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"Fare Fac - Say Do"

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1861-1865



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The Quaker Scout Jonathan Roberts (1818-1901)

By William Page Johnson, II



Jonathan Roberts was born in Mt. Holly, Burlington County, New Jersey on September 10, 1818, the son of Enoch and Ann (Matlock) Roberts. During the Civil War Jonathan volunteered as a scout and guide for the Union Army and was the elected Sheriff of the Restored Government of Fairfax County.

Jonathan and his family were members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers.) Jonathan arrived in Virginia in the fall of 1839 to attend Benjamin Hallowell's School in Alexandria.

In March 1842, he married Abigail Amanda Haines in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

In the fall of 1848, he returned to Virginia and purchased a large tract of land from William and Mary McCarty.¹ Cedar Grove plantation was located on Pohick Bay at the confluence of



Jonathan Roberts, c. 1867, *The Quaker Scout & Fairfax County Sheriff*

Photo courtesy of Gregory P. Wilson

Accotink and Pohick Creeks, and is now within the boundaries of the U.S. Army's Ft. Belvoir. Jonathan's acquisition included the old plantation house and outbuildings.

The Roberts were part of a large migration of some 40 Quaker families from Burlington and Gloucester Counties in New Jersey, to Woodlawn Plantation near Mount Vernon, Virginia. This migration was led by Chalkley Gillingham.

Jonathan Roberts offered himself as a candidate for the elected office of Fairfax County Surveyor in 1852 and 1858. In 1852, he was endorsed by his former school master, Benjamin Hallowell of Alexandria:

"This is to certify that Jonathan Roberts studied the principles of Surveying and the connecting branches,



Fairfax, Virginia - December 2013

Greetings from the President -

This will be my last message as President of HFCI. During the six years of my tenure we have seen very important progress on preserving the City of Fairfax's historic heritage. The opening of the Blenheim Civil War Interpretive Center represented a significant expansion of the City's historic resources available to the public. This property has become a focal point for many historic, cultural and social activities in the City. The opening of this facility was the result of a true partnership involving the City's elected officials, City staff and citizens, including HFCI. The historic Blenheim property is still a work in progress. In partnership with the City, HFCI has invested significant resources to the stabilization and restoration of the main house, as well as Grandma's Cottage on the property.

We have seen a steady increase in educational activities by the City's Historic Resources staff and HFCI with lectures, exhibits, markers and walking tours. HFCI continues its work with City Council to ensure that the development of the Old Town Park will protect and enhance the historic resources located this important block in the downtown part of the City. To further focus our efforts, HFCI is in the beginning stages of a strategic planning effort.

Your support for HFCI through your memberships and participation in fundraising activities is critical for our ability to continue our work. Our annual Taste of the Vine was another great success this year. We plan to continue this event as our signature fund raising effort but will add other fund raising activities as well.

I want to thank the members of the HFCI Board for their support during my time as President. I would particularly like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the

staff of the Office of Historic Resources. Through their efforts, and the many volunteers who support them, our rich history further enhances the quality of life in the City of Fairfax.
David L. Pumphrey

At the Fairfax Museum and Historic Blenheim...

Saturday, January 25 – 2 p.m.

“Mosby’s Raids in Northern Virginia”

—Talk and book signing with author William S. Connery, who will explore the local Civil War exploits of Confederate Col. John S. Mosby.

Saturday, February 22 – 2 p.m. TBA

Saturday, March 22 – 2 p.m.

“Confederate Memorial Day in Alexandria from 1866 to the Present”—Talk and book purchase and signing by Ann Graham, local historian and author, will trace the roots and continuation of the the annual Confederate Memorial Day in Alexandria, Mrs. Graham is the past chapter president of the Alexandria Mary Custis Lee 17th VA Reg #7 UDC

Special Events, Programs

14th Annual Fairfax Civil War Day

Saturday, April 26 – 10a.m. to 5 p.m. (Rain or Shine)

Historic Blenheim Civil War Interpretive Center, 3610 Old Lee Highway, Fairfax. 703-591-0560

Second Sunday Series...

Sunday, January 12 – 2 p.m.

“A Christmas Flight”

Talk and book signing by Mary Buckingham Lipsey about Fairfax's aviation pioneer Dr. William Christmas.

Sunday, February 9 – 2 p.m.

“Civil War Contraband Camps”

Historical researcher and blogger, Ronald Baumgarten will share his findings about the camps set up in Fairfax County to house freed African American slaves.

Historic Blenheim Civil War Interpretive Center Series

Second Sunday Series...

Sunday, March 9 – 2 p.m.

“The Civil War Romance of Antonia Ford and Major Joseph C. Willard”

Curator Susan Inskeep Gray will tell the story of Antonia Ford, a suspected Confederate spy, and her courtship with a Union Army officer.

This is a joint program with Historic Blenheim and will be held at The Civil War Interpretive Center at Historic Blenheim, 3610 Old Lee Highway, Fairfax.

Sunday, April 13 – 2 p.m.

