

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Oakland Baptist Cemetery

Other names/site number: Oakland Church Lot; VDHR No. 100-5339

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

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

VLR Listed:
12/14/2017

NRHP Listed:
9/4/2018

2. Location

Street & number: 4195 West Braddock Road

City or town: Alexandria State: VA County: Independent City

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___ B ___ C ___ D

<p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title: <u>Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u> State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____ Signature of commenting official:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>Title :</p>	<p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

FUNERARY: Cemetery

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

FUNERARY: Cemetery

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

NO STYLE

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: STONE: Marble, Granite, Limestone; METAL: Bronze; CONCRETE

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery, founded around 1897, historically was a part of The Fort, a village formed by emancipated African Americans on the site of the Civil War-era Fort Ward in the City of Alexandria, Virginia. The cemetery began as a family burial site used by the Burr and Harriet McKnight Shorts extended family. During the 1930s, a portion of the family burial ground was conveyed to the Oakland Baptist Church, which owns it through today. Rather than having a formal plan or design, the cemetery began as an unconstructed place for African Americans to bury their loved ones. The Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery is located along the eastern edge of the now City-owned Fort Ward Park and is on property donated by the Adams family. Located in a gently sloping area, the cemetery's lot size is approximately 20,599 square feet. The acreage is approximately .47 acre. Mature cedar trees line the cemetery's perimeter. An estimated 50 grave and commemorative markers have been placed within the cemetery's largely grassy area.¹ The materials used for the markers include bronze, marble, granite, and limestone. The graves, markers, and headstones of locally prominent families are found within the cemetery. Several artifacts that exist within the cemetery indicate some of the religious and

¹ Richard T. Eisenhour, *Oakland Baptist Church Alphabetized Markers*, completed survey under the auspices of a George Washington University/Alexandria Archaeology course instructed by Pam Cressey called "Field and Laboratory Research in Archaeology" (July 18, 1991).

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moral convictions of those buried there.² Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery is the only known surviving, privately-owned, African American cemetery in Alexandria. There are no non-contributing resources on the property.

Narrative Description

Location and Setting

The Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery is located in northwestern Alexandria and is a short distance south of Interstate 395. The cemetery is surrounded on its north, west, and south sides by land now owned and managed by the City of Alexandria as part of Fort Ward Park and Museum. The east side of the cemetery backs up to privately owned residential lots. Situated on a gently sloping hillside, the cemetery is surrounded on its north, east, and south sides by large cedar trees. Established around 1897, the cemetery served The Fort's residents and their descendants as an active burial ground through the 1980s and remains often visited today.

Currently, access to the cemetery is by way of the main entrance to Fort Ward Park, a short distance southwest of the cemetery. From the entry driveway, a road forks to the east and leads to the park's maintenance area located southeast of the cemetery. Signage at the fork points visitors toward the cemetery, which is off the maintenance area road to the east. An interpretive display, part of a series throughout the park, stands a short distance from the access road in a grassy area outside the cemetery's fencing. The interpretive display provides information about the history of The Fort community and the cemetery, including important African American leaders associated with it.

Fort Ward was constructed in July-September 1861, immediately after the Union Army's defeat at the Battle of First Bull Run. It was named for Commander James H. Ward, the first Union naval officer to die in the war. Throughout the Civil War, Fort Ward and other fortifications in northern Virginia and Maryland protected Washington DC from Confederate invasion. Fort Ward never came under attack and was abandoned in December 1865. The Fort Ward Park and Museum opened to the public on May 30, 1964, as part of Alexandria's commemoration of the Civil War's centennial. Since then, Fort Ward Park has been cited as one of the best Civil War restoration/preservation projects in the mid-Atlantic region, as well as the flagship of the series of earthworks known as the Defenses of Washington.³

Although the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery is not part of today's Fort Ward Park, the historic fortification itself was central to development of the Reconstruction-era freedpeople's community that colloquially became known as The Fort. During the war, thousands of African Americans moved to Union-occupied territory in northern and eastern Virginia and the promise of freedom. Their settlements typically grew up along the outskirts of Union fortifications such

² Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, "Oakland Baptist Church and Cemetery," *African American Historic Sites Database*, accessed July 24, 2017, published online at <http://www.aahistoricsitesva.org/items/show/315>.

³ City of Alexandria, "The Fort: A Post-Civil War African American Community," published online at <http://www.alexandriava.gov/fortward>.

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as Fort Ward. In the war's immediate aftermath, populations of these settlements swelled as African Americans sought to reunite with family members, find work, and establish themselves as freed persons. The experiences of these families, still etched into the park's landscape in the form of building foundations, cemeteries, cultivated plants, roads and other features, help to tell part of the story of what life was like for African Americans living in Alexandria from Reconstruction into the Civil Rights era. Some historic resources, such as headstones for burials located on what once were mixed residential and agricultural lots, are easily identifiable and clearly indicate the presence of the families that lived and died there. Other resources now hidden from view, such as burial sites whose markers are gone and building foundations that are below grade, require professional archaeological investigation before they can be given appropriate preservation and interpretation. In addition to the resources present in the cemetery, some of those who lived at The Fort until the early 1960s still reside in or near Alexandria and are willing to share their experiences. The memories and histories of these residents and their families help to instill the physical remains of the past with meaning for those using the park and viewing the cemetery today.⁴

In addition to the park's historical association with community residents, actions taken by the City on land within Fort Ward Park have had a direct effect on conditions within Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery. As the cemetery now can only be accessed by passing through Fort Ward Park, the relationship between cemetery conditions and park operations is particularly evident to anyone visiting the cemetery.⁵

Despite hardships associated with the 1960s relocation of The Fort's residents to make way for creation of Fort Ward Park, Oakland Baptist Church and its cemetery survive and stand as symbols of the self-sufficiency, integrity, and longevity of this distinctive African American community.⁶ Because it is the only known, surviving, privately-owned African American cemetery in Alexandria, the memories and contributions of those interred there should be recognized, celebrated, and commemorated.

Detailed Description

The cemetery occupies a .47-acre lot that for the most part is grassy with small groups of trees here and there. An entry gate is right-of-center in the chain-link fence that extends along the cemetery's west side. Although there are an estimated 50 grave and commemorative markers within the area designated for the cemetery, one of the major concerns of the descendants is that there are an unknown number of unmarked and unidentified graves also within the cemetery. This is based on oral testimonies of people who once lived at The Fort and are still living.⁷

⁴ Doug Appler, *Inventory of Historical Resources – Fort Ward Park. Inventory of Historical Resources – Fort Ward Park*, on file at the City of Alexandria, Virginia, working draft as of September 10, 2009.

⁵ Appler, *Inventory of Historical Resources – Fort Ward Park*.

⁶ "Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery," Preliminary Information Form, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA.

⁷ Krystyn R. Moon, *Finding The Fort: A History of an African American Neighborhood in Northern Virginia, 1860s -1960s*, University of Mary Washington (September 2014), p. 62.

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The cemetery occupies an area that has landscaped sloping hills and greenery created when Fort Ward Park was established. While at certain times of the year this is a beautiful view, in the past that landscaping has caused water runoff and erosion that have disrupted the graves and markers of many of those buried here. More recently, berms have been added to direct water away from the cemetery. The Trustees of the Oakland Baptist Church continue to seek resources that will assist with the prevention of further erosion and deterioration of the cemetery.

According to a survey completed by Richard T. Eisenhour in 1991, under the auspices of a George Washington University Alexandria archaeology course instructed by Pam Cressey called "Field and Laboratory Research in Archaeology," there are 62 marked graves and an unknown number of unmarked graves. The earliest marked burial identified was for J. W. Terrell (marker 26), who died May 25, 1925. The last person buried there was Annabella Campbell (marker 43), who died July 29, 1986. Members of several locally prominent families were buried in the Oakland Baptist Cemetery. Some of them are the Rusts, Wanzers, and Randalls.⁸

The grave markers, some of which are broken or partially buried, are placed in no specific burial pattern. Several of the markers have inscriptions that exemplify family traditions and sentiments of endearment. Many of the families used the same marker or headstone with several names inscribed. For example, the names of Rebecca R. Wanzer, Mary Hawthway, "Baby Thomas," and "Baby Ray" were written on one headstone; another headstone bears the names of Fredericka Rust, Willie Rust, Cora Rust, and Mary Rust (see Photo 13), while Joan and Bethea Rust also share a headstone. Several markers are machine-engraved, such as the Rusts', while others have hand-cut inscriptions. Contemporary markers were documented as block style, smaller in stature, with white marble vertical slabs with rounded tops. Plastic vases with plastic flowers are found on many of the graves. Floral carvings and crosses are found on many of the older markers and are indicative of the religious faith of those interred.⁹

Graves, markers, and headstones of prominent families date back to the late nineteenth century. James William Terrell, a founder of the Oakland Baptist Church, and his wife, Burney McKnight Terrell, are two of the first people known to have been buried in the cemetery (see Photo 9). No burials have taken place here since 1986, but many of the remaining families who once lived at The Fort visit the graves and put flowers on them.

