

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

VLR-12/1/99 NRHP- 8/14/00

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Bruin's Slave Jail

other names/site number VDHR File No. 100-47

2. Location

street & number 1707 Duke Street  not for publication N/A

city or town Alexandria  vicinity N/A

state Virginia code VA county Alexandria (~~independent city~~) code 510 zip code 22314

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Catherine Alusev 6/29/2000  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC RESOURCES  
State of Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

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

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Bruin's Slave Jail  
Name of Property

Alexandria, VA  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: warehouse  
DOMESTIC: single dwelling  
GOVERNMENT: courthouse

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: business

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

EARLY REPUBLIC: Federal

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK  
walls BRICK  
roof other: composition  
other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

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

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

ETHNIC HERITAGE: BLACK

**Period of Significance**

1819-1865

**Significant Dates**

1819

1844-1861

1862-1865

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

unknown

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

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

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Lloyd House Library, Alexandria

Bruin's Slave Jail  
Name of Property

Alexandria, Virginia  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property less than one acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>18</u>	<u>3211210</u>	<u>4296860</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Mrs. Ruth Lincoln Kaye

organization Professional historian date \_\_\_\_\_

street & number 708 Braxton Place telephone 703/836-3286

city or town Alexandria state Virginia zip code 22301

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional Items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Duke Enterprises, Inc.; Duke 8407 Partnership

street & number 1707 Duke Street telephone 703/549-6103

city or town Alexandria state Virginia zip code 22314

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**SUMMARY DESCRIPTION**

This simple Federal-style building constructed in 1819 is a dignified but lonesome survivor of a former village subsumed by the city of Alexandria. It is a masonry rectangle, two and one-half stories tall, with a moderately pitched gable roof. The building retains the essence of its original double-pile center-hall plan on the first floor, and portions of the plan are found on the second floor as well. The house contains a representative collection of architectural features, elements, and profiles from all significant periods of the building's existence, including original architraves, mid-nineteenth-century trim, late-nineteenth-century mantels, and twentieth-century restoration.

**DESCRIPTION**

Two and one-half stories tall, the house at 1707 Duke Street consists of a double-pile, center-hall plan on the first floor, measuring forty-two feet on the east-west axis and thirty-four feet north-south. The long axis is parallel to Duke Street (formerly the Little River Turnpike) and the building sits about eight feet from the curb. The narrow sidewalk and entry stoop are shielded only partially by a group of three masonry planters of recent origin. The north or rear portion of the property consists of a large parking area that is partially paved. The lot is enclosed on the west by moderately tall shrubs that continue south to form a partial screen for the first floor of the house. On the other sides, the nominated property is bounded by a one-story masonry structure on the north and another on the east that abuts the full width of the east elevation.

The massing of the house is defined by the simple rectangular masonry block with gable endwalls, each of which is punctuated by two slender chimneys flush with the wall surface, located about one-third of the length of the gable from the ridge, and terminated by corbelled masonry necking bands. The otherwise unarticulated and shingled gable roof planes, pitched at approximately 8:12, are penetrated by two small dormers of indeterminate age (they are probably not original to the building).

The brick is laid in five-course American bond, with no water table or other surface articulation, and terminates on the north and south elevations in a simple wooden cornice.

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A narrow wooden rake board, discontinuous across the chimney faces, defines the gable-end walls. The entire building was completely repointed recently, and no surface evidence of changes in fenestration, vanished door openings, or previous additions was discernable.

The principal or south elevation is marked by a five-bay fenestration pattern, with the main entry door at the first-floor level. Window openings are framed by shallow, flat, ungauged masonry jack arches, which may not be original, and wooden lug sills. Existing double-hung sashes are not original. The entry ensemble serves as the primary visual and decorative focus for this elevation. It sits on a modern brick stoop with a steel railing, and consists of a gabled pediment carried on Tuscan pilasters that are documented to date from 1930. The paneled soffit, paneled jamb reveals, and three-light transom are earlier and likely original to the house. Given the fundamental simplicity of the building, it is unlikely that it previously had a decorative frontispiece, and the opening was instead defined by the finished masonry on the outer surface. The existing door is a modern replacement with modern hardware. Narrow modern dormers are clad in wood, contain small double-hung wooden sash, and have gable roofs pitched at approximately 12:12.

Similar in some respects to the south elevation, the north elevation is characterized by its five-bay fenestration pattern and central entry. The entry and one bay to the east are sheltered by a narrow, wooden, hip-roofed porch that sits on a brick terrace two risers above grade. This feature is comparatively recent in origin. Window openings are defined by flush wooden lintels and wooden lug sills. The door opening also has a flush wooden lintel that spans a three-light transom and is set nearly flush with the plane of the finished masonry. The existing door is a modern replacement. Dormers are similar to those on the south elevation.

Based on visible evidence, the original configuration of both the east and the west elevations may have been similar, but now are different as the east wall has more extant openings. Both have a pair of small window openings at the attic level, with gauged masonry jack arches, and which contain double-hung sash not original to the building. There is no other feature on the west elevation, and the masonry is unrelieved to grade on the second and first floors. There are two window openings on the east elevation at the second-floor level that appear similar in configuration to those at the attic level, and thus

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may be contemporary with them, but as one of them opens into a space that is anomalous to the expected double-pile plan, there is reason to question their period of origin. There is a door opening at the first-floor level in the southeast room, but its date of origin is not known and its surface features and attributes are clearly late-nineteenth-century, rather than early-nineteenth-century, in origin.