“Our Most Important Public Building”—Local historian John Murphy will share the history of the Fairfax County Courthouse.

New Exhibition at Fairfax Museum and Visitor Center:

“Architecture in Virginia” will open at Fairfax Museum and Visitor Center, 10209 Main Street, on Sunday, March 9 and be on view through May 31. The exhibition is a partnership with the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond

New Exhibition in the Historic Blenheim Civil War Interpretive Center Gallery:

Tuesday, April 8–June 27, 2014

“The Civil War seen through the eyes of German-American caricaturists, Thomas Nast and Adalbert Volck”. Both caricaturists were German-Americans and while Nast supported the Union, Volck supported

the Confederacy. The exhibit not only focuses on these two men’s opinions on the war, but it also explains the role German-Americans played in the Civil War. Traveling Exhibition presented by the German-American Heritage Museum, Washington, D.C.

Fairfax Museum and Visitor Center, 10209 Main Street, Fairfax. 703-385-8414

Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission

2014 Signature Conference

“The American Civil War in a Global Context”

Saturday, May 31st

George Mason University

Center for the Arts

4373 Mason Pond Drive

Fairfax, VA 22030

Please register: <http://www.virginiacivilwar.org/2014conference.php>

LAND AGENCY.

The undersigned having been solicited by a large number of Land Owners of this County, to send them purchasers for their farms, and from my long experience as a Surveyor, and as Sheriff I am well informed as to the quality and condition of most of the farms in this county — I have concluded to solicit the patronage of the public as a LAND AGENT. Persons, therefore, who wish to purchase lands, and those who wish to sell, will find it to their interest to give me a call at my office, at Bruin’s Jail, West End, near Alexandria, Va., or by mail, Box 314, Alexandria P. O., Va.

JONATHAN ROBERTS,
de 21-2m Sheriff of Fairfax county, Va.

Alexandria Gazette, December 21, 1865, p. 3, 2.

Algebra and Geometry, under my direction, and having had some practical experience in the business, I have confidence in his qualifications for the office of County Surveyor.

Benj. Hollowell,

ALEX'A. BOARDING SCHOOL."²

Unfortunately, he lost both times, in part, to prejudices associated with being a northerner. Possible evidence for this prejudice is manifested in the *regrettable* and *unintentional omission* of a letter of support submitted to Hiram Brower, the editor of the *Fairfax County News*, a weekly newspaper. Brower did submit the letter for print to the *Alexandria Gazette* with an apology two days before the May 1858 election. Although Roberts lost both elections, at some point Roberts became acting County Surveyor due to the incapacity of the elected County Surveyor, who was, in Roberts view "*a drunken sot*."³ As acting County Surveyor, Roberts became very familiar with Fairfax County and its people.

In 1858, Jonathan Roberts received a charter from the Virginia General Assembly for the Accotink Creek Navigation Company whose stated purpose was "*to improve navigation in Accotink creek in the county of Fairfax*."⁴ The enterprise was likely engaged in shipping grain from Accotink Mill.

During the 1840's, in Fairfax County as elsewhere in the country, the divide over slavery grew wider. As a Quaker and a northerner, Jonathan Roberts was opposed to the institution. Consequently, he became known amongst the slaves in the county "*as their friend*."⁵ They sought him out for advice and assistance. On one occasion a slave woman came to *Cedar Grove* seeking Roberts help as she feared she was about to sold South by her Master, *to pick cotton*. Roberts could not legally advise her to runaway with her children.

Despondent, the slave turned and left, as she walked down the lane leading from the house, Roberts watched in horror as the woman stopped by his "*woodpile, take an ax in her right hand, and placing her left hand on the chopping block, deliberately chopped off three of her own fingers*." She ran back to Roberts holding up her left hand with the fingers still dangling and said, "*Now I cannot pick cotton, and no one will buy me, and I can stay at home with my children*."⁶

After the election of Abraham Lincoln in the fall of 1860, the already heated secession debate grew more

OFFICE OF THE FAIRFAX COUNTY NEWS.
FAIRFAX C. H., VA., May 22d, 1858.—The annexed communication, handed to me on Monday last, should have appeared in *The News* of yesterday: but much to my regret, it was unintentionally omitted; and as its publication in my next issue would but partially effect the object of the writer, I have deemed it due to him as well as a duty incumbent upon myself, to take such steps as may be best calculated to afford reparation to all interested. And hence, with this explanation, I respectfully request that you give it an insertion in the next issue of the country edition of your paper. Very respectfully, yours,
HIRAM BROWER, Editor Fairfax Co. News

Mr. EDITOR:—Permit me to say a few words in favor of JONATHAN ROBERTS, as a candidate for the County Surveyorship.

This office has become of considerable importance to the people of the county, and should be filled with a close eye to the habits and capacity of the man.

In Jonathan Roberts all the requisites will be found—He is sober, industrious, honest, and competent.

Benjamin Hollowell, than whom there can be no more competent judge, testified, when Mr. Roberts was a candidate at a former election, to his entire competency in the line of his profession, a practical Surveyor.

