The Freedmen's Bureau and School at Fairfax Court House

On September 22, 1862, one week after the Battle of Antietam, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed that effective January 1, 1863, "all persons held as slaves within any state...in rebellion against the United States...shall be then, and thence forward, forever free." 1

At the time, the Emancipation Proclamation was largely symbolic as it would be more than two years before the Civil War came to an end. For the vast majority of the now former slaves in the South, while legally free, it would be years before they were actually free. Even after the war ended in April 1865, some were still held in bondage against their will, for months, or years afterward:

"Bureau R.F.& A.L.
Headquarters 5th District of Va.
Alex., Va., Sept. 4, 1865"

Capt. Geo. A. Armes, will immediately proceed to the house of Mrs. Nancy Ratcliffe and bring away the two colored children Sarah and Fannie Harper, who are still held as slave by said Mrs. R., and deliver them to this office. If it is necessary to take them by force – or even bloodshed – let it be done. The purpose of the Bureau must and shall be carried out so far as it is in the power of the Supt. of this District.

Capt. Armes will attend to this matter in person and if he has nor...
Welcome New Members!

The President & Board of Directors of HFCI extends a hearty welcome to all new HFCI members.

Judith Blaine-Stewart  
Mathew Cher  
Evelyn Gerald and Kristin Leedom  
Joseph Lipari  
Patricia Pearson

DUES ALERT

If you have not paid your annual Historic Fairfax City, Inc. dues they are now due. Please remit based on the schedule below. Annual dues payments should be made out and sent to: Historic Fairfax City, Inc., 10209 Main Street, Fairfax, VA 22030.

Your annual dues help HFCI to continue to meet its basic goal of preserving the unique history of the City of Fairfax. Tax deductible donations over and above dues payments are encouraged.

Visit us on the web:  
HFCI Website!  
http://www.historicfairfax.org

October 2016

This year HFCI committees have taken action to support and protect historic interests with developers and others whose plans effect the character of our city.

One of these initiatives is working with the developer, IDI, on the proposed redevelopment of the Paul VI school property. Paul VI will move to a new campus in 2020. HFCI strongly supports preserving and repurposing the original 1836 Fairfax High School building. A letter writing campaign by Fairfax High School alumni lent additional weight to HFCI’s efforts. The developer is proposing two plans. The one HFCI supports is to preserve the original school building, including the green space fronting Routes 292/21/50, and repurpose the building for senior housing. Final plan approval awaits Fairfax City Council approval.

A continuing HFCI initiative is fund raising. We have just concluded our ninth annual “Taste of the Vine” — our main fund raising event to be used for refurbishment of the City’s historic properties and supporting exhibits at the Fairfax Museum, Blenheim Interpretive Center and the Radcliff-Allison House. Your TOV ticket purchases and contribution — and purchase — of silent auction items each year enables HFCI to continue its financial support of the City’s historic preservation programs at a substantial level.

Finally, your HFCI Board is working to grow our membership and to encourage current members to increase their participation in HFCI activities. Let’s all get out and encourage our friends and neighbors to become a member of HFCI to join with us in continuing our important historic preservation programs.

Membership information and applications are available at the Fairfax Museum and the Blenheim Interpretive Center. For additional information contact: Sandra Wilbur, President.

(Endnotes)


Endnotes
2017

Saturday, January 28, 2 p.m.
“*The CSS Shenandoah and the Last Shot of the Civil War*”

Local author William Connery will tell the story of the Confederate Navy’s last ship, the CSS Shenandoah.

Saturday, February 25, 2 p.m.
“A Slave No More: Lewis Lee of Fairfax Court House”

Retired educator Wes Bouchard will unfold the incredible story of a mulatto slave related to Blenheim’s Willcoxon family, his escape from slavery and the choices he made as a free man.

Saturday, March 25, 2 p.m.
“Harriet Tubman: Move or Die”

Actress Gwendolyn Briley-Strand will perform a presentation as Ms. Tubman followed, by a question and answer session. Ms. Strand will display an exhibit, “The Portals Through Time,” about Miss Tubman on the Eastern shore, in Auburn, New York and the people with whom she interacted.

Saturday, April 29, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
17th annual Fairfax Civil War Day

Living history programs, infantry and cannon firings, scholarly talks, military drills, historic house tours, Civil War music, wagon rides, youth activities, barbecues and more! Admission: $5/adults; $3/youth, 12 and under.

Saturday, May 20, 2 p.m.
“Louisa Virginia McHenry and the Trail to ‘Bleeker Canfield’”

Local historians Jim Lewis and Chuck Mauro will discuss the creation of the Loudoun County/Fairfax County line and will then chronicle J.E.B. Stuart’s onerous journey through our area on June 27, 1863, impacting his arrival time at Gettysburg.

Volunteers and Docents are sought for the city’s historic buildings: Ratcliffe-Allison-Pozer House, Historic Blenheim and the Civil War Interpretive Center and Fairfax Museum and Visitor Center. Additionally, volunteers may be interested in assisting with walking tours and special events. For information email susan.Gray@fairfaxva.gov, or call 703-385-8415.

Select historic buildings are open during city special events, including the Chocolate Lovers Festival, Civil War Weekend, Independence Day Celebration, Fall Festival and Festival of Lights and Carols. To arrange group tours of city-owned historic buildings email susan.Gray@fairfaxva.gov or call 703-385-8414.

The city has published a free self-guided walking tour brochure that provides a brief history of the city and noteworthy buildings in the Old Town Fairfax Historic District. This brochure is available from the Fairfax Museum and Visitor Center, 10209 Main Street, or call 703-385-8414. Select historic buildings are open during city special events, including the Chocolate Lovers Festival, Civil War Weekend, Independence Day Celebration, Fall Festival and Festival of Lights and Carols. To arrange group tours of city-owned historic buildings email susan.Gray@fairfaxva.gov or call 703-385-8414.

The Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1987. It includes a variety of buildings and monument types and styles, including:

- Fairfax Courthouse (1800)
- Ratcliffe-Allison House (1812)
- Joshua Gunnell House (c.1830)
- William Gunnell House (c.1835)
- Ford House (c.1835)
- Fairfax Elementary School (1873)*
- Old Fairfax Jail (1885)
- Old Town Hall (1900)
- Marr Monument (1904)

*Fairfax Elementary School was converted into the Fairfax Museum & Visitor Center in 1992.

**Fairfax Elementary School was converted into the Fairfax Museum & Visitor Center in 1992.**


John A. Ross (1844-1921) b. Clermont, OH; d.Las Vegas, NM; m. Co. G 48th Ohio Vol. Inf. 1861, Dec., 1861, age 17; prom. date unk. to Sgt., trans. as 1st Lt. to 107th United States Colored Troops; served as Assistant Superintendent, from March 1866 to Nov. 4, 1866; unfortunately, he kept very bad records of his activities;* m/1 Martha ______; m/2 Mina DONNELLS (1860-1940) c. 1885; Engineer on the Ohio & Mississippi Railroad; moved to Las Vegas, NM c. 1885; occ. Santa Fe R.R. Engr.; mbr. Sherman Post G.A.R.; bur. Riverview Cem., Seymour, Jackson Co., IN.


Chase was a former Assistant Commissioner of the Freedmen’s Bureau at Fairfax Court House. Chase had married Jennie Speer, a native of Fairfax County and the former teacher of the Freedmen’s School at Manassas, Virginia and a friend to Mary McBride.

Mary Elizabeth McBride (1847-1912) Mary E. McBride was born in Pennsylvania in 1847. She married Clarence Clarenville Ford on January 29, 1869 in Washington, D.C. Clarence was a former Assistant Commissioner of the Freedmen’s Bureau at Fairfax Court House. Chase had married Jennie Speer, a native of Fairfax County and the former teacher of the Freedmen’s School at Manassas, Virginia and a friend to Mary McBride.

Mary’s eye condition persisted well after her days as a teacher and was chronic enough for her to seek treatment. In 1874, the Fairfax News reported:

> “Mrs. Ford, wife of C.C. Ford, Esq., late of Vienna and now residing in Washington, narrowly escaped death by poisoning on Saturday. Mrs. Ford had been taking some pills containing arsenic for the benefit of her eyes, and by mistake took an overdose of them, they having got mixed with other pills.”

Clarence Clarenville Ford (1845-1889) worked in the U.S. Foreign Service from 1876 until his death in 1889. He was Consul at La Union, El Salvador in 1878 and Consul General at Saguaro la Grande and Havana, Cuba in 1882 and 1885, respectively. He died of kidney disease at Eckington, the home of Winfield S. Chase, in Washington, D.C., on May 28, 1889. Chase was a former Assistant Commissioner of the Freedmen’s Bureau at Fairfax Court House. Chase had married Jennie Speer, a native of Fairfax County and the former teacher of the Freedmen’s School at Manassas, Virginia and a friend to Mary McBride.


John A. Ross (1844-1921) b. Clermont, OH; d. Las Vegas, NM; m. Co. G 48th Ohio Vol. Inf. 1861, Dec., 1861, age 17; prom. date unk. to Sgt., trans. as 1st Lt. to 107th United States Colored Troops; served as Assistant Superintendent, from March 1866 to Nov. 4, 1866; unfortunately, he kept very bad records of his activities;* m/1 Martha ______; m/2 Mina DONNELLS (1860-1940) c. 1885; Engineer on the Ohio & Mississippi Railroad; moved to Las Vegas, NM c. 1885; occ. Santa Fe R.R. Engr.; mbr. Sherman Post G.A.R.; bur. Riverview Cem., Seymour, Jackson Co., IN.

Fairfax News of 50 Years Ago

Fairfax City OKs 75 Townhouses

A 75-unit townhouse project has been approved for construction on a seven-acre tract across from the Fairfax County Library quarterblocks north of the county court house.

