

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

VLR 9/18/08
NRHP draft

**National Register of Historic Places
Multiple Property Documentation Form**

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the required information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

New Submission Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

The Slave Trade as a Commercial Enterprise in Richmond, Virginia, MPS #127-6196

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

Resources Associated with the slave trade, slave dealers and related commerce in Richmond, Virginia, 1808 to 1865

C. Form Prepared by

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D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. (See continuation sheets for additional comments.)

[Signature] Date 10/9/08
Signature and title of certifying official

VA DEPT. OF HISTORIC RESOURCES
State and Federal agency and bureau

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

E. Statement of Historic Contexts

(If more than one historic context is documented, present them in sequential order.)

See continuation sheets 1 – 8, Endnotes 16 - 17

F. Associated Property Types

(Provide description, significance, and registration requirements)

See continuation sheets 9 – 15, Endnotes 16 - 17

G. Geographical Data

The majority of the identified resources associated with this multiple property listing are contained within a geographical area bounded on the west by 10th Street, on the south by the James River, and on the east by 19th Street. The northern boundary is more difficult to define because of the intrusion of Interstate 95 but it would approximate a line extended from the south side of Leigh Street on the west to the south side of Venable Street on the east. There are potential discontinuous resources near the Manchester docks and Rockets Landing. There may also be other related resources, as of yet not identified, within the boundaries of the City of Richmond and surrounding counties.

H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

(Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.)

The core geographical area associated with Richmond's slave trade is relatively well defined in a number of documents. The bulk of this geographical area is contained within three National Register Historic Districts -- Shockoe Valley and Tobacco Row, Shockoe Slip, and Shockoe Valley and Tobacco Row Boundary Increase. The historic context of the slave trade and its associated resources is noticeably absent from these nominations.

A review was made of the three above nominations and all of the antebellum buildings identified. These buildings were identified through information in the nominations themselves, through a review of historic maps for the area, and by a visual survey. Extensive research was done on the subject of Richmond's slave trade and its associated resources. This information was correlated to the existing buildings and potential archeological sites.

The historic context of Richmond as a center for slave trade and exportation has been extensively documented, the core geographical area has been clearly defined, and the time period thoroughly established. Because of the tremendous physical changes in the area there was little understanding of the potential existence of standing buildings and structures, or archeological sites. The context was developed as a very narrow aspect of the impact of slavery on the City of Richmond -- the impact of the slave trade as a business and the resulting built environment. This is in no way intended to ignore or diminish the importance of other resources associated with Richmond's African American population both free and enslaved but rather to focus on a little discussed and significant aspect of the city's history.

The significant property types have been defined by function and historical period. The purpose of this multiple resource nomination is to focus on buildings, structures and sites associated with Richmond's slave trade. Within this industry there were a number of specialized structures such as jails, offices and auction houses. A number of public buildings, namely hotels and meeting halls, were also utilized as offices and auction sites. It has also been determined that a number of the slave dealers resided in the geographic area either in free standing buildings or on the premises of their business. For the most part these residences were not distinguished and part of the vernacular residential fabric of the city.

The requirements for the listing of representative properties are based on knowledge of the condition of existing properties and their association with the context of Richmond's slave trade as a commercial enterprise. The number of standing buildings appears limited but a recently completed preliminary archaeological survey of the Lumpkin's Jail site added tremendously to the understanding of the potential archeological resources associated with the context of Richmond's slave trade. This site illustrated that despite the physical alterations in the area's landscape the potential for intact archeological deposits and features is high. In fact, the damp conditions characteristic of the Shockoe Bottom area appear to have enhanced the preservation of organic materials such as wood and leather, while the accumulation of subsequent construction and debris layers has effectively sealed and protected the mid-nineteenth-century occupation level.

The Slave Trade as a Commercial Enterprise in Richmond, Virginia, Multiple Property Submission

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Statement of Historic Contexts

The Slave Trade as a Commercial Enterprise in Richmond, Virginia

The presence of slavery and the business of buying and selling bondsmen was an essential element in Richmond's development as one of the preeminent cities in the south during the antebellum period. The city's pivotal location in proximity to the agricultural fields of Tidewater and Southside Virginia, and North Carolina, the natural power source provided by the falls on the James River, and its accessibility as a shipping port and later as a railroad hub made Richmond an ideal place for manufacturing and exporting operations. Processing, marketing and exportation activities were concentrated near the James River around Shockoe Creek where Richmond was founded. Tobacco processing, flour milling, and iron production were prominent industries and the coalfields of Midlothian contributed yet another facet to the city's wealth. In 1780, the Virginia state capital was moved from Williamsburg to Richmond further solidifying the city's status as an industrial, political and economic center. Often overlooked in discussions of Richmond's economic success in the antebellum period is the impact of the slave trade as a commercial enterprise. "In the 1850s, Richmond's biggest business by dollar volume was not tobacco, flour, or iron, but slaves."¹

The first Africans arrived in the British colonies in 1619 at Jamestown, Virginia. The great majority of imported slaves came directly from Africa but some were brought into the colonies from the West Indies. Their exact status as slave (lifetime service and inherited status) or servant is unclear but between 1640 and 1660 there is evidence of enslavement and by 1660 the concept of slavery was being solidified in the statute books of the colonies.² "In the Chesapeake area (Virginia and Maryland) more than anywhere to the northward, the shortage of labor and the abundance of land...placed a premium on involuntary labor."³ The cultivation of tobacco in this region "required labor which was cheap but not temporary, mobile but not independent, and tireless rather than skilled."⁴ In 1649, it was estimated that there were 300 slaves in Virginia. The number had grown to 2,000 in 1671 and by 1721, slaves accounted for over 50% of Virginia's total population. The 1780 United States census enumerated 292,627 slaves in Virginia.⁵