I regret to find an effort being made to prejudice the voters against Mr. Jonathan Roberts, because of his having come from one of the Northern States. I am, and believe in moments of calm thought, the people of this county are, opposed to this species of ostracism. Surely it is unjust and wrong, for when men become property holders and show themselves to be good citizens, submitting cheerfully to all the burthens and requirements of our system of government, they in all fairness are entitled to a fair participation in any benefits that may arise. Jonathan Roberts has made this county his home, the home of his family—has always conducted himself as a good citizen, is competent and honest, hails from a section of the county which has been without one single county office, in my recollection. Will not the people of the county, looking first at his entire competency, with an eye to these other circumstances, come up to his support at the polls on the day of election?

I feel authorized in saying, Mr Jonathan Roberts will receive a strong vote from all parties in this section of the county. AGRICOLA.

Chantilly, my 26—11

Alexandria Gazette, May 25, 1858, p. 3, 5.

intense. In early 1861, the Virginia General Assembly called for a convention of delegates to decide the issue once and for all.

Jonathan Roberts travelled to Fairfax Court House to hear the two principle candidates. The secessionists had selected Alfred Moss, then the Clerk of the Fairfax County Court. The Union men had backed William H. Dulany, a prominent Fairfax attorney.

*"Soon the Courthouse was crowded to its utmost capacity. I managed to get a seat on a high window-sill, where I could see the whole crowd, which was a little lower than where I sat, with the speaker's stand, where the Judges commonly sat, in front of me. As near as I could make out the Union men were to my left hand and the Secession men to my right. Among them Jim Jackson and his gang of bullies. All at once a stillness fell on the crowd, as Alfred Moss..., arose to define his position.... 'Elect me, and I will go in for immediate secession,' This so astonished me...that I called out: 'Why, Alfred Moss, you do not mean what you say; that you will go in for immediate secession.' 'Yes, I do,' he yelled. 'I will go for immediate secession.' ... 'Lynch him and carry him out. Lynch the —— black Abolitionist.' And Jim Jackson and his gang of bullies started toward me across the Courthouse to do their bidding.' Just at that time there was a commotion at my left hand, and there came a tall six-footer, Thomas J. Peacock, pushing his way toward me, and came and stood directly between me and Jim Jackson, who, when he saw him there, turned another way and left me alone, and quiet was restored again. But that question and Alfred Moss' answer defeated him by a majority of 425 votes in a poll of about 1,200 votes. After that meeting I was doubly a marked man for lynching."*⁷

The secession convention resulted in the passage of a referendum in which the people of Virginia would ultimately decide the question of secession. A statewide referendum was held May 24, 1861. On that day Jonathan Roberts arrived at his polling station at Accotink, Virginia. The judge of the election was Frederick "Fred" R. Windsor,

a noted secessionist. On his arrival, Roberts found Windsor seated at the polling table with a loaded revolver, swearing to shoot any man who dared to vote for the Union. Also present were approximately 40 militia cavalry who were there *to keep order*.⁸ Gathered outside the polling station were approximately 40 Union men who were preparing to leave without voting when Roberts arrived. As voting at this time was done *viva voce*, or by voice, the Union men of the area were intimidated by the presence of Windsor and the cavalry. Roberts assured the group that Windsor and the cavalymen were merely trying to intimidate them into not voting. Roberts then led the group back to the polling station. Accotink was one of only three precincts, out of fourteen, which voted to reject the Ordinance of Secession in Fairfax County.

About two weeks after the referendum vote, Jonathan Roberts name appeared on an order of General P.G.T. Beauregard to General Bonham:

*"Headquarters Department of Alexandria,
Camp Pickens, Manassas Junction, June 9,
'61*

*To Brigadier General M. L. Bonham,
commanding the forces at Fairfax Court
House – Sir: The following named persons
in Fairfax county, residing near Accotink
district, have been reported to me as inimical
and dangerous to our cause, viz: Alfred
Rucker, Ebin Mason, John Mason, R.F.
Roberts, Jonathan Roberts, and Levi
Deming.*

*Mr. John H. Barnes, (deputy sheriff) of Capt.
Dillaney's company, will inform you where
they are to be found.*

*You will please obtain secretly, reliable
written testimony proving the above charges
against said individuals, and if in your
judgment such testimony shall be deemed
sufficient, you will have them arrested
forthwith, and sent under escort or guard to
Governor William Smith at Warrenton, who
has been instructed to make necessary
arrangements for their safe keeping.*

*But should the testimony only amount to
strong suspicions of their dangerous
character, they will be allowed twenty-four*

hours notice to leave the county, not to return therein until after the war, under penalty of being arrested and kept in close confinement during the said period should that order be violated.