Zoning for the development was granted to Washington Landowner Irving S. Lichtman by a 4 to 2 vote of the Fairfax City Council last night.

Units averaging $35,000 are proposed for the site between Chain Bridge Road and University Drive directly east of the home of Fairfax City Mayor Edgar A. Prichard, who spoke in favor of the project.

Editor Note: This is The Mews townhome development.

100 Years Ago

Fairfax Court House, Va.

Fairfax Chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy, held its December meeting with Mrs. Howard A. Pletcher, Mrs. Claude Wiley presiding. Plants were made to provide Christmas baskets for needy widows of Confederate veterans in Fairfax county, and a play was given at the town hall Friday evening to obtain funds for the purpose.


150 Years Ago

"REWARD of KINDNESS. — Two young women (white) applied to the citizens of Fairfax Court House, about two weeks ago for work, and were kindly taken in by Mrs. Judge Thomas, and Miss Nancy Allison, respectively. On last Saturday night they repaid their benefactors by taking them in—decamping with sandy articles of their clothing. Constable Jos. II. Thomas, with commendable professional zeal, pursued and overtook them and brought them back to the Court House, where they were committed to jail. They managed to destroy most of the clothing, when caught, tearing up dresses with malignant spite."

Alexander Gazette, November 28, 1866, p. 3, c. 1.

200 Years Ago

NOTICE TO ALL WHO MAY CONCERN.

You are hereby notified that the Direct Tax, for 1816, has become due and payable, and that attendance will be given to receive the same at the following times and places, viz: At Fairfax C. House on Monday, the 21st of October, and the correct copies of the Tax Lists remain with the principal assessor of this Collection District open to the inspection of any person who may apply to inspect the same.

JOIN LITTLEJOHN, Collector of the Revenue for the 2nd Collection District of Virginia.
Major, Mar. 1865; appointed Assistant Superintendent for the 1864; enrolled Cat. 2nd N.Y. Heavy Artillery, Nov. 7, 1864; brevetted F, 13th Veteran Reserve Corps, July 1863; resigned Oct. 28, 1865. He attempted to discover the whereabouts of his family Sept. 1862; promoted 2nd Lt. Nov. 1862; assigned 2nd Lt. to Co. Catesby Jones, brother of Commodore Roger Jones, who is particularly anxious to witness, firsthand, the deplorable conditions of the freedmen. In June 1863, the Commission made a report to the Freedmen’s Bureau schools in Fairfax County, see: Educating Freedmen During Reconstruction in Fairfax County, Debbie Robison. Northern Virginia History Notes, December 6, 2014 (www.novahistory.org). See also African American Education in the Town/City of Fairfax, Fare Gazettes, v. 4, no. 1 (2006).

Agents of the Freedmen’s Bureau in Fairfax County

SUBORDINATE FIELD OFFICES
ALEXANDRIA
Superintendent of Contrabands
A. Gladwin Oct. 1863–June 1865
Superintendent
James I. Ferree (5th District) July–Nov. 1865
Henry E. Alvord Nov. 1865–Jan. 1866
Superintendent and Subassistant Commissioner
Samuel P. Lee Jan. 1866–Mar. 1867
Samuel P. Lee (10th Subdistrict) Mar. 1867–July 1868

In Fairfax County, the Freedmen’s Bureau ultimately established twelve schools at Accotink (Woodlawn), Andrew’s Chapel, Centreville, Fairfax Court House, Falls Church, Frying Pan (Herndon), Big Falls (Great Falls), Gum Spring, Lewinsville, Lincoln Village (Lincolnia), Painter’s (located on Ox Road 3 miles south of Fairfax Station), and Vienna.

Mary E. (McBride) Ford, the teacher of the Freedmen’s School at Fairfax Court House, died August 3, 1912, in Washington, D.C., her contributions unheralded. She and Clarence are both buried in Rock Creek Cemetery, Washington, D.C.

For additional information on the Freedmen’s Bureau schools in Fairfax County, see: Educating Freedmen During Reconstruction in Fairfax County, Debbie Robison. Northern Virginia History Notes, December 6, 2014 (www.novahistory.org). See also African American Education in the Town/City of Fairfax, Fare Gazettes, v. 4, no. 1 (2006).

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George Augustus Armes (1844–1919) b. May 29, 1844, Richmond, Henrico Co., VA; moved to Armandale, Fairfax County, VA; 1849, son of Joseph Orcutt Armes and Caroline Olive Older; mbr of Ball’s Fairfax Cavalry c 1860; messenger U.S. Dept. of State, 1861; on leave as a scout for the U.S. Cavalry in 1861 because of his knowledge of the roads in northern Virginia; participated in the raid on Fairfax Court House, June 1, 1861 and was wded.; wded. at Battle of Bull Run; wded. Battle of Williamsburg, May 1862; enl. as a Pvt., Co. B, 16th (West) Virginia Infantry, Sept. 1862; prom. 2nd Lt. Nov. 1862; asgned 2nd Lt. to Co. F, 13th Veteran Reserve Corps, July 1863; resigned Oct. 28, 1864; enl. at 2nd N.Y. Heavy Artillery, Nov. 7, 1864; bwd. Maj. Major, Mar. 1865; apptd. Assistant Superintendent for the
**Freedmen's Bureau efforts also signaled the beginning of a new era of federal government intervention for the welfare of its citizens.**

Under intense pressure from southern whites, Congress dismantled the Freedmen's Bureau in 1872. The Bureau, although a relatively short-lived, understaffed and underfunded, did provide initial opportunities for African Americans. By far their most last legacy was the establishment of over 1,000 schools throughout the south and several black colleges, such as Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee and Howard University in the District of Columbia. The Freedmen’s Bureau agents and the freedmen themselves acted as social workers. Some Freedmen Bureau staff were knowledgeable about the needs and lived near their districts; others were woefully unprepared to communicate with them in any manner, he is still willing to do the duty of a son and a relative and asks that you be kind enough to communicate with them. According to the recollections of Wm. David, of whom he has never heard anything and is particularly anxious to learn something of them. If they are living and he can communicate with them in any manner, he is still willing to do the duty of a son and a relative and asks that you be kind enough to attend to this matter as it is well known that the family of Commodore Jones of the U.S. Navy is from Fairfax.

The colored man applying to me appears to be, and I have no doubt is, a man of fine humane feelings and I would be glad to be the means of serving him in any way and hope that he may be able to discover his long lost relations.

Yours respectfully, Robert P. Flemming, Editor of the Jefferson Journal.*

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In July 1869, Virginia voters ratified a new constitution, which notably gave all male citizens above the age of 21 the right to vote and established a system of free schools for all children between the ages of 5 and 21. The new constitution took effect in January 1870. That year, the Freedmen’s Bureau school at Fairfax Court House was closed. That same year a new African American free school east of, and adjacent to, the Fairfax City Cemetery was established.

Under intense pressure from southern whites, Congress dismantled the Freedmen’s Bureau in 1872. The Bureau, although a relatively short-lived, understaffed and underfunded, did provide initial opportunities for African Americans. By far their most last legacy was the establishment of over 1,000 schools throughout the south and several black colleges, such as Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee and Howard University in the District of Columbia. The Freedmen’s Bureau efforts also signaled the beginning of a new era of federal government intervention into the issue of social welfare for its citizens.

His mother, Rachel Dotson, belonging to Com. Jones and raised all his children namely… Mark, Mary, and Martha. This affectionate son who is anxious to her of the family connections and whether they are living or dead, and if not the latter would be glad to communicate with them.

According to the recollections of Wm. Dotson…he had two brothers, Robert and David, of whom he has never heard anything and is particularly anxious to learn something of them. If they are living and he can communicate with them in any manner, he is still willing to do the duty of a son and a relative and asks that you be kind enough to attend to this matter as it is well known that the family of Commodore Jones of the U.S. Navy is from Fairfax.

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Yours respectfully, Robert P. Flemming, Editor of the Jefferson Journal.*

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“Once again I come with our appeal for the colored people, feeling assured that you still feel an interest in their welfare. I suppose you are aware there is a system of “free schools” established in Virginia, but generally the salaries are too small to induce a good teacher to risk her health and pay expenses. The trustees are not generally anxious to keep up the “colored” schools, as funds are otherwise appropriated. Last winter the school here was kept but two months and then dropped. Many of the leading colored men have appealed to me to take the school, but as I could not board at home, it being two miles distant, and as board is so extravagantly high in the village, I cannot consent to do it without help from the Friends. Having had experience, I feel confident of raising the school to its former flourishing condition, though I may sacrifice some home comforts by not keeping our own neighborhood school - yet I am willing to do so.

I do not know how this will be received; you may feel that your labors have ceased in this direction, but I assure you I shall try to make it a real benefit to the school if you can aid it. If your Society can give ten dollars per month, I think the public fund will be twenty-five per month more, though it may run short; I am willing to risk the balance. The people are anxious the school may feel that your labors have ceased in this direction, but I assure you I shall try to make it a real benefit to the school if you can aid it. If your Society can give ten dollars per month, I think the public fund will be twenty-five per month more, though it may run short; I am willing to risk the balance. The people are anxious the school...”

Mrs. Mary E. Ford, widow of the late Clarence C. Ford, and mother of Commonwealth’s Attorney C. Vernon Ford, died in Washington Saturday morning and was buried in Rock Creek Cemetery on Monday. Rev. Dr. Page of this place officiating.

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You will see that no rent is collected for such time, and that Tekoa Seals is not molested by the said Mrs. Farr, or any one acting for her until the matter is decided at these Head Quarters.