As noted above, the first floor features a double-pile, center-hall plan that retains elements of its integrity although a number of alterations have been made. The center hall is actually two spaces consisting of the south entry and stair hall and the north entry hall. The partition and door opening between the two halls may be original to the house.

In the south entry hall, the first flight of the stair to the second floor is on the west side of the hall and has eleven risers to an intermediate, full-width landing that is two risers below the second-floor elevation. From the landing, the second flight is on the east side of the hall. The simple turned newel appears to be mid-nineteenth-century in profile, but the handrail profile appears to be earlier and is possibly original to the house. The baseboard in this space is a six-inch-high flat board with a beaded top, and may likewise be original. An applied chair rail with profiles that replicate late Georgian and early Federal period models is clearly a later addition. Similarly, there is an applied cornice consisting of a double cyma crown and a Wall-of-Troy frieze that recall Georgian prototypes but are later additions.

A closet under the stair carriage with a board-and-batten door may be original. The architraves and casework at the door openings to adjacent rooms and to the south entry door share the same profile and are most likely original. The doors leading to the southeast and southwest rooms are mortise-and-tenon framed with six recessed panels, and have original hardware including rimlocks and hinges. The south entry door is a modern replacement but similar in character to the original doors. The walls and ceiling are plaster, and the flooring is new, overlaid on an earlier surface.

The north hall has been altered extensively. There is a shallow closet at the south end with a modern door and casing, the whole of which forms the enclosure for the stair to the basement. There was no basement historically, and it is documented that the cellar now existing under the northwest chamber of the first floor was excavated in 1931. It is

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likely that the entire assembly dates from that period, of perhaps later as a result of subsequent rehabilitation. The baseboard in the north hall is a heavy, flat board with a chamfered corner. There are also an applied chair rail and an applied cornice, both of which appear recent in origin. The casing on the north entry door is a more compact version of that found on the south, and is probably original, but the door is new. The door opening into the southwest room has a two-light transom, and the architrave matches that of the north entry.

The southeast chamber retains its integrity of plan and openings with one exception: the opening to the northeast chamber is probably original but it is cased with a profile more typical of the third quarter of the nineteenth century than the first. The door on the east wall formerly led to the exterior, and is composed of two vertical panels more typical of an early-twentieth-century prototype. The applied chair rail in this space is similar to that in the hall and of recent origin. The applied cornice, also similar to that in the hall, likewise appears to be modern. The flooring consists of random-width pine boards ranging from five to seven inches. The mantel is applied to the plaster surface, and while probably not original (based on the plaster configuration, which is vaguely mid-nineteenth-century in character), may be an older piece that has been reused. The backband that surrounds the firebox opening is characteristic of early-nineteenth-century models and is probably original to the location. The beaded baseboard is probably original. Window architraves are identical with the door casings in the hall, and are most likely original.

In the southwest chamber, the beaded baseboard survives, but the floor is carpeted and the materials are not visible. There is no chair rail in this space, and the applied modern cornice is similar to that in the hall. The mantel may be an earlier piece (vaguely Greek Revival in character, based on the raised panel in the pilasters) that has been reused and installed over the plaster surfaces. The window casings are similar to those on the opposite side and are original. There is a pair of modern doors set within a partially closed double opening that led to the northwest chamber. It is not known if this opening was fitted with sliding, recessed doors, but even if it was, this configuration is not commonly found in houses of the first quarter of the nineteenth century. If they ever existed, it was probably the result of a post-war rehabilitation.

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The northeast chamber has been significantly altered by a small toilet room installed behind a new screen partition on the north. In addition, the wall to the north hall has been almost completely removed, and modern finishes have been installed in all areas.

The northwest chamber shares some of the attributes of other spaces on this level, including the modern cornice, the beaded baseboard, the lack of a chair rail, and the presence of a mantel installed over the plaster. The window casings are unusual in this house, as they have heavy and complex molding profiles typical of the late Victorian era.

On the second level, the double-pile, center-hall plan exists only partially. This may be due to later alterations, or perhaps the original configuration of the northeast and central bays did not conform to the expected layout.

The second-floor stair hall shares some attributes with its counterpart on the first floor, such as the beaded baseboard and the applied chair rail, which runs up parallel to the stair and over the earlier baseboard. Balusters on this level are turned. The stair to the attic is enclosed in a beaded match-board shell, with a board-and-batten door. There is no cornice in this space. The door and window casings are the same profile as those located on the first floor, and likewise are probably original. The paneled doors leading to the corner rooms also are original and retain most of their original hardware. The most interesting feature of the stair hall is the heavy double board-and-batten door hung on iron strap hinges that separates the stair landing from the north hall. It is a feature that may date from the period that the building served as the "jail" for transient slaves, but it is equally possible that it dates from the brief period that it served as a regional outpost of the Fairfax County courthouse during the Civil War. Although clearly intended for a security-related function, the door's actual purpose has yet to be determined.