*Very respectfully, your obedient servant,
G.T. BEAUREGARD
Brigadier General Commanding*"⁹

As a consequence of his stance on both the slavery and secession issues, Roberts observed the following near his home:

"About a week after, my sons and I were planting potatoes in my field, when about 11 o'clock we observed a saddled horse tied in the edge of the field next to the woods on the hillside overlooking the Potomac River, Pohick Bay, and where we were at work. It was a wonder to us what the horse was doing there, and we watched it until near dinner time, when I sent the boys up to the house to feed while I went to see what that saddled horse was doing there. On coming to the place where the horse was tied from the opposite side, I surprised a soldier sitting at the foot of a tree watching where we had been at work, but at the time drowsy with sleep.

*I called to him and asked what he was doing there, and if he was lost. He jumped up very much startled, muttering something unintelligible. At last he got out that he was sent there by his Captain from Occoquan to watch the 'black Abolitionist,' Roberts, who they said was a 'Yankee Spy;'" The soldier also stated "...that he was a member of the company at Accotink on election day.... I told the soldier that I was Mr. Roberts; that I was no spy, but an open outspoken Union man, one that was opposed to slavery and secession."*¹⁰

After this incident, Jonathan Roberts temporarily left Cedar Grove with his family for the safety of Alexandria. At Alexandria, Jonathan Roberts called on Col. (later Major General) Samuel P. Heintzelman and offered his services as a guide and scout. Heintzelman was sufficiently

impressed with Roberts that on July 18, 1861, Roberts guided a portion of Heintzelman's artillery to the First Battle of Manassas.

Roberts witnessed the capture of Rickett's and Griffin's Union artillery batteries on Henry House Hill at about 2 p.m. July 21, 1861. The capture of these guns was the first success of the day for the Confederates and one of the turning points of the battle. Roberts recalled:

*"My post of observation was near a large brick house on the crest of a ridge beyond the Stone House on the turnpike, where the U.S. Surgeons established a field Hospital, about a half a mile from the Henry House, from where I could see all that took place to our right. It was here that I heard a great shout, ...out from the woods rushed a large body of fresh rebel infantry troops from the rebel army of J.E. Johnston, in the Valley, and with yells charged right on to those batteries, ...took them by surprise in their rear, and killed and wounded a large number at the first fire."*¹¹

Immediately after the Battle of Manassas, Fred Windsor accompanied by other southern sympathizers from the Accotink area, visited Cedar Grove looking for Jonathan Roberts. Finding him not home, they lied and told his wife, Abigail, that the Yankees had hung him for leading them in the wrong direction at the recent battle. Shortly afterward, an Alabama regiment visited the Roberts farm and stripped it of nearly everything of value.



Bruin's Slave Jail, 1707 Duke Street, Alex., VA. Site of the Fairfax County Courthouse from 1863 to 1865. Jonathan Roberts acquired Joseph Bruin's home and kitchen in 1864. The Bruin home, which no longer exists, stood immediately to the east of the Slave Jail.

Enough was enough, on September 12, 1861, Jonathan Roberts relocated his family to Alexandria. They occupied an abandoned home and later the home of Alexandria slave dealer, Joseph Bruin. They would remain in Alexandria for the duration of the war. Up to this point, Jonathan Roberts had served the Union cause without pay. When Union General William B. Franklin learned of this, he immediately issued orders to recognize Roberts' service and place him on the Federal pay roll:

*"Headquarters Camp Williams
Sep. 12, 1861*

*Jonathan Roberts is hereby employed as a
guide in the service of the United States at
a compensation rate of seventy five dollars
per month for the services of himself and
the use of his horse.*

*By order of Gen. McClellan
W.B. Franklin
Brig. Gen. Comdg.
Division"*¹²

On learning that *Cedar Grove* had been abandoned, the secessionists in Fairfax County threatened to burn it to the ground if Roberts did not stop piloting the Yankees around the county. Roberts countered that if his house were burned, *"there should not be a rebel house left standing between Alexandria and Wolf Run Shoals, at the mouth of Bull Run 20 miles away."*¹³ *Cedar Grove* survived the war.

In the fall of 1861, Roberts helped organize the *Unconditional Union Association of Alexandria*, Virginia. The Provost Marshal of Alexandria came to rely on this group to help keep order. Passes were issued only to individuals to travel between the lines with the endorsement of the association.¹⁴

In May 1862, Governor Francis H. Pierpont of the Restored Government of Virginia ordered that elections be held in Virginia to replace any official refusing to take an Oath of Allegiance to the United States. As none of the elected officials in Fairfax County took such an oath, their offices were declared vacant. Jonathan Roberts was appointed a Special Commissioner by Governor Pierpont to superintend the election. He was also a candidate for sheriff, to which office he was elected on May 22, 1862 (see *Restored Government of Fairfax County, Fare Facs Gazette*, v. 9, # 2, 2012).

When Fairfax Court House was evacuated by Confederate forces in October 1861, Alfred Moss, the secessionist Clerk of the Fairfax County Circuit Court, packed up most of the records of the county and moved them to Fauquier County for safekeeping. Many of the records of the Fairfax County Circuit Court had already been pilfered during the first months of the war by soldiers of both sides seeking souvenirs.