In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the trans-Atlantic slave trade was conducted by British importers and intermediate commission merchants who had access to large amounts of capital and political connections. Importers and commission merchants often served in government offices and occupied privileged positions in Colonial society.⁶ Northern ports carried on a large commerce in slaves who were transshipped to the other colonies, especially Virginia, Maryland and South Carolina. Southern ports convenient to the plantation regions grew up at Charleston, Savannah and Richmond. In the Richmond area, the earliest sales of imported slaves took place on board ships at

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the Manchester Docks, on the south bank of the James River. Manchester and the settlement of "Shockoes," on the north bank of the James River at the mouth of Shockoe Creek, were the first established settlements in what is now Richmond. Manchester, originally called Rocky Ridge, was the site of warehouses and other utilitarian buildings. An advertisement in the *Virginia Gazette* dated June 16, 1774 announced the sale of slaves in the town of Rocky Ridge. "To be sold 10th November at Rocky Ridge, 150 choice slaves, late the property of Jahn Wayles, dec'd by Francis Eppes and Henry Skipwith."⁷ By 1778, the sale of slaves in Richmond had moved to the north bank of the James River. The port of Rocketts was located just east of "Shockoes"--Robert Rockett had operated a ferry landing at this location since 1730. By 1770, Rocketts was one of the busiest inland shipping ports in the colonies. A seven mile section of the James River and Kanawha canal was opened in 1790 that allowed upland boats to enter Richmond instead of having to transfer goods from bateaux to wagons to be transported into the city. The "basin on Shockoe Hill" subsequently became the port of embarkation for goods traveling to and from Richmond and points west on the James River.⁸

With the birth of a new nation, the debate over the importation of slaves rose to the level of material advantages over questions of general welfare and human rights.⁹ In the northern colonies where many were resolutely hostile to the institution there was nonetheless much profit in the fitting out of ships for the African-slave trade and a desire to preserve the enterprise. In Virginia, it was argued that there would be a greater benefit if importations stopped. "Her slaves will rise in value, and she has more than she wants."¹⁰ Other reasons offered for abolishing the international slave trade were the fear that newly imported Africans were more likely to rebel than those already accustomed to the conditions of slavery, and the immigration of "white persons" would increase.¹¹ Between 1777 and 1804, Vermont, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, and New Jersey ended slavery within their borders. The Virginia General Assembly prohibited the importation of slaves in 1778. In 1783 and 1784 the United States Congress debated the issue of slavery, and Rufus King of Massachusetts introduced a resolution that after 1800 there should be no slavery or involuntary servitude in the United States. King's resolution was defeated but a provision was included in the federal Constitution that the "importation of such persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the year one thousand eight hundred and eight, but a Tax or duty may be imposed on such importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each person."¹² By 1803, South Carolina was the only state that had not outlawed the importation of slaves. In 1808, the federal government enacted the African Slave Trade Act that made it illegal to import slaves, thus ending the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

The early nineteenth century saw the expansion of the United States into the Lower South. Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama became states in 1812, 1817 and 1819, respectively, and Texas was declared a territory in 1836. The depletion of agricultural fields from the over cultivation of

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tobacco and the collapse of the tobacco market in the Upper South between 1819 and 1830 meant that many planters sought farming opportunities in the Lower South. "Virginia's rate of population growth for free blacks plummeted from 35 percent in the decade before 1820 to 3 percent between 1830 and 1840."¹³ Planters typically took a small group of slaves with them when they moved and if successful they increased their work force by purchasing additional slaves from traders.¹⁴ The primary crop grown in the Lower South was cotton, a labor-intensive operation dependent on slave labor. Because of the 1808 prohibition on the importation of slaves from Africa, planters in the Lower South had to look elsewhere for a labor source and the interstate slave trade rose to meet the demand. "Statistics show a massive relocation of slaves from the Upper South to the Lower South once the former region's agriculture started to decline. One estimate has placed the average movement at 20,000 bondsmen per year from 1820 to 1860, or 10 percent of the Upper South's slave population...Virginia, possessing the most slaves, supplied 300,000 bondsmen between 1830 and 1860."¹⁵

Virginia was exclusively a slave-exporting state and Richmond was the best place in the state to sell slaves. "Speculators, planters, farmers, urban purchasers of domestic servants for their own use all preferred to go to Virginia, especially to Richmond, for negroes, because this indicated a certain social as well as a financial advance."¹⁶ Richmond was known as the greatest market for slaves in the United States, second only to New Orleans.¹⁷ Richmond's profitable industrial economy, its location as a central transportation hub, and its importance as the state capital and a center of banking and commerce, all contributed to the success of the slave trade in the city. The long history of slavery in Virginia and the comfort of many with the presence of the institution set the framework for the development of slave trading as a commercial enterprise. "The Richmond *Enquirer's* editorial article about 'Our Slave Market' demonstrated that slave-trading was recognized as both an honorable and an important business."¹⁸