The southwest chamber retains a high degree of integrity in that the applied chair rail may be the only change of significance. The floor is made of random-width pine boards, the beaded baseboard survives, and the mantel is similar to that in the southeast room on the first floor. There is no crown molding, and the window architraves are similar to early examples in other spaces. The southeast room is similar in most respects, but it has a modern applied crown molding and a Georgian mantel installed by the current owner. The east window surround located to the north of the chimney breast is similar to that on

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the north entry door and may be original. There is a closet with a modern door and casing on the south side of the chimney. The small doorway into the northeast hall appears to be a later alteration, as it is inconsistent in detail and in plan concept with the original space configuration.

A transverse hall from east to west appears to be original, but the spaces adjacent to it on the north have been altered. The hall begins at the partition that is the west wall of the center hall extended, and terminates at the east exterior wall of the house. It is illuminated by a window in that east wall. The flooring is of random-width pine boards, and there is a beaded early baseboard on the south side. The baseboard on the north side is a heavy flat board similar to that found in the first-floor north hall. This suggests that the entire partition on the north side may date from around the turn of the twentieth century. The partition itself is interesting and anomalous in that it terminates on the east with a rounded corner that ties into the setback wall of a large, late-nineteenth-century bathroom in the northeast corner of the building. Neither the hall nor the bathroom has any decorative features.

The northwest chamber is similar in size to the space below but is finished and detailed like no other space in the house. The baseboard has the flat, beveled profile found in several locations and is probably late-nineteenth-century in origin. The flooring is exposed, random-width pine boards. The flat, double-beaded chair rail with no raised profile is typical of the eighteenth century but is clearly a later application over the finished plaster surface. The bracketed mantel is clearly a late-nineteenth-century feature, unique to the house, and the applied, complex cornice is more suggestive of the Colonial Revival than the Victorian in style and scale. Window surrounds are boldly modeled surfaces consistent with Victorian prototypes.

The smaller spaces located on the north side of the hall are configured *en suite* to serve as antechambers to the northwest room. The woodwork detailing is similar in scale and profile to that found in the larger space, and probably all dates from a late-nineteenth-century rehabilitation. A lingering question in the larger corner space pertains to the presence of what appears to be a stair nosing or threshold in the west exterior wall flanking the chimney breast. It has been hypothesized that these elements are the remainder of former openings in the exterior wall. There is no corroborating evidence

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elsewhere on the interior of the building, however, and nothing on the exterior survives to suggest the possibility of openings at this level. These elements, therefore, remain a tantalizing mystery.

Formerly a large unified space, the attic has been subdivided to provide closets, toilet facilities, and kitchen space to serve the living space that was created there in the twentieth century. Dormers were added to supplement the light provided by the small openings in the end walls. No historic fabric or other features are visible in these spaces.

As noted above, the cellar under the northwest corner of the building was excavated in 1931 and is defined primarily by the concrete features of slab and retaining walls. Other than visible framing elements, no other historic feature of note is visible in the space.

C. Richard Bierce, AIA

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Bruin Slave Jail, which is located at 1707 Duke Street in Alexandria, is a Federal-style dwelling constructed about 1819 for John Longden, who sold the property in 1844 to Joseph Bruin, a slave dealer. Bruin used the house as a holding facility, or "slave jail," for slaves awaiting sale to individuals and other dealers. Harriet Beecher Stowe, in *The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1854), described how she employed her knowledge of Bruin's slave jail as background for her explosive 1852 novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In addition, between 1862 and 1865 the house served as the Fairfax County courthouse under the Restored Government of Virginia. The building is an uncommon example of a five-bay Federal dwelling in Alexandria. It also retains historical fabric reflecting its use as a slave jail, thereby making it a unique resource in the United States.

**JUSTIFICATION OF CRITERIA**

The Bruin Slave Jail is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. It is eligible under Criterion A because of its association with the antebellum slave trade, its relationship to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and its use as a courthouse. Under Criterion C the building is eligible as a locally uncommon five-bay Federal dwelling, and as a unique example in the United States of a slave jail.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

In 1796, John West, the Fairfax County surveyor, envisioned a subdivision of Alexandria to be called West End Village. He laid out a grid of more than forty lots on valuable land on both sides of the Duke Street extension (Little River Turnpike), a major trade route to the West. By the early nineteenth century, the village consisted largely of the dwellings and shops of butchers and drovers. West End endured as a village at least until 1878, when it was absorbed by the city of Alexandria. The area still is called West End, although all of the village's early buildings are gone save 1707 Duke Street.<sup>1</sup>

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John Longden (1755–1830), a veteran of the Revolutionary War, settled in George Washington's adopted hometown in 1783. He served as keeper of the poorhouse, 1794–1796; an Alexandria councilman, 1797; clerk of the market, 1798–1799 and 1803–1805; superintendent of police, 1808; and councilman of the second ward during most of the period between 1811 and 1823. Richard Lewis sold him a West End lot about 1802–1803, part of a tract of 98 acres Lewis bought in 1796–1797 from Robert Allison and his wife Ann Ramsay that was located “on the South side of the turnpike road leading from Leesburgh to Alexandria.” Longden built his retirement house—the Federal dwelling that now stands at 1707 Duke Street—on the lot in 1819.<sup>2</sup>