In the fall of 1862, Jonathan Roberts, through a slave informant, discovered that Moss had left the records in Warrenton, Virginia with his friend, William A. Jennings, Clerk of the Fauquier County Circuit Court. Roberts obtained special permission from the Secretary of War to bring the records back to Fairfax. After traveling to Warrenton, the Fauquier County seat, Jennings initially professed to know nothing about the records. However, after threatening to have the military search his office, Jennings divulged that *"Alfred Moss had deposited some boxes up stairs, but he knew not what was in them."*¹⁵ Roberts found the records on the second floor of the Fauquier County Clerk's office. He had them shipped by rail back to Fairfax Court House. Included among the records recovered were the recorded votes of the secession referendum of Fairfax County.

At about this same time, Jonathan joined the *Union Home Guard of Fairfax County*, a militia infantry company raised by his friend, Henry T. Brooks, Clerk of the Fairfax County Court. This unit was not all that active, however. If they mustered at all, they likely spent their time patrolling the roads, protecting the telegraph lines, and chasing rebel guerrillas.^{16,17}

In January 1863, the Fairfax County Court House was in shambles. Although the Confederate army had withdrawn to the south side of the Rappahannock River, Confederate cavalry still threatened large swaths of Fairfax County, including Fairfax Court House. Consequently, it was decided to temporarily move the courthouse to Bruin's Slave Jail on Duke Street in Alexandria.

The County Court of Fairfax County, acting under the Wheeling Government, is to be held at Joseph Bruin's House, West End, near this place.

Alexandria Gazette, January 13, 1863, p. 2, c. 1.

In April of 1863, Jonathan Roberts was summoned to Alexandria by Col. Henry H. Wells, the Provost Marshall at that place. Joshua C. Gunnell, the former sheriff of Fairfax

County, had been captured by federal forces while at Fairfax Court House following the capture of Union General Edwin Stoughton. After being held for months in Old Capitol Prison in Washington, D.C., Gunnell had asked to take the Oath of Allegiance in order to secure his own release. However, his request was refused by Union authorities as they feared he would simply violate his parole. Gunnell asked, Col. Wells to summon Jonathan Roberts to vouch for his character. When Roberts arrived, Colonel Wells asked:

*"Mr. Roberts, do you know that man?" pointing to Gunnell. "Oh yes," said Roberts, "that is Joshua C. Gunnell, our old sheriff." "I know that," said Wells, "what do you know about him?" Roberts then said, "Joshua C. Gunnell was one of the most uncompromising, bitter rebels in the county." Wells, becoming impatient, added, "I know all that,...the facts are he has sneaked back home and our soldiers being afraid he would work them harm have arrested him and sent him on his way to the Old Capitol, and he begs to be allowed to take the oath of allegiance and be allowed to go home, and he says he will keep it; but I am afraid to trust him. What do you think about it?" Roberts then indicated to Wells that "Joshua C. Gunnell before the war had been known and acknowledged as a great advocate of the sanctity of the oath, and that I believe if he voluntarily took the oath of allegiance he would go home and keep it."*¹⁸ Wells then released Gunnell.

As Gunnell and Roberts made their way out of the Provost Marshal's office and into the street, Gunnell turned and spoke to Roberts, *"Now, Mr. Roberts, before this I would have shot you as quick as I would have shot a rabbit, but now you have done more for me than any of my old friends could or would have done, and I will go quite as far the other way, and no one shall hurt or harm you if I can help it."*¹⁹

Other Union loyalists in Fairfax County also came to Gunnell's defense. According to an affidavit of John Hawxhurst a member of the Virginia House of Delegates, and John S. Hollingshead, Commissioner of Deeds, Joshua Gunnell attempted to alert Union authorities of Mosby's impending raid on Fairfax Court House *"2 or 3 days before General Stoughton's capture."*²⁰ In his statement, John Hawxhurst indicates that Gunnell spoke directly with John's brother, Job Hawxhurst, Clerk of the Fairfax County Circuit Court. Gunnell told Hawxhurst, *"Mosby is at 'Frying Pan' and would be very likely to give them trouble, and that the citizens would be blamed for it."* When Stoughton

was informed he is alleged to have replied *'that he knew all about it and would attend to his own business.'*²¹

In the summer of 1863, Jonathan Roberts was thrown from his horse while leading Union cavalry on a scout down Little River Turnpike. The fall resulted in severe injuries to his arm and leg, rendering him a cripple for the remainder of his life. In fact, in 1875, he would receive an *invalid pension* as a result of these injuries as well as for his services as a Guide and Scout.²²

In May 1864, Jonathan was reelected sheriff of Fairfax County. However, Jonathan was struggling to perform one of the significant duties of his office. At the time, all Virginia sheriffs had the responsibility of collecting taxes, or the *county levy*. For this, Virginia sheriffs were also entitled to receive five percent of the tax they collected as compensation, which was in addition to a small salary typically paid them by the county.²³

Under the best circumstances, the job of collecting taxes is difficult. In Fairfax County, the job of collecting taxes during the war was next to impossible and downright dangerous. Throughout the war, Confederate partisans operated with impunity in the county. So much so, that Jonathan Roberts was compelled to place the follow ad in the *Alexandria Gazette*:

It is advertised by "Jonathan Roberts, Sheriff of Fairfax County," that in consequence of the unsettled state of the Country he cannot ride it with safety; all Tax Payers in consequence are notified to make preparation to pay their taxes, wherever found; and to avoid difficulty he request; all to call at his office, "Bruin's Dwelling, West End" to pay taxes.