The failure of tobacco plantations in the 1820s created a surplus of slaves in the Upper South, which coincided with an increased demand for slaves in the Lower South where many farmers had migrated, seeking new agricultural opportunities. "Many a Virginia 'country gentleman' or 'planter' was unable to keep his family in comfort and feed and clothe his negroes decently without ultimately selling some of them or running deeply in debt."¹⁹ Many owners sent excess slaves to Richmond either to be sold or hired out. The process of hiring out was a unique aspect of slavery in Richmond because of the presence of manufacturing interests in the city. A niche developed for agents who specialized in the hiring out of slave labor. Often owners worked with an agent to negotiate the terms for the hiring of a slave, or they negotiated with a potential employer directly, and in some cases slaves were allowed to hire themselves out, seeking their own employment and housing. "Under this system, owners allowed slaves to go to Richmond to find work for a specified period of time...This

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system became popular among owners who cared little for paying an agent or for the hassles of finding employment for their slaves. According to this practice slaves were required to pay their masters a stipulated sum of money ... but whatever they could earn above that amount was theirs to do as they wished ... a small amount of cash with which to secure his food and lodgings.”²⁰ Between the years of 1800 and 1840, Richmond experienced considerable economic development and the demographics between those years reflect an increase in the number of slaves, most of whom were owned by or employed in Richmond industries. In 1800, Richmond had a population of 5,737, of whom 2,293 were slaves and 607 were free blacks. By 1840, 20,153 people lived in Richmond, including 7,509 slaves.²¹ The demand for hiring slaves was high because they were considered the most efficient workforce in many industries and for large construction projects like the James River and Kanawha Canal. Tobacco, iron and mill operators experimented to find the most efficient blend of workers – slaves, free blacks and whites. Because there were so many slaves employed in industries that were dependent upon the rise and fall of market demands, slaves switched jobs frequently. The system of hiring out allowed businesses to, in essence, lay off slave workers when they were not needed. Because manufacturing and ancillary businesses required fewer laborers than farming there was an excess of slaves available for exportation to other areas. Thus the domestic slave trade was born to move surplus slaves from the Upper South to the Lower South and western territories where they were in high demand.

The trade in slaves grew as an industry just as tobacco processing and flour milling did. The 1845 *Richmond Directory* identified nine agents associated with the slave trade. The 1852 directory listed twenty-eight “negro” traders and by 1860 it listed eighteen “negro” traders, eighteen agents, and thirty-three auctioneers, all of whom were engaged in the business of selling slaves.²² Such a large increase in the numbers of those involved in the business suggests that slave trading as a commercial enterprise was viable and financially successful. “The editor of the *Warrenton Whig* wrote that the gross amount of the Dickinsons’ (referring to the Richmond auction house of Dickinson and Hill) sales in 1856 reached the enormous sum of two million! The entire sales for other houses of similar kind in Richmond would make the amount go over four millions, and still the business is increasing.”²³ In 1857, the *Richmond Enquirer* estimated that receipts for Richmond’s slave auctions totaled \$3,500,000.²⁴ By the 1840s, the slave trade had become such a large economic factor that the city of Richmond began to look for ways to regulate the business and benefit financially. In 1842, Richmond City Council required that auctioneers be licensed to sell slaves. In 1852, the city charter allowed a tax to be levied on slave jails and slave traders. This tax ranged from \$20 to \$50 annually depending on the volume of trade. The Virginia General Assembly did not attempt to regulate the slave trade until 1860 when it imposed a licensing fee on auctioneers. In 1861, the city of Richmond realized \$10,000 in revenue from the licensing and taxing of the slave trade.²⁵

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The trader, who undertook as their primary occupation, the business of buying and selling bondservants, was viewed with disdain and seen by many as the root of all of the evils associated with slavery. "Many accused the traders of habitual brutality, general dishonesty, breaking up families, and trafficking in criminal and unhealthy slaves."²⁶ As the significant interstate slave trade developed, traders began to establish more permanent headquarters and advertise in directories and newspapers. "The selling and hiring of slaves was so fully recognized as a business of general public interest that city (Richmond) directories usually indicated resident traders. But not all traders liked to be so classed, and it was easy to avoid it, if one dealt in other things."²⁷ It was the name "negro" trader that was to be avoided and not the business.²⁸ The innocuous practice of occasionally selling slaves was accepted by most southerners as a necessary part of operating a financially successful business.

As slave trafficking became a more organized business so did job classifications. Larger traders often purchased slaves in rural areas and transported them directly to areas outside of Virginia for resale. The primary and least expensive method used to move slaves south and west was by foot in coffles -- groups of slaves manacled together. "A coffle was usually accompanied by a wagon with a tent and some custodial personnel."²⁹ The smaller traders bought slaves and sold them through the auction houses on consignment. Another class of trader was the slave jail or pen operator. The jail operators often speculated in the slave market and had slaves available for direct purchase. The primary function of the jails was to house slaves that were being sold at local auctions, to hold recently purchased slaves for planters, and to confine slaves who had violated one of the many laws that governed their activities. "Auctioneers," "commodities brokers," and "commission merchants" were all terms used by those who sold a variety of goods including slaves. Auctioneers would occasionally purchase a few slaves for quick resale but generally held large sales for others and charged a commission for their services. Commodities brokers and commission merchants were more discreet, and arranged private sales or purchases with little or no advertising. They were often requested to liquidate the assets of an estate which included the sale of slaves owned by the deceased. "General agent" usually referred to someone who arranged the hiring of slaves but they often sold slaves as well. Specialty retail stores also grew up around the slave trade especially clothing stores that supplied outfits for slaves about to be auctioned. The selling price for a slave was enhanced when they appeared on the auction block clean and neatly dressed.³⁰

