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 Odd Fellows Hall
other names: NA; site number: DHR#100-5015-0005

2. Location

street & number 411 South Columbus Street ___ not for publication N/A city or town Alexandria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. Signature of Keeper
___ determined not eligible for the National Register
___ removed from the National Register Date of Action_____
____ other (explain):

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: SOCIAL Sub: meeting hall

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: multiple dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Second Empire

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	BRICK
roof	SLATE
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.)

____ 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 ETHNIC HERITAGE Sub.: Black

Period of Significance 1869-1953

Significant Dates N/A

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

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder George L. Seaton

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography Miller, T. Michael, "The Odd Fellows Hall - Pantheon of Black History," (Alexandria, VA 1984).

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 1,175 square feet

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

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1 18	322050	4296720	2	__	_____ _____
3	__	_____ _____	4	__	_____ _____

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description
Alexandria, VA: 74.04, Block C.

Boundary Justification
The boundary includes the entire city lot historically associated with this property.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth Calvit for the Office of Historic Alexandria
organization City of Alexandria date August 1994
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 Odd Fellows Hall, a two-and-a-half-story, rectangular, brick building, is located on the west side of South Columbus Street in "the Bottoms," one of the oldest African American neighborhoods in Alexandria. It is one of the largest structures on the block and was built by African Americans. Distinctive architectural features include a slate mansard roof and decorative Second Empire detailing above the entrance and window frames.

The Odd Fellows Hall began as a one-story brick building constructed in 1864. It is believed that the original structure was built for an African Methodist Episcopal church, but the church was not successful in maintaining a congregation. In 1869, three African American men, James Webster, Robert Darnell, and John Credit, formed the Odd Fellows Joint Stock Company and purchased the property at 411 South Columbus street. The existing building was enlarged in 1870 by George Seaton, a local master carpenter and politician. The enlarged structure is a two-and-a-half-story brick structure, three bays wide on the front by four bays on the northern and southern side elevations. Some detailing on the first story reflects the Greek Revival style while the majority, particularly carved corbels and the mansard roof covered with slate tiles, is more evocative of the Second Empire mode. Two chimney stacks puncture the roof line at the base of the roof on both side elevations. According to late-nineteenth-century Sanborn maps, the windows were evenly spaced on both side and rear elevations. According to Sanborn maps, there was also at one time an outdoor stairway on the north side.

Detailed Description

The east, or street, elevation has a central entrance flanked by two windows on the first floor, with three evenly spaced windows on the second. The windows are four-over-four on the first level, and two-over-two with vertical muntins on the second. There are two four-over-four dormer windows in the mansard roof that are spaced in between the window openings below. The main elevation is the only elevation that has decorative elements believed to be original to the structure. Over the entrance is a wooden entablature supported by decorative wooden brackets. Flanking the entrance, the large first-floor windows have similar, but less grand architraves. The common brick was originally left unpainted, and was laid in a seven-course American bond pattern. Decorative wooden jamb trim elements are painted.

The building was rehabilitated in the 1980s after remaining vacant for several years. It has been modified to hold five residential condominium units. A roof deck with a decorative wrought-iron railing has been added to the structure. The building has also been completely painted, including the brick. The north elevation was modified extensively with a new large entrance, and first-floor windows replaced the original smaller windows. The new entrance and two-over-two windows, with vertical muntins, have Italianate-style wooden entablatures that mimic the original ones on the facade.

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Some of the second-floor windows have been moved from their original spacing. The south side elevation has three rows of evenly spaced windows. The windows in the basement, first, and second levels have two-over-two sashes with vertical muntins. The smaller dormer windows within the mansard roof are aligned above the windows on the lower levels of the south, west, and north elevations. The dormer windows have four-over-four sashes with a slightly arched roof and are framed in decorative painted wood. The west elevation has two rows of evenly spaced windows. On the first level, the two windows are different sizes and shapes. One is tall and narrow, the other is small and rectangular. These two windows have ornamental frames and entablatures similar to those on the north side.

Interior Description

The high ceiling of the first floor reflects its original use as a meeting hall. The upper two floors have lower ceiling heights, with the top floor located within the mansard roof structure. The perimeter walls of the building are load-bearing masonry, 18" thick at the first floor and 9" thick at the second. The interior structural system is wood, bearing on brick foundation piers. The Odd Fellows Hall underwent extensive renovation in 1984-85 when the meeting hall was subdivided into five residential condominiums. The original structural framing was reinforced with new wood and steel at that time.