Alexandria Gazette, January 7, 1864, p. 2, c. 1.

Making matters worse, much of the native population had simply fled, deserting their homes and farms. Those that remained, native and loyalist alike, often did not have the money to pay their taxes. If taxes were not paid the sheriff was authorized, by law, to sell property to recover the debt. This made Roberts an extremely unpopular individual. After the war, he was soundly criticized for conducting tax sales in Fairfax County after the Virginia legislature had changed the law prohibiting such sales for taxes due for the years 1861 to 1864.²⁴

Joseph Bruin's slave jail and home had been confiscated by the Federal Judge John C. Underwood under the Confiscation Act of 1862. The properties were auctioned in July 1864. Jonathan Roberts was the high bidder for the Bruin home which he acquired for \$400.

SALES UNDER THE U. S. CONFISCATION LAW—The United States Marshal's sale of confiscated property in the Eastern District of Virginia took place, according to public announcement, yesterday. "All the right, title interest, and estate of the parties named," was sold as follows:

Joseph's Bruin's house and lot at West End, suburb of Alexandria, \$400. Jonathan Roberts.

Lot at West End, \$605. Jonathan Roberts.

Alexandria Gazette, July 20, 1864, p. 1, c. 1 & 2.

Joseph Bruin is widely viewed as the model for the slave trader in Harriett Beecher Stowe's 1852 novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. He had been captured in Loudoun County early in the war and had been confined in Old Capitol Prison for nearly three years. After the war he returned to Alexandria to find his home occupied by Roberts. Bruin, along with other property owners, filed suit to have their properties returned. One of these cases went all the way to the United States Supreme Court. In *McVeigh v. The United States*, 1870, the court ruled in favor of the plaintiff, stating he had been denied due process in the act of confiscation. The sale to Jonathan Roberts was nullified and he was forced to surrender the property to Bruin without compensation.²⁵

In July 1865, the rebuilding began. Gen. Christopher C. Augur, of the Military Department of Washington, issued an order that "the next session of the Fairfax court will

An order has been issued by Gen. Augur directing the Court House and attached building of Fairfax County, which have been in the possession of the U. S. Government for the last two or three years, be turned over to the proper County Officers. The next session of the Fairfax court will be held therefore, not in the house Joseph Bruin, at West End, but at the Court House.

Alexandria Gazette, July 19, 1865, p. 3, c. 1.

be held therefore not in the house of Joseph Bruin, at West End, but at the Court House."²⁶ Presumably, this also meant that the Fairfax County Sheriff's office and jail also returned to Fairfax Court House.

After the war, Jonathan Roberts remained very active in local and Virginia affairs. He was elected a Justice of the Peace and a Justice of the Fairfax County Circuit Court.²⁷ He was an outspoken proponent of reconstruction, suffrage for former slaves, and the disenfranchisement of former Confederates.²⁸

On January 31, 1866, Jonathan Roberts testified before the Joint Committee on Reconstruction. His testimony reflects someone entirely discontented with the community in which he lived. The hostility and disloyalty of former secessionists and confederates is apparent:

*"...they hate the Yankees, as they call all northern men, and while the government of the United States is in the control, the northern men, or Union men, they will hate it, and they do hate it, and do everything they can to injure it.... A returned rebel, who was taken prisoner for shooting our pickets up at Fauquier county – an old slave trader – came back and sued me, as sheriff, for property which I was put in possession of for the benefit of the court. I was put in possession by an order from the Secretary of War. He sued me as a trespasser the minute he got back. If it was to go on trial they would convict me."*²⁹

In his testimony, Jonathan Roberts further revealed that he felt the Union men of Fairfax County were hated and that their lives would be endangered if the United States troops should be withdrawn; also that the freedmen were frequently ill-treated and that they and white Unionists could not hope for justice in the State courts.

"The Union men cannot stay there unless the military force is continued... We are not going to have any safety under our present State organization. I say that although I am a sheriff, sworn to sustain the reorganized government, yet I do not believe that it is reorganized while the rebels control it. They are now passing laws there to disenfranchise men who have been voters there. They are passing vagrant laws



on purpose to oppress the colored people and to keep them in vassalage, and are doing everything they can to bring back things to their old condition, as nearly as possible.... They do not talk much, but I can hear them saying, once in a while, 'We are biding our time; we are only just subjugated at present; we are not whipped; we are only overpowered; we will be at it again one of these days; we will bide our time,' and such expressions as these."³⁰

He also expressed a belief that in case of a foreign war with France the former Confederates would join the enemy against the United States.

