



## PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for HISTORIC DISTRICTS

### Purpose of Evaluation

Please use the following space to explain briefly why you are seeking an evaluation of this property. The purpose of this PIF is to request the recognition of an historic district comprising the 19th-century Shockoe Hill Burying Ground and its related components. In 1989, as a result of a “Phase 1” cultural resources survey undertaken for VDOT, the preparer of this P.I.F. recommended that a suite of archaeological sites and above-ground structures at the northern end of Shockoe Hill in Richmond, Virginia should be considered a potential historic district eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (Mouer 1989). The SHPO’s review committee for that project concurred with my recommendation. More than thirty years later there is now far more extensive understanding of the nature and extent of this proposed district as well as a considerably more enlightened understanding of significant themes which lend it a unique level of importance. Not long after that 1989 report, three of the most visible elements of the proposed district were individually listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register. However, a proper appreciation of all of the historic contexts which make this district significant requires recognition of several additional contributing elements.

The district is a significant example of the sort of municipal almshouse-public hospital-cemetery complexes that arose in the period of the New Republic following disestablishment of the Church. The history of the District encompasses the changing social and racial relationships of Richmond through the Antebellum, Civil War, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow/Lost Cause eras of the 19th century. While the previously listed properties (The Almshouse, Shockoe Hill Cemetery, and The Hebrew Cemetery) illustrate wonderfully the public appreciation for important and wealthy persons, for civic leaders and historical figures like John Marshall and Elizabeth Van Lew, and for excellence in public architecture and mortuary design, there is much more to the Shockoe Hill tract. Very significant social history and cultural process begs for proper recognition of all the known contributing properties on this tract. Foremost among these is the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground. That name, which will be used in this document, is one of several names that have been used historically to describe the land that served as the City of Richmond’s municipal graveyard for residents of African descent.

The City of Richmond in the 21st century is trying to come to grips with and to correct some of the failings of its history. Among those are the abandonment and destruction of The Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground, also called The Second African Burying Ground (Smith 2020b ). It is time to recognize, to whatever extent possible, the formerly discarded and ignored portions of the history of this important district. And it is time to honor the fact that a large part of it is sacred ground for descendants of more than 22,000 African

Americans buried here, and for all the poor whose “Potter’s Field” graves now show no remaining traces of markers or enclosures. The estimate of over 22,000 would likely make this the largest burying ground for free people of color and slaves in the United States (McQueen n.d. c).

Recent research by Lenora McQueen, Ryan Smith, Steve Thompson, Ellen Chapman and others has revealed the extent and importance of now “invisible” graves of people buried on Shockoe Hill. These projects also document the City’s efforts to erase those graves as Reconstruction gave rise to The Lost Cause and Jim Crow in the period ca. 1880-1920. Shockoe Hill’s almshouses housed both Black and White residents. The Shockoe Hill Burying Ground, as it was originally named, houses the dead of both Black and White residents, but it is not an accident of history that African Americans cannot find their ancestors’ resting places there. It is beyond time to recognize the complete history to this historic place.

In summary, it is proposed that the resources named here should be considered together as an historic district comprising multiple sorts of resources; namely, historical sites, archaeological sites, cemeteries, and structures. All of these resources are inextricably linked by historic contexts, conjoined and complementary purposes, and common municipal management or oversight. The common patterns and events associated with this place clearly represent themes which are critically significant to the history of the City of Richmond and the American South. These patterns, themes and events deserve recognition and interpretation at the local, state, and national levels.

Are you interested in applying for State and/or Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No X

Are you interested in receiving more information about DHR’s easement program? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No X

**1. General Information**

District name(s): Shockoe Hill Burying Ground (127-7231)

Main Sts: Hospital, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th Streets

Name of the Independent City or County where the property is located: Richmond City

**2. Physical Aspects**

Acreage: Approximately 40 acres

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban X Suburban \_\_\_\_\_ Town \_\_\_\_\_ Village \_\_\_\_\_ Hamlet \_\_\_\_\_ Rural \_\_\_\_\_

Briefly describe the district's overall setting, including any notable landscape features: The proposed district is defined by the original 28-1/2 acre parcel laid out by the City in 1799 for the purpose of locating a public cemetery, and the expansion of that plot throughout the 19th century. Today, the landscape of the proposed district is dominated by the 1861 Almshouse (Virginia Landmarks Register 127-0353, NPS property number 81000647, 89001913); the enclosed burying ground for White people known as The Shockoe Hill Cemetery (Virginia Landmarks Register 127-0389, NPS property number 95000818); and the Hebrew Cemetery (Virginia Landmarks Register 127-6166, NPS property number 06000348). All three of these dominant landscape features are listed on the Virginia Historic Landmarks Register and on the National Register of Historic Places (National Park Service 1981, 1995, 2006). See Figures 1-5.

Less obvious are these important contributing sites:

\_\_the City Hospital Site (44He0709), also historically referred to as the Colored Almshouse (Figure 6).

\_\_the lot surrounding the City Hospital which was used as a cemetery throughout the 19th century, and considered here to be an important component of the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground;

\_\_The original core site of the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground founded in 1816 (44He1203), for which a request for an extended boundary definition has been submitted to VDHR (Mouer 2020). Research suggests that more than 22,000 African American Richmond residents were buried here, including a majority of all the enslaved and emancipated people living in Richmond from 1816 to 1879 (Figures 7-11). In late 19th-and early 20th-century maps and documents, this burying ground is also referred to as the City's "Potter's Field."

\_\_The site of the City of Richmond powder magazine which was exploded by Confederate troops during the Evacuation of Richmond;

\_\_The possible site of the John W. Smith House, situated near the magazine. This building was destroyed and numerous inmates in it were killed when the Powder Magazine was blown up.

\_\_There were several 19th-century City of Richmond gallows sites on the property, some of which can be placed with reasonable confidence on contemporary maps.

\_\_The entire Almshouse property extending north from existing structures to the northern edge of the proposed District. This property was used for burying inmates of the 1861 Almshouse and from its predecessor institution, the "Poor House and Workhouse" of 1805. There may be some remains of these structures from 1805 on this

lot as well.

Following the Civil War, two new commercial powder magazines were placed within the eastern margin of the proposed district. These are not considered contributing elements, nor have their locations been surveyed except through documentary sources. However, the construction of one of these magazines in 1867 disturbed “over one hundred” (Richmond Whig April 9, 1867) graves in the African Burying Ground, and its location was directly beneath the I-64 overpass and potentially in the Area of Potential Effects for planned widening of the highway.

### 3. Architectural/Physical Description

Architectural Style(s):\_\_The above-ground resources have been expertly described in the National Register nominations for the Almshouse, the Shockoe Hill Cemetery, and the Hebrew Cemetery. Those documents describe in detail the architectural qualities of the Almshouse and its attendant South Building. The important design elements of both Shockoe Hill Cemetery and The Hebrew Cemetery have been extensively documented. Historically important persons and classes of people—from Chief Justice, John Marshall to the Jewish soldiers who fought for the Confederacy are documented in those nominations. As such, we have chosen not to repeat the work that has already become well recognized as critical to the District’s significance.

If any individual properties within the district were designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here:

\_\_\_\_\_see above \_\_\_\_\_

If any builders or developers are known, please list here:

\_\_\_\_\_see above \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) of construction (can be approximate):\_\_\_\_\_1805-1908\_\_\_\_\_

Are there any known threats to this district?\_Yes. Completion of the DC2RVA High-Speed Rail and proposed widening of I-64 by VDOT through the district are of concern. These projects have undergone or are presently undergoing Section 106 processes. A third potential threat is the City’s potential sale of property which includes a 1.2-acre portion of the site of the original core of the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground.

#### **Narrative Description:**

In the space below, briefly describe the general characteristics of the entire historic district, such as building patterns, types, features, and the general architectural quality of the proposed district. Include prominent materials and noteworthy building details within the district, as well as typical updates, additions, remodelings, or other alterations that characterize the district..