Respectfully, &c.
James I. Ferree

The task of the new agency was monumental. At the time, there was no tradition in the United States of the government taking responsibility for the welfare of any of its citizens, much less the bureaucracy to administer such programs. From the start, the Freedman’s Bureau was understaffed and understaffed. The Bureau employed less than 1,000 people, at its peak, to attend to the welfare of approximately 4 million former slaves. In addition, the Bureau was staffed by soldiers who were woefully unprepared to act as social workers. Some Freedmen Bureau staff were incompetent or even corrupt. However, most were diligent, hardworking and brave. Southern whites resented the meddling of the Bureau and were often openly hostile to the Freedmen’s Bureau agents and the freedmen themselves.

To illustrate the feeling of some whites toward the Freedmen and the Bureau, 1st Lt. Marcus S. Hopkins, Freedmen’s Bureau agent for Prince William County, wrote to his superiors following an incident between a white man and a former black Union soldier:

“To show you the state of feeling here among many people, (not all) in regard to such a transaction, Dr. C. H. Lambert, the practicing physician of this place, followed the freedman to me, and said that: ‘Subdued grave of Mary and Clarenville Ford, Rock Creek Cemetery, Wash., D.C. Photo credit: Page Johnson...”

Graves of Mary and Clarenville Ford, Rock Creek Cemetery, Wash., D.C. Photo credit: Page Johnson...”

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The bearer, Tekoa Seals, col’d., complains that a Mrs. Farr, Farrell, or some such name, is trying to collect rent of her for the time that she (the owner) was off in the rebel lines.
freedmen. ...They hold an insane malice against the freedmen, from which he must be protected, or he is worse off than when he was a slave.” 80

While the powers of the new agency were very broad, they did not specifically address the one critical thing that most freed slaves desired, aside from their freedom, above all else. The one thing that had been denied them, by law, in every southern state for centuries – access to an education. Consequently, in December 1865 the Freedmen Bureau Bill was amended to include, among other things, specific authority for the commissioner to acquire land for erection of “suitable buildings for asylums and schools” for the freedmen. In February 1866, President Andrew Johnson, who had succeeded President Lincoln following his assassination in April 1865, vetoed the bill stating, in part:

“The Congress of the United States has never heretofore thought itself empowered to establish asylums... It has never founded schools for any class of our own people...” 83

The Congress overrode the President’s veto in July 1866 and the provisions of the amended Freedmen’s Bill, including the establishment of schools for the freedmen became law.

“A Calamity to the Freedmen”

Captain George Augustus Armes, age 21, became the first assistant sub-assistant commissioner, of the Fairfax County sub-district, in July 1865. Armes was a native of the Annandale area of Fairfax County, and a veteran of the Union Army. He established his headquarters at Fairfax Court House in the home of Mrs. Martha Ann Moss, the widow of former Fairfax County Circuit Court Clerk, Thomas Moss. The Moss home stood on the block comprised of Court Street (Sager Avenue), East Street, South Street and Mechanic Street (University Drive). Armes had intended to stay in the home of Mrs. Henry Wirt Thomas. However, the Thomas’ had recently returned to Fairfax Court House after spending the war years in Richmond as refugees.

In the summer of 1865, all buildings constructed by the Union Army in Fairfax County were to be conveyed to the Freedmen’s Bureau for the use by the freedmen. This included the substantial number of buildings at Fairfax Station and Vienna, which were to be dismantled and reconstructed elsewhere in the county as housing and schools. In an inventory of the buildings at Fairfax Station and Vienna conducted by Captain George A. Armes the buildings at Fairfax Station included:

“...nine (9) huts, one (1) railroad platform, two (2) stables, nine (9) block houses, one

Also during 1867, Mary McBride helped establish Providence Lodge No. 3, of the Independent Order of Good Templars (I.O.G.T.). 85

Mary wrote of this accomplishment in a letter to Jacob Ellis:

“Two other ladies and myself have started a Temperance Society at Fairfax. We prepared a paper and sent it amongst the citizens. Some of the very first names annexed were those of the leading rebels of the place, notwithstanding the appeal bore my signature. One or two of the lower classes objected on that account. However, we have fully succeeded; have over thirty members, at which I am so rejoiced, as whiskey has been the ruin of this part of the country. The Southern ladies will not unite with us; in fact, they rather encourage moderate drinking; and I know of one young gentleman who has quite lost caste with them since he joined the ‘Yankee Society,’ as they term it.” 86

As a “Worthy Templar” Mary pledged total abstinence from spirituous liquor,87 and “To safely keep all money of the Lodge, and pay the same only on the order of the Worthy Chief Templar and Worthy Secretary.” 88

It is likely that at about this time she met and developed a relationship with Clarence Clarenville Ford, the son of Fairfax merchant Edward R. & Julia Ford. Mary and Clarence were married in Washington, D.C. on January 29, 1869. They returned to Fairfax and resided with Bleeker Canfield. Mary appears not to have told Jacob Ellis of her marriage as she continued to sign her name as “Mary E. McBride” on her school reports.

The Freedmen’s Schools in Fairfax County, in particular the teachers, were entirely dependent on funding from the Society of Friends in Philadelphia, who in turn relied on donations from their membership and the public.
of Friends in Fairfax County. Another assistant at the Fairfax Court House school was Maggie Lewis, a former student of the school. Maggie wrote the following letter to the Society of Friends:

“To my benefactors, the Association of Friends of Philadelphia:

I am very grateful to you for all that you have done for me; and I will try to do as well as I can to deserve it. My education is, as you know, very poor yet, but I will endeavor to do the best of my ability with the scholars which Miss Mary has placed under me to teach them. My own tasks I study as good as I can, but I do not always know them as well as I would like to. I get along very well with my scholars, and I hope that I shall do my part with them. My parents also desire to be remembered gratefully to you for your kindness to us.

Yours respectfully,
Maggie Lewis”

Mary McBride apparently suffered from some type of affliction of her eyes, which was serious enough to impair her vision and to periodically prevent her from teaching.

During these intervals, the students were under the direction of Maggie Lewis.

2nd Lt. William Shields succeeded Orrin E. Hine on February 23, 1867. In April 1867, Lt. William Shields wrote to his superiors of the condition of the schools in Fairfax County:

“The school houses are totally inadequate to accommodate the scholars. Most of them are very low, built of logs and mud, poorly ventilated, miserably furnished, and so small that half the scholars must remain outside while the other half recites. Some of them have neither locks nor hinges on the doors.”

Lt. Shields was subsequently succeeded by 2nd Lt. Winfield Scott Chase of the 18th Veterans Reserve Corps in the summer of 1867. Systematic harassment of the freedmen was on the rise. Lt. W.S. Chase wrote ominously about a subject to all military orders relating to the sales of liquors. Military orders at the time strictly forbade the sale of liquor to soldiers. In early September 1865, Capt. Armes discovered his orderly so drunk that he could not attend to his duties and that the Kearney’s had sold or given some “4 or 5 thousand” bricks to the Freedmen.

“I have made arrangements to build chimneys to the Freedmen’s Houses & Schools House. I purpose putting here & if there are any of them left after I have put them in use, I will let him have them. Mr. Love left his farm buildings & everything and went south amongst the Rebels and now comes back a poor man and thinks he ought to have everything the same as if nothing happened.”

Armes did certify that 100,000 bricks were used by the Bureau taken from the premises of Thomas R. Love and belonged to him for which had not received compensation.

George Armes was also ordered to furnish a list to the Bureau “of all places in your sub-district where, in your judgement not less than fifty (50) colored children can be convened for the purpose of a school.” This apparently not done as such a list was not found.

Lawrence & Sarah Kearney, both Irish immigrants, had come to Fairfax Court House in May 1864 with the 16th New York Cavalry. Sarah Kearney was employed as a cook for the officer’s mess. Lawrence Kearney was a U.S. Army veteran of the 2nd Seminole War in Florida in the 1840’s. In July 1865, the Kearney’s were granted a license to keep an ordinary in their home at Fairfax Court House. When the license was issued they were apparently told that they were “subject to all military orders relating to the sales of liquors.” Military orders at the time strictly forbade the sale of liquor to soldiers. In early September 1865, Capt. Armes discovered his orderly so drunk that he could not attend to his duties and that the Kearney’s had sold him the liquor. Capt. Armes sent for the Kearney’s and advised them that they were in violation of orders against selling liquor to soldiers and if it happened again he would take action.

Three days later Capt. Armes found several of his men so drunk that “it was not safe for people to go through the town after dark.” He sent for Mrs. Kearney who denied selling the men the liquor. He then sent for his men, who acknowledged in the presence of Mrs. Kearney that she had sold them the liquor. Armes fined the Kearney’s five dollars and told them if it happened again he would take action.

Photo credit: Unknown. (Fairfax County), Freedmen’s Bureau, 1867-'68.
In the meantime, at Alexandria, Lawrence Kearney related his version of the facts to Chaplin Ferree, whereupon he was released. Subsequently, Ferree issued orders for Capt. Armes to return the items taken from the Kearney’s and to remove the guard from around their home.  The orders further stated the:

“Capt. is informed that he is not a Provost Marshal, but an Assistant Superintendent of Freedmen, and he will in future leave such business as this to those who are Provost Marshals.”