Several residents of The Fort were founders of Oakland Baptist Church, which is located about one mile southeast of the cemetery at the intersection of King Street and Braddock Road. The congregation started worshiping as Oak Hill Baptist Mission in 1888 and moved to its current location in 1893. Some descendants of The Fort's original families continued to own their land through the early 1960s, when the City of Alexandria established Fort Ward Park and Museum. Residents of this neighborhood included the Adams, Ashby, Jackson, Javins, Shorts, McKnight and Terrell families, and several others.

⁸ Eisenhour, *Oakland Baptist Church Alphabetized Markers*.

⁹ Eisenhour, *Oakland Baptist Church Alphabetized Markers*.

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Today the cemetery lies within a City-designated Maximum Cultural Resource Protection Area (MCRPA). Numerous burial sites have been identified by the City of Alexandria’s Archaeological Office of Historic Preservation.¹⁰ Many fallen and broken headstones mark burials as well or are nearby. For example, the headstone for Cornelia Spencer, engraved with the words “mother/ born in Jefferson Texas 1842 – Died October 13, 1897” is placed against a tree. In addition to this evidence, which creates some locational focus and corresponds with the visible headstones, is the oral history of Sgt. Lee Thomas Young. He recalls that, by 1947, there were 17 or 18 gravesites between his house (immediately south of the cemetery) and the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery, and that the markers generally were old and broken during the time he lived at The Fort. That the stones were broken over sixty years ago, and that the remaining stones are in such poor shape, makes it seem likely that more markers may have been lost over the years.¹¹

Recently the woodlands surrounding the cemetery have been in serious decline. Tree count is down by one-quarter or more, based on a survey of approximately 600 trees in the park. No new trees or shrubs have been planted since 2010 due to ground disturbance concerns related to unknown archaeological resources outside the cemetery’s fencing. Now that more information is known about the archaeological resources and a process has been established for ground disturbing activities as part of the park’s management plan, new trees and shrubs can be planted.¹²

Although the last person was interred in the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery in 1986, descendants still gather to commemorate those who are buried there and have voiced their concerns about the work that needs to be done to restore the broken headstones, eliminate the runoff that causes erosion, and continue maintenance of the cemetery in general.¹³

Names, Dates, Ages, and Markers of Those Interred in the Cemetery

Listed below are the names found on the surviving grave markers in the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery. The documented ages of those buried in the cemetery range from a three-month-old infant to a 94-year-old female, Goldie M. Wanzer. Ms. Wanzer was born in 1881 and passed away in 1975, which means she lived through the Jim Crow era, segregated schools, inadequate health care systems, makeshift burial sites, the Civil Rights movement, and the hardships associated with these historical events. The average age of persons buried here was 63 years.¹⁴

<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Marker Number</u>
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¹⁰ *Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan*, October 2014, Final Draft, on file at City of Alexandria, VA.

¹¹ Alexandria Legacies Project: *Interview with Sgt. Lee Thomas Young*, March 7, 2009. Interviewer: Pam Cressey. Transcriber: Gabby Faundez

¹² *Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan*, 2014.

¹³ Moon, *Finding the Fort*, 252.

¹⁴ Eisenhour, *Oakland Baptist Church Alphabetized Markers*.

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<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Marker Number</u>
Baby Thomas	Unknown	Unknown	3 months	(29)
Bennett	Evette D.	1984 -1984 (3 months)		(24)
Blackburn	Maria	1841 - Oct. 10, 1925	84	(27)
Campbell	Annabelle	Nov. 28, 1927 - July 29, 1986	59	(43)
Chambers	Ethel	May 30, 1889 - March 9, 1977	88	(45)
Crone	John	Died Feb. 28, 1969	78	(25A)
Crone		Died? 1948 (?)	Unknown	(25)
Dorey	Clarence	--	Unknown	(1A)
Douglass	John	--	Unknown	(41)
Douglass	Lula	--	Unknown	(41)
Fitzhugh	Virginia	Died Jan. 18, 1918	65	(52)
Grant	Anne Bell	Dec. 7, 1908 - Nov. 16, 1980	72	(30)
Hall	Evelyn N.	June 5, 1930 - Nov. 17, 1981	51	(42)
Hall	Mary M.	Feb. 23, 1892 - Aug. 28, 1961	69	(42)
Harris	Gladys	April 26, 1920 - Oct. 31, 1969	49	(22)
Hawthway	Mary	--	Unknown	(29)
Henry	Jean C.	1928 - 1985	57	(12)
Henry	Rev. Frank	April 12, 1904 - July 26, 1963	59	(35)
Henry	Clarence	Died Sept. 16, 1936	Unknown	(36)
J.	J.	--	Unknown	(18)
Javins	W. E.	June 15, 188 - Feb. 27, 1907	Unknown	(51)
Jones	W. Strother	Died Jan. 31, 1937	Unknown	(49)
Lewis	Russell	Jan. 1929 - Jul. 1929	Unknown	(6)
Lewis	Minnie	Nov. 1886 - Aug. 1	Unknown	(6)
Mallory	Sarah	Dec. 29, 1901 - Oct. 4, 1969	68	(34)
Mallory	William Buck	Died July 28, 1974	Unknown	(33)
Moore, Rev.	Samuel Thomas Family	1868-1956, (1) (Rev. Moore	88	(1)
Morgan	Lucille T. R.		Unknown	(17)
Penn	James Finley	July 1, 1911-Dec. 24, 1970	59	(31)
Randall	Irene Oleander	(?), 1927 - 1980,	53	(11)
Randall	William J., Sr.	April 9, 1888 - Aug. 17, 1946	58	(9)
Randall	Mamie W.	July 30, 1887 - Feb. 7, 1950	63	(9)
Randall	L. J.	May 1, 1926 - March 13, 1973	47	(10)
Rollins	Estelle Roy	1914-1937	23	(18)
Roy	Earnest E.	Jan. 12, 1911 - Sept. 23, 1973	62	(19)
Roy	Elnora	1890 - 1936	46	(16)
Rust	Herman J.	Jul. 12, 1930 - Dec. 21, 1979	49	(13)

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<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Marker Number</u>
Rust	John	1900-1951	51	(14)
Rust	James S.	1888-1951	63	(28)
Rust	Bertha	1904-1946	42	(14)
Rust	Isabelle	1891-1973	82	(21)
Rust	Fredericka	--	Unknown	(29)
Scales	Everett, Jr.	April 17, 1970 - August 2, 1970	Unknown	(23)
Smith	A.	Died 189 (?)	Unknown	(4)
Spence	Cornelia	1842-Oct. 13, 1897	55	(50)
Terrell	J. W.	Died May 25, 1925	72	(26)
Terrell	Burney	Died July 4, 1930	82	(26)
Thomas	Baby	--	Unknown	(29)
Unknown	Unknown		Unknown	(5)
Unknown	Unknown		Unknown	(15)
Unknown,	Unknown		Unknown	(3)
W.	F.		Unknown	(38) ¹⁵
W.	R.		Unknown	(40)
W.	J.		Unknown	(39) ¹
Wanzer	William	March 4, 1883 – Sept. 1, 1950	67	(7)
Wanzer	Roland R., Sr.	Apr. 18, 1909 - Apr. 9, 1978	69	(4)
Wanzer	Charlotte, B.	November 30, 1900 - May 21, 1976	76	(48)
Wanzer	Gladys	Feb. 4, 1908 - May 18, 1982	74	(46)
Wanzer	Clarence, Sr.	Feb. 1, 1897 - July 17, 1980	83	(47)
Wanzer	M. Goldie	April 1881 - April 1975	94	(8)
Wanzer	Rebecca		Unknown	(29)

Integrity Analysis

The Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery retains integrity of location, with boundaries that were first defined in 1939 when the church acquired the property and modified only once since then due to a land exchange with the City of Alexandria during the 1960s.¹⁶ The cemetery has a high level of integrity of association. As the only known, surviving, privately-owned African American cemetery in Alexandria, it is directly associated with the history of Fort Ward and, later, The Fort, from the Civil War-era settlements established by African Americans seeking

¹⁶ Moon, *Finding the Fort*, 243. According to Moon, the City of Alexandria and Oakland Baptist Church exchanged ½ of .47 acre of land in 1969, with the church trading to the City a portion of land donated by Samuel Javins when the cemetery was established and the City trading to the church a portion of land purchased in 1963 from heirs of Bernice Terrell.

