

Select Biographies of the Alexandria Petitioners

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OFFICE OF
HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA

**Alexandria Archaeology Publications
Number 148**

Alexandria Archaeology
Office of Historic Alexandria
City of Alexandria, Virginia
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Select Biographies of the Alexandria Petitioners

After the Nat Turner uprising in 1831, 46 free Black Alexandrians published a petition asserting loyalty to their town. Biographies of selected petitioners are included here.



PUBLISHED DAILY
ON FAIRFAX ST. BETWEEN KING AND PRINCE STS,
AND ON
TUESDAYS, THURSDAYS, AND SATURDAYS,
FOR THE COUNTRY.

Daily Paper \$8 per annum—Country Paper \$5.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 4, 1831.

[COMMUNICATED.]

The Mayor is complying with the desire of the colored persons whose names are signed to the enclosed paper, when he requests it may be printed.

ALEXANDRIA, Sept. 21, 1831.

To John Roberts, Esq. Mayor of Alexandria.

HONORED SIR—The undersigned, free colored inhabitants of the Town of Alexandria, most respectfully beg leave to represent to your Honor: That they have heard, with deep concern, the various reports relating to the colored people of the South, and pray your permission to express to you their abhorrence of the recent outrage; and to accept and credit their solemn asseveration, that they would unite heart and hand in defending the authorities of the town and community against whatsoever enemy should rise up against them. And further do most devoutly assert, that they would promptly give public information of any plot, design, or conspiracy, that might come to their knowledge, to disturb the peace and jeopard the safety of the community.

James Evans, Simon Turley, David Jarbour, Michael Morris, George Fitzgerald, Henry Darnell, William Evans, Francis Hoy, Nathaniel Lucas, William Spencer, Robert Franklin, Peter Loudoun, Simon Tate, Thomas Valentine, William Hymekle, George Grayson, Joshua Taylor, Lewis Campbell, Luke Lee, Dennis Hackett, Daniel Bruce, James Willson, Alfred Hines, Anthony Dawlin, Dennis Carpenter, Tristram Garner, John S. Beckley, Walter Bennett, Benjamin Cryer, Philip Hamilton, Kinsey Ware, Charles Henry, John Tyler, Jonas Townsend, William Roberts, William Dudley, Thomas Morgan, Abram Miles, Emanuel Weaver, William Ross, William Bennett, Nathaniel Haney, Alfred H. Parry, John Harris, Andrew Beli, William Beckley.

For two days in August 1831, an enslaved man named Nathaniel Turner and a core group of followers rampaged across rural Southampton County, Virginia, killing some 55 white people, and causing widespread panic across the South.

A month after the uprising, 46 free Black residents of Alexandria, Virginia published a petition in the local newspaper, asserting their loyalty to the town. These 46 men represented a cross-section of Alexandria's free Black community and included skilled artisans who owned property and had large families, as well as unmarried day laborers. What the petitioners had in common was a shared concern that the violent events in Southampton County could prompt the white authorities in Alexandria to impose even harsher restrictions on Black freedoms, freedoms that were already proscribed by restrictive laws that constrained Black independence, education, movement, and assembly. The petition was their attempt to forestall potential white backlash before it could form, and to ease tensions within the town.

Garrett R. Fesler, *To Be Visible without Being Seen in the Age of Nat Turner: A Documentary Archaeology of Free Black Responses to Dissonance in the City of Alexandria, Virginia, 1829–1833*. *Historical Archaeology* 58: 255–281, (2024).

James Evans, Simon Turley, David Jarbour, Michael Morris, George Fitzgerald, Henry Darnell, William Evans, Francis Hoy, Nathaniel Lucas, William Spencer, Robert Franklin, Peter Loudoun, Simon Tate, Thomas Valentine, William Hymekle, George Grayson, Joshua Taylor, Lewis Campbell, Luke Lee, Dennis Hackett, Daniel Bruce, James Willson, Alfred Hines, Anthony Dawlin, Dennis Carpenter, Tristram Garner, John S. Beckley, Walter Bennett, Benjamin Cryer, Philip Hamilton, Kinsey Ware, Charles Henry, John Tyler, Jonas Townsend, William Roberts, William Dudley, Thomas Morgan, Abram Miles, Emanuel Weaver, William Ross, William Bennett, Nathaniel Haney, Alfred H. Parry, John Harris, Andrew Beli, William Beckley.