Several leading citizens of Fairfax Court House also came to the defense of the Kearney’s in the form of an affidavit:

“Fairfax Court House, Va.
September 15th 1865

We the undersigned citizens of the Town of Fairfax Court House certify that we have never seen any disorderly conduct at Mr. Laurence Kearney’s as has been reported: W.R. Chapman

G.W. Guines

Joseph Whitehead

A.J. Mills

Geo. H. Williams

A.T. Willcoxon

T.J. Murray

Thomas Martin

William H. Pettit

F.D. Richardson

David A. Steele

In January 1866, Kearney filed suit against Armes in Fairfax County Circuit Court for Trespass. His complaint stated the Armes had:

‘laid hold of him and with great force and violence pulled and dragged him about…and struck him a great many violent blows and strokes…and compelled him…out of his store and dwelling…into the public street…and the said Armes did break open and enter the store and dwelling house…and seized 10 blankets, 45 gallons of whiskey & 3 gallons of rum...being of great value $300...and that he and his family during all the time aforesaid, not only greatly disturbed and annoyed...but also...prevented from carrying on...affairs necessary and business...all to the damage of the plaintiff of $1,000.00...therefore he brings this suit.”

The suit appears to have been continued until September 1867, when it was dismissed.

In another incident, Cornelius White, a native of New York, who resided a half mile northeast of Fairfax Court House near Chain Bridge Road and Accotink Run, accused George Armes of:

“...stealing my mules.... I came back on my farm last spring, everything destroyed. No house. No furniture. I have laid out all I have for a team, and a cheap house, so this breaks me up entirely. How shall I get along now I know not. I hope you will bring the rascal to justice some way. For I think it is time, before he burns my house. For I do not feel safe at no time.”

As a consequence of these incident George Armes was relieved from duty on September 14, 1865 after only a month and a half as sub-assistant commissioner, and having been accused of: 1) use a government spring wagon and team as a conveyance to and from the Court House and Station, Tuesday, September 5, 1865, the day of the Tournament; 2) punishing Silas Jackson, a former slave, “for neglecting to feed the horses” and several negro boys, tying them to posts by their thumbs with their hands raised high behind their back, and by bucking and gagging another, all this in front of his office; 3) being intoxicated while on duty; and, 4) refusing to obey orders directing him to return the property (whiskey and blankets) of Lawrence & Sarah Kearney at Fairfax Court House. In his recommendation to Gen. O.O. Howard, Chaplain Ferree, for your kindness to us, not only in sending the clothing and gifts, but also in proveng us as a teacher, books, &c., for a school. We can simply say ‘thank you,’ and endeavor by our future behavior and improvement to prove that ‘actions speak louder than words.”

The above was signed by twenty-one of the pupils, the teacher penciling the ages opposite each name. Their ages range from 8 to 16 years – the writer of the address being only thirteen.

The Freedmen’s Bureau and the schools in Fairfax County continued to be a target of vandals. In September 1866, Capt. Ross’ own quarters in Vienna were destroyed by fire. Arson was suspected. That fall the school house at Frying Pan was also burned down by arsonists and the school and church building at Lewinsville was partially destroyed by a mob.

On October 17, 1866, Capt. Ross reported to his superior:

“The principal work of the Bureau in this county since January 1, 1866, has been settling claims and locating schools. During which time many claims have been settled and eight schools located. The colored people being very illiterate and but little capable of making an agreement, the white people take all the advantage of them they possibly can often defrauding them of their hard earnings. A number of Freedmen have been severely assaulted by the late so-called Confederate States soldiers. Some of the cases have been tried by civil authorities and I am not aware of their having punished any of the defendants. Most invariable if a colored man wishes to get a warrant of a magistrate for the arrest of parties committing deprivations upon them, I am compelled to intercede on their behalf as but few of the magistrates will do anything for the colored people unless they are compelled.”

On November 6, 1866, the 107th U.S.C.T. was mustered out of service. As a result, Captain John A. Ross was succeeded by Orrin E. Hine, of the 50th New York Infantry. In a final goodwill gesture, Capt. Ross requested 1,500 feet of plank, 200 feet of scantling and 8 windowsashes and glass for the repairing of the school house at Fairfax Court House. Mary was assisted in her duties by Alice Sutton, of Fairfax Court House. Alice was a member of the Society for the colored people unless they are compelled.”
There was an examination of the children charged with stoning the school mistress at Fairfax Court House last week, in that Village day before yesterday, at which the military authorities were present. The result of the examination was that one little boy had thrown some pebbles at the lady; and that some drunk-en men, for whose conduct the citizens are not responsible, and utterly condemn, went to the house of the lady in question one night some time ago, and threatened her.

Alexandria Gazette, April 23, 1866, p. 3, c. 2.

of their conduct, and desist from annoying her. "

Mary was determined to make her school a success and she asserted:

“There is certainly a great deal of talk, but that troubles me very little. There are some things that are very unpleasant here for me, but I am determined to stay here until sent by the proper authorities into another field, or dismissed the service entirely.” She further remarks: “It is not labor for me, as some would call it; I love the work.”

The children at the Fairfax Court House Freedmen’s School adored their teacher. In a letter to Jacob Ellis, Mary McBride wrote:

“How pleasant it is to return after absence and find you have been greatly missed, and your appearance hailed with delight. Last Sabbath was reception day with me; at one time I counted fifteen colored visitors, some cried, some laughed, and others looked their happiness – their faces beamed with joy. Some of my children told me yesterday they ‘knew I would come back,’ ‘Why?’ ‘Because we prayed for you night and morning!’ I sincerely hope their prayers will not be in vain in other respects. It made me happy to know these poor children had not forgotten to pray for their teacher while absent. I was soon installed in my old log school-house, surrounded by my dusky flock, all eager, attentive, and glad to get back to school.”

Mary was equally fond of her students:

“I am quite proud of my pupils. A number of them take particular pride in dressing neatly and nicely, and looking like ladies, two of them especially, in the first class. They are good, faithful girls, in whom I have every confidence, and I think in the future they will be able to take entire charge of the school. They are good spellers and readers, write well, and talk grammatically. A number of the young ladies at the boarding school here do not read or write as well as four of the girls in my first class.”

In the same letter she also alludes to another pupil, a daughter of the village blacksmith, nine years of age, who kept her father’s books, and did all his writing, much to the astonishment of the people of Fairfax Court House.

Several children had to walk as much as five miles, each way, to attend the Freedmen’s School at Fairfax Court House. Many students attended irregularly. Through necessity, they were hired out by their parents as laborers, especially during the spring planting season and fall harvest.

Mary McBride reported:

“Fairfax C.H., October 1, 1865 – I have written of the conditions here before; I think there are about one hundred and thirty (130) colored people.”

Almost immediately upon his arrival, Lt. Smith began urging the Bureau to establish schools for the freedmen in Fairfax County:

“Fairfax C.H., September 25th 1865 – I am desirous of operating a school here for the colored children of this place. I think if I could get a few school books I could manage all else by myself. The books should be for scholars who are just beginning. Can you advise any means for getting them?”

Lt. Smith wrote to his superior again a week later about his efforts:

“Fairfax C.H., October 1, 1865 – I have established a school here, the teachers of which are two soldiers of the 19th Ohio Vol. Inf. The children appear very intelligent and learn with remarkable rapidity. This is the only school in this Division for colored people. I would respectfully recommend that measures be taken to establish a school in this vicinity which would be permanent this winter. The one which is already established is kept in the basement of Mrs. Morse’s [Moss’] house and in all probability cannot long last.

We have had a Sabbath School here this morning which was a good one. Old and young attended.”

On September 30, 1865, Sidney Smith was ordered to relocate his office to Vienna Station on the Loudoun & Hampshire Railroad. Mrs. Moss’ property at Fairfax Court...
House was restored to her without "compensations for damages to the property or to rents which may have accrued." 17

On October 2, 1865, Lt. Smith moved his headquarters to Vienna, Virginia. He wrote to his commander:

"I deeply regret to leave here on account of them. They will both surely have to be dispensed with. I am interested in them both. Cannot some measures be taken to secure this house and keep the school in operation?" 18

The school he started in Mrs. Moss’ cellar closed the same day. 19

On October 10, 1865, Smith again wrote to his superior about educating the former slaves:

"The colored people appear to be anxious that their children should attend school & often tell me that if they had books & someone to instruct them they would study nights and such other times as they had leisure. The desire for education among these people appears to be universal. Now is the time, in my opinion, for the Bureau to extend its aid to them for the acquirement of it. If I had suitable buildings at my command, together with books &c., there are soldiers here who would be glad of the privilege of teaching them.

Until the morals and education of these Freedmen are put in proper training, we have not much to expect of them. I would recommend that some measures be taken to encourage marrying among themselves. I often find male and female living together as man and wife, who have never been married and who appear to have a very vague idea of marriage. Until these evils and vices are remedied, we have but little to expect better of them. I have been here to inform you where schools could be located to the best advantage, but one at Fairfax C.H. and Fairfax Station should be attended to at once." 20

Over the next two months Lt. Smith wrote often about the need for schools for freedmen in Fairfax County. On November 30, 1865, in frustration he wrote:

"In reply to your communication of the 29th inst. requesting me to forward without delay school report for November 1865. I have the honor to inform you that there are no schools for colored children in this county. I assure you Chaplain, that I deeply regret that I have no school to report to you." 21

Sidney Smith was in communication with the Philadelphia Society of Friends (aka Quakers) seeking their assistance with the establishment of schools for the freedmen in Fairfax County. In December 1865 the following appeared in the Friends Intelligencer, a periodical of the Philadelphia Society of Friends:

"Lieu. Smith, assistant superintendent for Fairfax County, Va., says that all the refugees and freedmen there are self-supporting, and no camps for either now exist. There is not a school in the county, although there are one hundred and thirty five freedmen in the vicinity of Fairfax Court House, fifty at the Station, and the same number at Lewinsville. The behavior of the people is in every way exemplary, and few cases of oppression have come to his notice. Education is the greatest want." 22

In January 1866, Sidney B. Smith wrote to the justices of the Fairfax County Circuit Court seeking permission to:

"...use the brick house which stands near the courthouse and which is unoccupied, for the purpose of establishing a school for

sooner to be mastered out. ...so earnest is he on the subject of education he had been teaching a school in his camp this winter, and, as some of his men show, with considerable success." 23

Although the Watkins resided relatively close to the school, Mary wrote of "wading through ice, snow, mud and rain for a mile, and experiencing considerable difficulty in crossing swollen brooks." 24

The Fairfax Court House Freedmen’s School was completed by April 1866 and Mary McBride took up new duties. Almost immediately she began to be harassed and intimidated by the local white citizens.