The contemporary aesthetic of the proposed district is captured in the essence of the three major landmarks: the 1861 Almshouse with its 1908 West Building, the Shockoe Hill Cemetery, and the Hebrew Cemetery. The area remains primarily a peaceful, somewhat secluded historic anomaly surrounded by industrial landscapes and dense residential areas including the Gilpin Court public housing complex. The principal intrusions into the district include the Curtis Holt Sr. Bridge, which carries 5th Street across the Bacon's Quarter Branch valley through the district; Interstate 64, which passes through the eastern side of the District in the vicinity of the original part of the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground; the CSX (formerly Seaboard Air Line) railroad track which bounds the district on the north and east at the base of Shockoe Hill; an abandoned Sunoco gas station which sits on a portion of the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground; and finally, a former SPCA animal shelter which stands over the site of the 1865 city powder magazine explosion.

Discuss the district's general setting and/or streetscapes, including current property uses (and historic uses if different), such as industrial, residential, commercial, religious, etc. For rural historic districts, please include a description of land uses.

The following paragraph from the National Register Nomination for Shockoe Hill Cemetery gives a good description of the general setting of the District:

“Noteworthy neighboring sites to the north of Shockoe Hill Cemetery include the Almshouse and Hebrew Cemetery. The Almshouse is an imposing four-story brick Italianate-style structure built in 1860. In addition to housing Richmond's poor, it served as Confederate General Hospital #1 during the Civil War and was the first hospital to treat Union as well as Confederate wounded. The Almshouse has been a registered landmark since 1983. The privately owned Hebrew Cemetery, established in 1816, houses a fine collection of memorial stone and metal work including a dramatic cast-iron Confederate memorial fence of draped muskets and crossed swords. The well-maintained and well-preserved grounds of Hebrew Cemetery exhibit the city's best example of a block and grid grounds layout in a parklike setting.”

The district continues to be used in the same or similar ways that it was during the 19th century. That is, the majority of the landscape is allocated for use as burying grounds. The Almshouse is now a privately managed home for low-income residents. Of course, there are no gallows, no public powder magazine and, unfortunately, no markings or enclosures indicating the presence of a burying ground for people of color or a vastly expanded “potter's field” which extended well to the north and east of the proposed historic district (see Plates 1-5).

The Hebrew Cemetery, which is operated under the auspices of Congregation Beth Ahabah, Richmond, Virginia, was founded in 1816, the same year as the “Burying Ground for Free People of Colour” and the “Burying Ground for Negroes” (slaves) which is how the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground appears on the 1816 plan by Richard Young (Plates 8a and 8b).

Over the 19th century, and especially at the turn of the 20th century, the Hebrew Cemetery expanded onto grounds which had been used for burying people of color. It appears that at least a portion of the Hebrew Cemetery may have been literally raised by substantial amounts of fill that covered graves which are probably still intact.

There is written and pictorial evidence that considerable damage has been done to some portions of the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground. For example, a comparison of two photographs in the Cook Collection of the Valentine Museum taken just a few years apart in the late 1880s or early 1890s illustrate that the construction of the Northside Viaduct involved reconstructing portions of 5th Street where it crosses the African Burying Ground (see Plates 6, 7, 8 and 9). Earlier road work on 5th Street in 1883 disturbed numerous graves, leaving some of these exposed in the road cut. Newspapers, official records, and other documents provide evidence of that destruction and the subsequent public outcry.

The later Cook photograph illustrates that, despite considerable damage in the vicinity of 5th Street, much of that Burying Ground remained intact at lower elevations down the slope. These photographs show clearly the “terrace” construction described by Frederic Law Olmstead when he visited and witnessed African American funerals here in 1853. Today the proposed district retains elements illustrative of the important social and cultural history which took place on these grounds. Clearly missing from current visual representations are the complex and changing aspects of racial relations that played out here, as well as important historical events and trends concerning civic responsibility for burying the dead and tending to the needs of the poor and disabled. Of special interest is the relationship among the district’s contributing elements with regard to the rise of efforts toward White supremacy in the late 19th- and early 20th-century era of Jim Crow and The Lost Cause. Shockoe Hill provides one of the clearest physical manifestations of this in the United States: gleaming obelisks were raised to slave owners, while the physical remains of the enslaved were erased or hidden under tens of feet of fill.

#### 4. District's History and Significance

In the space below, briefly describe the history of the district, such as when it was established, how it developed over time, and significant events, persons, and/or families associated with the property. Please list all sources of information used to research the history of the property. (It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or family genealogies to this form.) Normally, only information contained on this form is forwarded to the State Review Board. If the district is important for its architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, or other aspects of design, please include a brief explanation of this aspect.

The nomination to list the proposed district in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places will be based primarily upon NRHP Criterion A because it is associated “with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.” We will also demonstrate eligibility under Criterion C that the district represents a distinguishable entity which embodies “distinctive characteristics of a type and period.” Some contributing properties of the proposed district are archaeological sites which may also be eligible under Criterion D in that they probably are capable of contributing important information concerning significant historic and cultural themes and sub-themes (NPS 1997). It is a fact that this tract of land contains many thousands of human burials, and there are undoubtedly resources here for the comparative study of White Christian, Jewish and African-American funerary practices, for example. Nonetheless, the applicants for this nomination are not emphasizing Criterion D and believe that further archaeological testing is not required to properly evaluate the profound cultural and historical significance of the District.

The nomination will be based primarily, but not exclusively, on the following historic context themes:

1. Municipal responsibilities for housing and health care of the poor and disabled and for the burial of the dead, 1799-1920
  - a. Changing patterns of race relations through the 19th century are reflected in how the above responsibilities were conducted in Richmond and are expressed in the history and fabric of Shockoe Hill.
  - b. Medical care in the almshouses/hospitals, including during times of smallpox and cholera epidemics.
  - c. Grave desecration by “resurrectionists” acquiring cadavers for medical students.
2. The Civil War impacts on Richmond and the Shockoe Hill complex, 1860-1865

- a. The explosion of the City Magazine during the Evacuation, April 1865
  - b. Removal of almshouse residents during the Civil War led to subsequent deaths at the “temporary” almshouse (Smith House) from the explosion of the powder magazine.
  - c. Burial and subsequent disinterment of bodies of Union prisoners of war in the “Colored Burying Ground” at Shockoe Hill.
  - d. Use of the properties by the military and by Virginia Military Institute during the War.
3. The rise and consequences of Jim Crow and The Lost Cause, ca. 1880-1920
- a. Abandonment and obliteration of the African Burying Ground / Potter’s Field in the period 1880-1920 in contrast to the continued preservation and stewardship of the Shockoe Hill and Hebrew Cemeteries.
  - b. Further destruction of African Burying Ground later in the 20th century due to negligence and loss of “memory.”

There is extensive documentation of the previously registered properties readily available from their nomination forms and numerous other sources. There is also an excellent recent paper by Gibson and Richard Worsham (2016) on the Almshouse and the historic contexts that related almshouses, hospitals and cemeteries in 19th-century Virginia and the other original colonies. Recent publications and presentations concerning the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground have resulted from extensive research by Lenora McQueen (n.d.a, n.d.b, n.d.c) and Ryan K. Smith (2020a, 2020b). Additional unpublished information comes from Ryan Smith’s web site, “Richmond Cemeteries: Exploring Richmond, Virginia’s historic burial grounds second African Burying Ground” and from working papers and personal communications from Lenora McQueen, Ellen Chapman and Steve Thompson.

#### Municipal Responsibility for the Poor as a Result of Disestablishment

This proposed district comprises a tract of land which was acquired by the City of Richmond in 1799 for use as a location for a municipal burying ground. The first known use of the tract was for a “poor house and workhouse” established in 1805. With the passing of Virginia’s Religious Freedom Statute in 1786 came the disestablishment of the Church and, as a result, municipalities inherited the responsibility for caring for the poor, tending to their medical needs, and providing public burying grounds. These public services had been an intrinsic aspect of statutory and common law in Virginia devolved from England’s Poor Laws dating to the reign of Elizabeth I. Until 1786 these duties were handled by the vestry of local parishes; in this case that was Henrico Parish, the main chapel of which was St. John’s on Church Hill.

This pattern was also followed in the other founding colonies following the Revolution. Throughout the newly formed United States there arose complexes often including elements of housing for the poor, hospitals for the sick and disabled, and public cemeteries free of specific religious associations. The proposed historic district is an excellent example of such a complex as they arose in urban areas. (Trattner 1974, Green 2003, Worsham and Worsham 2016 ). Similar complexes based around “poor farms” arose in many non-urban counties (Mouer and Egghart 1993). The component that is missing from this district at present is the lack of visible evidence of racially segregated burial practices. The present Shockoe Hill Cemetery had been reserved for the burial of White persons.