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freedom, through Reconstruction, Jim Crow segregation, and the Civil Rights movement. The cemetery is the resting place for some of the founders and other residents of The Fort and Oakland Baptist Church.¹⁷

With regard to setting, the historic resources within the cemetery itself retain their historic spatial relationships and the informal pattern of burials. The wider setting was altered considerably when the Fort Ward Park and Museum were created, which resulted in demolition of the African American community that had been associated with The Fort since Reconstruction. Offsetting this, however, is the fact that numerous archaeological resources associated with The Fort are still extant within the parklands, as well as several marked burials. The cemetery's more immediate setting has been altered by landscaping intended to direct water runoff away from the cemetery.

The cemetery's integrity of design, workmanship, and materials have been affected by loss of some markers through neglect, erosion, or other factors. The historic markers that remain are representative of a range of periods in the cemetery's history, from the early twentieth century to the much more recent past. Their design and materials are indicative of funerary practices of the African American community over more than a century. Workmanship of the grave markers illustrates both vernacular, hand-cut examples and mass produced, machine-cut examples, which are indicative not only of changing technology used in creation of markers but also economic circumstances for the families who commissioned or purchased them.

Continued use of the cemetery by descendants of the founding families have assured that the cemetery's character-defining qualities have been preserved, which are vital to the cemetery's high integrity of feeling as a cemetery that originated as a family burying ground during the late nineteenth century and later became a church and community cemetery. The cemetery also is the best tangible cultural resource representative of a community where families survived segregated schools, hospitals, and public facilities. The legacy associated with the founders of The Fort and their descendants is priceless. The area surrounding the cemetery is a location where families worshiped and played together and where families lived, achieved and died. Every effort should be made to preserve this legacy as well as the cemetery itself.

¹⁷ Fort Ward Park Heritage Trail Brochure (City of Alexandria, Virginia, n.d.), published online at [https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/historic/info/archaeology/Fort HeritageTrailBrochure.pdf](https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/historic/info/archaeology/Fort%20HeritageTrailBrochure.pdf).

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: AFRICAN AMERICAN
SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

C. 1879 – 1968

Significant Dates

1897

1929

1965

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery, a historic African American cemetery, is locally significant under Criterion A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: African American and Social History. The cemetery played an important role in the development of Alexandria's historic African American community from the late 19th through the late 20th century. The Oakland Baptist Church continues to own the cemetery, and the property meets Criteria Consideration A and Criteria Consideration D due to its historical importance related to the development and legacy of the local African American community after the Civil War and through the Reconstruction, Jim Crow segregation, and Civil Rights eras. The period of significance is from c. 1879-1968, beginning with the extended McKnight and Shorts families purchasing the lands that eventually included the cemetery and ending with the traditional 50-year cutoff for properties where significant activities have continued into the more recent past; this end date is applicable because burials continued here until 1986. Significant dates are 1897, the earliest known burials in the cemetery that have been identified to date; 1929, when the Oakland Baptist Church acquired the cemetery; and 1965, when the last families living at The Fort relocated due to creation of the Fort Ward Park and Museum. This cemetery represents a history, not unlike African American history across Virginia, where African Americans organized daily activities, economic resources, and methods for preserving life and burying their family members within constraints, limited resources, and segregated conditions. It is the only known, surviving, privately-owned, African American cemetery in Alexandria, and is the place where the contributions made by those who lived and died there are memorialized and preserved.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion A: Ethnic Heritage: African American and Social History

The Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery evolved out of a need for the African American residents of The Fort to have their own burial ground. Prior to emancipation, enslaved African Americans had been buried wherever and in whatever fashion their owner chose; family members often were separated; and the religious or moral sensibilities of African Americans themselves were rarely considered. After the Civil War, freedom of religion and access to land ownership became touchstones for freed people as they established communities and reunited with relatives. These remained principal motivations for successive generations as well through the long decades of Jim Crow segregation and the advent of the Civil Rights movement.¹⁸

¹⁸ Eric Foner: *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 5.

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In the freed people's community that grew up around Fort Ward, it is not known where African Americans were buried during and immediately after the war years. It is reasonable to suppose that at least some may have been buried at what became known as the Contrabands and Freedmen's Cemetery in Alexandria (NRHP 2012). This nationally significant cemetery is one of the only known burial grounds in the United States to be established and administered by the federal government for the interment of African American "contrabands," the wartime term used to describe those who had fled slavery, and freedmen during and immediately following the Civil War. The U.S. government closed the cemetery in 1869.

In 1865, Fort Ward was closed and its salvageable materials auctioned off, although the extensive earthworks remained.¹⁹ Between 1866 and 1870, African Americans continued to live in the freedpeople's community that had been established around the fort and they eventually occupied the lands within the fortification as well. For several decades after the Civil War, African Americans experienced various difficulties obtaining clear title to property they occupied and improved; much of this owed to the federal government's failure to assist with their long-term resettlement. During the war, lands that the federal government had confiscated from Southern owners in open rebellion had been given to freed people to work as their own, with the promise that they could retain ownership. Famously, in January 1865, Union General William Tecumseh Sherman had issued Field Order No. 15, which ordered that roughly 400,000 acres in South Carolina and Florida be redistributed in 40-acre allotments to newly emancipated African Americans. Less than a year later, however, President Andrew Johnson rescinded the order, over the objections of the head of the Freedmen's Bureau, and returned most of the land to prewar owners or their heirs.²⁰ A similar situation occurred with the Freedman's Village established by Congressional order on the grounds of Arlington, Confederate General Robert E. Lee's plantation in northern Virginia. The first attempt to close the village occurred in 1868. Although residents successfully fought off that effort, by the 1880s, evictions began and the village fully closed by 1900. People who had lived on and improved the land since the 1860s received compensation, but this was based on an 1868 appraisal and a contrabands fund tax collected during the war, not current market values.²¹

In Alexandria, residents of The Fort had more success in obtaining clear title to parcels around and within the vacated Fort Ward, although it appears to have taken several years to accomplish. For example, by about 1870, Burr Shorts was living at The Fort and, by 1879, land records show that he and his wife, Harriett Stuart McKnight Shorts, began purchasing in increments what eventually added up to 10 acres on the old fortification's east side. The Shorts paid for a survey of their land in 1879 and a deed was recorded in 1884.²² The Shorts-McKnight extended family was one of the principal founding families of The Fort. They are known to have established a

¹⁹ Wanda S. Dowell, "Fort Ward," National Register Nomination (March 30, 1981), p. 8-2.

²⁰ Barton Myers, "Sherman's Field Order No. 15," *New Georgia Encyclopedia* (June 8, 2017), published online at <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/shermans-field-order-no-15>.

²¹ National Park Service, "Freedman's Village," Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial (no date), published online at <https://www.nps.gov/arho/learn/historyculture/emancipation.htm>.

²² *Finding the Fort*, p. 49-50. Appler cites Fairfax County Deed Book E No. 5, p. 578-579 as the land record associated with this transition; see Appler, *Inventory of Historical Resources – Fort Ward Park*, 22.

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small family burial ground on their land at some point, and this was the origin of what became the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery. Three McKnight family graves are the earliest marked burials identified to date in the cemetery and all predate church ownership of the land: James W. Terrell and Maria McKnight Blackburn (1925), and Burney McKnight Terrell, wife of James and sister of Maria (1930). All are near the northern end of the cemetery's fenced area, which was bequeathed to Burney by her mother.²³ Family members continued living on some of the original Shorts land until creation of Fort Ward Park during the early 1960s.

Establishing their own churches and cemeteries were among the top priorities, along with education, for emancipated African Americans and their children, not only to meet practical needs but because these achievements represented cultural autonomy and self-sufficiency. Thus, Oak Hill Baptist Mission, started in 1888, was the first church with a documented association with The Fort. The congregation originally met somewhere at the former Oak Hill plantation. In 1891, the Baptist Ministers' Council recognized Oak Hill Baptist Mission as a regular missionary Baptist church. Later that same year, Trustee Charles P. Roy purchased land on behalf of the church from member Brooks Johnson; this property is located about a mile southeast of the current Fort Ward Park. Other founding members of the congregation included Clara Adams, William Carpenter, John Wesley Casey, Maggie Hall, Mollie Nelson, Nancy Shepherd, James William Terrell, Harriett McKnight Shorts, Daniel Simms Sr. and Smith Wanzer. While the frame sanctuary was being constructed, the congregation may have met in the community's one-room schoolhouse (no longer extant). Due to a 1929 fire that destroyed the 1890s church building and the congregation's earliest records, it is not known when the church name changed from Oak Hill Baptist Mission to the Oakland Baptist Church; the current sanctuary was constructed in 1931. A cornerstone on the building reads "Organized 1891/ Built 1893/ Re-Built 1931."²⁴

Burr Shorts died in 1898, leaving all of his holdings to his wife, Harriet Stuart McKnight Shorts. A short time later, she gave two acres to their daughter and son-in-law, Clara Shorts Adams and Robert Adams. In 1912, Harriet Shorts deeded a ¾-acre parcel to her adopted son, Jacob Ball. Harriet's daughter (from her first marriage), Florence McKnight, married Samuel Javins and the couple purchased 2.5 acres in The Fort in 1889. In her will, Harriet Shorts divided her remaining land holdings among her children, including Florence McKnight Javins. Between about 1900 and 1929, various families in The Fort community had purchased burial plots in the cemetery established by the Shorts family as early as the 1890s. In 1929, after the death of his wife, Samuel Javins conveyed the cemetery to Oakland Baptist Church, although a deed was not recorded until 1939.²⁵ Three marked McKnight family graves have been found in the cemetery

²³Fort Ward Park Interpretive Marker, "The Oakland Baptist Church," (City of Alexandria, Virginia, n.d.), published online at <https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/historic/info/archaeology/TrailSignOaklandBaptistChurch.pdf>.