"Mrs. McBride commenced this school under great disadvantages...and has persistently and with more than common courage fought a cowardly prejudice extended her 'nigger school' by the chivalry." 25

One evening a group of drunken men, one of whom was named Fox and all allegedly former confederate soldiers of Mosby’s command, visited the Watkins home. The men demanded that Mrs. Watkins turn over the teacher of the "nigger school." They stated their intention to "tar and feather." 26

The reconstructed at Fairfax Court-House.—An intelligent and patriotic lady from Philadelphia, commenced, a few days ago, a school at Fairfax Court-house, in which she was trying to enlist forty or fifty colored children. Some of the chivalrous sons of the reconstructed in that place, and among their number a son of Judge Thomas, took it upon themselves a duty to put a stop to a proceeding so distasteful to their dignity by throwing stones at the teacher as she passed to and from the school-house, whereupon the military authorities were notified of their conduct, and a squad of cavalry soon made their appearance in the village, but were unable to arrest the offending parties, they having left this county for their country's good.—Virginia State Journal.

Daily National Republican April 19, 1866, p. 3, c. 3.
for the school which seems to indicate that it was built on a hillside: “he will...provide slabs and put them up all around the house so the same can be banked up with earth.”

On March 26, 1866, Capt. Ross wrote to his superior in Alexandria:

“I am building a school house at Fairfax C.H., will have a school started in four or five days. I think there will be an average attendance of fifty (50).”

The building at Fairfax Station was dismantled and reconstructed at Fairfax Court House by members of the 107th U.S.C.T. under the supervision of Capt. John Ross. The log structure was small with few windows, but draftly due the chinking between the logs being inadequate. The interior of the building was open. The school was furnished with desks and benches constructed of rough planks by a soldier of the 107th U.S.C.T.

While the school building was being reconstructed at Fairfax Court House, arrangements were made for Mary McBride to board with a “Mrs. Watkins.” This was likely Napoleon B. and Virginia Watkins who maintained a residence in Fairfax Court House. Napoleon Watkins was a native of New York who had immigrated to Virginia with his parents, Elida & Clorine Deyo Watkins, about 1840. Napoleon had married Virginia Willcoxon, the daughter of Fairfax Court House tavern owner, Rezin Willcoxon. The couple resided on a ten-acre parcel on the northeast corner of North Street and the Falls Church Road (where the Fairfax City Regional Library is now located). Virginia had received this parcel in the distribution of her father’s estate.

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“Desolation has truly stamped its impress everywhere around us. The tillers of the soil are for the most part fenceless.... Chimneys are to be seen without houses; charred stumps of trees; and indeed whole woods have been either cut or burned down. In most places in this section, so complete has this kind of desolation been, that there is not enough wood left to fence the ground. Efforts at resuscitation however, are beginning to show themselves here and there; occasionally a short panel of new fence may be seen, though in most instances there is nothing more than an impromptu one, made of the tops of pine trees driven down diagonally and crossing each other.”

Capt. John A. Ross, Sub-Assistant Commissioner, Freedmen’s Bureau, Fairfax County, Virginia, March 1866 to November 1866. Photo credit: CDV from the Collection of Ralph Baughn.

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The federal government was then in the process of selling surplus lumber and property, including Union Army and government buildings, at various locations in Fairfax County. It was decided to move an existing log building at Fairfax Station to Fairfax Court House for use as a school. The building selected was a hewn-log structure, "16 ft. wide by 25 ft. long," with a dirt floor. Jacob Ellis wrote to the Friends Intelligencer:

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"The school house belongs to the colored people but stands on Mr. Sagar's ground without rent, which he says it may continue so long as they will keep up the fence around it. Mr. Sagar is a good man & a true friend to these poor people."

The Fairfax Court House Freedmen's Bureau School was located on the south side of Little River Turnpike (Main Street) "¼ mile east of the C.H. …on Mr. Sagar's land." Andrew Jefferson Sager owned 285-acres of land adjoining Fairfax Court House. A comprehensive review of the land records of Fairfax County indicates that Sager’s land began approximately where Daniel’s Run crosses Main Street. Therefore, the approximate location of the school was between the east bank of Daniels Run (at Main Street) and the present Fairfax Museum and Visitors Center. The school was likely situated very close to the Daniels Run floodplain. This assumption is supported by a surviving repair contract...
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Colored children there.” He added that, “as officers of the same great Government – both civil and military – I trust that the necessity of co-operation between us, for the good of the free people and for our own good too, will be sufficient incentive to overcome all feelings of a minor consideration which may perhaps be entertained by either party.”59

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Evening Star, September 1, 1866, p. 2, c. 5.
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In January 1866, Sidney B. Smith wrote to the justices of the Fairfax County Circuit Court seeking permission to:

“...use the brick house which stands near the courthouse and which is unoccupied, for the purpose of establishing a school for

soon to be mastered out. ...so earnest is he on the subject of education he had been teaching a school in his camp this winter, and, as some of his men show, with considerable success.”

Although the Watkins resided relatively close to the school, Mary wrote of “wading through ice, snow, mud and rain for a mile, and experiencing considerable difficulty in crossing swollen brooks.”

The Fairfax Court House Freedmen’s School was completed by April 1866 and Mary McBride took up new duties. Almost immediately she began to be harassed and intimidated by the local white citizens.

“Miss McBride commenced this school under great disadvantages...and has persistently and with more than common courage fought a cowardly prejudice extended her ‘nigger school’ by the chivalry.”

One evening a group of drunken men, one of whom was named Fox and all allegedly former confederate soldiers of Mosby’s command, visited the Watkins home. The men demanded that Mrs. Watkins turn over the teacher of the “nigger school.” They stated their intention to “tar and feather” her.

When Mrs. Watkins indicated the teacher was not at home, stones were then thrown at the house. Mary McBride also had stones thrown at her as she walked to and from the school. After these incidents, Capt. Ross was compelled to station a guard at Fairfax C.H. for over a month to protect Mary and to keep her schoolhouse from being destroyed.

Jacob M. Ellis wrote of these incidents in the Friends Intelligencer:

“She has met with considerable opposition and indignity, accompanied with threats of personal violence, the latter, however, confined to a plentiful throwing of stones at her, on one or two occasions, on her way to the school-house. Notwithstanding this, she perseveres with a firm and dignified determination, will not give up the work unless forced to do so by the ‘authorities,’ and has now forty pupils in attendance, with good progress. From the seeds thus sown good fruit must certainly be produced, and we cannot but desire her encouragement. Much sympathy has been felt and expressed for her in her trying position, accompanied with the hope and belief that the offenders themselves will ere long become ashamed
There was an examination of the children charged with stoning the school mistress at Fairfax Court House last week, in that Village day before yesterday, at which the military authorities were present. The result of the examination was that one little boy had thrown some pebbles at the lady; and that some drunken men, for whose conduct the citizens are not responsible, and utterly condemn, went to the house of the lady in question one night some time ago, and threatened her.

Alexandria Gazette, April 23, 1866, p. 3, c. 2.

of their conduct, and desist from annoying her.”

Mary was determined to make her school a success and she asserted:

“There is certainly a great deal of talk, but that troubles me very little. There are some things that are very unpleasant here for me, but I am determined to stay here until sent by the proper authorities into another field, or dismissed the service entirely.” She further remarks: “It is not labor for me, as some would call it; I love the work.”

The children at the Fairfax Court House Freedmen’s School adored their teacher. In a letter to Jacob Ellis, Mary McBride wrote:

“How pleasant it is to return after absence and find you have been greatly missed, and your appearance hailed with delight. Last Sabbath was reception day with me; at one time I counted fifteen colored visitors, some cried, some laughed, and others looked their happiness – their faces beamed with joy. Some of my children told me yesterday they knew I would come back. ’Why?’ Because we prayed for you night and morning!’ I sincerely hope their prayers will not be in vain in other respects. It made me happy to know these poor children had not forgotten

to pray for their teacher while absent. I was soon installed in my old log school-house, surrounded by my dusky flock, all eager, attentive, and glad to get back to school.”

Mary was equally fond of her students:

“I am quite proud of my pupils. A number of them take particular pride in dressing neatly and nicely, and looking like ladies, two of them especially, in the first class. They are good, faithful girls, in whom I have every confidence, and I think in the future they will be able to take entire charge of the school. They are good spellers and readers, write well, and talk grammatically. A number of the young ladies at the boarding school here do not read or write as well as four of the girls in my first class.”

In the same letter she also alludes to another pupil, a daughter of the village blacksmith, nine years of age, who kept her father’s books, and did all his writing, much to the astonishment of the people of Fairfax Court House.

Several children had to walk as much as five miles, each way, to attend the Freedmen’s School at Fairfax Court House. Many students attended irregularly. Through necessity, they were hired out by their parents as laborers, especially during the spring planting season and fall harvest. Many students were also without adequate shoes and clothing, even in the winter months. Consequently, illness and that things that are very unpleasant here for me, but I am determined to stay here until sent by the proper authorities into another field, or dismissed the service entirely.” She further remarks: “It is not labor for me, as some would call it; I love the work.”

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are congregated to any considerable number. At the place there are about one hundred and thirty (130) colored people.”

Fairfax Freedmen’s Bureau School

“The Virginians think the negroes cannot learn, but they are mistaken.”