The historic building now contains condominium units #4-8, with units #1-3 located in an adjacent building. Only one of the five units (#7) was available for viewing. Inside this studio unit on the top two floors of the building, little of historical significance is visible. All interior trim, the mantel and wall finishes date from the 1985 renovation. A metal spiral staircase leads to second-floor bedrooms. The bedrooms are in the attic of the mansard roof and the exterior walls slope to reflect the roof form on this floor. The bedrooms have exposed some of the original heavy timber oak columns as decorative features.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Odd Fellows Hall is significant to African American history in Alexandria, Virginia because it is one of the only surviving structures from the period 1790 to1953 associated with African American communal organizations. It has been the meeting hall for many secret organizations, benevolent groups, and others established by and for African Americans. It was also the site of many festivals and other social events because it was one of the few non-religious buildings in the city that could hold large groups of people that were not restricted according to race. The building was used well into the twentieth century as a meeting hall. Closed to meetings in 1974, it has undergone extensive interior changes due to its conversion into a multiple-family housing unit composed of five separate apartments. The alterations and change in use, however, have not diminished its importance to African Americans and its significance in Alexandria's history. It is located in the oldest African American community in Alexandria, "the Bottoms," and served the neighborhood's residents, as well as those from the other neighborhoods in the city, for over one hundred years.

Historical Background

Fraternal and benevolent societies have existed in black communities since the mid-seventeenth century, providing services to alleviate the harshness of segregated life. In addition to providing support to those in need, these groups provided the stimulus that helped develop leadership within the black community.[1] They provided opportunities for many to learn the principles of economics and needed leadership skills necessary to succeed in a newly freed environment. They also helped create a separate social structure in a segregated society. One of the main goals of many of these groups was to integrate African Americans into the established social, political, and economic systems of Alexandria and the nation.[2]

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1 Low, W. Augustus and Virgil A. Clift, Encyclopedia of Black America (New York: De Capo, Inc., Plenum Publishing Corp., 1981), 394.

2 Ibid., 395.

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The Odd Fellows was an established benevolent society founded in the late eighteenth century in England and brought to the United States.[3] Due to racial prejudices, blacks were not allowed to join the all-white societies and as a result, they formed their own organizations. The first chapter of the National Grand United Order of Odd Fellows, Harmony Lodge #818 was established in 1846. The chapter was granted dispensation by the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows, Friendly Society, England. This group became the second African American lodge in the city. The first was the Universal Lodge #10 (Masonic), founded in Alexandria in 1845 and believed to have been the first African American Masonic lodge below the Mason-Dixon line.[4] There were other groups of secret societies and local organizations for both men and women that had similar missions including: the Rising Star Chapter #3; Jeremiah Chapter #1; Eureka Chapter #2; Oriental Lodge #11; Ocarsia Lodge #32; Universal Lodges #91; the Good Samaritans, Mt. Calvary Lodge #1; the Daughters of Zion; and several Galilean orders including the Eastern Star and the Golden Star.[5]

After the Civil War, African American secret societies and organizations were legally allowed to meet. This led James Webster, Robert Darnell, and John H. Credit to organize the Odd Fellows Joint Stock Company in Alexandria in 1869 and construct a meeting hall. They hired local master carpenter and businessman George Seaton to enlarge an existing building and make it suitable as a meeting hall. In 1870 a renovated and enlarged building was completed with funding by the Freedmen's Bureau.[6] The architectural plans and costs of the building have not been located, but the surviving structure is two-and-a-half stories, constructed of brick, and topped with a mansard roof.

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3 T. Michael Miller, "The Odd Fellows Hall -- Pantheon of Black History" (Alexandria, Vir. 1984), 1-3.

4 Alexandria Black History Resource Center, "Odd Fellows Exhibit" (Fall 1993).

5 Miller, "The Odd Fellows Hall," 1.

6 Ibid.

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The Freedmen's Bureau (Bureau of Refugees, Freedman, and Abandoned Lands) was established by act of the U.S. Congress on March 3, 1865. It was to "oversee the social and political incorporation of blacks by distributing clothing, food, and fuel to destitute freedmen and oversee 'all subjects' relating to their condition in the South."[7] The Bureau established 46 hospitals, staffed with physicians, surgeons, and nurses which lead to a reduction in the death rate of freedmen and improved sanitary conditions. It also resettled displaced people and organized freedmen's courts and boards of arbitration. Perhaps its greatest contribution was in education. The Bureau set up or supervised all kinds of schools including
day, night, Sunday, and industrial schools as well as colleges. By 1869 9,503 teachers were serving in freedmen's schools, many of them from the north.[8]

The Odd Fellows Hall served as a gathering place for the Odd Fellows as well as other groups of secret societies and local organizations with similar missions for both men and women. The building served as a place for festivities, meetings, and receptions, making it an important part of the social and economic development of the African American community in Alexandria after the Civil War. Many of the leaders in the black community were founders of the Odd Fellows Hall, or were members of one of the many organizations that met there. Other organizations were established and lodges constructed in the early twentieth century that continued and expanded the support established by the groups that first met at the Odd Fellows Hall.