Longden died in the house in 1830, and his grandson Edgar L. Bentley inherited it. Bentley sold it in 1844 to Joseph Bruin.<sup>3</sup>

Joseph Bruin (1809–1882) had been dealing in slaves in the area since November 1840, according to a receipt from slave dealer Alexander S. Grigsby of Fairfax for \$435 for a twelve-year-old Negro boy named John. On 21 December 1841, Bruin paid Grigsby \$890 for two slaves named Mary and Isaac, \$425 for one and \$465 for the other. On 3 August 1843, he advertised in the *Alexandria Gazette* that he wished to sell fifty to seventy-five “likely young negroes of both sexes, who can be seen at all times at our residence, West End, Alexandria.” Bruin, who had purchased Longden's house from Bentley on 11 March 1844, probably first had leased it from Bentley.<sup>4</sup>

With the purchase of the large house and two acres for an exercise yard, Bruin had sufficient space in which to conduct his trade. On 15 December 1845, he and partner Henry Hill advertised in the *Alexandria Gazette*:

NEGROES WANTED: All persons having Negroes to sell will find ready sale and liberal prices for them by calling at the new establishment of BRUIN & HILL, West End, Alexandria, who will give the highest prices for likely negroes, and one of them will at all times be found at home every day or night to give their personal attention to business. Communications to them through the Post Office attended to without delay. Negroes boarded at the usual rate of twenty-five cents each per day. BRUIN & HILL.

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The Franklin and Armfield slave-trading firm was located at 1315 Duke Street, four blocks east of Bruin's business (the office, a National Historic Landmark, still stands). Although no business connection between the two firms has been established, they were both located on major trade routes to the West, as well as south to New Orleans.

The slave-trading business was so profitable that by 1853 Bruin had added a wash house to the back of the dwelling and acquired another house just to the east for his family residence. His new home had a dining room and a kitchen attached. These buildings with the wash house were insured for \$6,200; only Longden's house survives.

In 1852, Harriet Beecher Stowe published *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the best-selling and most-controversial novel of the nineteenth century. The book, which gave human if fictional faces to slaves and slave owners alike, stirred emotions in all regions of the country. To refute the accusations of inaccuracy that emanated from the South, Stowe published *The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1854, "presenting the original facts and documents upon which the story is founded, together with corroborative statements verifying the truth of the work." Frederick Douglass, the most significant Negro abolitionist of the slave era, described *The Key* as "a major contribution to the war on slaveholders. . . . There has not been an exposure of slavery so terrible as *The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*."<sup>5</sup>

In *The Key*, for example, Stowe described in heartbreaking detail how a number of slaves escaped on 15 April 1848 from Washington, D.C., in the ship *Pearl*, but were captured down Chesapeake Bay and returned to captivity for eventual sale in New Orleans. Bruin and Hill purchased a slave family who went by the name Edmondson, and confined its members in Bruin's West End "slave jail." The head of the family, Paul Edmondson, traveled north to try to raise the sum of \$2,250 to buy the two girls' freedom. He eventually made his way to the home of the Reverend Lyman Beecher, Harriet Beecher Stowe's father, who raised the sum overnight.

Stowe mentioned Bruin and his slave jail some twenty times in *The Key*, particularly in relation to the Edmondson family. She wrote that

Bruin and Hill, the keepers of the large slave warehouse in Alexandria, offered four thousand five hundred dollars for the six Edmondson children

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and . . . refused an offer of \$1,000 for Mary alone, saying he could get double that sum in the New Orleans market. . . . The girls were employed in washing, ironing, and sewing by day, and locked up by night. Sometimes they were allowed to sew in Bruin's house and even to eat there. . . . Gay calico was bought for them to make up into "show dresses" in which they were exhibited on sale.

One of Bruin's daughters begged him not to include Mary and little Emily Edmondson in the coffer he was assembling for New Orleans, and he agreed to exclude them. Soon the rest of "the gang" left the slave jail

on foot—men, women and children, two and two, the men all handcuffed together, the right wrist of one to the left wrist of the other, and a chain passing through the middle from the handcuffs of one couple to those of the next. The women and children walked in the same manner throughout, handcuffed or chained.

Stowe wrote, "There is no doubt that Bruin was personally friendly to [the Edmondson girls] and really wished most earnestly that they might be ransomed, but then he did not see how he was to lose two thousand find hundred dollars."

The Edmondson girls were ransomed, but another slave, young Emily Russell, was not so fortunate. She was "thrown into Bruin and Hill's gaol in Alexandria." On 31 January 1850, Bruin wrote to a prospective buyer asking \$1,800 for her. When he did not get it, he placed her in a coffer bound for New Orleans and she died en route.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Bruin fled Alexandria but was captured and then confined in the Old Capitol Prison in Washington until the end of the war. In his absence, his slave jail was used as the Fairfax County courthouse from 4 December 1862 to 19 July 1865.