²⁴ Fort Ward Park Interpretive Marker, "The Oakland Baptist Church;" Moon, *Finding the Fort*, p. 125-126.

²⁵ Moon, *Finding the Fort*, p. 49-50, 62-63. According to Moon, the 1929 deed of conveyance was not officially recorded, possibly due to the financial strain imposed by the fire that destroyed the church sanctuary. A second deed of conveyance was officially recorded in 1939.

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and predate church ownership of the land: James W. Terrell, Maria McKnight Blackburn (1925), and Burney Terrell (1930), wife of James and sister of Maria. A later land exchange with the City of Alexandria reconfigured the burial lot to its current dimensions, extending it to the north and shortening the west side.²⁶ Burials at the cemetery continued until 1986. The cemetery continues to be visited today by descendants of those interred here, members of Oakland Baptist Church, and visitors to Fort Ward Park.

Today the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery is locally significant and eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: African American and Social History. The cemetery is a tangible embodiment of the African American community at The Fort from the late 19th century through the late 20th century, a time during which the local residents endured Jim Crow segregation and fought for equality during the Civil Rights movement. The right to dignified burial according to African American cultural traditions is intrinsic to the cemetery's historical significance. Such autonomy, both of a person's own body as well as a family's ability to grieve, had been denied throughout the existence of the institution of slavery. For the freedpeople who populated The Fort, as well as their descendants, the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery, and others like it, became a touchstone of African American cultural heritage. Cemeteries, similar to churches, were among the first places that African Americans could shape according to their own values and mores, without outside interference. Important contributions and sacrifices made by those buried at Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery are recorded on the surviving grave markers. For example, at least two of the grave markers are for veterans of World War II and the Korean War. Herman A. Rust (1930-1979) served in the United States Army and fought in the Korean War. James Finley Penn fought in World War II and died in 1970.

As a community resource, moreover, the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery is significant in the social history of The Fort. A suitable burial ground is among the most urgent needs that a community requires in order to thrive. Although this cemetery began as a family burial ground, it quickly evolved into a community cemetery, with various individuals purchasing from Burr and Harriet Shorts plots for their own relatives. As one of the founding families of the Oakland Baptist Church, the extended McKnight-Shorts family also were deeply involved in one of The Fort's earliest organized institutions. The church provided a place for worship as well as community building, education, charitable outreach, youth activities, and other vital services. The church's 1929 acquisition of the cemetery started by the McKnight-Shorts family represented a logical extension of the congregation's involvement in community improvement, a role that it has maintained through the most recent burial in 1986 and up to the present as a still-active congregation.

²⁶ Moon, *Finding the Fort*, 243; Fort Ward Park Interpretive Marker, "African Americans and the Civil War – Fleeing, Fighting and Working for Freedom," (City of Alexandria, Virginia, n.d.), published online at <https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/historic/info/archaeology/TrailSignsAfricanAmericansAndTheCivilWar.pdf>.

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Detailed Historical Overview²⁷

African Americans established The Fort, a community that persisted after the Civil War through Reconstruction, Jim Crow segregation, and the Civil Rights movement. “The Fort” received its name from its location on and around the remnants of Fort Ward, one of the fortifications built as part of the Defenses of Washington and now the site of an urban park. A series of interpretive markers has been placed at various places throughout the park that highlight important places and community members during The Fort’s history.

At least a small number of African Americans lived in the vicinity of The Fort prior to the Civil War. Philip H. Hooff, who owned the land where Fort Ward was eventually constructed, owned three enslaved men and three enslaved women, according to the 1860 Federal Schedule of Slave Inhabitants. Additionally, the Protestant Episcopal Theological Seminary in Virginia (NRHP 1980) is located a short distance southeast of The Fort, as is the historically associated Episcopal High School. Also known as Fairfax Seminary, the Episcopal Seminary is known to have relied in part on an enslaved workforce to provide cooking and cleaning services for students and to maintain the buildings and grounds. Although the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia did not express open support for slavery, many of its members, including ministers, owned slaves. In June 1861, Union troops occupied the seminary campus and established a military hospital.²⁸

The Civil War opened the door for opportunity and civil rights for African-American Virginians, about 90 percent of whom were enslaved in 1860. In the war’s early months, African Americans who tried to escape slavery by fleeing to Union Army-held territory were returned to their owners under the terms of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. In May 1861, Major General Benjamin F. Butler took command of Fort Monroe near Hampton, Virginia. On May 24, he issued his famous “contraband decision,” which concerned three African Americans who had escaped slavery; most recently, these persons had been working on Confederate defenses. In his statement General Butler refused to authorize their forced return to slavery, equating them as equivalent to “contraband of war” that could be confiscated by the Union Army. Under such classification the Union Army was not under any obligation to return the property. Butler’s decision rested on his argument that the Fugitive Slave Act did not apply in territory no longer part of the United States, which included all areas that had seceded from the Union to form the Confederate States of America. Butler’s decision not only had a lasting impact on the treatment of those who fled slavery by guaranteeing them safe refuge behind Union lines. It also helped to lay the foundation for President Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, which freed all persons held as slaves in the Confederate states (although any enslaved people in Union states and territories were not freed). Especially after these two actions, the upheaval from battles and the federal presence in Alexandria and eastern Fairfax County offered

²⁷ Several scholars have conducted studies of The Fort, its founding families, the community’s development across almost a century, the creation of Fort Ward Park, and the descendants who remain in the area today. These provide the basis for the historical overview herein, and contain far more information than can be conveyed in this nomination. Links to these detailed investigations are available at “The Fort: A Post-Civil War African American Community,” a website located at <https://www.alexandriava.gov/historic/archaeology/default.aspx?id=54262>. Additional reports are available at the Office of Historic Alexandria in Alexandria, Virginia, and at the Department of Historic Resources in Richmond, Virginia.

²⁸ Moon, *Finding the Fort*, 28-29.

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the chance and destination for thousands of African Americans to escape slavery, seek refuge and jobs behind Union lines, and create new lives. The military hospital at the closed seminary near Fort Ward was one such place of employment. At the end of the war in May 1865, African Americans in Alexandria and surrounding areas numbered 10,000, nearly half of whom were under 12 years of age.²⁹

The freed people aided the Union cause by working as hospital attendants, gravediggers, stevedores, teamsters, cooks, laundresses, and in labor gangs to build roads, construct fortifications and trenches, and maintain rail lines. More than 200,000 African American men enlisted in the United States Colored Troops (USCT), and a quarter of those lost their lives fighting for freedom. Many USCT soldiers escaped slavery before enlistment, such as James M. Peters and William Wood. James Peters' son and daughter-in-law, John and Ella (Ashby) Turner moved to The Fort around 1910, while Wood's son and daughter-in-law, Douglass (also born enslaved) and Matilda Wood, were in 1927 the donors for The Fort's Seminary School (now the site of T. C. Williams High School).³⁰

Local tax records from 1866 indicate that at least a few African Americans lived in what was then eastern Fairfax County. By 1870, federal census takers recorded a number of African Americans in the vicinity of the abandoned Fort Ward, an area less developed than the neighborhood surrounding the Fairfax Seminary and Episcopal High School.³¹ From the 1870s through the turn of the 20th century, African Americans purchased land and built homes around the fort and eventually within it as well. These families became connected through shared kinship, marriage, church, and work, particularly at the seminary and historically associated private high school.³²

In 1898, Clara Shorts Adams, daughter of Burr and Harriet Shorts, was deeded two acres from her parents' 10-acre plot. The land was located along Old Braddock Road. A community leader, Clara Adams was a founding member of Oakland Baptist Church in 1891. Clara Shorts also worked as a domestic at the Fairfax Seminary as well; in an oral history interview, her great-nephew, Charles McKnight, recalled that she did not hesitate to voice her opinions to her white employers. In 1898, she and her husband, Robert Adams, donated a ¼-acre parcel of land to the school board of Falls Church for the purpose of building a school for neighborhood children. From the creation of Virginia's statewide public education system in 1870 until the 1960s, the commonwealth's public schools were racially segregated. Although premised on the "separate but equal" doctrine, in reality, schools for white children received the lion's share of public funds set aside for education. African Americans and Virginia Indians had to raise private funds, as well as in-kind donations of land, materials, and labor, to operate schools for their children.