The Odd Fellows organization as well as the other secret and benevolent organizations provided African Americans an opportunity to develop leadership skills and a professional network for African American men and women, and were very important for the growth and strength of the African American community in Alexandria. Many people associated with these groups were, or became leaders in the community. These included the people previously mentioned as well as William Davis, William Skinner, the Rev. W. A. Price, Patrick H. Lumpkins, Laura Watson, Mary Johnson, Amanda Buckner, Mary Henry, Georgia Simms, James Buckner, George Croper, Robert Monroe, and E. S. Furguson.

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7 Howard McGary and Bill E. Lawson, Between Slavery and Freedom, Philosophy and American Slavery, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1992, pp 63-64.

8 John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom A History of Negro Americans, Alfred A. Knopf, NY, 3rd edition, 1967

A1 H AMERICAN
H C RESOURCES
ANDRIA, VIRGINIA

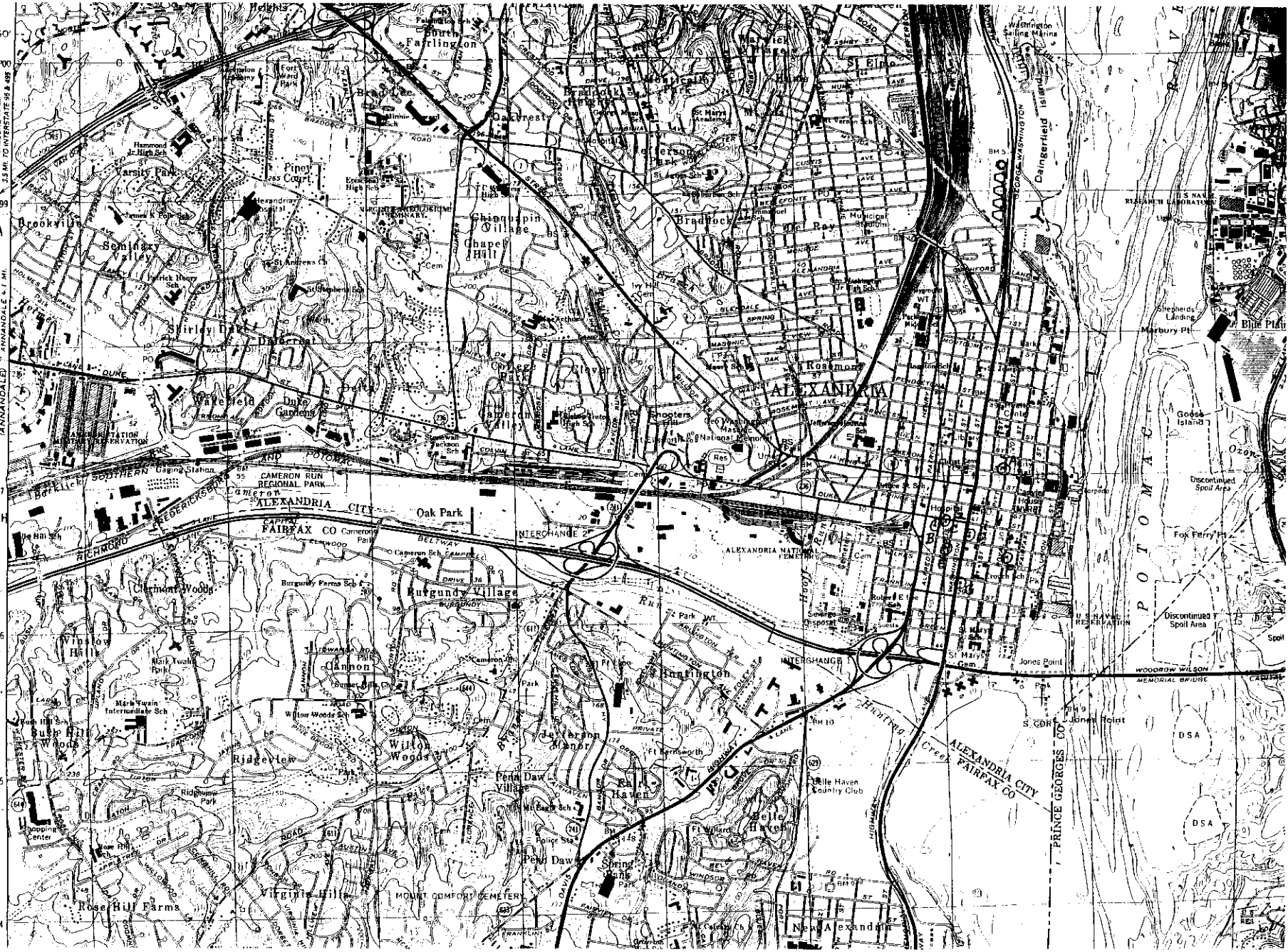
MOSES HEPBURN ROWHOUSES
18/322460/4297280

3. 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