Almost immediately upon his arrival, Lt. Smith began urging the Bureau to establish schools for the freedmen in Fairfax County:

“Fairfax C.H., September 25th 1865 – I am desirous of operating a school here for the colored children of this place. I think if I could get a few school books I could manage all else by myself. The books should be for scholars who are just beginning. Can you advise any means for getting them?”

Lt. Smith wrote to his superior again a week later about his efforts:

“Fairfax C.H., October 1, 1865 – I have established a school here, the teachers of which are two soldiers of the 19th Ohio Vol. Inf. The children appear very intelligent and learn with remarkable rapidity. This is the only school in this Division for colored people. I would respectfully recommend that measures be taken to establish a school in this vicinity which would be permanent during the winter. The one which is already established is kept in the basement of Mrs. Morse’s [Moss’] house and in all probability cannot long last.

We have had a Sabbath School here this morning which was a good one. Old and young attended.”

On September 30, 1865, Sidney Smith was ordered to relocate his office to Vienna Station on the Loudoun & Hampshire Railroad, Mrs. Moss’ property at Fairfax Court
a satisfactory manner how he came to sell enlisted men liquor."22

In the meantime, at Alexandria, Lawrence Kearney related his version of the facts to Chaplin Ferree, whereupon he was released. Subsequently, Ferree issued orders for Capt. Armes to return the items taken from the Kearney's and to remove the guard from around their home. 23 The orders further stated the:

"Capt. is informed that he is not a Provost Marshal, but an Assistant Superintendent of Freedmen, and he will in future leave such business as this to those who are Provost Marshals.24

Several leading citizens of Fairfax Court House also came to the defense of the Kearney's in the form of an affidavit:

"Fairfax Court House, Va.
September 15th 1865

We the undersigned citizens of the Town of Fairfax Court House certify that we have never seen any disorderly conduct at Mr. Laurence Kearney's as has been reported:

W.R. Chapman   G.W. Guines
Joseph Whitehead  A.J. Mills
Geo. H. Williams  A.T. Wilcoxon
T.J. Murray   Thomas Martin
William H. Pettitt  F.D. Richardson 25
David A. Steele

In January 1866, Kearney filed suit against Armes in Fairfax County Circuit Court for Trespass. His complaint stated the Armes had:

'laid hold of him and with great force and violence pulled and dragged him about...and struck him a great many violent blows and strokes...and compelled him...out of his store and dwelling...and into the public street...and the said Armes did break open and enter the store and dwelling house...and seized 10 blankets, 45 gallons of whiskey & 3 gallons of rum...being of great value $300...and that he and his family during all the time aforesaid, not only greatly disturbed and annoyed...but also...prevented from carrying on...affairs necessary and business...all to the damage of the plaintiff of $1,000.00...therefore he brings this suit.26

The suit appears to have been continued until September 1867, when it was dismissed.

In another incident, Cornelius White,27 a native of New York, who resided a half mile northeast of Fairfax Court House near Chain Bridge Road and Accotink Run, accused George Armes of:

"...stealing my mules.... I came back on my farm last spring, everything destroyed. No house. No furniture. I have laid out all I have for a team, and a cheap house, so this breaks me up entirely. How shall I get along now I know not. I hope you will bring the rascal to justice some way. For I think it is time, before he burns my house. For I do not feel safe at no time."28

As a consequence of these incident George Armes was relieved from duty on September 14, 1865 after only a month and a half as sub-assistant commissioner, and having been accused of: 1) use a government spring wagon and team as a conveyance to and from the Court House and Station, Tuesday, September 5, 1865, the day of the Tournament; 2) punishing Silas Jackson, a former slave, "for neglecting to feed the horses" and several negro boys, tying them to posts by their thumbs with their hands raised high behind their back, and by bucking and gagging another, all this in front of his office; 3) being intoxicated while on duty; and, 4) refusing to obey orders directing him to return the property (whiskey and blankets) of Lawrence & Sarah Kearney at Fairfax Court House. In his recommendation to Gen. O.O. Howard, Chaplain Ferree, for your kindness to us, not only in sending the clothing and gifts, but also in provenging us a teacher, books, &c., for a school. We can simply say 'thank you,' and endeavor by our future behavior and improvement to prove that 'actions speak louder than words.'29

The above was signed by twenty-one of the pupils, the teacher penciling the ages opposite each name. Their ages range from 8 to 16 years – the writer of the address being only thirteen.27

The Freedmen's Bureau and the schools in Fairfax County continued to be a target of vandals. In September 1866, Capt. Ross' own quarters in Vienna were destroyed by fire. Arson was suspected.30 That fall the school house at Frying Pan was also burned down by arsonists and the school and church building at Lewinsville was partially destroyed by a mob.31

On October 17, 1866, Capt. Ross reported to his superior:

"The principal work of the Bureau in this county since January 1, 1866, has been settling claims and locating schools. During which time many claims have been settled and eight schools located. The colored people being very illiterate and but little capable of making an agreement, the white people take all the advantage of them they possibly can often defrauding them of their hard earnings. A number of Freedmen have been severely assaulted by the late so-called Confederate States soldiers. Some of the cases have been tried by civil authorities and I am not aware of their having punished any of the defendants. Most invariable if a colored man wishes to get a warrant of a magistrate for the arrest of parties committing depredations upon them, I am compelled to intercede on their behalf as but few of the magistrates will do anything for the colored people unless they are compelled."32

On November 6, 1866, the 107th U.S.C.T. was mustered out of service. As a result, Captain John A. Ross was succeeded by Orrin E. Hine, of the 50th New York Infantry. In a final goodwill gesture, Capt. Ross requested 1,500 feet of plank, 200 feet of scantling and 8 windowashes and glass for the repairing of the school house at Fairfax Court House.33

Mary was assisted in her duties by Alice Sutton, of Fairfax Court House. Alice was a member of the Society
The school houses are totally inadequate to accommodate the scholars. Most of them are very low, built of logs and mud, poorly ventilated, miserably furnished, and so small that half the scholars must remain outside while the other half recites. Some of them have neither locks nor hinges on the doors. **82**

Lt. Shields was subsequently succeeded by 2nd Lt. Winfield Scott Chase of the 18th Veterans Reserve Corps in the summer of 1867. Systematic harassment of the freedmen was on the rise. Lt. W.S. Chase wrote ominously about a new organization:

> "I have made arrangements to build chimneys to the Freedmen's Houses & Schools House. I purpose putting here & if there are any of them left after I ix up the doors, **82**

Armes did certify that 100,000 bricks were used by the Bureau taken from the premises of Thomas R. Love and belonged to him for which had not received compensation. **16**

Armes also ordered to furnish a list to the Bureau of "all places in your sub-district where, in your judgement not less than fifty (50) colored children can be convened for the purpose of a school." **73**

During his brief tenure as Assistant Superintendent, George Armes received a number of complaints from citizens.

Lawrence & Sarah Kearney, 18 both Irish immigrants, had come to Fairfax Court House in May 1864 with the 16<sup>th</sup> New York Cavalry. Sarah Kearney was employed as a cook for the officer's mess. **33** Lawrence Kearney was a U.S. Army veteran of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Seminole War in Florida in the 1840's. In July 1865, the Kearneys were granted a license to keep an ordinary in their home at Fairfax Court House. When the license was issued they were apparently told that they were "subject to all military orders relating to the sales of liquors." **18** Military orders at the time strictly forbade the sale of liquor to soldiers. In early September 1865, Capt. Armes discovered his orderly so drunk that he could not attend to his duties and that the Kearney's had sold him the liquor. Capt. Armes sent for the Kearney's and advised them that they were in violation of orders against selling liquor to soldiers and if it happened again he would take action.

Three days later Capt. Armes found several of his men so drunk that "it was not safe for people to go through the town after dark." He sent for Mrs. Kearney who denied selling the men the liquor. Capt. Armes sent for his superiors of the condition of the schools in Fairfax County:

> "The Freedman's Bureau are now engaged in organizing schools in Fairfax County, Va., for the use of the negroes. One is already in operation at Fairfax Court House, with fifty scholars. Schools are soon to be started at Dranesville and other points in that section of the State." **84**

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This apparently not done as such a list was not found.
freedmen. ...They hold an insane malice against the freedmen, from which he must be protected, or he is worse off than when he was a slave."

While the powers of the new agency were very broad, they did not specifically address the one critical thing that most freed slaves desired, aside from their freedom, above all else. The one thing that had been denied them, by law, in every southern state for centuries – access to an education. Consequently, in December 1865 the Freedmen Bureau Bill was amended to include, among other things, specific authority for the commissioner to acquire land for erection of "suitable buildings for asylums and schools" for the freedmen. In February 1866, President Andrew Johnson, who had succeeded President Lincoln following his assassination in April 1865, vetoed the bill stating, in part:

"The Congress of the United States has never heretofore thought itself empowered to establish asylums.... It has never founded schools for any class of our own people...."

The Congress overrode the President's veto in July 1866 and the provisions of the amended Freedmen's Bill, including the establishment of schools for the freedmen became law.

"A Calamity to the Freedmen"

Captain George Augustus Armes, age 21, became the first assistant sub-assistant commissioner, of the Fairfax County sub-district, in July 1865. Armes was a native of the Annandale area of Fairfax County, and a veteran of the Union Army. He established his headquarters at Fairfax Court House in the home of Mrs. Martha Ann Moss, the widow of former Fairfax County Circuit Court Clerk, Thomas Moss. The Moss home stood on the block comprised of Court Street (Sager Avenue), East Street, South Street and Mechanic Street (University Drive). Armes had intended to stay in the home of Mrs. Henry Wirt Thomas. However, the Thomas' had recently returned to Fairfax Court House after spending the war years in Richmond as refugees.