The old courthouse in Fairfax Court House (present-day Fairfax City) had become so unsatisfactory to the county justices that on 1 December 1862 several of them petitioned Governor Francis H. Pierpont, of the unionist Restored Government of Virginia, to

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change the court-meeting place. "Owing to the proximity of the public enemy to our county seat and the subsequent occupation by United States forces as well as the dilapidated condition of the Court House building," they suggested a site at or near the theological seminary or the village of West End. Three days later, the governor agreed and issued a proclamation:

Whereas it is represented to me to be extremely hazardous on account of the proximity of the public enemy to hold the Courts for the County of Fairfax in the Court House thereof, therefore I Francis H. Pierpoint, Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia by virtue of the authority vested in me by the 11th section of the Code of Virginia do hereby authorize the Courts for said County to be held in the Village of West End so long as the cause aforesaid shall continue. Due notice will be hereafter given by proclamation of the restoring of the sessions of said Court to the County seat of said county as established by law.<sup>6</sup>

On 16 March 1863, the first county levy "convened in Alexandria"; the following 21 December, "books, papers belonging to Fairfax, now in Fairfax County, were deposited in Alexandria Court House."<sup>7</sup>

On 1 July 1864, pursuant to an act of Congress dated 17 July 1862 to seize and confiscate the property of rebels, U.S. Marshal John Underwood confiscated the slave jail. On 19 July 1864, he auctioned the house, and it was knocked down to John Sherer, a native of New York, for \$400. This action established a legal title, and the house continued to be used as the Fairfax County courthouse. The *Alexandria Gazette* reported on 19 July 1865, that at the last term of the Fairfax County court to be "held at West End," twelve land deeds were recorded, as well as two estate inventories, liquor and tavern licenses, tax remissions for thirty-nine citizens, three wills and several estate letters of administration, and an order for election in the Sixth District of four magistrates, a constable, and two overseers of the poorhouse. Also, William M. Fitzhugh was appointed clerk.<sup>8</sup>

Soon after the end of the war, Joseph Bruin was released from confinement and returned to his residence next door to the slave jail, which reverted from public to private use and

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served as a residence from 1869 to 1951, through several changes of ownership. On 1 June 1951, it became the property of Charles R. Hooff, Inc., and has been used as an office ever since.<sup>9</sup>

Despite modifications over the years, the building retains its integrity and essential historic fabric representing both its Federal architecture and the era of its use as a slave jail. It is likely the only surviving such structure in the United States.<sup>10</sup>

Ruth Lincoln Kaye

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ENDNOTES

1. Timothy J. Mills, "Origin of West End Village and Little River Turnpike" (M.A. thesis, James Madison University, 1963); Griffith M. Hopkins, *Atlas of Fifteen Miles Around Washington, D.C.* (Philadelphia: G. M. Hopkins, 1878).
2. T. Michael Miller, *Alexandria City Officialdom, 1759-1992* (Bowie, Md.: Heritage Books, 1992), 3, 6-12, 14, 15; Fairfax Land Book A2:262; Fairfax County Deed Index for 1803-1804 to Land Book D2:184 (missing).
3. Fairfax Land Deed Book K3:151, 155 (11 March 1844).
4. "Fairfax Chronicles," July 1983 (vol. 7, no. 2); Fairfax Land Deed Book K3:151, 155 (11 March 1844).
5. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Boston: John P. Hewett and Co., 1854; Cleveland, Oh.: Arno Press, 1968), 314, 321, 323, 325, 331-333. All quotes and references to *The Key* that follow are to this edition.
6. Office of the Governor, Executive Letter Books, Gov. Francis H. Pierpont, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va.
7. Fairfax County Order Book 1863-1867, pp. 8, 208.
8. Fairfax County Land Deed Book E:148; Fairfax County Order Book 1863-1867, p.196.
9. Alexandria Land Deed Book 312:465.
10. Conversation with Ms. Kira Ramakrishna Badamo, National Park Service, National Historic Landmarks Survey, Washington, D.C., 20 July 1999.

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Bruin's Slave Jail  
City of Alexandria, Virginia

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary of Bruin's Slave Jail is defined by the City of Alexandria Tax Parcel No. 073.02-02-06. A plat of the parcel is included as additional documentation.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary includes the present city parcel which encompasses the primary resource (building) and land that has been historically associated with the building since its construction in c. 1819.

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**Bruin's Slave Jail  
City of Alexandria, Virginia**