Many of the early public auctions of slaves in Richmond took place on the streets. As the industry developed further, the auctions moved to the taverns frequented by the traders. Bell Tavern was the center of the slave trade during the first part of the 1800s. Located at the corner of Franklin and Fifteenth streets, the tavern was the site of many slave auctions and housed the offices of at least two

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slave trading firms.³¹ R. H. Dickinson and Thomas Taliaferro had offices at Bell Tavern. The following advertisement appeared in the *Whig* on January 1, 1841:

BY R.H. DICKINSON: ADMINISTRATOR'S SALE OF *Twenty-Seven* VALUABLE NEGROES. Will be sold on SATURDAY, the 2nd of January, 1841 at 1 o'clock in front of Bell Tavern, twenty-seven valuable NEGROES – consisting of BOX-MAKERS, PRIZEMEN, TWISTERS, STEMERS, COOKS, FEMALE HOUSE SERVANTS, and some FIRST RATE FIELD HANDS. D.M. BRANCH Adm'r of Sam'l Cosby, dec'd. Sale conducted by R.H.D., Aucr.³²

The tavern was replaced in 1846, by the City Hotel, also known as the St. Charles, located on the northeast corner of 15th and Main streets. Thomas Taliaferro moved his offices to the City Hotel. Benjamin Davis, Churchill Hodges, the Hill brothers, David Pulliam, and later the partnership of Pulliam and Davis, all well known traders, had offices in the City Hotel. Auctions were held in the basement. The Exchange Hotel, one of the city's finest, at the southeast corner of Main and 14th Streets, housed the offices of at least five agents including George Jones, Pulliam and Slade and P. M. Tabb and Sons. The offices of other traders were located in the warehouses and shops within a two block radius of the hotels.

The heart of the slave trading district was centered on these hotels and taverns and was roughly bounded by Broad Street to the north, Cary Street to the south, Fourteenth Street to the west and Seventeenth Street to the east. Locust Alley, which turned into Mayo Street north of Franklin, bisected the area between Fourteenth and Fifteenth Streets and connected Broad and Main Street. Fifteenth Street cut an irregular track through the district, becoming Birch Alley, later Lumpkin's Alley, south of Broad Street, and Wall Street south of Franklin. Sixteenth Street terminated north of Broad and continued as Union Street for one block between Broad and Grace streets. Ross Street ran diagonally east to west just north of Grace Street and Exchange Alley bisected the blocks between Franklin and Main from Fourteenth to Seventeenth Streets. The irregularity of the streets can be attributed to the meandering path of Shockoe Creek that traversed the district. Several low-income residential enclaves developed in the Shockoe Creek area, close to the docks, factories and depots. "During the 1830s and 1840s this area housed workers of all races, classes, and ethnicities including German and Irish immigrants, native-born whites, free blacks, and slave city dwellers."³³ The Shockoe Creek area was occupied predominately by blacks by the 1850s, and white Richmonders viewed the neighborhood as "exclusively for black workers and as a symbol of abject poverty and depravity."³⁴ As evidenced by the 1886 Sanborn map tenement buildings were constructed along the alleys behind businesses.

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Auction houses, jails and offices were scattered throughout the district. The area between 15th and New streets (Locust Alley) was the location of offices for some of the most prominent slave dealers in the city. The firm of Pulliam & Davis was located on the west side of Wall Street near Franklin. Both Peter Pulliam and Hector Davis are identified as having independent offices also located on this block. Silas Omohundro, one of the largest traders in the city, also had an office on Locust Alley. While the nucleus of the slave trade was located in this area, the city was rife with traders and businesses associated with the slave trade.³⁵

There were three major slave jail operators in the city – Robert Lumpkin, Silas Omohundro and Bacon Tait. The jails served a number of purposes. The slave jails could house as many as thirty slaves or more who were awaiting auction or who were recently purchased and awaiting transportation. The jails were the sight of private sales that were more leisurely than the fast paced auctions and often provided boarding houses for traders and planters from out of state. Robert Lumpkin's Jail is perhaps the most well-known of these. The complex was located on Lumpkin's Alley, an extension of 15th Street between Franklin and Broad. Lewis A. Collier and Bacon Tait operated jails on this site before it was purchased by Lumpkin. The area was known as "the devil's half-acre," reflecting the iniquitous business conducted inside the stockade fence. Thomas Lumpkin and George Apperson operated jails on the west side of Lumpkin Alley between Broad and Franklin Streets. Silas Omohundro operated a jail on Exchange Alley between Locust Alley and Wall Street. Omohundro also had offices and a jail on the southeast corner of Broad and Seventeenth streets. Bacon Tait operated a jail at the southeast corner of Cary and 15th Streets and Hector Davis operated a jail at the corner of Locust Alley and Franklin Street. On the north side of Broad Street, near Lumpkin's jail was the "Negro" burial ground. It was here that the slaves who died in the jails from disease or were hanged for their indiscretions were buried. Freed blacks were also buried in this cemetery, now under an asphalt parking lot.