In the summer of 1865, all buildings constructed by the Union Army in Fairfax County were to be conveyed to the Freedmen's Bureau for the use by the freedmen. This included the substantial number of buildings at Fairfax Station and Vienna, which were to be dismantled and reconstructed elsewhere in the county as housing and schools. In an inventory of the buildings at Fairfax Station and Vienna conducted by Captain George A. Armes the buildings at Fairfax Station included:

"...nine (9) huts, one (1) railroad platform, two (2) stables, nine (9) block houses, one..."

It was some time before I could command order again, they were so delighted; nor did I try very hard.—I thought they had cause for a little jubilee. The news was very unexpected to them, as they had made up their minds 'for the worst,' as they termed it."

Also during 1867, Mary McBride helped establish Providence Lodge No. 3, of the Independent Order of Good Templars (I.O.G.T.).

Mary wrote of this accomplishment in a letter to Jacob Ellis:

"Two other ladies and myself have started a Temperance Society at Fairfax. We prepared a paper and sent it amongst the citizens. Some of the very first names annexed were those of the leading rebels of the place, notwithstanding the appeal bore my signature. One or two of the lower classes objected on that account. However, we have fully succeeded; have over thirty members, at which I am so rejoiced, as whiskey has been the ruin of this part of the country. The Southern ladies will not unite with us; in fact, they rather encourage moderate drinking; and I know of one young gentleman who has quite lost caste with them since he joined the 'Yankee Society,' as they term it."

As a "Worthy Templar" Mary pledged total abstinence from spirituous liquor, and "To safely keep all money of the Lodge, and pay the same only on the order of the Worthy Chief Templar and Worthy Secretary."

It is likely that at about this time she met and developed a relationship with Clarence Clarenville Ford, the son of Fairfax merchant Edward R. & Julia Ford. Mary and Clarence were married in Washington, D.C. on January 29, 1869. They returned to Fairfax and resided with Bleeker Canfield. Mary appears not to have told Jacob Ellis of her marriage as she continued to sign her name as "Mary E. McBride" on her school reports.

The Freedmen’s Schools in Fairfax County, in particular the teachers, were entirely dependent on funding from the Society of Friends in Philadelphia, who in turn relied on donations from their membership and the public.
“Once again I come with our appeal for the colored people, feeling assured that you still feel an interest in their welfare. I suppose you are aware there is a system of “free schools” established in Virginia, but generally the salaries are too small to induce a good teacher to risk her health and pay expenses. The trustees are not generally anxious to keep up the “colored” schools, as funds are otherwise appropriated. Last winter the school here was kept but two months and then dropped. Many of the leading colored men have appealed to me to take the school, but as I could not board at home, it being two miles distant, and as board is so extravagantly high in the village, I cannot consent to do it without help from the Friends. Having had experience, I feel confident of raising the school to its former flourishing condition, though I may sacrifice some home comforts by not keeping our own neighborhood school - yet I am willing to do so.

I do not know how this will be received; you may feel that your labors have ceased in this direction, but I assure you I shall try to make it a real benefit to the school if you can aid it. If your Society can give ten dollars per month, I think the public fund will be twenty-five per month more, though it may run short; I am willing to risk the balance. The people are anxious the school shall be opened as soon as possible, so please let me hear from you as soon as possible.”

In July 1869, Virginia voters ratified a new constitution, which notably gave all male citizens above the age of 21 the right to vote and established a system of free schools for all children between the ages of 5 and 21. The new constitution took effect in January 1870. That year, the Freedmen’s Bureau school at Fairfax Court House was closed. That same year a new African American free school was established.

Under intense pressure from southern whites, Congress dismantled the Freedmen’s Bureau in 1872. The Bureau, although a relatively short-lived, understaffed and underfunded, did provide initial opportunities for African Americans. By far their most lasting legacy was the establishment of over 1,000 schools throughout the south and several black colleges, such as Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee and Howard University in the District of Columbia. The Freedmen’s Bureau efforts also signaled the beginning of a new era of federal government intervention into the issue of social welfare for its citizens.

His mother, Rachel Dotson, belonging to Com. Jones and raised all his children namely... Mark, Mary, and Martha. This affectionate son who is anxious to her of the family connections and whether they are living or dead, and if not the latter would be glad to communicate with them.

According to the recollections of Wm. Dotson...he had two brothers, Robert and David, of whom he has never heard anything and is particularly anxious to learn something of them. If they are living and he can communicate with them in any manner, he is still willing to do the duty of a son and a relative and asks that you be kind enough to attend to this matter as it is well known that the family of Commodore Jones of the U.S. Navy [is from Fairfax].

The colored man applying to me appears to be, and I have no doubt is, a man of fine humane feelings and I would be glad to be the means of serving him in any way and hope that he may be able to discover his long lost relations.

Respectfully, Robt. P. Flemming
Editor of the Jefferson Journal

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Alex., Va., September 2, 1865

Capt. G.A. Armes, Supt. &c.

The bearer, Tekoa Seals, col’d., complains that a Mrs. Farr, Farrell, or some such name, is trying to collect rent of her for the time period that she (the owner) was off in the rebel lines.

You will see that no rent is collected for such time, and that Tekoa Seals is not molested by the said Mrs. Farr, or any one acting for her until the matter is decided at these Head Quarters.

Respectfully, &c.
James I. Ferree
Act. Supt. 5th Dist. Va.”

The task of the new agency was monumental. At the time, there was no tradition in the United States of the government taking responsibility for the welfare of any of its citizens, much less the bureaucracy to administer such programs. From the start, the Freedman’s Bureau was understaffed and understaffed. The Bureau employed less than 1,000 people, at its peak, to attend to the welfare of approximately 4 million former slaves. In addition, the Bureau was staffed by soldiers who were woefully unprepared to act as social workers. Some Freedmen Bureau staff were incompetent or even corrupt. However, most were diligent, hardworking and brave. Southerners whites resented the meddling of the Bureau and were often openly hostile to the Freedmen’s Bureau agents and the freedmen themselves.

To illustrate the feeling of some whites toward the Freedmen and the Bureau, 1st Lt. Marcus S. Hopkins, Freedmen’s Bureau agent for Prince William County, wrote to his superiors following an incident between a white man and a former black Union soldier:

“To show you the state of feeling here among many people, (not all) in regard to such a transaction. Dr. C. H. Lambert, the practicing physician of this place, followed the freedman to me, and said that: ‘Subdued and miserable as we are, we will not allow niggers to come among us and brag about having been in the Yankee army. It is as much as we can do to tolerate it in white men.’ He thought, ‘It would be a good lesson to the niggers &c. &c.’ I have heard many similar, and some more violent remarks, on this, and other subjects connected with the

---
Mary E. (McBride) Ford, the teacher of the Freedmen’s School at Fairfax Court House, died August 3, 1865. She and Clarence are both buried in Rock Creek Cemetery, Washington, D.C.

In Fairfax County, the Freedmen’s Bureau ultimately established twelve schools at Accotink (Woodlawn), Andrew’s Chapel, Centreville, Fairfax Court House, Falls Church, Frying Pan (Herndon), Big Falls (Great Falls), Gunn Spring, Lewinsville, Lincoln Village (Lincolnia), Painter’s (located on Ox Road 3 miles south of Fairfax Station), and Vienna.

### Agents of the Freedmen’s Bureau in Fairfax County

#### SUBORDINATE FIELD OFFICES

**ALEXANDRIA**

**Superintendent of Contrabands**

A. Gladwin Oct. 1863–June 1865

**Superintendent**

James I. Ferree (5th District) July–Nov. 1865

Henry E. Alvord Nov. 1865–Jan. 1866

**Superintendent and Subassistant Commissioner**

Samuel P. Lee Jan. 1866–Mar. 1867

Samuel P. Lee (10th Subdistrict) Mar. 1867–Dec. 1868

**Superintendent**

Samuel P. Lee (6th Educational Subdistrict of VA) Jan.–Apr. 1869

**FAIRFAX COURTHOUSE (Fairfax County)**

**Assistant Superintendent**

Capt. George A. Armes Aug.–Sept. 1865

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In March 1863, under intense pressure from northern abolitionist groups, Congress established the American Freedmen’s Inquiry Commission. This commission was charged with investigating the status, condition and capacity of the former slaves freed by the Emancipation Proclamation. The three member commission traveled to Union occupied areas of the South, where they interviewed many former slaves and Union field commanders and witnessed, firsthand, the deplorable conditions of the freedmen. In June 1863, the Commission made a report to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton and recommended that the government help support the former slaves in their transition to life as freedmen.

Congress took up the issue in January 1864, when a bill establishing a “Bureau of Freedmen’s Affairs” was introduced. After more than a year of debate, President Lincoln signed a bill establishing the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands on March 3, 1865. Popularly known as the Freedmen’s Bureau, the new agency was established within the War Department and was “to continue during the present war of rebellion and for one year thereafter.” The powers of the new agency were very broad and included the “supervision and management of all abandoned [and confiscated] lands and the control of all subjects relating to refugees and freedmen from rebel states.” Interestingly, poor whites were also included in the legislation and were to be assisted by the new bureau.

The new agency was to be headed by a commissioner, with assistant commissioners, “for each of the states declared to be in insurrection.” The commissioner and assistant commissioners were all to be appointed by the President. The act further authorized the Secretary of War to immediately issue such provisions, food, clothing, shelter, and fuel as he deemed necessary for the “suffering and destitute refugees.” In addition to providing these basic necessities, the Freedmen’s Bureau attempted to assist former slaves in locating lost relatives, legalizing slave marriages, settling labor disputes (usually with whites), and negotiating labor contracts.

