

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
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DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Franklin and Armfield Office

AND/OR COMMON

1315 Duke Street Apartments

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

1315 Duke Street

CITY, TOWN

Alexandria

STATE

Virginia

VICINITY OF

CODE

51

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

8

COUNTY

Alexandria

CODE

510

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERICAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER: Apartments

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Edward J. Hunter and James B. Knox, Jr.

STREET & NUMBER

1311 Duke Street

CITY, TOWN

Alexandria

VICINITY OF

STATE

Virginia

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Alexandria City Hall

STREET & NUMBER

100 North Fairfax

CITY, TOWN

Alexandria

STATE

Virginia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Historic Alexandria Virginia Street by Street: A Survey of
Existing Early Buildings. Historic Alexandria Foundation.

DATE

1976

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Historic Alexandria Foundation

CITY, TOWN

Alexandria

STATE

Virginia

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Despite alterations to its exterior and interior and the disappearance of its slave pens, this house, which served as the Franklin and Armfield headquarters and John Armfield's residence from 1828 to 1836, still has the foreboding appearance it must have had to the thousands of slaves who passed through its doors. The house was constructed sometime between 1810 and 1820 by Robert Young, Brigadier General of the Second Militia of the District of Columbia. It and its grounds covered half a block fronting on Duke Street. Shortly after he completed the house, General Young, faced with financial problems, was forced to sell it.

In 1828 Franklin and Armfield leased and eventually purchased the house to serve as headquarters for their slave-trading operations. According to Prof. E. A. Andrews, a contemporary observer, the main block of the house served as the firm's office and Armfield's residence, while the two-story attached wing in the rear was used to house slaves at night and had "doors and windows which were grated like those of ordinary prisons."⁸ Both ends of the house had partially roofed courts or pens where the slaves passed their daylight hours and which were surrounded by high walls of whitewashed brick. In 1836 Armfield, charged with winding up the firm's affairs, sold the establishment to George Kephart, a fellow slave trader. Kephart operated it for a number of years before selling it to Price, Birch and Company, who dealt in slaves there until Alexandria fell to Union troops in 1861. During the Civil War, captured Confederate soldiers were imprisoned there.

In the 1870's Thomas Swann, a prominent railroad builder and political figure, purchased the property. He tore down the slave pens, probably using much of the materials to construct the adjacent row of townhouses now situated east of the house. At the same time Swann altered the old Franklin and Armfield office itself, adding a third story of frame construction to the attached rear wing and replacing the main block's gable roof with a Mansard one to conform with the townhouses. Over the years, the property has had several changes of ownership and has been used chiefly as a rooming and apartment house.

The Franklin and Armfield office is an L-shaped, Adamesque style, three-story structure of gray-painted brick. It consists
(continued)

⁸Cited in Isabel Howell, "John Armfield, Slave Trader," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, II (March, 1943), 19.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1828-61

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Robert Young

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Franklin and Armfield, according to distinguished historian Clement Eaton, was "the most eminent slave-trading firm in the South."¹ Between 1828 and 1836, Isaac Franklin, in partnership with his relative by marriage, John Armfield, created the largest-scale slave-trading operation in the antebellum South. With what Franklin's biographer Wendell Holmes Stephenson has described as "keen insight into business conditions," they established their headquarters in Alexandria, Va., (then part of the District of Columbia) and thus were adjacent to an area blessed with a surplus of slaves available at low prices.² While Armfield remained in Alexandria and purchased slaves for shipment south, Franklin handled sales at offices in New Orleans and Natchez, markets in which slave prices were at their highest. At its peak, the firm had agents in almost every important Southern city, owned a fleet of sailing ships, and trafficked in thousands of slave annually. In the process both partners became enormously wealthy and according to Kenneth Stampp, perhaps the leading expert on Negro slavery, "probably no trader ever exceeded the returns enjoyed by the firm of Franklin & Armfield. . . . Few who exploited slave labor, rather than trading in it, profited that much."³ After 1836 Franklin retired, and under Armfield's direction, the firm was gradually disbanded.

Despite alterations to both its exterior and interior and the disappearance of its outlying slave pens, this house, which served as the Franklin and Armfield headquarters and John Armfield's

(continued)

¹Clement Eaton, A History of the Old South, 2nd ed. (New York, 1966), 233.

²Wendell Holmes Stephenson, Isaac Franklin: Slave Trader and Planter of the Old South (Baton Rouge, 1938), 24.

³Kenneth M. Stampp, The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South (New York, 1956), 265.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bancroft, Frederic, Slave Trading in the Old South (Baltimore: J. H. Furst Company, 1931).

Cox, Ethelyn, Historic Alexandria Virginia Street by Street: A Survey of Existing Early Buildings (Alexandria: Historic Alexandria Foundation, 1976) (continued)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	18	321580	42196800	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the nominated property coincides with the boundary of the legal lot known as 1315 Duke Street, Alexandria, Va.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Ralph S. Christian, Historian

December 1976

ORGANIZATION

DATE

American Association for State and Local History

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

1400 Eighth Avenue South

615-242-5583

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Nashville,

Tennessee

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ___

STATE ___

LOCAL ___

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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of a 24.17-by-38.19 foot, rectangular-shaped, three-bay-wide main block and an attached three-story, rear wing that measures 15.06 by 59.43 feet. The main block sits on a full basement, and foundations are brick throughout. The brick of the south, or front, facade is set in Flemish bond while American or common bond is used elsewhere. Twin, corbeled chimneys with a parapet connecting wall are located on the east end of the main block while two other chimneys intersect the apex of the gable-roofed wing. The present Mansard roof of the main block is faced with slate and covered with black-painted, turned tin, and it is adorned with wood dormers--two on the south side and three on the north--with gabled roofs and rectangular four-over-four sash windows.