Many of the merchants involved in the slave trade had residences close to their offices or lived in the same building from which they conducted their business. Some houses were part of a larger complex, such as the one at Lumpkin's Jail that housed Robert Lumpkin and his family. Listings in the 1855 City of Richmond Directory indicate that many slave traders operated their business out of the same building that served as their primary residence. The dwellings were located on one of the many alleys and streets that formed the core of the district, or only a few blocks away. Many slave traders maintained separate residences, but these too were primarily located in the Shockoe area. Hector Davis, who had an office at St. Charles Hotel, lived in a house located at 9th and Marshall streets.³⁶ Ash Levy, a slave dealer who also operated a clothing store for outfitting slaves, lived on the east side of 18th between Grace and Broad streets.³⁷ The house is still standing at 211 North 18th Street and is the only standing house that can currently be identified with any certainty as the

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former residence of a slave trader. The dwelling is listed as a contributing resource in the Shockoe Valley and Tobacco Row National Register Historic District.

Dramatic changes in land use patterns of both Shockoe Bottom and Shockoe Slip have resulted in the loss of many of the structures associated with the slave trade. The Evacuation Fire of 1865 did much to destroy the southwest corner of the trading district. At 3:00 am on April 2, 1865, fire was set to the Shockoe Warehouses to prevent the Union troops, which were preparing to enter the city, from seizing valuable supplies. The fire quickly spread from the warehouses located at 12th and Cary streets and soon engulfed much of the river front. By the time the fire was brought under control at mid-day on April 3 the area from 15th Street on the east, Main Street on the north, Fifth Street on the west, and the James River on the south had been destroyed. Reconstruction of the financial district along Main Street was quick as Northern investors came to the city. The heart of the trading district was given over to "tough saloons, gambling houses and women of shady reputation.....Not one brick remains of the Old Council chamber, Harris's mansion, the Ballard and Exchange Hotels, the five churches, Odd Fellows' Hall, or the many quaint dwellings of this vanished neighborhood"³⁸ In 1860, fifty-two tobacco factories stood in the greater Shockoe area. All but three antebellum tobacco factories have been replaced with larger modern facilities south of Main Street along the James River. These buildings have been or are being renovated as apartments and condominiums. The construction of Interstate 95 resulted in a large swath of the city being leveled including the nucleus of the former slave trading district. While many of the structures had already disappeared, the construction of Interstate 95 guaranteed even more widespread destruction. The highway enters the district on the north near the intersection of Broad and 16th streets and continues south to Franklin Street, where it cuts a diagonal path to the southeast and crosses the James River. The highway passes under Broad Street and is elevated by the time it reaches Franklin Street. The northwest corner of the district was particularly hard hit by the construction of Interstate 95 – the area where Robert and Thomas Lumpkin, and George Apperson operated jails. "Here an atomic bomb could hardly have made a more complete clearance of the past."³⁹

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Associated Property Types

The property types associated with the slave trade in Richmond are much like the businesses themselves -- as the slave trade became more sophisticated and specialized, so did the buildings. There were auction houses, offices, and jails. In addition to the specialized buildings, many of the public buildings and hotels were utilized as residences and offices for the traders and agents, and also served as auction sites. The private dwellings of the slave dealers located within the district often doubled as offices and shops. Based on the historic context described above, the individual listing of each resource under this Multiple Property Submission could use any of the four main Criteria (A, B, C, and D) for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Residences

The residences of slave traders were scattered throughout the city with most concentrated in the slave trading district. The city directories of the period not only listed business addresses but they also listed residential addresses for the traders, auctioneers, commission merchants and agents. According to the 1855 City Directory, the residence of trader Benjamin Davis was in Court End, on Marshall between 8th and 9th Streets. Another Court End resident was auctioneer William P. Sheppard. E. C. Moore, an auctioneer, lived in Church Hill on Grace Street between 25th and 26th streets. R. Cauthorn and E. N. Dabney, partners in the auction house of Cauthorn and Dabney, listed their addresses as Henrico and Albert C. Pulliam, with the auction house of Pulliam and Betts, resided in Manchester. The home of Isaac Davenport, a commission merchant, is still standing at the corner of Main and Foushee streets and is known today as the Ellen Glasgow House, a property individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The complex occupied by Silas Omohundro was insured by the Mutual Assurance Society in the 1850s. The insurance policy illustrates a complex consisting of four buildings northeast of Tobacco Alley, between Locust and 15th streets. There was a two-story brick office and two, three-story brick lumber houses all facing Tobacco Alley. A three-story brick dwelling with a wood roof was located slightly behind this grouping of buildings. While this complex long ago disappeared, the description was representative of other similar complexes.

The surviving house of Ash Levy, a survivor in the midst of commercial development, is a testament to the location and state of other antebellum dwellings in the Shockoe Bottom area. Ash Levy was not only a slave trader, but he also operated a clothing store that specialized in apparel for slaves being sold at auctions. In 1833, the dwelling was insured for \$1,500 by the Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia and was described as a two-story brick dwelling. A Mutual Assurance Society policy dated

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19 May 1853 valued the house at \$4,000, the unattached kitchen at \$600 and the carriage house at \$350. The dwelling is two stories with an attic and measures 22 x 36'. This dwelling currently stands at 211 North 18th Street, as half of a double house.⁴⁰ This is the only known residence of a slave trader still standing within the trading district. Because of the drastic changes in land use in the Shockoe Bottom area, there are few surviving antebellum structures. Dwellings located some distance away from the former slave trading district and outside of the current boundaries of intense commercial development may still be standing.

