Street Baptist Church" (draft document in the files of the Alexandria Black History Resource Center), 1.

[4] C. Richard Bierce, "National Register Form-Colored Baptist Society," (Alexandria, Va., 1980), 3.

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Section 8 Page 5

Historic Background

As the congregation grew after 1803, it became apparent that facilities would have to be found to house the expanding group. On November 1, 1818, three African American men, Jesse Henderson, Evan Williams, and Daniel Taylor, leased the present site on South Alfred Street. A small wooden structure was erected soon after the land was obtained for use by the Colored Baptist Society.[5] The church was officially recognized by the Alexandria Baptist Church in 1823. The white First Baptist Church supplied white ministers until 1863 when they supplied the first African American minister.[6]

Over the years, the name of the church has changed from the Colored Baptist Society to the African Baptist Church in 1842, to the First Colored Baptist Church some time later, and finally to Alfred Street Baptist Church.[7] The name may have changed but the mission of the church congregation has not. The church's educational branch was organized by 1820, providing both religious and secular learning opportunities for African Americans. The school was open for both adults and children, but many children could not attend because of the duties they had in the home. In 1833, a Mr. Nuthall, a teacher from the District of Columbia, established a formal school in the church. However, in the 1830s, Alfred Street Baptist Church experienced restrictions on operating a school, due to racial tensions in the city. The secular school was open for two to three years, when the tensions resulting from the Nat Turner Rebellion forced its closure. The Sunday school, however, continued to operate. One of Nuthall's students, Mary Peake, later became involved in education of African Americans in Alexandria.[8]

When the city was retroceded to Virginia in 1846, the restrictions placed on African Americans forced the closure of many schools and prevented them from having free movement and assembly. Unlike other churches and Sabbath schools that were forced to close their classrooms, Alfred Street Baptist Church was able to remain open because it agreed to have a white manager present at all times. When

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[5] Afro-American Institute for Historic Preservation and Community Development, "A Study of Historic Sites in the Metropolitan Washington Regions of Northern Virginia and Southern Maryland Importantly Related to the History of Afro-Americans," Part III (Washington, DC, 1978), 88.

[6] "History, 1803-1979," Alfred Street Baptist Church, 2.

[7] Marie T. Boyd, "A Brief History of Alfred Street Baptist Church," in *One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of Alfred Street Baptist Church* (Alexandria, Va., 1956), 5-6.

[8] Department of Education, "Special Report of the Commissioner of Education on the Condition and Improvement of Public Schools in the District of Columbia." Submitted to the Senate June 1968 and to the House, with Additions, June 13, 1870 (Washington Government Printing Office, 1871), 284; Afro-American Institute, 90.

CONTINUATION SHEET
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the Union Army occupied the city in 1861, the churches began to express their independence by replacing their previously white pastors with African Americans. In 1863, the Rev. Samuel Madden became the first African American leader of the church. The Rev. Alexander Truatt, who served the church from 1896-1913, worked to increase the church's size, the services it offered, and its involvement in the community. The congregation and its leaders reached beyond their congregation to other African Americans in the city and offered them the use of the church's library, one of the first libraries available to them. The church also helped establish other African American churches in Alexandria, including Shiloh Baptist and Ebenezer Baptist Churches.[9] During the Civil War, Alfred Street Baptist Church was used as a hospital.[10] After the war, while the city established a public school system, Alfred Street Baptist Church continued its tradition of operating a Sunday school. In the 1920s, long-time pastor Reverend Andrew Adkins participated in the creation of the first high school curriculum for black students in the Alexandria public school system and became its first teacher.[11]

The church has also been an important social and religious anchor for the surrounding African American community. It is located in the oldest free black neighborhood in Alexandria, the "Bottoms." The area rests at a lower elevation than surrounding streets, hence its name. Only a few structures besides Alfred Street and several townhouses.