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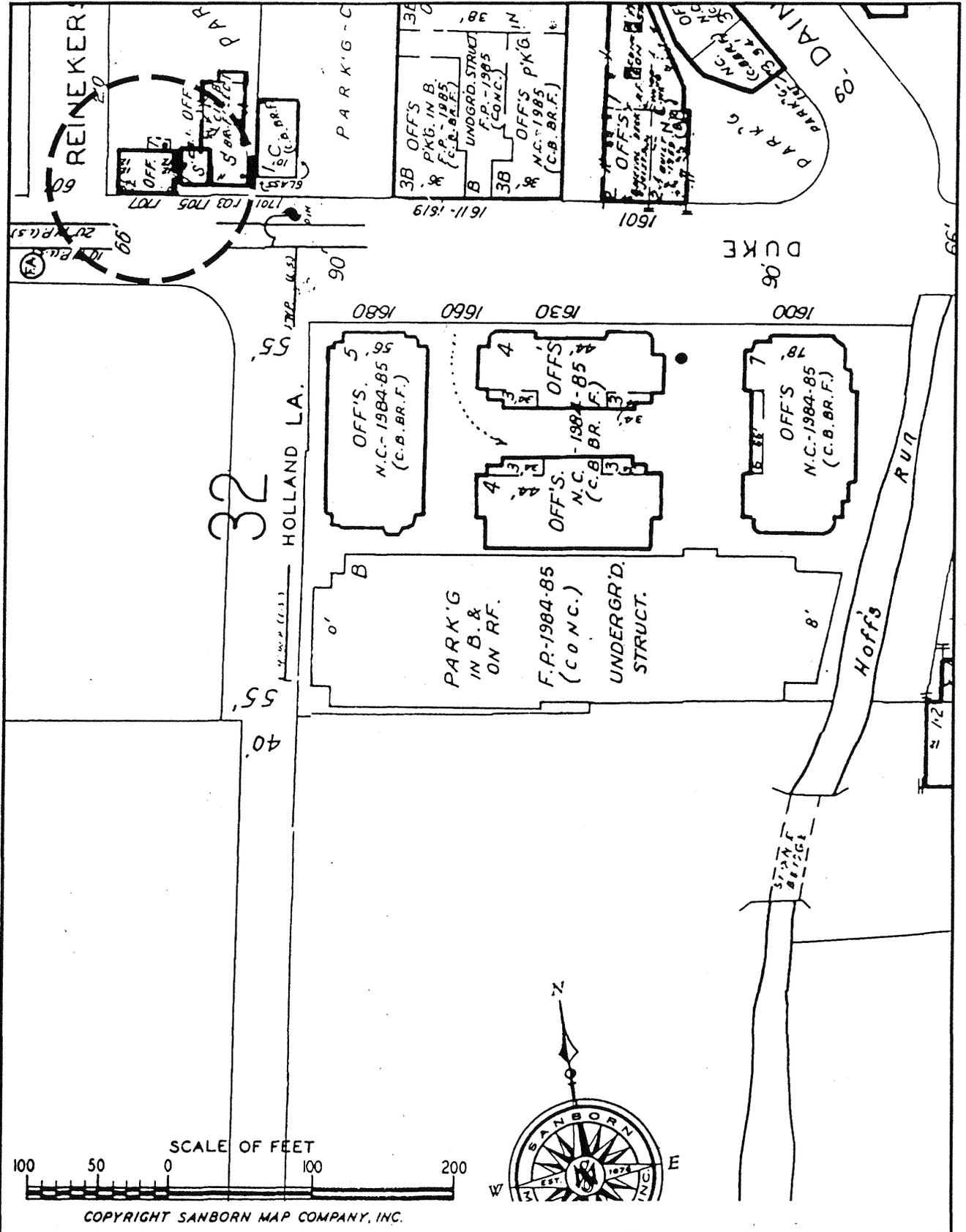
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**Photograph List**

All photographs were taken by Charles R. Hooff, III in 1998.

- 1 View to North taken from Duke Street
- 2 View to South-from rear of building
- 3 View of original door-2<sup>nd</sup> Floor





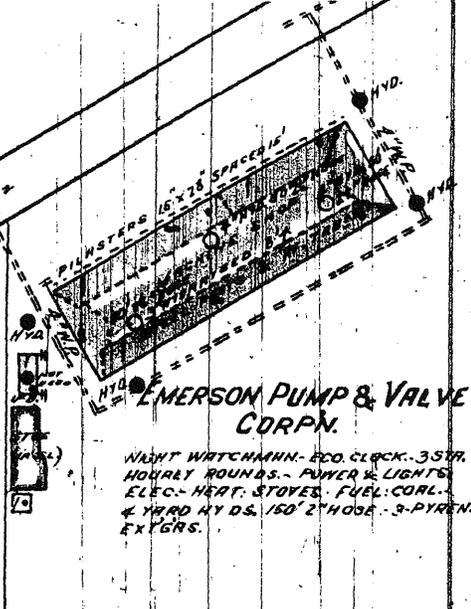
SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE

1921

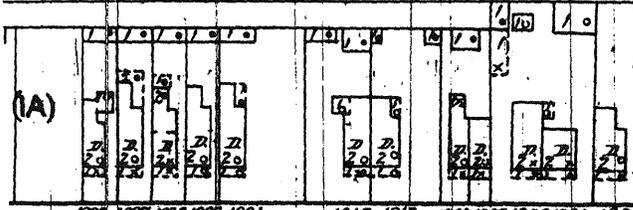
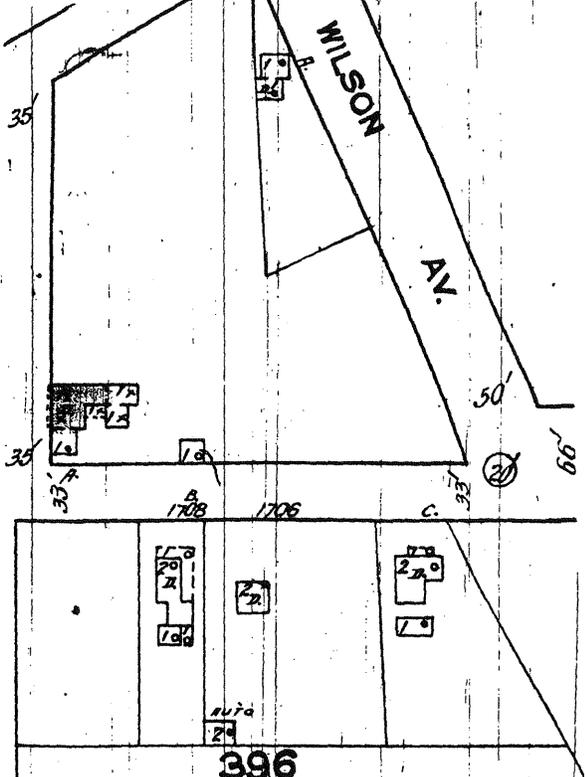
one inch = 100'

395

DIAGONAL RD.