Hotels and Meeting Halls

The hotels served a multitude of purposes in relation to the slave trade. They often served as the offices and residences of the traders, they housed buyers who came to Richmond wishing to make a purchase, and they were often the site of auctions. Bell Tavern was constructed on the northeast corner of Main and 15th Streets in 1802 and was "noted as the scene not only of recruiting in the War of 1812 but of countless slave-auctions."⁴¹ Bell Tavern was replaced by the City Hotel, known during most of its history as the St. Charles, in 1846. The City or St. Charles Hotel was a four-story brick building with seven bays facing Main Street and extending north on 15th Street for twelve bays. There were storefronts at street level and a wrought iron balcony was positioned below the second story windows on the Main Street facade. The building was demolished in 1903.

The Exchange Hotel, a grand hotel built in 1841, stood on the south side of Franklin Street between 14th and Locust streets. The three-story brick edifice was set on a raised stone foundation. Round bays anchored the corners and the five bays of the facade were separated by full-height Ionic columns that supported a deep entablature that was pierced with attic windows. The Ballard Hotel was built in 1855 directly across the street from the Exchange. The two hotels were connected at the second story by an enclosed bridge across Franklin Street. The five-story Ballard Hotel had an ornate facade of cast iron columns and entablatures. The Exchange Hotel was demolished in 1900; the Ballard was demolished in 1920.

The Union Hotel stood on the southwest corner of 19th and Main Streets from 1817 until it was demolished in 1911. The first story of the four-story hotel was shielded by a columned arcade which supported a wrought-iron balcony. The six second-story windows were set within arched reliefs; the center arch contained double doors with side lights that opened onto the balcony. The third and fourth stories were set off by two-story, Doric pilasters that supported the cornice.

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The Metropolitan Hall was built on the northwest corner of 14th and Franklin Streets in 1828 and was demolished in 1882. Built as the First Presbyterian church, it became the Metropolitan Hall in 1853 when the congregation moved further west to 10th and Capitol streets.⁴² The three story brick building had a three bay entry tower that was reached by an open porch with steps to either side. The tower was crowned with a pedimented roof and shallow cupola. The facade extended two more bays on either side of the tower and the entire building was covered by a gabled roof. The building was the “scene of lectures, theatrical entertainments and political conventions, and later as a rather questionable variety-house,” and activities associated with the slave trade.⁴³

The Odd Fellows Hall stood on the northeast corner of Franklin and Mayo streets from 1841 to 1936. In comparison to the hotels and the Metropolitan Hall, it was a simple building. The first story was set off in an ashlar-base that was pierced by windows and an entrance at the east end. The second floor was punctuated by four large windows with carved stone lintels. The third floor was five bays wide and the windows rested at the base of the plain cornice and entablature. The hotels and public buildings had all disappeared from the trading district by 1936 and their sites occupied by state office buildings and Main Street Station. The loss of these buildings has erased a major architectural resource associated with the slave trade in Richmond.

Jails

Jails represent one of the more specialized buildings associated with the slave trade in Richmond. Some of the auction houses, as will be discussed later, had holding areas where a small number of slaves were housed prior to sale, but the jails were generally a specialized complex of buildings. There were three major jail operators in Richmond – Robert Lumpkin, Silas Omohundro, and Bacon Tait. A general description of the jails can be developed from various accounts.

Men and women lived separately in communal rooms. Males have a large room downs stairs with a number of windows strongly barred and a strongly barred door ...(the slaves sleep) on the floor without any beds that I saw but old clothing, blankets &c. and the females a like room over it. A high fence surrounded a courtyard outside of the dormitory building.

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In addition to the larger dormitories the jails often had smaller buildings to house special slaves, such as the “fancy” girls or the “No. 1 stock.”⁴⁵ “Physique, mental ability, special skills or training, and temperament all played a role in determining price.”⁴⁶ “Fancy girls” was a term that referred to girls

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between the ages of 12 and 20 who were especially pretty and of fair complexion. They brought high dollars at auctions and were sought after as domestics, concubines and prostitutes.⁴⁷ “No. 1 stock” referred to males and females between the ages of 19 and 25 who were seen as prime field hands or possessed a particular skill; they too brought premium prices at auction.⁴⁸ The jail operators also ran boarding houses for the traders and buyers and had their own dwellings within the compound.

On November 27, 1844, Robert Lumpkin purchased lots 62, 63 and 64 located on the east side of Wall Street, later known as Lumpkin’s alley.⁴⁹ Lumpkin’s complex consisted of four brick buildings. “One was used by the proprietor as his residence and his office. Another was used as a boarding-house for the accommodation of those who came to sell their slaves or to buy. A third served as a bar-room and a kitchen. The ‘old jail’ stood in a field a few rods from the other buildings. It was forty-one feet long and two stories in height, with a piazza to both stories on the north side of the building. Here men and women were lodged for safe-keeping, until they were disposed of at private or public sale.”⁵⁰ Robert Lumpkin was not the first slave dealer to own the property. Bacon Tait bought the same lots in 1830 and by 1833 had improved the value of the property from \$400 to \$1500. The two-story brick dwelling that was insured in 1833 for \$1500 with the Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia was the same one that was later occupied by Robert Lumpkin and his family. The property was owned from 1833 to 1844 by Lewis Collier, another Richmond slave dealer. By 1840, the buildings on the property were insured for \$6,000. The property was subsequently used as the Colver Institute, a school for freed slaves.⁵¹ The buildings were demolished by 1876. The Richmond Iron Works were constructed on the property ca. 1894, which were replaced by the Seaboard Air Line Railroad freight depot in 1909. In the mid-twentieth century, the northern sections of the depot were demolished and the western portion of the lots buried beneath Interstate 95. The remainder of the site of Lumpkin’s jail has been paved over for a parking lot, identified in city records as 1500 East Franklin Street.