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I write this on behalf of a colored man named Wm. Dotson, a native of Virginia and formerly a slave of Commodore [Thomas ap Catesby] Jones, brother of Commodore Roger Jones, who is particularly anxious to discover the whereabouts of his family connections, to wit:
Fuller, Sacramento, CA, Apr. 12, 1876; div. Oct. 17, 1876; lectured in California on Religion and Temperance; res. Eureka, Humboldt Co., CA 1880; d. May 16, 1891, bur. Veterans Memorial Grove, Yountville, Napa Co., CA.

Rev. Albert Gladwin (1816–1869) b. Apr. 22, 1816, Essex, Middlesex Co., CT; ordained a Baptist Minister, 1867; moved to Alex., VA winter of 1862–63 under the direction of the American Baptist Free Missionary Society of New York; initiated religious meetings and schools among the newly freed slave of Alexandria; accused of racism and harsh treatment of the contrabands (i.e. former slaves); apptd. first Superintendent of Contrabands, Alex., VA, 1863 by the Military Governor, Gen. John P. Slough to deal with the influx of former slaves who had flooded the city after the beginning of the Civil War. Two of his duties were to record the deaths of freedmen and to assist poor and destitute people with coffins, headstones, and burial; helped est. the Freedmen’s Cemetery at Alex., VA in February 1864; relieved as Superintendent in 1865 after he insisting on burying deceased United States Colored Troops (U.S.C.T.) in the Freedmen’s Cemetery instead of the soldiers’ cemetery (Alex. Natl. Cem.); later missionary for the American Baptist Publication Society; d. unexpectedly, Nov. 14, 1869, Laramie, Albany Co., Wyoming Territory; bur. Prospect Hill, Cem., Essex, CT.

Orrin Eugene Hine (1836–1899) b. Triangle, Broome Co., NY, June 28, 1836; son of Elisha and Nancy (Rodger) Hine; educated at Oxford Academy; occ. Teacher; enl. Pvt. Co. E, 50th N.Y. Engrs., Aug. 29, 1861; commissioned a 1st Lt. same date; prom. Capt. Aug. 7, 1862; mustered out City Point, VA, Mar. 6, 1865; breveted Major, Nov. 1865; m. Alma Delano, June 18, 1866, Maine, Broome Co., NY; dau. of Marshall Delano and Lydia Gibson; apptd. Assistant Superintendent, Freedmen’s Bureau for Fairfax Co., Nov. 1866; relieved Mar. 1867; mbr. of the Virginia Constitutional Convention from Fairfax Co. in 1869; postwar occ. Realtor; fndg. mbr. Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, April 15, 1865; on duty with Freedmen’s Bureau Dec. 18, 1865; apptd. Assistant Superintendant, Commissioner, Fairfax County, Aug. 1867; m. Georginia Virginia “Jennie” Speer (1847-1929) 1874, Fairfax, VA; Jennie Speer was a former teacher of the Freedmen’s Bureau School at Manassas; d. June 3, 1910; both are bur. in Rock Creek Cem., Wash., DC.

Winfield Scott Chase (1835-1910) b. October 17, 1835, Palmyra, NY; m. Elizabeth Parkins (1840-1871), 1861, St. Louis, MO; enl. Nov. 22, 1861, at Palmyra as Pvt. Battery L, 1st N.Y. Artillery; apptd. Sgt., date not stated; wded. Battle of Chancellorsville May 2, 1863; trans. April 16, 1864, to the Veteran Reserve Corps (V.R.C.); prom. 2nd Lt. 18th V.R.C., Apr. 23, 1864; m. mbrs. of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, April 15, 1865; on duty with Freedom’s Bureau Dec. 18, 1865; apptd. Assistant, Assistant Superintendant, Commissioner, Fairfax County, Aug. 1867; m. Georginia Virginia “Jennie” Speer (1847-1929) 1874, Fairfax, VA; Jennie Speer was a former teacher of the Freedmen’s Bureau School at Manassas; d. June 3, 1910; both are bur. in Rock Creek Cem., Wash., DC.  

Volunteers and Docents are sought for the city’s historic buildings: Ratcliffe-Allison-Pozzer House, Historic Blenheim and the Civil War Interpretive Center and Fairfax Museum and Visitor Center. Additionally, volunteers may be interested in assisting with walking tours and special events. For information email Susan.Gray@fairfaxva.gov, or call 703-385-8415.

The city has published a free self-guided walking tour brochure that provides a brief history of the city and noteworthy buildings in the Old Town Fairfax Historic District. This brochure is available from the Fairfax Museum and Visitor Center, 10209 Main Street, or call 703-385-8414.

The Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1897. It includes a variety of building and monument types and styles, including:

- Fairfax Courthouse (1800)
- Ratcliffe-Allison House (1812)
- Joshua Gunnell House (c.1830)
- William Gunnell House (c.1835)
- Ford House (c.1835)
- Fairfax Elementary School (1873)*
- Old Fairfax Jail (1885)
- Old Town Hall (1900)
- Marr Monument (1904)

*Fairfax Elementary School was converted into the Fairfax Museum & Visitor Center in 1992.

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Select historic buildings are open during city special events, including the Chocolate Lovers Festival, Civil War Weekend, Independence Day Celebration, Fall Festival and Festival of Lights and Carols. To arrange group tours of city-owned historic buildings email Susan.Gray@fairfaxva.gov or call 703-385-8414.

Revised: 7/24/2016

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**Clarence Clarenville Ford** (1845-1889) was born in Pennsylvania in 1845. He served as Virginia’s first mayor from 1890 to 1900; President of the Virginia McKinley Club in 1897, d. Sept. 19, 1899, Vienna, Fairfax Co., VA; bur. Arlington Natl. Cem.


**Mary Elizabeth McBride** (1847-1912) was born in Pennsylvania in 1847. She married Clarence Clarenville Ford on January 29, 1869 in Washington, D.C. Clarence was the son of Edward Rodolph and Julia F. Ford, and the brother of Antonia Ford. In 1780, they were residing at Fairfax Courthouse in the home of Bleeker Canfield. They had one child, Charles Vernon Ford b. August 9, 1871, C. Vernon Ford was the Commonwealth’s Attorney for Fairfax County from 1897 until his death in 1922.

Mary’s eye condition persisted well after her days as a teacher and was chronic enough for her to seek treatment. In 1874, the Fairfax News reported:

“Mrs. Ford, wife of C.C. Ford, Esq., late of Fairfax County, and now residing in Washington, narrowly escaped death by poisoning on Saturday. Mrs. Ford had been taking some pills containing arsenic for the benefit of her eyes, and by mistake took an overdose of them, they having got mixed with other pills.”

**Clarence Clarenville Ford** (1845-1889) worked in the U.S. Foreign Service from 1876 until his death in 1889. He was Consul at La Union, El Salvador in 1878 and Consul General at Saguaro Grande and Havana, Cuba in 1882 and 1885, respectively. He died of kidney disease at Eckington, the home of Winfield S. Chase, in Washington, D.C., on May 28, 1889. Chase was a former Assistant Commissioner of the Freedmen’s Bureau at Fairfax Court House. Chase had married Jennie Speer, a native of Fairfax County and the former teacher of the Freedmen’s School at Manassas, Virginia and a friend to Mary McBride.


**John A. Ross** (1844-1921) w. Clermont, OH; d. Las Vegas, NM; enl. Co. G, 48th Ohio Vol. Inf. 1861, Dec. 1861, age 17; prom. date unk. to Sg’t.; trans. as 1st Lt. to 107th United States Colored Troops; served as Assistant Superintendent, from March 1866 to Nov. 4, 1866; unfortunately, he kept very bad records of his activities; m/1 Martha; m/2 Mina DONNELLS (1860-1940) c. 1885; Engineer on the Ohio & Mississippi Railroad; moved to Las Vegas, NM c. 1885; occ. Santa Fe R.R. Engr.; mbr. Sherman Post G.A.R.; bur. Riverview Cem., Seymour, Jackson Co., IN.


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**Local historians Jim Lewis and Chuck Mauro will discuss Portals Through Time,” about Miss Tubman on the Eastern shore, in Auburn, New York and the people with whom she interacted.**

**Saturday, April 29, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. 17th annual Fairfax Civil War Day**

Living history programs, infantry and cannon firings, scholarly talks, military drills, historic house tours, Civil War music, wagon rides, youth activities, barbecue and more! Admission: $5/adults; $3/youth, 12 and under.

**Saturday, May 20, 2 p.m. “Harrriet Tubman: Move or Die”**

**Saturday, February 25, 2 p.m. “A Slave No More: Lewis Lee of Fairfax Court House”**

Retired educator Wes Bouchard will unfold the incredible story of a mulatto slave related to Blenheim’s Willcoxon family, his escape from slavery and the choices he made as a free man.

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On September 22, 1862, one week after the Battle of Antietam, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed that effective January 1, 1863, “all persons held as slaves within any state…in rebellion against the United States…shall be then, and thence forward, forever free.”

At the time, the Emancipation Proclamation was largely symbolic as it would be more than two years before the Civil War came to an end. For the vast majority of the now former slaves in the South, while legally free, it would be years before they were actually free. Even after the war ended in April 1865, some were still held in bondage against their will, for months, or years afterward:

“Bureau R.F. & A.L.
Headquarters 5th District of Va.
Alex., Va., Sept. 4, 1865

Special Order No. 9

Capt. Geo. A. Armes, will immediately proceed to the house of Mrs. Nancy Ratcliffe and bring away the two colored children Sarah and Fannie Harper, who are still held as slave by said Mrs. R., and deliver them to this office. If it is necessary to take them by force – or even bloodshed – let it be done. The purpose of the Bureau must and shall be carried out as far as it is in the power of the Supt. of this District.

Capt. Armes will attend to this matter in person and if he has nor