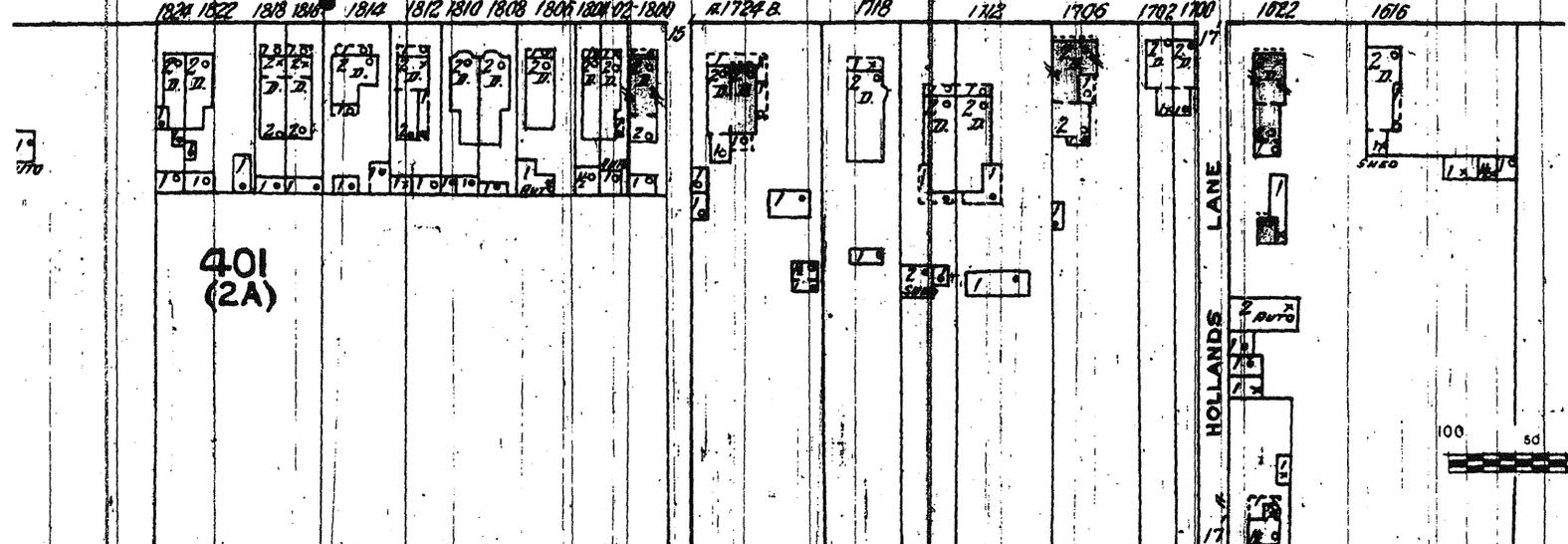


**EMERSON PUMP & VALVE CORPN.**  
 NIGHT WATCHMAN - E.C. CLACK - 35 ST.  
 HOURS - 7 A.M. - 5 P.M. - POWER & LIGHTS  
 ELEC. - HEAT. STOVES - FUEL - COAL  
 4 YARD HY. DS. 150' 2" HOSE - 3-PYRENE  
 EXTERS.



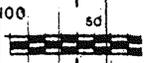
1829 1827 1825 1823 1821 1815 1813 1809 1807 1805 1803 1801