Members of the congregation were important citizens of the African American community and successful Alexandria businessmen. George Seaton, a master carpenter, and a founder of the Colored YMCA, the Colored Building Association, and the Odd Fellows Hall, was one prominent church member who was an active leader in the community. Alfred Street Baptist Church, like other African American churches in Alexandria, was a training ground for future church and civic leaders. It was also an important meeting place for the community of African Americans living in Alexandria. Members came from all areas of the city and from the seven free black neighborhoods. The Alfred Street Baptist Church was also an important provider of educational opportunities before, during, and after the Civil War. All of these factors provide the historical evidence of the significance of Alfred Street Baptist Church in the history of African Americans and the city of Alexandria.

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[9] James Howard, "The History" in 170 Years of Service: The Alfred Street Baptist Church, 1803-1973 (November 11, 1973), 5.

[10] Rose Miles Robinson, "From Our History," *Alfred Street Baptist Church 188th Anniversary* (November 10, 1991), 1.

[11] C. Richard Bierce, "National Register Nomination form – Colored Baptist Society," (Alexandria, Va., 1980), 3.

CONTINUATION SHEET
Section PHOTO Page 7

All photographs are of:

ALFRED STREET BAPTIST CHURCH
Alexandria, Virginia
VDHR File Number: 100-5015-0001
Elizabeth Calvit, exterior photographs
Kristin B. Lloyd, interior photographs

All negatives are stored at the archives of the Department of Historic Resources in Richmond, Virginia.

DATE: July 1994
VIEW OF: side elevation of church, looking south
NEG. NO.: 19169: 7
PHOTO 1 OF 13

DATE: July 1994
VIEW OF: side elevation of church, looking north
NEG. NO.: 19170:35
PHOTO 2 OF 13

DATE: July 1994
VIEW OF: exterior, looking west
NEG. NO.: 19170:36
PHOTO 3 OF 13

DATE: July 1994
VIEW OF: exterior of historic church with view of new hyphen, looking west
NEG. NO.: 19170: 37
PHOTO 4 OF 13

DATE: July 1994
VIEW OF: side elevation of church, looking south
NEG. NO.: 19170: 34
PHOTO 5 OF 13

DATE: February 1996
VIEW OF: altar and organ pipes at front of new sanctuary, looking west
NEG. NO.: 19032: 16
PHOTO 6 OF 13

DATE: February 1996
VIEW OF: 1st floor chapel, pulpit and altar, looking south
NEG. NO.: 19030:3A
PHOTO 7 OF 13

DATE: February 1996
VIEW OF: 1st floor encapsulated north exterior wall of original church, looking southwest showing lower half of original windows
NEG. NO.: 19032: 21
PHOTO 8 OF 13

DATE: February 1996
VIEW OF: 2nd floor, upper half of interior window between older section of building and 1980s addition, looking southwest
NEG. NO.: 19032:32
PHOTO 9 OF 13

CONTINUATION SHEET
Section PHOTO Page 8

DATE: February 1996
VIEW OF: 2nd floor classroom, turn-of-the-century window of Rev. S.W. Madden, looking west
NEG. NO.: 19032: 24
PHOTO 10 OF 13

DATE: February 1996
VIEW OF: stairway and exterior window looking south
NEG. NO.: 19032:36
PHOTO 11 OF 13

DATE: February 1996
VIEW OF: 1st floor, chandelier in entrance hall between building entrance and sanctuary doors
NEG. NO.: 19032:15
PHOTO 12 OF 13

DATE: February 1996
VIEW OF: Stained glass window in chapel, west wall
NEG. NO.: 19030:7A
PHOTO 13: OF 13