Nonetheless, the Shockoe Hill tract was the site of the burial of at least 22,000 free and enslaved African American residents of Richmond between 1816 and 1879. The land on which those burials were interred is present, but it is not indicated by signage or markers or enclosures of any kind. That fact is not accidental, and it is the negligence and erasure or apparent “disappearing” (Smith 2020a, Smith in press) of that ground that forms a significant theme for the historical and cultural significance of the proposed historic district.

### Shockoe Hill’s Segregated Burying Grounds

The first interments for which we have found documentation are those initially buried on the parcel which later became the City Hospital lot which, in turn, was later incorporated into the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground. Two new cemeteries were established for free people of color and slaves in 1816 as a result of years of efforts led by Christopher McPherson and members of the free Black community. The original African Burying Ground along Shockoe Creek had become intolerable from overuse, poor upkeep and its placement at the city’s gallows site. Originally this new burying ground on Shockoe Hill was established on 2 one acre plots (Figures 8a and b)). This had expanded to take over 3.3 acres by 1835, as indicated by the Micajah Bates Plan of 1835. In 1850, the city added an additional 9 acres to the African Burying Ground. Before it was closed to further interments in 1879, that “potter’s field” had spread down all of the slopes and across the valley floor to the edges of Bacon’s Quarter Branch to the North and Shockoe Creek to the East.

A local Jewish congregation was given permission to establish a cemetery on the Shockoe Hill Burying Ground tract for Jewish residents also in 1816. A cemetery for non-Jewish White residents was finally planned in 1820 and began accepting interments in 1822. This cemetery was initially referred to as the New Burying Ground, and eventually came to be known as the Shockoe Hill Cemetery. The superintendent of the Almshouse also served as the Superintendent of the Shockoe Hill Burying Ground, and the City Hospital. According to the 1869 Boyd’s Directory of Richmond City, the Hebrew Cemetery was also being managed at that time by the Superintendant (although this may have been a short-term situation based on unusual circumstances). At times, much of the work involved in maintaining the burying grounds and excavating graves fell to the inmates of the almshouse(s).

### Segregation of the Almshouses and Hospitals

Sometime before 1842, the city established a separate City Hospital building for smallpox patients on the tract immediately adjacent to the enclosed White portion of Shockoe Hill Cemetery. In 1863, a new smallpox hospital was opened at Howard's Grove specifically for free people of color and the enslaved, and the City Hospital on Shockoe Hill was then used for Whites only.

Following the opening of the present Almshouse structure and its return to service at the end of the Civil War, the City Hospital was repurposed as "The Colored Almshouse." For the first time the White and Black paupers under the city's care were fully segregated in life as well as in death. The site of the City Hospital was recorded as an archaeological site (44He0703) by this author in 1989. Research by McQueen (Plate 8a) has shown that both White and Black people who had died at the Poorhouse were buried on the Hospital lot, but by 1850 that property had become incorporated into the African Burying Ground.

For a period of time during the Civil War, the newly completed Almshouse of 1861 was used by the Confederate military as a hospital, prison, barracks, and temporary home of the Virginia Military Institute. On April 3, 1865, Confederate troops exploded the City Powder Magazine. Newspaper accounts report thousands of shattered windows in the city as a result. There were several almshouse inmates at a home owned by the heirs of the Magazine's former Keeper which served as a temporary almshouse. That house was destroyed and several of the inmates were killed. The explosion also knocked down a portion of the brick enclosure wall at Shockoe Hill Cemetery. According to a memoir published many years later by one Richmonder, some "graves were torn open" in the African Burying Ground immediately adjacent to the Magazine (Walthall 1933).

#### Almshouse Doctors and "Resurrectionists"

Beginning as early as 1832, medical faculty at the University of Virginia had regularly negotiated to purchase cadavers robbed from the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground and to ship them to Charlottesville for study and eventual discard (Von Daacke 2019). In 1994, construction of a new building at Virginia Commonwealth University's medical school revealed a mid-19th-century well that had been used to dispose of cadavers which had been used for instructing students in anatomy and physiology in the period ca. 1840 to 1860. All or nearly all of the identifiable remains from the MCV well were those of African Americans (Owsley and Bruwelheide 2012).

Research by Jodi Koste (2012, personal communications) has led to a better understanding of the medical college's use of grave-robbers, also known at the time as "resurrectionists," to acquire these "specimens" primarily from the Richmond public cemetery; that is, from the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground. It was commonly known at the time, and there were ongoing protests from religious groups and the public. There were usually at least one physician and some medical students present at the Almshouse and/or City Hospital, and contemporary sources indicate that they would watch for funerals at the African Burying Ground and alert the "resurrectionists" to disinter a fresh "commodity" the following day.

The finds in the MCV well were recovered under this author's direction; the story of that episode and of MCV's grave-robbing of the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground has been brought into public knowledge best by a documentary film from Shawn O. Utsey, Chairman of African American Studies at VCU (Utsey 2000).

### The Jim Crow Era and the "Disappearing" of The Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground

Reconstruction and the Federal occupation of Richmond lasted until 1870. Federal troops and martial law were withdrawn. In 1879 the City of Richmond closed Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground, and began a series of actions that served to efface those graves. Portions of the former Burying Ground were transferred from public ownership to the Hebrew Cemetery. The construction of the Northside Viaduct, designed to connect the north and south ends of Shockoe Valley by electric trolley, led to the destruction of graves in the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground.

For several years before Shockoe Hill was closed to interments of non-Whites, the area outside the White and Hebrew enclosures was sometimes referred to, and depicted on maps, as the city's "Potter's Field." The City soon began developing the Potter's Field by selling or leasing it to industrialists, primarily foundries and railroad facilities. Each of these desecrations brought howls of protest and pain from city residents, but to no avail. Historian Ryan K. Smith has properly described the "disappearing" of Black cemeteries in Richmond, and of this one in particular he writes in the introduction to a powerful essay:

"By tracing the process of obliteration at Richmond's second African Burial Ground, this article illustrates how those in power— in this case a New South coalition of government officials, city engineers, and private developers— worked to truncate the highly charged memorial landscape related to human remains. The loss of this immense burial ground, untouched in the scholarly literature until now, underscores how essential the landscape and even human bodies are for the maintenance of social space and memory. As this site continues to face threats by roadway and railway projects and a proposed auction, it poses a key challenge to the concept of material "integrity" at the heart of federal preservation guidelines that have placed such properties at a disadvantage. As descendants and activists work to reclaim this burial ground without benefit of archaeological discoveries, the historic importance of its destruction may offer one of its few ways forward."

Perhaps nothing illustrates this purposeful destruction of sacred ground better than those two photographs made by George Cook and/or his son approximately 4 or 5 years apart (probably 1888 and 1892). These are views to the southwest across Bacon's Quarter Branch Valley. Plate 6 is the earlier view (see also Plate 7 for detail). In the foreground is the recently constructed Tanner and Delaney/Richmond Locomotive Machine Works built right atop the "Potter's Field" that had extended down the slopes and across the valley from the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground. The heart of the Burying Ground is on those very slopes. In the distance are the City Hospital and the Almshouse with its yard and non-

vegetated portion of the Burying Ground that also includes one of the locations of the City's gallows.

The later Cook Studio image (Plates 8 and 9) was made after completion of the Northside Viaduct and extension of 5th Street across the Burying Ground. This devastating damage took place within 10 to 12 years of the City's closing of the Burying Ground. It is clear that the top of the hill in the oldest part of the Burying Ground has been razed. Note, too, that the land on top of the hill west of 5th Street that had been transferred from use for burying persons of African descent now is covered with new graves belonging to the Hebrew Cemetery.