A recently completed Phase I archaeological investigation revealed that the property holds a potentially rich cache of information about the slave trade and life in nineteenth century Richmond. During the excavation, no definitive evidence of the jail complex was uncovered, but material associated with it, and other features of the jail were identified. Ceramics and glass were found in high concentrations and their type coincided with the kind that would have been used during the time of Lumpkin’s ownership, as well as previous owners Lewis Collier and Bacon Tait. Architectural materials such as brick, window glass and slate shingles were found as well. A surface paved with river cobblestones was discovered during the excavation and may have been part of the central courtyard. Contemporary accounts of the complex identify a central courtyard area that would have probably been paved with stones. A portion of a brick foundation wall and a vertical wood post were also discovered during the excavation. This site has been recommended for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A, B and D.⁵²

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Auction Houses

While many auctions were held at hotels, as the slave trading business expanded, privately owned auction houses began to multiply. These buildings varied in appearance but had in common a large room for the auctions and facilities in which to house and inspect slaves both prior to and after sale. Hector Davis' "slave market"⁵³ was located on the north side of Franklin Street, with part of the building on 15th Street. A description written in 1937 as part of the Works Progress Administration Historical Inventory project describes the building as it stood at that time. The three-story building was constructed of stone, brick and wood. The front of the structure was wood. The author describes the dimensions of the building as "probably 100 feet in length by 50 feet wide, or more."⁵⁴ The building sat against a hill on the west and there was evidence of a spring that had once flowed from the hill.

The ground floor has heavy restraining (retaining) walls against the sheer hillside on the west side of the building. The north wall is of huge stone blocks, and at the eastern end of the north wall is an archway built of stone, and now bricked in with bricks that are thickly covered with old moss. This archway gave upon a rear alley of only a few feet, due to the hillside that must have been cut away for the north wall. A stream of water flowed from a spring in the hillside, and evidence of this is still visible. There is just enough room for a wagon to have driven in from Wall Street (now 15th) and entered the "compound". The auction bell tower is still discernible, although it has been cut down and the bell long removed...In the center of the Court stands a rickety shed-like structure, topped in the center with a large tower, and a smaller one to the north; this shed was used for sales of both humans and live stock.⁵⁵

The 1859 City Directory contains the following advertisement:

Hector Davis, Auctioneer & Commission Merchant, For sale of Negroes, Franklin Street, Richmond, VA. Sells negroes both publicly and privately and pledges his best efforts to obtain highest market prices. He has a safe and commodious jail where he will board all negroes intended for his sale at 30 cents per day.⁵⁶

Further investigation is needed to determine if the landlocked building on Lombardy Alley between 14th and 15th Streets has potential significance. This three-story brick building has antebellum period shutters and exhibits a physical resemblance to other documented structures that were used as auction houses and holding jails.

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Offices

The buildings used as offices for slave traders and associated businesses would have been of typical commercial construction during the antebellum period. There is no evidence that these buildings had any distinct architectural character. The 1855 Richmond Directory suggests that two small buildings on the east side of 15th Street between Main and Cary streets may have been offices for commission merchants, Dabney and Cauthorn, and George J. Sumner. George Sumner was also listed as an auctioneer. Franklin Stearns purchased 13 and 15 South 15th Street in 1858 and 1862 from Edwin Wortham, a partner in the firm of Wortham and McGruder. Wortham and McGruder operated a large warehouse on the northeast corner of Cary and 15th streets, 27 South 15th Street. They were listed in the 1855 City Directory as wholesalers, commission merchants, and general collecting agents, all euphemisms for companies engaged in the hiring and selling of slaves.⁵⁷

Property Type Significance

The residences, hotels and meeting halls, jails, auction houses, and offices are all resources associated with the sophisticated network of traders and dealers that developed by the 1850s. The wide variety of building types are representative of the enormous diversity of the slave trade. The hotels and meeting houses that were the sites of early slave auctions and housed offices for many traders were among the largest and earliest buildings associated with the slave trade. The smaller offices and residences were more numerous, but were not the centralized hubs of activity that the auction houses, slave jails and hotels were. All of the buildings and resources discussed are illustrative of the massive influence of the slave trade in Richmond. Because of the tremendous loss of architectural fabric in the trading district, any properties in the Richmond area that are positively identified as having an association with the slave trade as a commercial enterprise are significant as rare surviving examples of buildings associated with this exceptionally important historic context.

Property Type Registration Requirements

The architectural qualities of the buildings associated with the slave trade in Richmond may be varied, but will have a demonstrated association with persons and events closely associated with the business during the antebellum period. These buildings will meet registration requirements due to their contextual association with the slave trade as commercial enterprise. The buildings will be of appropriate architectural style for buildings constructed during the antebellum period in Richmond. To qualify for registration, the buildings should retain some measure of architectural integrity and be

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evocative of the period of significance. *National Register Bulletin 15* defines seven aspects of integrity which is defined as a property's ability to convey its significance. These seven aspects are location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. As has been discussed, the setting for these buildings has been heavily compromised over the decades by demolition and the construction of modern buildings and Interstate 95. Because of the changing land use patterns present in the city, some alterations may have occurred to the property, but the aspects of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling should still convey a sense of antebellum architecture. The original use and function of the property may no longer be evident, but historical evidence should be present to clearly identify the building as a being associated with the slave trade, such as deed information or business and personal records, as well as anecdotal evidence.