DUKE

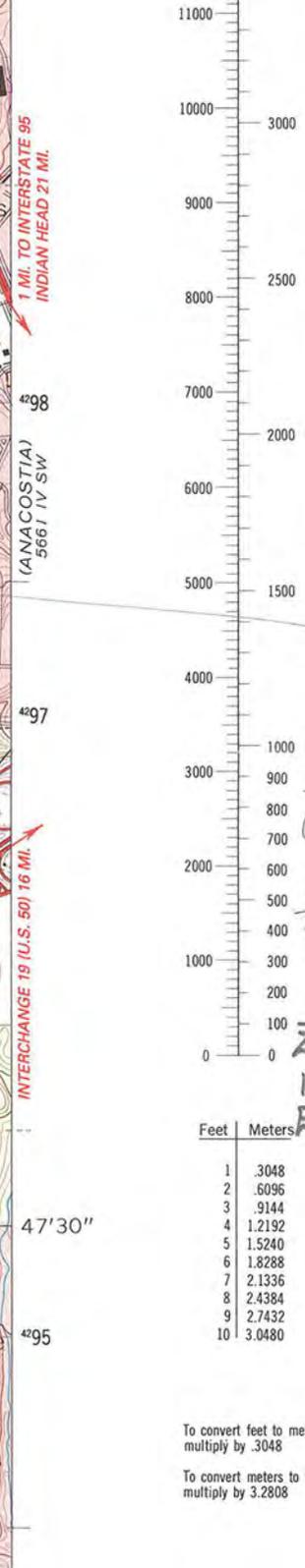
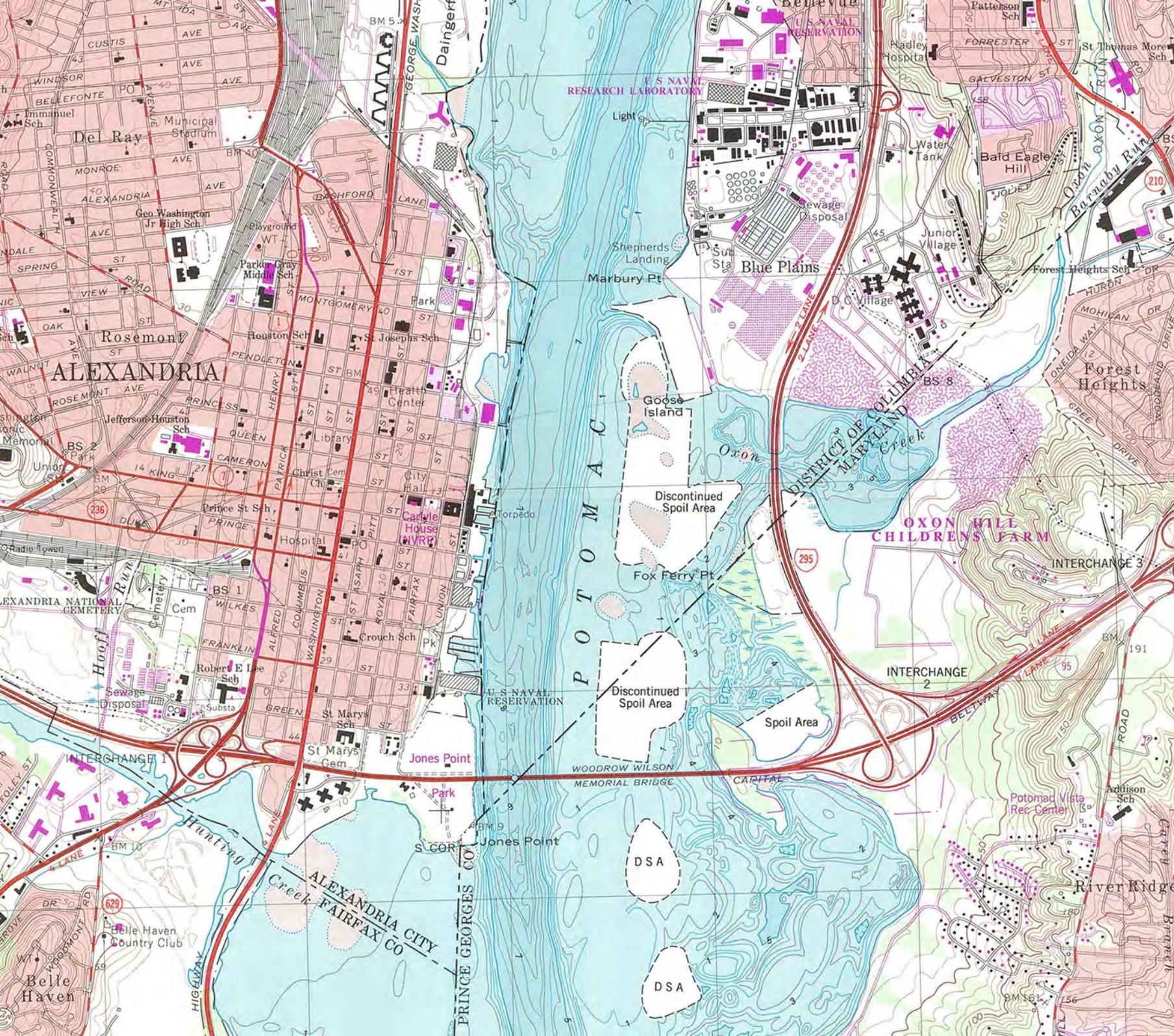


401 (2A)

HOLLANDS LANE



R. F. & P. R. R.



BRUNNEN  
 SLAVE  
 JAIL  
 CITY OF  
 ALEXANDRIA  
 VIRGINIA  
 ZONE 18  
 N-4296860  
 E-321210

Feet	Meters
1	.3048
2	.6096
3	.9144
4	1.2192
5	1.5240
6	1.8288
7	2.1336
8	2.4384
9	2.7432
10	3.0480

To convert feet to meters  
 multiply by .3048  
 To convert meters to feet  
 multiply by 3.2808

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**SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD**

NRIS Reference Number: 00000890 Date Listed: 8/14/00

Property Name: Bruin's Slave Jail County: Alexandria State: VA

Multiple Name

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Patrick Andrews  
Signature of the Keeper

8/14/00  
Date of Action

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Amended Items in Nomination:

The property is nominated under National Register Criteria A and C, but no Area of Significance for Criterion C has been indicated in section 8 of the registration form. The form is amended to add Architecture as an Area of Significance.

**DISTRIBUTION:**

- National Register property file**
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)**