### Reclaiming Historic Justice for Richmond's 19th-Century Public Facilities for the Poor, the Disabled, and the Dead

The late 1980s witnessed the beginnings of a major social movement by African Americans in Richmond, as elsewhere throughout the country, to reclaim Black heritage by finding and forcing public recognition of important "lost" historic sites. The discovery of the cadavers in the well at the Medical College of Virginia became a magnet for African American residents, academics, and civic leaders to bring together forces and methods for identifying heritage resources and instigating processes to reclaim such sites through site visibility and interpretation. The work of the proposed nomination is intended to reclaim an equal and truthful representation of the sacred ground comprising thousands of graves of Black human beings as a major missing component of the City's history.

Plate #10 includes an image of The Almshouse by a Scottish photographer named Alexander Gardner, photographed from City Hospital just days after the fall of Richmond to United States troops in April 1865. Lenora McQueen has surmounted this image with a quote from Lt. Col. John Lyell describing the landscape of the Shockoe Hill Burying Ground. Between the photograph and Lyell's description we see the totality of the Shockoe Hill District in 1865 with the Almshouse, Shockoe Hill Cemetery, the Hebrew Cemetery, and the "Colored Cemetery." A close look at the Almshouse reveals shattered windows from the explosion of the City Magazine just a few days previously. If the Northeastern corner of the brick wall surrounding Shockoe Hill Cemetery were visible here, you would see it had been badly damaged. These components all worked together as a system throughout most of the 19th century.

The truth of history is presently misrepresented by the listed historic-site properties on Shockoe Hill without the components that fully illustrate the proposed district's historic contexts and their significance. Half of the truth remains buried and scattered on the graded-and-filled urban landscape that has been mechanically sculpted across the eastern part of the proposed district beginning with Richmond's urban expansion in the late nineteenth century. Here, the district's historic resources are exclusively archaeological, due to the very processes this nomination seeks to highlight. However, the typical impetus to subject this portion of the historic cultural landscape of Shockoe Hill to routine "testing strategies" to "evaluate the archaeological integrity" of the deposits here should be resisted.

In this part of the proposed Shockoe Hill Burying Ground Historic District, historical significance now resides equally in the destruction, often deliberate, of a highly meaningful, emotionally charged, and racially fraught historic landscape.

Here, historical significance is physically grounded in the juxtaposition between what was here--amply demonstrated from a wide and extensive array of documentary sources--with how the area appears today. Shockoe Hill is a massive public burying ground. This nomination seeks both to demonstrate its full extent and to expose the great disparities that have characterized efforts at preservation and historical valorization across this public place. Whether graves are marked with elaborate monuments or natural vegetation, that sacred ground remains sacred.

**5. Property Ownership** (Check as many categories as apply):

Private

Public\Local

Public\State

Public\Federal \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**6. Applicant/Sponsor** (Individual and/or organization sponsoring preparation of the PIF, with contact information. For more than one sponsor, please list each below or on an additional sheet.)

name/title: Lenora McQueen, Ryan K. Smith, Steve Thompson, Ellen Chapman, and L. Daniel Mouer

organization: \_\_\_\_\_

street & number: % Dan Mouer, 600 West 30th Street,\_\_\_

city or town:

Richmond

state:

V

a

-

zip

code:

23225\_\_\_\_\_

Email

danmouer@fastmail.fm

telephone 804 909-2825

:



Applicant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 6/29/2020

• • *Signature required for processing all applications.* • •

Contact person: Dan Mouer\_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Telephone: 804 909-2825

**7. Notification**

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for DHR to confer with or notify local officials of proposed listings of properties within their jurisdiction. In the following space, please provide the contact information for the local County Administrator, City Manager, and/or Town Manager.

name/title: The Honorable Ellen F. Robertson, Councilmember,

Richmond City Council locality: Richmond Gateway 6th Voter District

\_\_\_\_\_

street & number: 900 E. Broad Street, Suite 305

city or town: Richmond state: VA zip code: 23219

telephone: 804.646.7964 (office tel), 804.646.5468 (fax)

name/title: The Honorable Levar Stoney, Mayor locality: City of Richmond

street & number: 900 E. Broad Street, Suite 201

city or town: Richmond state: VA

zipcode: 23219 telephone: 804.646.7964 (office tel)

804.646.5468 (fax)

## Appendix 1: References

Green, Elna C. 2003 *This Business of Relief: Confronting Poverty in a Southern City, 1740-1940*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

Lazurus, Jeremy M. 2020 "[One woman's crusade brings attention to long-forgotten Black cemetery.](#)" Richmond Free Press, March 6, 2020

Koste, Jodi L. 2012 "Artifacts and Commingled Skeletal Remains from a Well on the Medical College of Virginia Campus: Anatomical and Surgical Training in Nineteenth-Century Richmond," <https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/arch001/2/>

National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Forms  
1981 The Almshouse, NPS Property number 81000647, 89001913  
1995 Shockoe Hill Cemetery, NPS property number 95000818 2006 Hebrew Cemetery, NPS property number 06000348

National Park Service. 1997 How to Apply The National Register Criteria for Evaluation

McQueen, Lenora

n.d. a Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground, a presentation prepared for principals involved in Section 106 Review and Compliance procedures for DC2RVA High-Speed Rail Project and VDOT's proposed widening of I64.

n.d. b Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground, Presentation Boundaries and Footprint Research. Presentation of ongoing compilation of data concerning the Burying Ground Site.

n.d. c The Shockoe Hill Burying Ground Interments (A study in search of burial records for the Grave Yard for Free Persons of Color and For Slaves, established 1816). Ongoing research last updated 12/26/2019

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# **Appendix 2: Figures and Plates**