The majority of the buildings associated with Richmond's slave trade have disappeared, though the potential for associated archaeological sites may be substantial. A recently completed *Preliminary Archaeological Investigation of the Lumpkin's Jail Site*, funded by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, the City of Richmond's Slave Trail Commission, and the Alliance to Conserve Old Richmond Neighborhoods, has revealed compelling evidence that the site may yield information despite subsequent development. The site possesses a high degree of archaeological integrity, with intact cultural deposits and features, as well a substantial assemblage of artifacts contemporary with the Lumpkin occupation, including well-preserved organic materials such as wood and leather. As such, this resource offers strong potential for more intensive archaeological research, and thus should be considered eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion D, as well as Criteria A and B.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Ernest B. Furgurson. Ashes of Glory: Richmond at War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), p. 20.
- ² Winthrop D. Jordan. The White Man's Burden (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 26.
- ³ Jordan, p. 39.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Jordan, p. 40, 58. Frederick Bancroft. Slave-trading in the Old South (Baltimore: J. H. Furst Company, 1931), p. 2,
6. ⁶ Bancroft, p. 3.
- ⁷ Benjamin B. Weisiger, III. Old Manchester & Its Environs, 1760-1910 (Richmond: William Byrd Press, 1993), p. 3.
- ⁸ Joseph Clarke Robert. The Tobacco Kingdom: Plantation, Market and Factory in Virginia and North Carolina, 1800-1860 (Gloucester: P. Smith, 1938), p. 58.
- ⁹ Bancroft, p. 6.
- ¹⁰ Bancroft, p. 7.
- ¹¹ Bancroft, p.5.
- ¹² United States Constitution, Article 1, Section 9
- ¹³ Robert Harold Gudmestad, "The Richmond Slave Market 1840-1860," Thesis. University of Richmond, 1993, p. 4
- ¹⁴ Michael Tadman, Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), p. 228.
- ¹⁵ Gudmestad, p. 6.
- ¹⁶ Bancroft, p. 95-96.
- ¹⁷ Gudmestad, p. 33.
- ¹⁸ Bancroft, p. 380.
- ¹⁹ Bancroft, p. 89.
- ²⁰ Midori Takagi, Rearing Wolves to Our Own Destruction: Slavery in Richmond, VA, 1782 – 1865 (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999) p. 37-38.
- ²¹ Takagi, p. 17.
- ²² Bancroft, p. 96-99.
- ²³ Gudmestad, p. 107
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Gudmestad, p. 107
- ²⁶ Gudmestad, p. 14-15
- ²⁷ Bancroft, p. 96.
- ²⁸ Bancroft, p. 99 and Chapter XVII. The majority of the traders were referred to with a far more offensive and pejorative term that reflected the status of the trader as the lowest echelon in a business that was viewed as necessary but distasteful.
- ²⁹ Herman Freudenberger and Jonathan B. Pritchett, "The Domestic United States Slave Trade: New Evidence," Journal of Interdisciplinary History, XXI:3 (Winter, 1997), p. 474
- ³⁰ Bancroft, p. 105-106.
- ³¹ Virginius Dabney, Richmond: The Story of a City, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990) p.111. Mary Wingfield Scott, Old Richmond Neighborhoods, (Richmond: William Byrd Press, 1950) p. 131.
- ³² Gudmestad, p. 40-41.
- ³³ Takagi, p. 97.
- ³⁴ Ibid.

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³⁵ Ralph R. White, ed. Prof. Philip Schwarz. Seeing the Scars of Slavery In the Natural Environment (Richmond: James River Park System, 2002), p. 27-31.

³⁶ City of Richmond Directory, 1855. Daisy L. Avery, "Slave Market of Hector Davis," Works Progress Administration Historical Inventory Project, June 11, 1937, p. 2.

³⁷ Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia, Policy 19667

³⁸ Scott, p. 130.

³⁹ Scott, p. 121

⁴⁰ City of Richmond Directory, 1852.

⁴¹ Scott, p. 131.

⁴² Scott, p. 125.

⁴³ Ibid. Metropolitan Hall is one of the buildings identified on Gudmestad map of "The Slave Trading District", p. 122. The 1855 Butlers' Richmond Directory indicates that auctioneer, Robert B. Lyne had his office in the Metropolitan Hall.

⁴⁴ Gudmestad, p. 49-50

⁴⁵ Gudmestad, p. 95-97

⁴⁶ Gudmestad, p. 98.

⁴⁷ Bancroft, p. 131, 328. Tadman, p. 125-127.

⁴⁸ Gudmestad, p. 125. Bancroft, p. 30, 55, 117.

⁴⁹ Matthew R. Laird, "Preliminary Archaeological Investigation of the Lumpkin's Jail Site (44HE1053) Richmond, Virginia," (Report prepared for City of Richmond, May 2006) p. 3.

⁵⁰ Laird, p. 34.

⁵¹ Laird, p. 7.

⁵² Laird, p. 31.

⁵³ Avery, p. 1

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ Avery, p. 1-2.

⁵⁶ Avery, p. 3.

⁵⁷ Richmond Directory of 1855. Mary Wingfield Scott File Notes at The Valentine Richmond History Center.