²⁹ Pamela Cressey and Francine Bromberg, "Contrabands and Freedmen Cemetery" National Register Nomination, (March 1, 2012), section 8, p. 12; Rebecca Calonico, "Fort Monroe 2013 Update and Boundary Increase," National Register Nomination (March 15, 2012), section 8, p. 89; Fort Ward Park Heritage Trail Brochure.

³⁰ Fort Ward Park Interpretive Marker, "African Americans and the Civil War." Despite being partially blinded during the war, Peters returned to Prince William County with his wife, Josephine, and they raised 10 children. Wood, who died of illness during the war, was buried at the USCT section of Alexandria National Cemetery.

³¹ Moon, *Finding the Fort*, 10-11, 14.

³² Fort Ward Park Interpretive Marker, "African Americans and the Civil War."

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Situated off the northwest corner of the Adams' property, the 1898 "Colored School Building at Seminary" remained in use until the 1920s; the trace of School House Lane, where the building once stood, is still present in Fort Ward Park.³³

In 1992, Elizabeth Douglas (1919-2014), one of the residents of The Fort, spoke fondly about her education in a one-room schoolhouse during an interview conducted by Dr. Henry Mitchell, Bradford Henderlong, and Patricia Knock:

It was a great big room, and those children, about 40 or 50 children, was in that one room. I have a picture in there. You can see the picture. And then, they used to have the lodge meetings upstairs because it was Odd Fellows and Daughters of Liberty and they had it upstairs. But that big room downstairs was the school we went in. And then, when they had entertainments there, they would have that big room down there for the dancing and all right down there. Of course, I was a little girl, I never attended them, but they had them.³⁴

When Clara Adams died in 1952, she was buried next to her husband on their land in a spot south of today's Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery. In historic deeds, this area is referred to as the "Old Grave Yard." Her grave is marked with a headstone that reads Clara W. Adams; June 2, 1865; Feb. 1, 1952; A Tender Aunt and a Faithful Friend." When Fort Ward Park was established, this area became the park's maintenance yard, despite the presence of the marked burial. Another burial is believed to be in the immediate vicinity, based on the 1923 will of Amanda Clarke, daughter of Harriet Shorts. She requested to be buried "in the little grove on my property," which is thought to have stood at the southeast end of her land and alongside the northern boundary of Robert and Clara Adams' property. Sergeant Lee Thomas Young, who lived in the former 1898 schoolhouse after World War II, recalled seeing several grave markers in the woods between his house and the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery.³⁵ All of this confirms the existence of a small family cemetery outside the church's cemetery's marked boundaries. Archaeologists with the Office of Historic Alexandria have identified several depressions in the ground that are believed to be burials.

Another important contributor to educational opportunities for The Fort's children was Douglass Wood. His father, William Wood, escaped slavery in Fauquier County, Virginia, and served in the United States Colored Troops during the Civil War before dying in an Alexandria military hospital. Born in 1854, Douglass Wood contributed the land for the Seminary School, built during the 1920s to replace the 1898 schoolhouse. So named for its proximity to the Fairfax Seminary, Seminary School was among the approximately 380 public schools built in Virginia under the auspices of the private Julius Rosenwald Fund. Rosenwald, a German-Jewish immigrant and chairman of Sears, Roebuck and Company, and Booker T. Washington met in

³³ Appler, *Inventory of Historical Resources – Fort Ward Park*, 31-32, 35. The land transaction was recorded in Fairfax County Deed Book C-6, p. 139.

³⁴ Dr. Henry Mitchell, Bradford Henderlong and Patricia Knock, *Legacies: Interview with Elizabeth Douglas* (Alexandria, VA), March 28, 1992.

³⁵ Appler, *Inventory of Historical Resources – Fort Ward Park*, 56, 60-61, 76; Moon, *Finding the Fort*, 240. According to Moon, archaeological investigations have identified at least 17 burials in this area.

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May 1911. The two men worked together to establish the Rosenwald Fund, with the Tuskegee Institute providing institutional support. They worked together to create a program for building public schools in former Confederate states to provide educational opportunities for African American children. By Julius Rosenwald's death in 1932, Rosenwald schools provided facilities for one-third of southern African American students.³⁶ In addition to Wood's land donation, The Fort's African American community raised \$1,000 toward the costs of the school's construction. The Rosenwald Fund added \$900, local white residents donated \$50, and the local school board contributed \$4,285. The Seminary School opened in 1927 and remained in use until 1950, by which time The Fort's children were being bussed to segregated schools in Alexandria. According to Fisk University's database of Rosenwald Schools, the Seminary School was an example of a three-teacher plan, which would have had three classrooms as well as an industrial training room.³⁷

In 1959, Madell Casey Belk, granddaughter of Oakland Baptist Church founder John Wesley Casey, and Julia Bradby, a descendant of The Fort's Adams and Roy families, were among 17 plaintiffs in *Jones v School Board of City of Alexandria*. The federal lawsuit, decided by the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, was among many that found fault with the methodologies of local pupil placement boards in deciding where to enroll white and African American children in school. Such boards were established in Virginia after the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* decision found the "separate but equal" doctrine that had been used to justify segregated schools to be unconstitutional. In practice, however, pupil placement boards often continued to decide children's school assignments based on factors other than geographic location and academic performance; race often was a deciding factor. In 1965, City of Alexandria schools desegregated; the same year, T. C. Williams High School opened on the site of the Seminary School. Construction of the much larger school included displacement of several African American property owners, as local resident Frances Terrell recalled years later.³⁸

Other locally important persons associated with Oakland Baptist Church, and buried at the cemetery, include Mollie Nelson, one of the church's founders and a midwife. Born in 1886, she was buried in the cemetery in 1976. Elizabeth Henry Douglas, a descendant of The Fort, remembers:

We had to go right up to Aunt Mollie's house, and you crossed the bridge and go right

³⁶ Fort Ward Park Interpretive Marker, "Within Its Walls – A Foundation for Education and Opportunity," (City of Alexandria, Virginia, n.d.), published online at <https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/historic/info/archaeology/TrailSignWithinItsWalls.pdf>; Bryan Clark Green, *Rosenwald Schools of Virginia* (012-5041) Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2004 (Available at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources), p. E6-E7, E10, Appendix Two, p. 12.

³⁷ Fisk University Rosenwald Fund Card File Database, available online at <http://rosenwald.fisk.edu/?module=search>; Moon, *Finding the Fort*, 152-153, 166-167.

³⁸ Moon, *Finding the Fort*, 216; Fort Ward Park Interpretive Marker, "Within Its Walls;" Justia US Law, *Jones v School Board of City of Alexandria, VA.*, 179 F. Supp. 280 (E.D. Va. 1959), available online at <https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp/179/280/1522544/>; Frances Johnson Colbert Terrell, as quoted in Fort Ward Park Heritage Trail Brochure; Moon, *Finding the Fort*, 166-167. T. C. Williams, a segregationist, ran Alexandria's public schools from 1933-1962.

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up. She wasn't any relation to us, but she was the one that delivered babies all throughout the county.³⁹

Nelson's role as a midwife was one of necessity for African Americans during that time, when many of the hospitals were segregated and many of the families were uninsured. Bringing new life into The Fort guaranteed families that their legacy could continue to grow and thrive; her contributions to the health and happiness of The Fort's residents cannot be enumerated.

Elizabeth Douglas also contributed significantly to the community as a Sunday School teacher at Oakland Baptist Church, singer in the church choir, and role model. She also published a book of poetry in 1998, entitled *Sister Elizabeth Douglas: Her Life and Her Poems*.⁴⁰

The Lewis and Roy families are additional families represented in this cemetery. Minnie Roy Lewis was buried here in 1952; the graves of Earnest and Elnora Roy are also here. Minnie's infant child, Russell Lewis, shares her gravestone. Her husband, James Lewis Sr., worked as sexton and groundskeeper at the Episcopal High School for Boys and the Protestant Episcopal Theological Seminary (aka Fairfax Seminary), and served as a deacon and active member of Oakland Baptist Church for 55 years. Their eldest child, James Lewis, Jr., was born on the school grounds and was employed there until 1941. He then worked as chauffeur and personal assistant to John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers of America. James Lewis continued to assist all UMWA presidents until retirement in 2002 at age 90. He was a pillar of the community, serving on the Oakland Baptist Church's Deacon Board for 55 years (the longest in church history) and chaired the board for 38 of those years. Many of the church's members still discuss his faithfulness to the church and the community.⁴¹

In 1952, Morris Leroy Johnson and Lonnie Richard Johnson, aged 9 and 11, respectively, drowned in the Potomac River after being denied admittance to a publicly owned "whites only" swimming pool. For African Americans who wanted to swim, their only options were to take a bus into Washington DC or to swim in the Potomac River and Hunting Creek. The boys were great-grandchildren of Daniel Simms Sr., one of the founders of Oakland Baptist Church, and Alice Wanzer Simms. The children were buried next to their father, Morris Johnson, at the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery. After the tragedy, the City of Alexandria opened a pool for African Americans, the Johnson Memorial Pool, but continued its policy of racial segregation in public facilities.⁴²

As was demonstrated with the history of public schools that served The Fort, progress toward equal treatment for African Americans often was accompanied by difficult consequences. The integrated T. C. Williams High School, which opened in 1965, was constructed on lands acquired from African American property owners and resulted in demolition of dwellings and

³⁹ Mitchell et al., *Legacies: Interview with Elizabeth Douglas*

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Douglas, *Sister Elizabeth Douglas: Her Life and Her Poems*, EBH & T Associate, 2008.