**Figure 1. Location of Proposed Shockoe Hill Burying Ground  
Historic District**

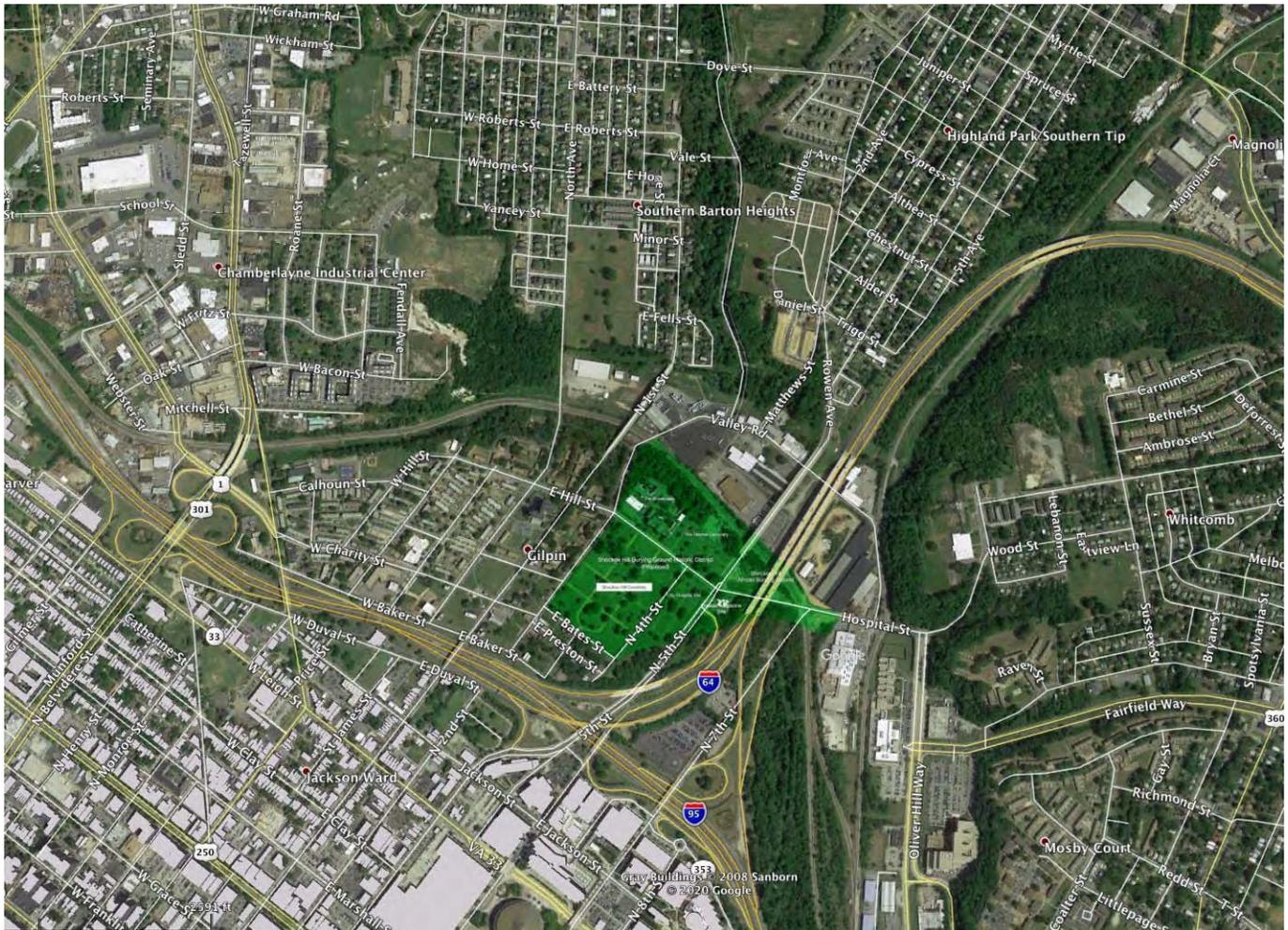


Figure 2. Proposed Historic District Boundaries

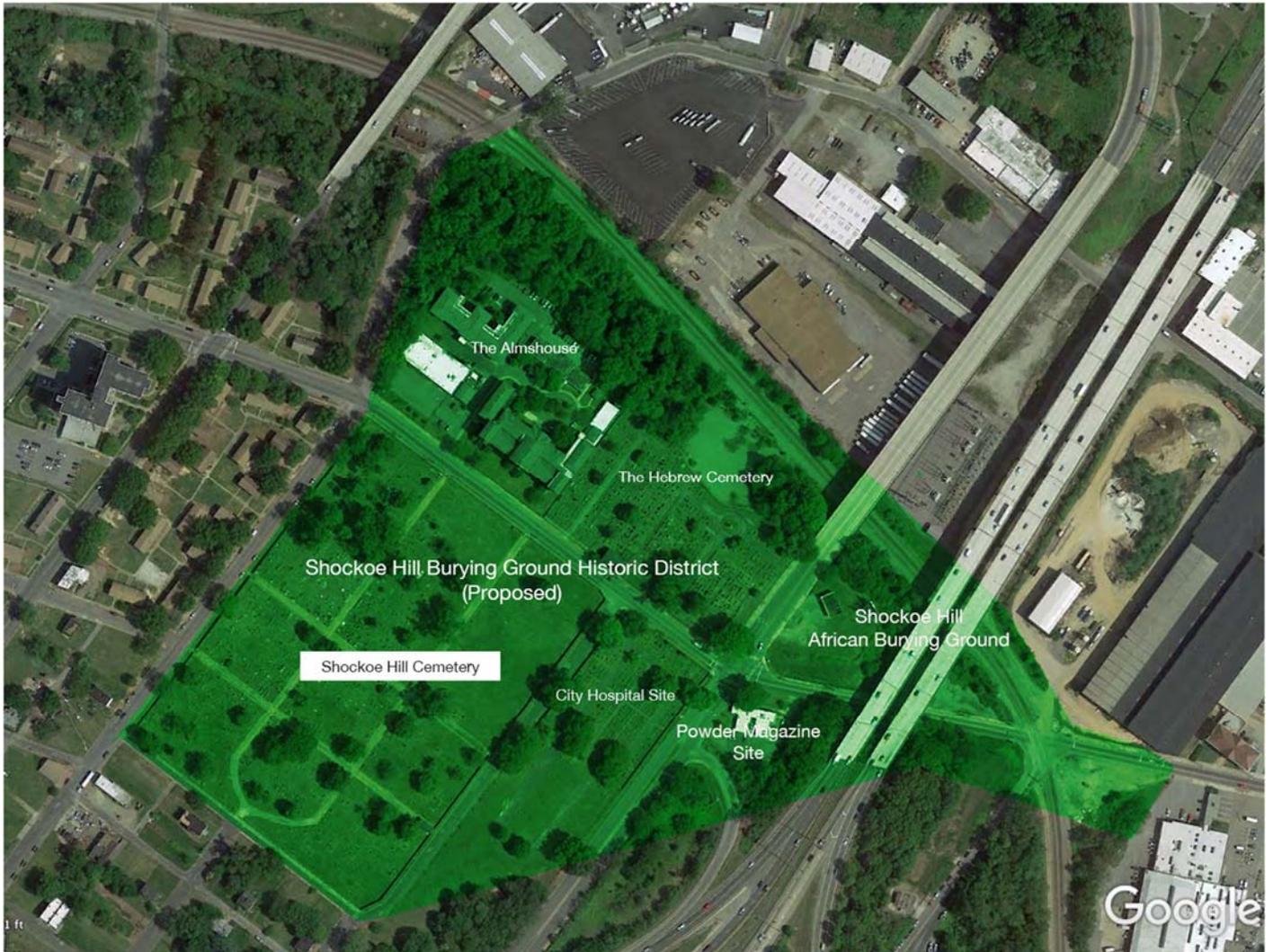


Figure 3. Contributing Property: The Almshouse



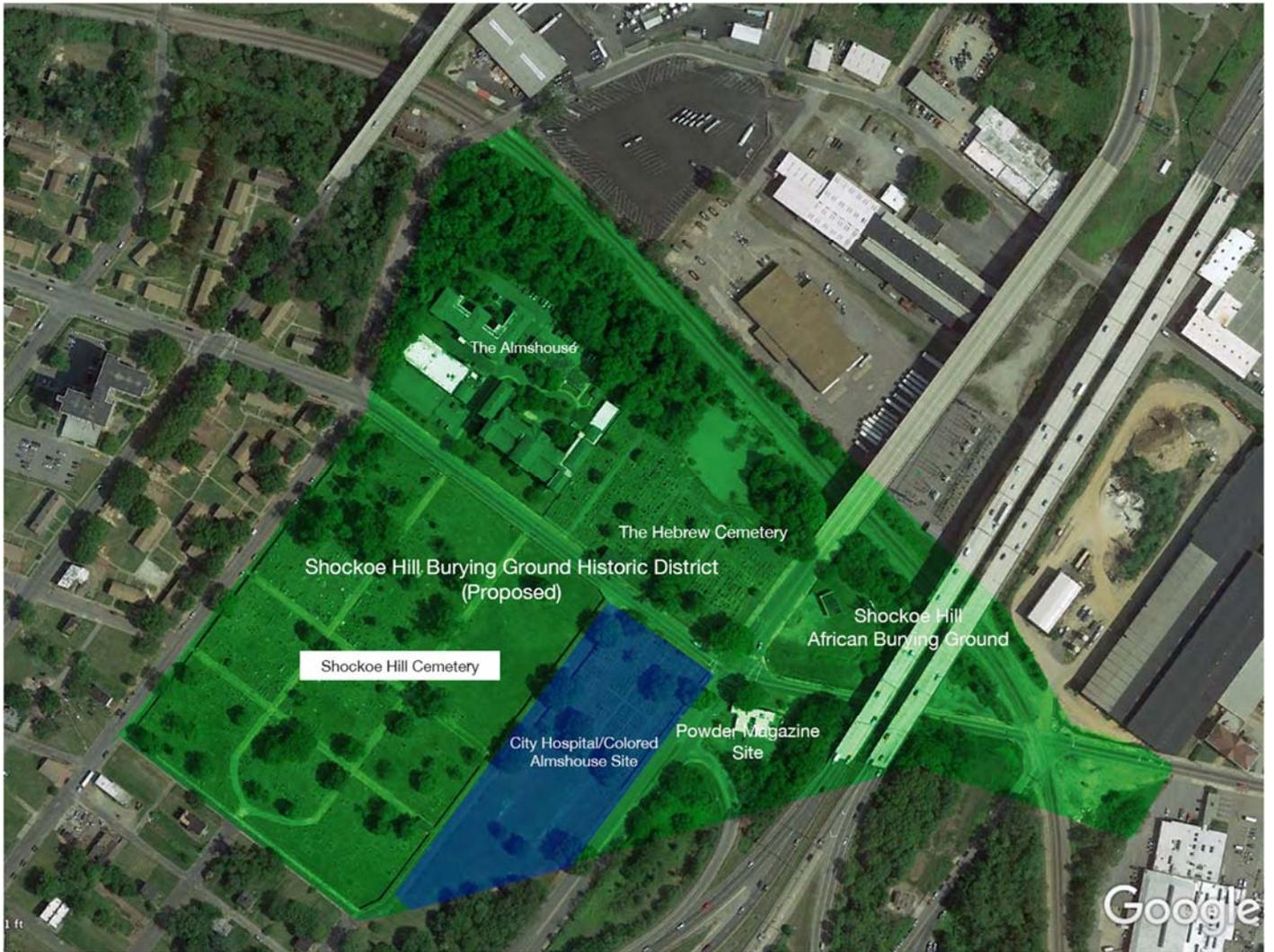
Figure 4. Contributing Property: Shockoe Hill Cemetery