Because of the difficulties Jonathan encountered in collecting the county levy, he resigned as sheriff of Fairfax County in June 1866. In his letter of resignation he indicated that the office had become "*a burden and expense*" which he was "*unwilling to incur any longer.*"³¹

In 1867, debate began in earnest about the Reconstruction and readmission of Virginia to the Union. Jonathan Roberts was a Radical Republican candidate to the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1867.³² He wrote to Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts advocating a secret ballot in the reconstructed government of Virginia which in his view "...*would prevent the dis-loyalists from terrifying the weak-hearted into voting as they dictated.*"³³ This intimidation was something that Jonathan had experienced firsthand at the beginning of the war. He lost the nomination to the convention to Capt. Orrin E. Hine, of Vienna, Virginia, then the Assistant Superintendent of the Freedmen's Bureau for Fairfax County.³⁴

Virginia adopted a new constitution in 1869 which contained a number of significant changes. Freedmen, former slaves, were given the right to vote. Significantly, the move to disenfranchise former Confederate soldiers and elected officials was defeated. Only the most senior former Confederates lost their right to vote. The *viva voce*, or voice vote, was abolished and replaced by the secret ballot. A new system of free schools was initiated and a new position of Treasurer was created to collect the county levy. However, in spite of these changes, Jonathan Roberts had become increasingly disillusioned with the political situation in Virginia. He was concerned that the old regime would return to power. This, in fact, did happen after Reconstruction and the era of *Jim Crow* was ushered in.

In April 1869, Jonathan resigned as Justice of the Circuit Court and applied for the position of Collector of Internal Revenue the following month.^{35,36} He did not receive the appointment.³⁷

In October 1869, Jonathan Roberts announced the sale of *Cedar Grove* and most of his personal property.

PUBLIC SALE OF VALUABLE PERSONAL PROPERTY, AT CEDAR GROVE FARM, NEAR ACCOTINK VILLAGE, FAIRFAX COUNTY, VA.—Will be sold, by public auction, on fifth day, (THURSDAY) the 28th day of October, 1869, the **STOCK and FARMING UTENSILS:** on the above farm, consisting of 2 first-rate Horses, 1 brood Mare, 2 colts, 1 pair large well broke mules, 12 Devon Cows, 1 Durham Bull, 1 young Alderney Bull, 2 Devon Calves, 3 Chester Sows and 25 pigs (full blood), Threshing Machine and Horse Power, Corn Shellers, Turnip Cutter, Grain Fan, Wheat Drill, Roller, Cutting Box, Cider Mill, 1 Germantown Carriage, Market Wagon, Farm Wagon, Cart, Corn, Cornstalks, Hay, Straw, Plows, (1 Cast Steel Plow,) Harrows, Cultivators, Forks, Rakes, 1 Horse Fork, Grindstone, Furnace Boiler, 1 bbl Cider (old), Meat Tubs, &c. Also, **HOUSEHOLD GOODS and KITCHEN FURNITURE**, such as Tables, Chairs, Sofas, Mattresses, Bedsteads, Stoves, Dishes, Milk Pans, Churn, and a large lot of valuable Books, &c., &c. Sale to commence at 10 o'clock a. m.

TERMS—All sums under \$20 cash ; all sums of \$20 and upwards a credit of four months will be allowed, upon the purchaser giving his note, with satisfactory security, payable at the First National Bank, at Alexandria. No property to be removed until the above terms are complied with.

JONATHAN ROBERTS.

Fairfax co., oct 9—eots

Alexandria Gazette, October 9, 1869, p. 3, 3.

In December 1869, he moved his family to Marietta, Marshall County, Iowa. After his wife, Abigail, died in 1881, Jonathan moved back east returning to his native New Jersey. He died at Clarksboro, New Jersey on March 30, 1901 and is interred at Mickleton Friends Burying Ground, Mickleton, New Jersey.³⁸

(Endnotes)

I would like to acknowledge Gregory P. Wilson, a descendent of Jonathan Roberts, who graciously provided me with the wonderful photograph of his ancestor. Greg is working on a more comprehensive biography of Jonathan Roberts, which he will publish in the near future.

¹ Fairfax County Deed Book N1, p. 171, Fairfax County Circuit Court Clerk, Fairfax VA.

² *Alexandria Gazette*, May 11, 1852, p. 2, c. 7.

³ *National Tribune*, November 19, 1891, p. 1.

Fairfax Court House News of 150 Years Ago

The guerillas have again become active along the Orange and Alexandria Railroad. Last night they fired the large piles of wood between Manassas Junction and Fairfax Court House, accumulated by the company during the year, at great expense.

One pile containing several thousand cords was burning this morning, without any prospects of its being saved.

Providence Evening Press, November 10, 1863, p. 3, c. 3.

The following persons, have been arrested and sent from Fairfax Court House to Washington, and committed to the Old Capitol Prison. J H. Simpson, W. E. Simpson, William Payne, Espy Buckley Dan'l. Vowels, Alfred Beckworth, (colored,) John Clark, W. A. B. Smith, Silas Mayhew, Moses Woodyard and James Marshall. Buckley above mentioned is said to be a brother-in-law of Wildman Kincheloe, who captured, at Devereux Station, on the 28th ult., a lot of mules.