⁴¹ Fort Ward Park Interpretive Marker, "Within Its Walls;" Fort Ward Park Interpretive Marker, "The Oakland Baptist Church."

⁴² Fort Ward Park Interpretive Marker, Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery."

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other buildings, thus erasing what had been four generations of African American ownership and occupation. The creation of Fort Ward Park followed a similar track.

The boundaries of The Fort were not formally defined as when the settlement began, this area of what was then eastern Fairfax County was rural. By the 1920s, the influences of suburbanization were being felt, with some lands associated with The Fort were sold for residential developments. The projects, however, stalled and during the 1940s The Fort continued to have a rural feeling. By this time, new residents were moving into The Fort, drawn by the mushrooming job opportunities related to World War II and subsequent massive economic expansion. Descendants of original occupants still lived at The Fort and other nearby neighborhoods, principally along Braddock Road, King Street, and Quaker Lane.⁴³

In 1952, the City of Alexandria annexed the portion of eastern Fairfax County that included The Fort. Three years later, the City began buying the lands that included the old Fort Ward earthworks with the intent of creating a public park as part of the City's planning for the Civil War Centennial. During the 1950s, Jim Crow segregation remained entrenched in Virginia, and the City of Alexandria was no exception. Local government was dominated by whites who understood the historic significance of Fort Ward, but overlooked the significance of an almost century-old African American community that had been founded by freedmen and freedwomen and made to thrive despite extremely trying circumstances. Instead, as occurred commonly throughout Virginia at the time, the neighborhood was deemed "blighted" and targeted for urban renewal. The City of Alexandria obtained federal funds for purchasing properties in blighted areas, including The Fort, which required the City to help find housing for people being displaced. Families who had lived at The Fort scattered to other places as their means permitted.⁴⁴

When it came to preservation of historic places, historic preservation theory at this time embraced selection of a single timeframe and "restoration" of a place to its appearance at that time. This approach had gained widespread acceptance and use as a result of the massive, privately-funded Colonial Williamsburg project begun in the 1920s, and also was used at numerous national parks. Landscape features, buildings, roads, and other resources that pre- or postdated the selected time frame were removed, while careful examination of historic records, drawings, and photographs, as well as archaeological investigations, were used to recreate the place's desired historic appearance. As historic preservation became professionalized during the late twentieth century, this approach fell out of favor. What became of The Fort, and Fort Ward, however, is a classic example of the "restoration" approach.

As described in the 1982 National Register nomination of Fort Ward, the City of Alexandria, with assistance from professional archaeologists, restored the fort's Northwest Bastion, including installation of reproduction armament. Underbrush was removed from the entire site, exposing 99 percent of the earthworks. The Outlying Gun Battery and Rifle Trench were left unrestored but identified with signage. The park's entrance gate is a reconstruction, based on original plans

⁴³ Moon, *Finding the Fort*, 11-12, 198-208.

⁴⁴ Moon, *Finding the Fort*, 12-13, 198-208, 231.

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prepared by the Army Corps of Engineers at Fort Belvoir. The park project also included construction of a museum that housed Civil War-era artifacts, offered educational displays about the fort itself and Civil War history more generally, and included a research library. For its efforts, the City was cited for “outstanding achievement” by the National Civil War Centennial Commission, recognition that was granted to just six cities and was thought to be of such importance that it factored into Alexandria’s designation as an All American City in 1964, the same year Fort Ward Park opened to the public. The nomination makes no mention of the community that grew up around and within the fort’s site and was still well-populated when the City initiated the fort’s restoration.⁴⁵

Also left unmentioned in the nomination was the Jackson Family Cemetery, which was located on a small farm established by James F. Jackson in 1894. In addition to family members, the cemetery included plots sold by the Jacksons to other neighborhood residents for burial of their dead. The cemetery was located at the top of a small slope “just outside the abates of the reconstructed fort” with the bastion to the north. It was identified in various property maps and even noted on City maps of the area dating to the early 1960s, and historic records indicate that City employees wanted to remove the burials because they were not considered part of the site’s history. During the early 1970s, Elizabeth Henry Douglas discovered that headstones had been removed from the Jackson Cemetery; in 2012, she recalled that City employees told her that whatever could be sold had been and the remainder thrown away. Limited archaeological testing has indicated that at least 20 burials were in the cemetery.⁴⁶

Despite the demolition of buildings associated with The Fort within the confines of Fort Ward Park, the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery remained in use. As mentioned earlier, the cemetery’s boundaries were finalized due to a land exchange with the City during the fort’s restoration. The church and cemetery have continued to bind together those who had grown up in The Fort and those whose ancestors had lived here, allowing The Fort to live on in memory as well as in the social, religious, cultural, and familial ties of its founding families. New generations of the families who founded The Fort and larger community around the Virginia Theological Seminary (historically known as Protestant Episcopal Theological Seminary) still live nearby today.⁴⁷

These descendants also have assured that the erasure of The Fort from public memory and from interpretation of Fort Ward’s history would not be allowed to stand. Starting in the 1990s, archaeological investigations at and around the fortifications have brought the almost century-long occupation of the site by African Americans back into public awareness. An oral history project began around the same time. Excerpts from these interviews include the following:

Growing up in my beloved Seminary was like living in one great big house. Everyone was family, and if they were not, you thought they were. There were gardens at every home; some people had chickens, a few pigs, horses, and many dogs and cats. The families provided for themselves with these gardens and

⁴⁵ Dowell, “Fort Ward,” 8-2.

⁴⁶ Appler, *Inventory of Historical Resources – Fort Ward Park*, 45-51; Moon, *Finding the Fort*, 62, 236, 239.

⁴⁷ Fort Ward Park Interpretive Marker, “Within Its Walls.”

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livestock, so eating fresh foods was a natural for us. As children, we grew up happy and carefree despite of the happening of the times. -- Gerald Wanzer

I remember that we always had a nice neighborhood and the people were always kind and nice and they looked out for one another...We all lived like one family.
--Julia Adams Bradby

But it was not until 2008-2009, when the City of Alexandria embarked on a master planning process for Fort Ward Park, that descendants of The Fort's founders, other longtime residents, members of Oakland Baptist Church, and the larger community engaged in long-overdue public dialogue with City officials about treatment of The Fort, its residents, and descendants over the past half-century. As noted in a 2009 *Washington Post* article, the City had placed a maintenance area immediately south of Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery, on a site that also included marked burials. Descendant Adrienne Terrell Washington noted that the City once operated a trash transfer station adjacent to the marked grave of Washington's great-grandmother, Clara Adams (1865-1952), as well as, according to historic records, her husband, whose grave is unmarked. In 2009, Washington said, "It's just a shame when you have to go through two locked gates to see one of the graves of your ancestors," then find them surrounded by trucks, tools and piles of mulch.⁴⁸

The City Council established the Ad Hoc Fort Ward Park and Museum Stakeholder Advisory Group to advise the City's parks and recreation department and historic preservation planning staff on the park's future uses. Another group, the Fort Ward and Seminary African American Descendants Society, Inc., also formed to represent the knowledge and interests of descendants associated with The Fort. Also as part of the master planning process, additional archaeological investigations have been conducted to identify locations of burials, dwelling sites, road traces, and other landscape features associated with The Fort. Native American occupation of the site also has been documented through archaeology. The findings of these investigations have provided crucial information in preparation of this nomination.