Figure 5. Contributing Property: The Hebrew Cemetery



**Figure 6. Contributing Property: City Hospital/Colored Almshouse Site and Grounds (44Heo703)**



## Figure 7. Contributing Property: Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground



Green=Proposed District

Violet: Historic boundaries of the Burying Ground

The Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground is a proposed archaeological site of City of Richmond's municipal burying ground for enslaved and free people of African descent during the period ca. 1805 to 1879. It is known that some white persons were also buried here, including some paupers who died at the various almshouses that existed here, some felons who were hanged at the city's gallows here, and some prisoners of war who died in Libby Prison and other facilities. This site includes the "Grave Yard for Free People of Color and Slaves," a name assigned to archaeological site 44He1203 (Dovetail 2018). That site as recorded occupies just a small portion of the known Burying Ground which was called by a variety of names throughout the 19th century and remained labelled on maps as a landmark as late as the 1905. Please note that the historic extent of the Burying Ground is considerably larger than the proposed District boundaries.

Figure 8a. 1816 Plan by City Surveyor, Richard Young

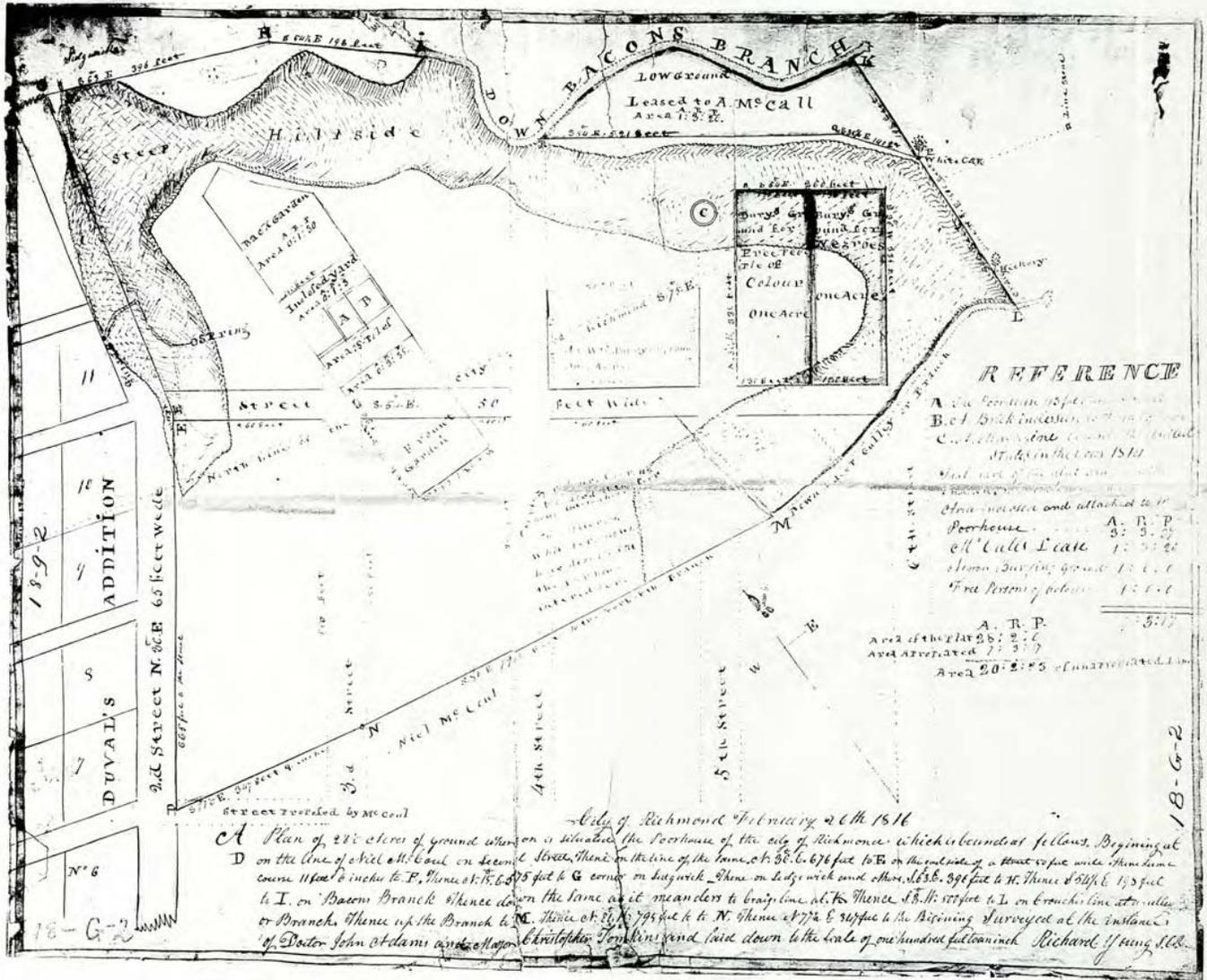
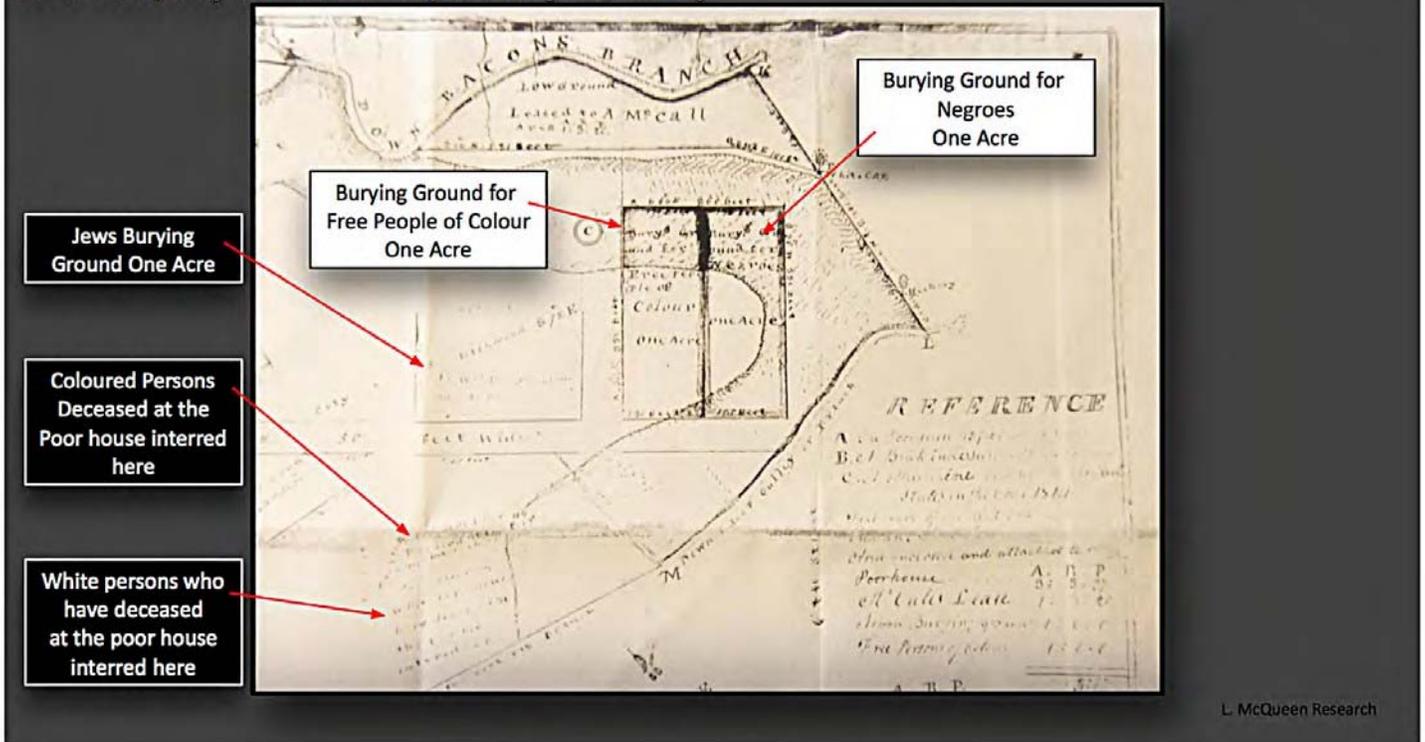