The Washington correspondent of the *New York Times* says that Mr. Secretary Chase at the last session, took good care to provide against any contingency which might arise from Congress being opposed to the Administration and the prosecution of the war. Without any further financial legislation by this Congress, the Secretary had within his grasp on the 1st of December \$1,00,000,000.

The *Washington Chronicle* of this morning says:—"John Kincheloe, father of Kincheloe the guerrilla, was sent up by the Provost Marshal General of the defences south of the Potomac, on Saturday, and committed to the Old Capitol."

Alexandria Gazette, December 7, 1863, p. 2, c. 2 & 3.

Mr. Robt. Allison, an old citizen of Fairfax County, died recently, at Fairfax Court House.

Alexandria Gazette, January 25, 1864, p. 2, 2.

Joshua C. Gunnell, an old and well known citizen, of Fairfax County, died at his residence, at Fairfax C. H., on Saturday last.

Alexandria Gazette, February 23, 1864, p. 1, 2.

Endnotes continued

⁴ Acts of the General Assembly of Virginia, 1858, p. 132, William F. Ritchie, Printer, Richmond, VA.

⁵ *National Tribune*, November 19, 1891, p. 1.

⁶ *National Tribune*, November 19, 1891, p. 1.

⁷ *National Tribune*, November 19, 1891, p. 1.

⁸ *National Tribune*, November 19, 1891, p. 1.

⁹ *Evening Star*, July 29, 1861, p. 3, c. 6.

¹⁰ *National Tribune*, November 19, 1891, p. 1.

¹¹ *National Tribune*, November 26, 1891, p. 1.

¹² Pension App. #208,529; Cert. #156,734, NARA, Wash., DC

¹³ *National Tribune*, November 26, 1891, p. 1.

¹⁴ *National Tribune*, November 26, 1891, p. 1.

¹⁵ *National Tribune*, November 26, 1891, p. 1.

¹⁶ *Evening Star*, March 24, 1862, p. 3, c. 1.

¹⁷ This unit was likely consolidated with another unit from Ohio County, WV – possibly that of Capt. Thomas Howard. The obituary of Henry Brooks son, Dr. F.M. Brooks, indicates his father served in the "6th Brigade, 2nd Division of Virginia Militia." The basis of this listing is the roll of the Union Home Guards, which appears in Adjutant Generals' Papers, Union Militia Rosters, Ohio Co., WV, West Virginia State Archives, WVU, Morgantown, WV. However, men from Fairfax County have been separately identified by cross-referencing the names on that roll with Fairfax County deed books indices and U.S. Census Records for Fairfax County 1850 and 1860.

¹⁸ *National Tribune*, December 3, 1891, p. 1, c. 4.

¹⁹ *National Tribune*, December 3, 1891, p. 1, c. 4.

²⁰ Union Provost Marshal Citizens File, "Joshua C. Gunnell," RG 109, NARA, Wash., DC.

²¹ Union Provost Marshal Citizens File, "Joshua C. Gunnell," RG 109, NARA, Wash., DC.

²² Pension App. #208,529; Cert. #156,734, NARA, Wash., DC

²³ Code of Virginia, 1860, Title 12, Chapter 37, Section 22, p. 216, Ritchie, Dunnavant & Co., Richmond

²⁴ *Richmond Whig*, September 18, 1868, p. 5.

²⁵ *McVeigh v. The United States*, 78 U.S. 259.

²⁶ *Alexandria Gazette*, July 19, 1865, p. 3, c. 1.

²⁷ *Evening Star*, Aug. 2, 1867, p. 1.

²⁸ Eckenrode, Hamilton James, *The Political History of Virginia During the Reconstruction*, © 1904, p. 46, Johns Hopkins Press, The Friedenwald Co., Printers, Baltimore, MD.

²⁹ Report of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction at the First Session of the 39th Congress, Testimony of Jonathan Roberts, © 1866, p. 33-35, U.S. Government Printing Office, was., DC

³⁰ Report of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction at the First Session of the 39th Congress, Testimony of Jonathan Roberts, © 1866, p. 33-35, U.S. Government Printing Office, was., DC.

³¹ Term Papers of the Fairfax County Circuit Court, 1866, Box 2, Fairfax County Circuit Court Clerk, Fairfax, VA.

³² *Alexandria Gazette*, September 30, 1867, p. 3.

³³ *Evening Star*, March 11, 1867, p. 2, c. 4.

³⁴ *Alexandria Gazette*, October 8, 1867, p. 3.

³⁵ Fairfax County Minute Book, 1867, p. 403, Fairfax County Circuit Court Clerk's Office, Fairfax, VA.

³⁶ *Alexandria Gazette*, May 2, 1869, p. 3.

³⁷ *Alexandria Gazette*, May 21, 1869, p. 3.

³⁸ *Friends' Intelligencer*, April 13, 1901, v. 28, n. 15, p. 231.

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