The gravity and sense of purpose with which the descendants have approached this new era of collaboration with the City of Alexandria was expressed by Adrienne Washington:

The African American Descendants of The Fort and Seminary communities have only one dutiful and determined goal: the restoration and preservation of our sacred heritage. Where others view deeds, cannons, and picnic pavilions, we see people buried on this hallowed ground whose blood runs through our veins and four generations of our families' veins. Countless unmarked graves of our ancestors are buried under the very soil that joggers, dog walkers and Civil War buffs unknowingly tread today. Where others see open space, we see familiar faces, family memories and challenges on land that our ancestors—from slavery to freedom to Jim Crow to urban renewal— families toiled, bought and successively seeded to grow a sustainable community. Through self-sufficiency, small farms, churches, schools and community, values were instilled and

⁴⁸ Marc Fisher, "A Tale of Two Communities," *Washington Post* (March 15, 2009), available online at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/14/AR2009031401907_pf.html.

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they contributed to the prosperity of this city and nation for 150 years. The Fort conveys endurance and excellence.⁴⁹

The Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery As Hallowed Ground

Adopted in January 2015, the Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan Section 1 Summary Report begins with the following affirmation:

The City of Alexandria affirms that significant parts of Fort Ward Park are hallowed ground. Fort Ward Park is home to significant historic and cultural resources, including sacred burial grounds of the families that lived there. The City of Alexandria recognizes that these sacred places and any other burial sites identified in the future shall be protected from disturbance and treated with respect and dignity. The Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan provides a sensitive approach to acknowledging, protecting and interpreting the resources on this property, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places along with guidelines for managing the area's natural resources and compatible passive recreation uses.⁵⁰

The City's affirmation of the various burial grounds within Fort Ward Park, including the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery, acknowledges the historic and cultural resources associated with the families who once lived there. The City also has asserted that any burial sites identified in the future shall be protected from disturbance and treated with respect and dignity. Although Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery is not owned by the City, due to its historic association with Fort Ward Park, the Museum Area Management Plan includes provisions for the cemetery's preservation and interpretation as well.⁵¹

Acknowledgments

Due to the tireless efforts of Deaconess Lena Rainey; Deaconess Frances Colbert (Johnson) Terrell, great-great-granddaughter of Seminary community founders, Wallace and Virginia Roy Wanzer; Michael Williams, Chair of the Oakland Baptist Church Trustees; Adrienne Terrell Washington, great-great-granddaughter of The Fort founder, Harriett Stuart McKnight Shorts, Fort Ward and Seminary African American Descendants Society, Seminary Civic Association, and others, significant progress has been made to restore and maintain the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery. Edwin Haynes, J.D. and Iburia Hall-Haynes, Ph.D., members of the Oakland

⁴⁹ Adrienne Terrell, as quoted in Fort Ward Park Heritage Trail Brochure (City of Alexandria, Virginia, n.d.), published online at <https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/historic/info/archaeology/FortHeritageTrailBrochure.pdf>.

⁵⁰ City of Alexandria, "Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan Section 1 Summary Report" (Adopted January 2015), p. 2, published online at https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/parks/102714FortWardFinalDraft_SecI_Summary_Adopted.pdf.

⁵¹ The final draft of the management plan is published online at https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/parks/102714FortWardFinalDraftManagementPlan_Adopted.pdf.

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Baptist Church, served as consultants for the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery Project and preparers of this document.⁵²

⁵² Adrienne Washington, January 24, 2015.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

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designated a National Historic Landmark
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA; City of Alexandria, VA

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): DHR No. 100-5339

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property approximately .47 acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 38.830010 | Longitude: -77.100340 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |

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3. Zone: Easting: Northing:

4. Zone: Easting: Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery is located on the eastern edge of Fort Ward Park and is bounded on its north, west, and south sides by parkland, and by privately owned property on its east boundary. The true and correct historic boundaries are shown on the attached Sketch Map and Photo Key.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The cemetery was founded around 1897 on property donated by the Adams family. It has served "The Fort" and "Seminary" communities and their descendants since it was founded. The historic boundaries capture the cemetery's setting and all known historic resources, and encompass the cemetery's extent, which is clearly demarcated on all sides from the adjacent parklands by a chain-link fence.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Iburia Hall-Haynes, Ph.D. and Edwin Haynes, J.D.
organization: E B H & T Associates Consulting
street & number: 5908 Ewing Place
city or town: Alexandria state: VA zip code: 22310
e-mail: iburiahaynes@aol.com and edhaynes@aol.com
telephone: 571-371-2637 or 703-203-3462
date: August 2, 2017

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to

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the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery
City or Vicinity: Alexandria
County: Independent City State: Virginia
Photographer: Iburia Hall-Haynes and Edwin Haynes
Date Photographed: 2017

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 20. Directional signage from Fort Ward Park toward the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery, camera facing northeast.
- 2 of 20. View toward cemetery from interpretive display, camera facing east.
- 3 of 20. View from within cemetery toward gate and interpretive display, with Fort Ward Museum building in background, camera facing west.
- 4 of 20. View from within cemetery toward northern boundary, camera facing northeast.
- 5 of 20. View of different types of grave markers within the cemetery, camera facing northeast.
- 6 of 20. Portion of head stone within cemetery.
- 7 of 20. Head stone that has been partially buried due to past erosion issues in the cemetery.
- 8 of 20. Grave marker for Mary M. and Evelyn N. Hall.
- 9 of 20. Grave marker for J. W. Terrell and Burney Terrell.
- 10 of 20. Grave marker for Irene O. Randell.
- 11 of 20. Grave marker for M. Goldie Wanzer.
- 12 of 20. Grave marker for Cornelia Spence; note reference to the Episcopal High School.
- 13 of 20. Collective marker for the Rust family, Fredericka, Willie, Cora, and Mary Rust.

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- 14 of 20. Grave marker for Alice Wanzer Simms and Niel Griffith Simms Sr.
- 15 of 20. Grave marker for Lawrence J. Randall, a World War II veteran.
- 16 of 20. Grave marker for Maria Blackburn.
- 17 of 20. Collective marker for John and Lula Douglas and family.
- 18 of 20. Grave marker for Gladys Wanzer Macke__.
- 19 of 20. Grave marker for Herman A. Rust, a Korean War veteran.
- 20 of 20. Interpretive display for the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery, camera facing east.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Photo of Headstone for Clara Adams

Figure 2. Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery at Fort Ward Park as it appeared on March 18, 2011, in Alexandria, Va. *Washington Post* (March 19, 2011)

Figure 3. Fort Ward Park entrance gate as it appeared on December 28, 2010 (published at <http://tangledtrees.blogspot.com/2010/12/>).

Figure 4. Oakland Baptist Church as it appears today.

Figure 5. Undated picture of Clara Adams, looking left at Fort Ward in Alexandria (published in the *Washington Post* [March 15, 2009]).

Figure 6. City of Alexandria, Virginia, Tax Assessment Map. The Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery occupies Lot 21.03.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Figure 1. Headstone for Clara Adams

Clara Adams was a founder of the Oakland Baptist Church. She continued as a pillar of the community beyond her husband Robert's death in 1930. She was buried in 1952 next to her husband just east of the school she helped establish. Her headstone stands today on land once owned by her parents, Burr and Harriett Stuart McKnight Shorts; this land is within the present boundaries of Fort Ward Park, a short distance south of the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery. Camera is pointing in north direction.

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Figure 2. Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery at Fort Ward Park as it appeared on March 18, 2011, in Alexandria, Va. *Washington Post* (March 19, 2011).

This photograph of the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery shows the gated entrance from the cemetery's southern side. Some of the grave markers are shown. Camera is pointing towards the north.

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Figure 3. Fort Ward Park entrance gate as it appeared on December 28, 2010 (published at <http://tangledtrees.blogspot.com/2010/12/>).

The Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery is to the right (east) of this entrance. Camera is pointing towards the northeast.

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Figure 4. Oakland Baptist Church as it appears today.
The Oakland Baptist Church still has an active congregation.

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Figure 5. Undated picture of Clara Adams, looking right at Fort Ward in Alexandria (published in the *Washington Post* [March 15, 2009]).

Clara Adams' great-granddaughter is helping lead the fight to recognize Alexandria's Black History.