An 1861 photo of the south, or front, facade shows that the house had identical entrances located in the center and on the left side and square stone lintels over the windows and doorways. Apparently, during the renovation of the 1870's, the center doorway was converted to a window, and the stone lintels were replaced with segmental brick arches. Also, windows were added to the west end of the main block, and the bars were removed from the attached rear wing. Most of the windows, some of which appear original, are four-over-four sash and have plain stone sills. Single doorways include the original opening in the left side of the front facade and one on the east side of the attached wing. Neither door is original.

Inside, the house has undergone considerable alteration over the years and today contains seven apartments. From the house's historic period there remain the original pine flooring and apparently the open-well, three-flight staircase with carved newel post and balusters. Less altered is the basement with its rounded arch supports for the chimneys on the east end, its walls with peeling whitewash, and barred windows which have been bricked up from the outside.

The house is flanked on the east by the brick townhouses dating from the 1870's and on the west by an alley and a modern one-story business structure of masonry and metal. The neighborhood is a mixture of residential and commercial buildings, and until relatively recently it had been declining. In recent years, however, efforts have been launched to maintain its essentially residential character. At present, the row of townhouses to the right of the Franklin and Armfield office are undergoing renovation, and the owners of the office itself have expressed interest in restoring it.

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residence from 1828 to 1836, still has the foreboding appearance it must have had to the thousands of slaves who passed through its doors. After Franklin and Armfield sold it, the house continued as a center for slave trading until 1861, and during the Civil War it housed captured Confederate soldiers. The Adamesque style structure is an L-shaped, three-story structure of gray-painted brick and consists of a three-bay-wide, rectangular-shaped main block with a Mansard roof, which is not original, and attached three-story, rear wing. The only other known structure associated with Franklin and Armfield or its owners during the existence of the firm is the Isaac Franklin Plantation near Gallatin, Tenn.

History

The highly successful Franklin and Armfield slave-trading firm had its genesis in the early 1800's when a young Tennessean, Isaac Franklin, charged with handling business matters for his brothers in New Orleans, became aware of the large scale migration to the Southwest, the growing demand for slaves in the region, and the great profits to be made in dealing in human chattels. The exact date Franklin became a slave trader is unknown, but extant records show him selling slaves in Natchez, Miss., by 1819 and New Orleans by 1828.

In 1824 Franklin met and befriended John Armfield, a stage-coach driver of North Carolina Quaker stock, and trained him in the art of buying slaves. In 1828 he made Armfield, who eventually married Franklin's niece, his partner, and what Eaton has called "the most eminent slave-trading firm in the South" came into existence.⁴ Possessed with what Franklin's biographer Stephenson has described as "keen insight into business conditions," they established their headquarters in Alexandria, Va., adjacent to an area blessed with a surplus of slaves available at low prices.⁵ While Franklin handled sales at offices in New Orleans and Natchez, markets in which slave prices were highest, Armfield remained in Alexandria, residing and conducting business in a leased house at 1315 Duke Street. By means of newspaper advertisements, agents
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⁴Eaton, History of the South, 233.

⁵Stephenson, Isaac Franklin, 24.

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who scoured the countryside, a willingness to pay higher prices than other dealers, and a reputation for fair dealing, he was able to supply Franklin with slaves purchased at relatively low prices. During the firm's heyday in the 1830's, annual profits were often in excess of \$100,000, and 1,000 to 1,200 slaves were shipped annually to the Southwest. Most of them were transported on the firm's own ships, which sailed from Alexandria every 30 days during the October-May shipping season.

Because Franklin and Armfield had what Frederic Bancroft, the historian of the slave trade, has described as "a positive genius for speculating in slaves," they rapidly amassed considerable fortunes.⁶ Although Franklin's estate was later assessed at \$750,000, many of his contemporaries considered him a millionaire, a figure which may be closer to the truth. Armfield was believed to be worth around \$500,000. "But along with wealth," says Stephenson, "had come a modicum of stigma resulting from participation in a business that was tolerated only because it was regarded as a necessity."⁷

By 1836 Franklin had withdrawn from active involvement in the slave trade, the Alexandria office and sailing ships had been sold, and Armfield had begun settling the firm's affairs, a task not finished until well after the senior partner's death in 1846. During his last 10 years, Franklin, who had invested much of his wealth in land and his own personal slaves, lived the life of a typical wealthy planter, dividing his time between his Fairvue Plantation in Tennessee and his other holdings in Louisiana. Armfield, who did not retire completely from the slave trade until the 1850's, invested his wealth in real estate and gave large sums to the University of the South before his death in 1871.

⁶ Frederic Bancroft, Slave Trading in the Old South (Baltimore, 1931), 58.

⁷ Stephenson, Isaac Franklin, 93.

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_____, "John Armfield of Beersheba Springs," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, III (March, June 1944), 46-64, 156-167.

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Stephenson, Wendell Holmes, Isaac Franklin: Slave Trader and Planter of the Old South (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1938).

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