A N AMERICAN
H IC RESOURCES
XANDRIA, VIRGINIA

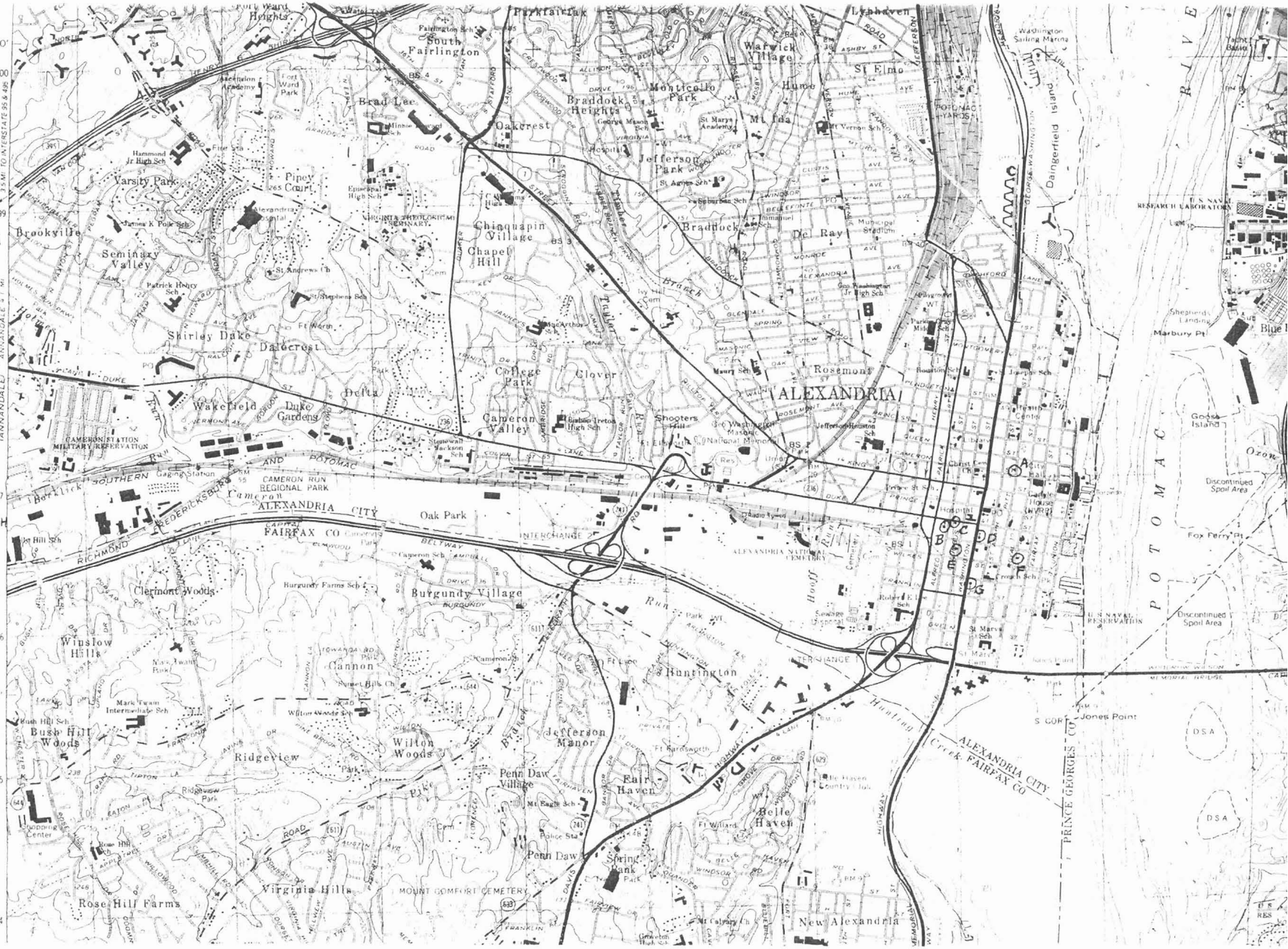
MOSES HEPBURN ROWHOUSES
18/322460/4297280

B. ALFRED STREET BAPTIST CHURCH
18/321990/4296870

C. DR. ALBERT JOHNSON HOUSE
18/322040/4296900

D. BEULAH BAPTIST CHURCH
18/322200/4296800

E. ODD FELLOWS HALL
18/322050/4296720

F. GEORGE LEWIS SEATON HOUSE
18/322490/4296660

G. ROBERTS MEMORIAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
18/322150/4296460