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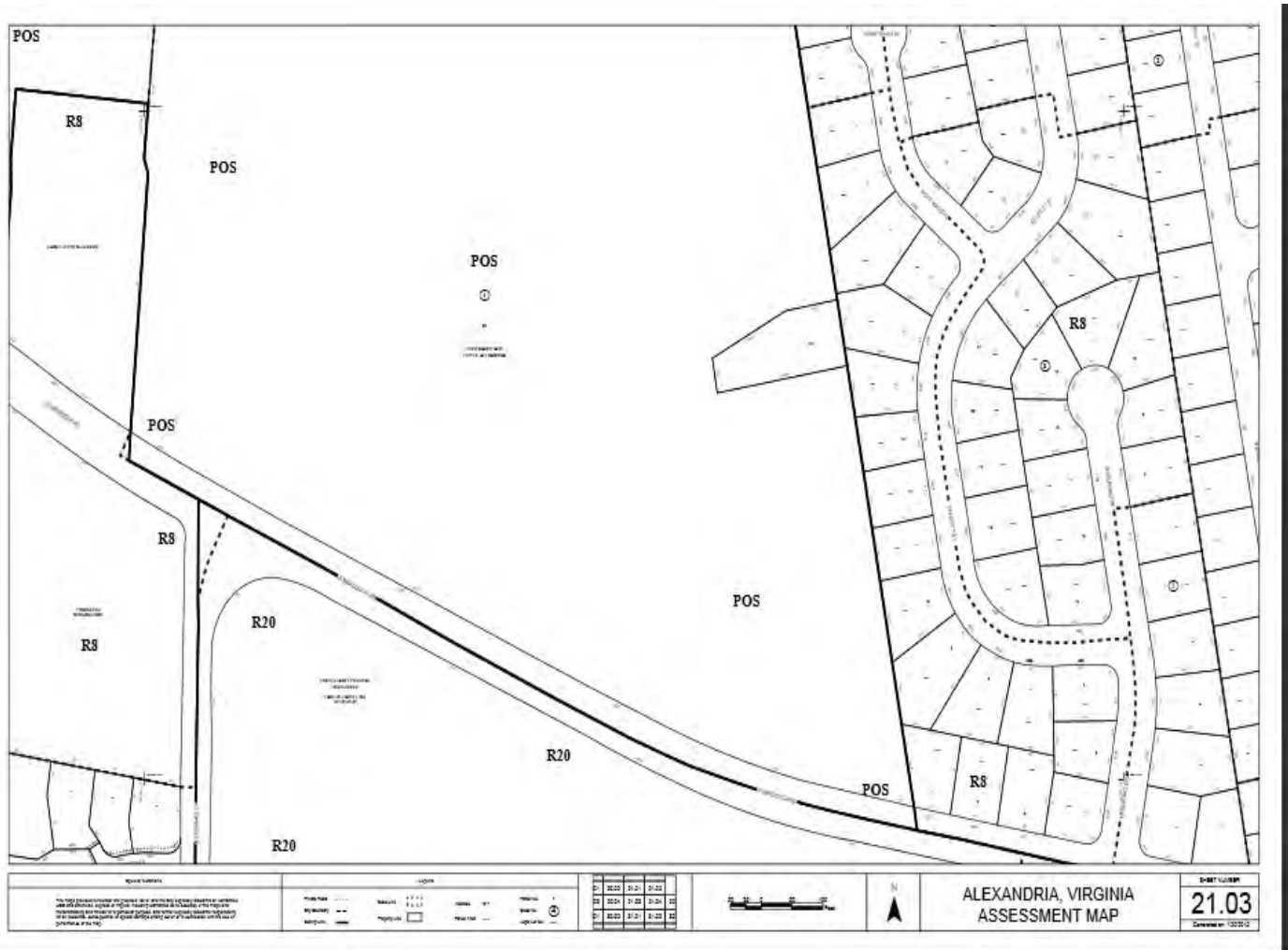


Figure 6. City of Alexandria, Virginia, Tax Assessment Map. The Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery occupies Lot 21.03.



LOCATION MAP

Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery

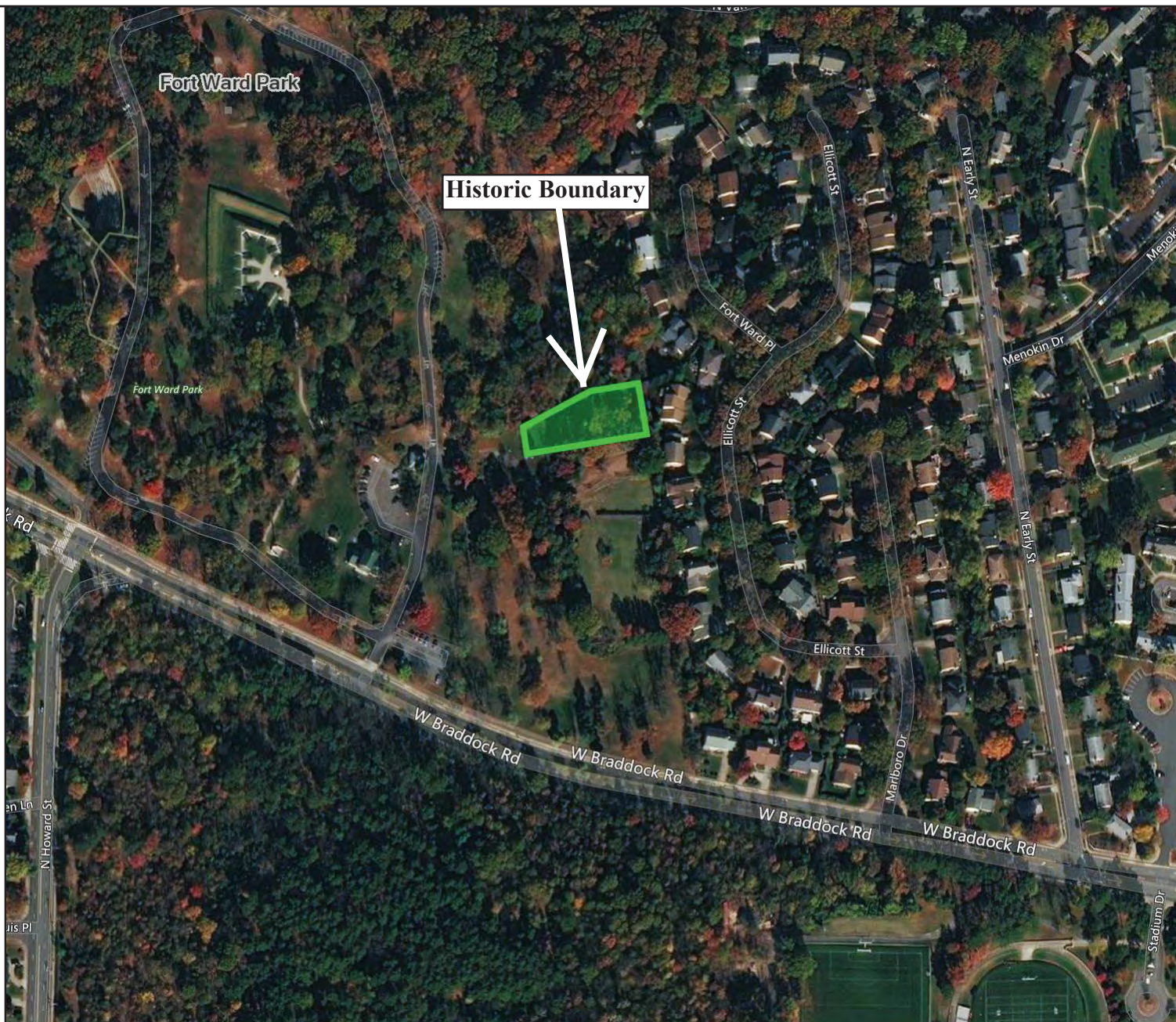
City of Alexandria, VA

DHR No. 100-5339

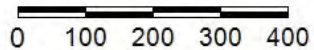
Latitude/Longitude Coordinates:

Latitude: 38.830010

Longitude: -77.100340



Feet



1:4,514 / 1"=376 Feet

Title:

Date: 3/21/2018

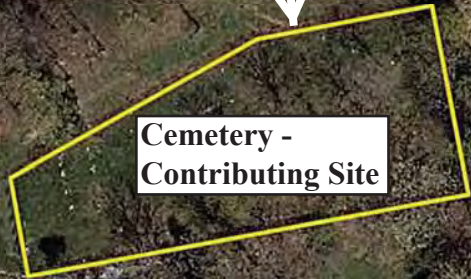
DISCLAIMER: Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years from a variety of sources and the representation depicted is a cumulative view of field observations over time and may not reflect current ground conditions. The map is for general information purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. Map may contain errors and is provided "as-is". More information is available in the DHR Archives located at DHR's Richmond office.

Notice if AE sites: Locations of archaeological sites may be sensitive to the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and Code of Virginia §2.2-3705.7 (10). Release of precise locations may threaten archaeological sites and historic resources.

Historic Boundary



Cemetery -
Contributing Site



SKETCH MAP
Oakland Baptist Church
Cemetery
City of Alexandria
DHR No. 100-5339

Sources: VDH-IR 2017, ESRI 2017
Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years and the representation depicted is based on the field observation data and may not reflect current ground conditions. The map is for general illustration purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. The map may contain errors and is provided "as-is". Contact DHR for the most recent information as data is updated continually.

1 in = 100 feet



DHR
Department of Historic Resources

Created by: D. Bascone October 12, 2017

PHOTO KEY

Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery

City of Alexandria, VA

DHR No. 100-5339



Photo Locations



Note: Photos 6-19 are of individual grave markers