Figure 8b. 1816 Plan by City Surveyor, Richard Young

1816 Plan, City of Richmond (February 26, 1816)



In 1816, the City laid out two 1-acre plots that became the heart of the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground. They we're labelled for "Free People of Colour" and "For Negroes." Please note that these were not the first burials on the property. Two small adjacent plots were designated for "Coloured Persons" and "White Persons" deceased at the Poor House.

This illustration is from an exhaustive work of documentary study of the Burying Ground by Lenora McQueen, a descendant of three ancestors who were buried here, including her great- great-great-great grandmother Kitty Cary.

## Figure 9. 1853 Smith-Keily Map of Henrico and Richmond



This figure, from one of McQueen's research presentations, shows two parts the Smith-Keily Map of Henrico of 1853. The larger image here is from the main map, and the smaller image is from the City inset. On the Henrico map the whole complex is labelled "Shockoe Hill Burying Ground," while on the Richmond inset the Contributing Properties are each labelled separately.

Figure 10. Micajah Bates "Plat of The City Property Near the Poor House," 1842

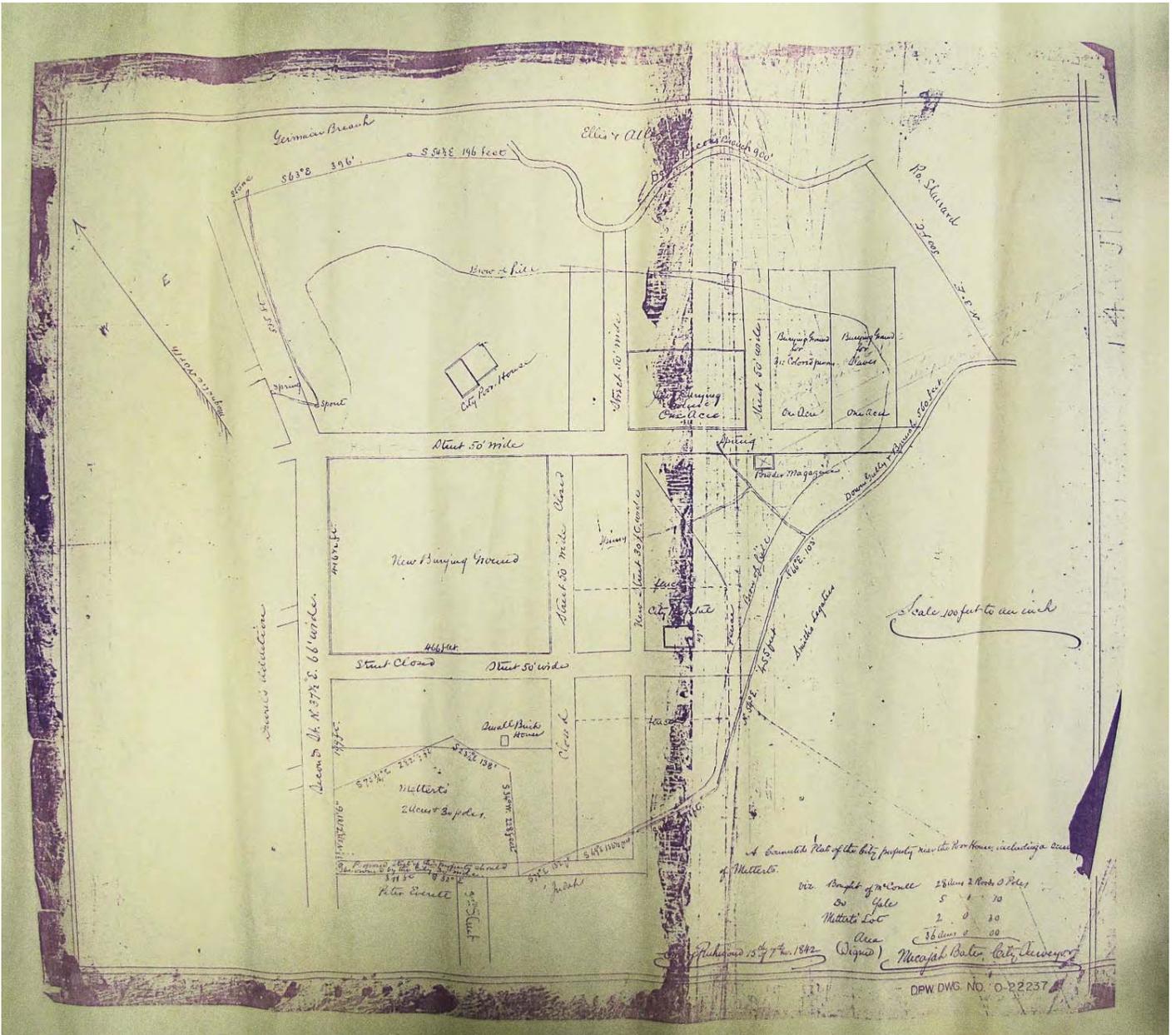
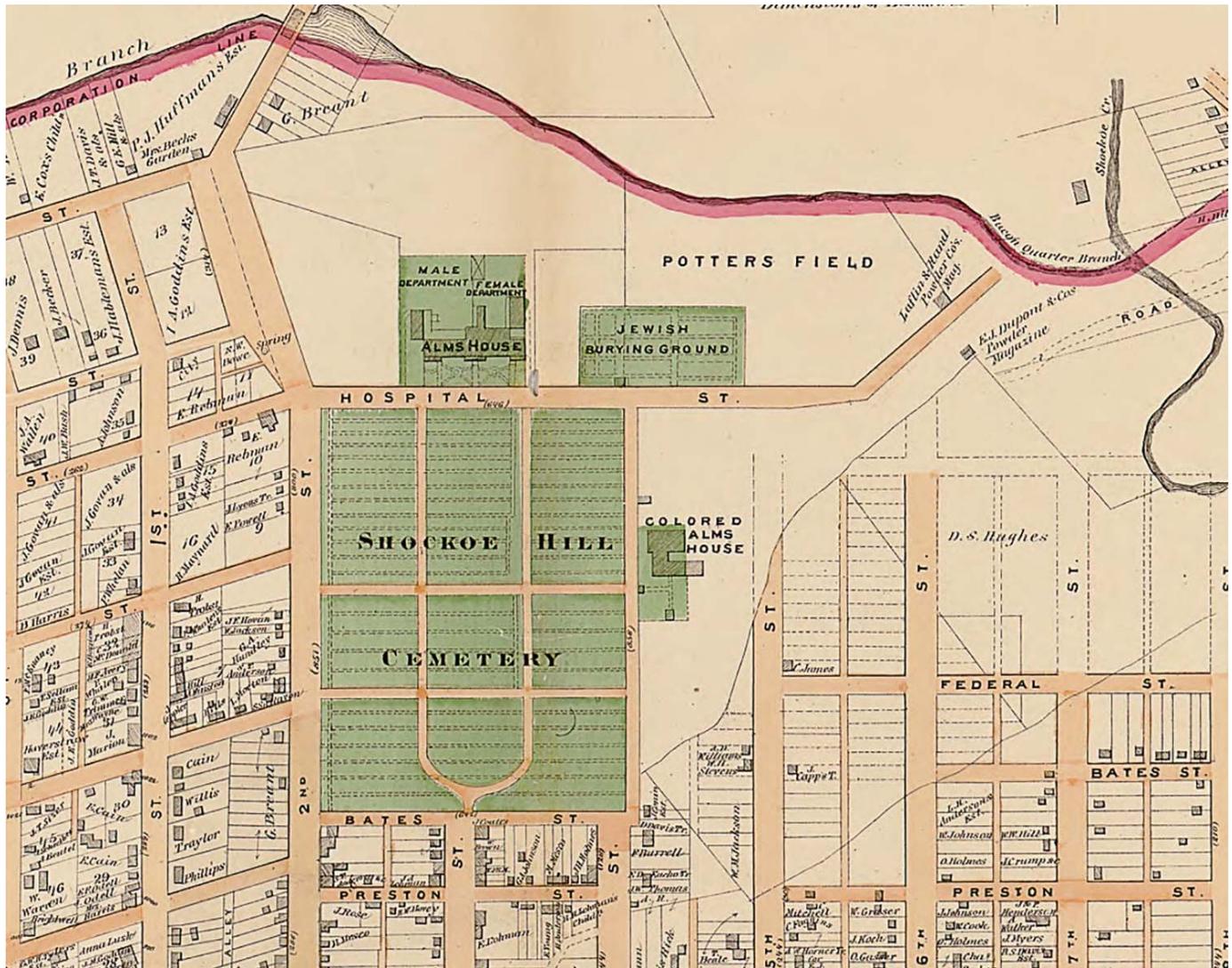


Figure 11. Detail from Beers Atlas of Richmond, 1876



In this map the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground is shown as the City's "Potters Field."

# Plates

## Plate 1. View to the West on Hospital Street



The Hebrew Cemetery is to the right and to the left in the foreground. Shockoe Hill Cemetery is to the left background opposite the Almshouse. (Google Earth Street View)

## Plate 2. View of the Hebrew Cemetery at the South End of Curtis Holt Sr. Bridge



**Plate 3. View to Northwest across The Hebrew Cemetery Annex towards The Almshouse from 5th Street.**



## Plate 4. View Northeast from the Intersection of Hospital and 5th Streets

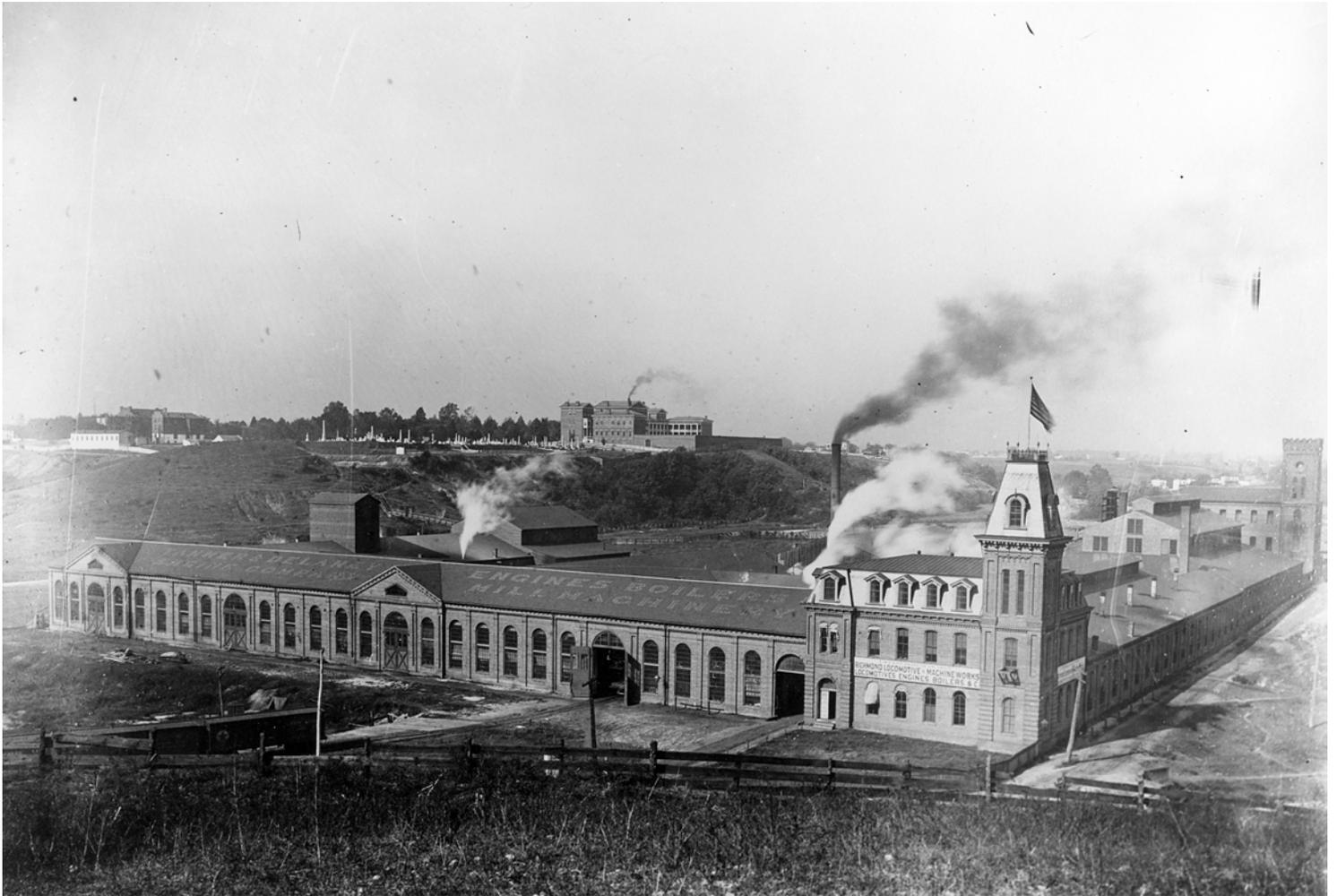


This view shows the original core portion of the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground as it appears today. The small building is a former Sunoco gas station.

## Plate 5. View to the West from the Intersection of Hospital and 5th Streets



## Plate 6. View SW Across Bacon's Quarter Branch Valley, ca. 1888



This view of the Richmond Locomotive and Machine Works factory by the George Cook Studio is a view towards Shockoe Hill. To the left in the middle ground is the oldest portion of the African Burying Ground. Proceeding right across the image are the Hebrew Cemetery and the Almshouse. In the background on the left is the City Hospital and even further in the background is Shockoe Hill Cemetery.

## Plate 7. Detail of 1888 Cook Image



The hilltop in the center of this image includes the original portion of the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground as well as the expansion of the Ground down the slopes and onto the Valley Floor. In a detailed description of two burials in 1853 on that slope, Frederick Law Olmstead described the practice of excavating the graves in a sort of staircase of terraces so that graves could be placed on the slopes at appropriate depths without encroaching on earlier graves just downhill. This terracing and the walking paths connecting them are clearly evident in this image.

## Plate 8. View SW Across Bacon's Quarter Branch Valley, ca. 1892



This is another Cook Studio image made four or five years after the first one, following the completion of the Northside Viaduct and the extension of 5th Street across the Shockoe Hill tract.

## Plate 9. Detail of Cook Photo from 1892



In this closeup detail the damage to the African Burying Ground from construction of 5th Street and the Northside Viaduct is obvious. Nonetheless, it is also clear that much of the terraced ground still exists on the lower slope of the northeastern end of Shockoe Hill. The small building in the center of the image, at the north end of the Viaduct, sits very near where the abandoned Sunoco Station stands today.

## Plate 10. The Almshouse as Virginia Military Institute in 1865



For a short period near the end of the Civil War, the new Almshouse housed the Virginia Military Institute. In this presentation slide by Lenora McQueen there is a quote from Lt. Col. John W. Lyell, a senior officer at the academy, describing the core of the proposed District including Shockoe Hill Cemetery, the gallows, the "Jewish Cemetery," and "the Colored Cemetery" that covered the slopes of the hill "to the rear." The photograph was shot from the City Hospital. A close look at the Almshouse reveals numerous broken windows blown out by the explosion at the the City Magazine. The photograph is a stereo plate by Alexander Gardner in the Library of Congress, viewable at <https://www.loc.gov/item/2018671526/>.