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Alexandria Archaeology Intern, 2021

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Alexandria Gazette, October 4, 1831

JAMES EVANS

James Evans was a free Black brickmaker born in Virginia between 1775 and 1794, and probably around 1780. He is described in the *Free Negro Registers* as being “5 feet 6 inches tall, with a dark complexion, bushy hair and a scar on the right side of his face.” Evans was a central figure of Alexandria’s free Black community. He was among the original trustees of David Memorial Chapel and was a member of First Baptist Church. He provided affidavits of freedom for a number of other free Black men in Alexandria, including Samuel Bee Wilson, Samuel Evans, James Wilson, and William Evans.¹ Evans was also involved in the establishment of a school for Alexandria’s free Black residents, helping to recruit the institution’s first teacher of reading, writing, and arithmetic in 1823 and his replacement three years later.² Evans was also in frequent conversation with Alexandria’s government on behalf of the free Black community. Besides the 1831 petition, he also petitioned city leaders in 1841 to allow Black Alexandrians to hold religious meetings with the supervision of a White person.³ Although this petition was unsuccessful, he took up the cause again the following year.⁴

By 1830, Evans was a landowner and head of a 10-member household that included three boys under 10, a man between 36 and 54, three girls under 10, two females between 10 and 23, and a woman between 36 and 54, all of whom were free Blacks.⁵ Ten years later, his household again include 10 free Black people.⁶

Evans had not always owned property. In 1806, James and William Evans were renting a residential property in Ward 4 of Alexandria, and the following year, he appears to have been renting a house for \$13.38 annually.⁷ This house, on a parcel of land between Prince and West streets, was sublet by George Gilpin, who in turn rented it from William Thornton Alexander and his wife Lucy.⁸ In 1810, Evans lived in a property on Prince Street with four other Black Alexandrians, three free and one enslaved.⁹ That year, Evans owned at least two pieces of property in Alexandria’s Ward 4; in 1830, he also owned two pieces of property in that ward.¹⁰ His real estate on Prince Street was worth at least \$1240, and, in 1847, he owned perhaps as much as \$1850 worth of property on Prince and West streets.¹¹ The free Black land tax records from that year show that a house and lot west of West Street worth \$200, two houses and two lots west of West Street worth \$600, a house and a lot on West & Prince worth \$400, a house and a lot on Prince Street worth \$150, and two houses and a lot on Prince Street worth \$500 were all owned by a man or men named James Evans.¹² In 1850, a James Evans also owned real estate in Ward 3, although this Evans may have been the son of the older brickmaker. That year, one property in Ward 4 belonged

¹Anna Lynch, *A Compendium of Early African Americans in Alexandria, Virginia* (Alexandria, Virginia: Alexandria Archaeology Publications, 1993), 1:22; Carter G. Woodson, *Free Negro Heads of Families in the United States in 1830* (Washington, D.C.: The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, Inc., 1925), 17; Year: 1850; Census Place: Alexandria, Alexandria, Virginia; Roll: 932; Page: 363b, “James Evans in the 1850 United States Federal Census.”

²“A Teacher Wanted,” *Alexandria Gazette*, August 23, 1823; “A Teacher Wanted,” *Alexandria Gazette*, April 28, 1826.

³“In Council—Feb. 8, 1841,” *Alexandria Gazette*, February 10, 1841; “In Council—Feb. 25, 1841,” *Alexandria Gazette*, February 26, 1841.

⁴“In Council—May 27, 1842,” *Alexandria Gazette*, May 31, 1842.

⁵Woodson, *Free Negro Heads of Families*, 17; 1830; Census Place: Alexandria, Washington, District of Columbia; Series: M19; Roll: 14; Page: 270; Family History Library Film: 0006699.

⁶Evans in censuses, “James Evans in the 1840 United States Federal Census.”

⁷1806 and 1807 tax lists.

⁸Lynch, *A Compendium of Early African Americans*, 2:14.

⁹Lynch, *A Compendium of Early African Americans*, 1:22.

¹⁰Belinda Blomberg, “Free Black Adaptive Responses to the Antebellum Urban Environment: Neighborhood Formation and Socioeconomic Stratification in Alexandria, Virginia, 1790-1850,” PhD diss., (The American University, 1988), 341, 339.

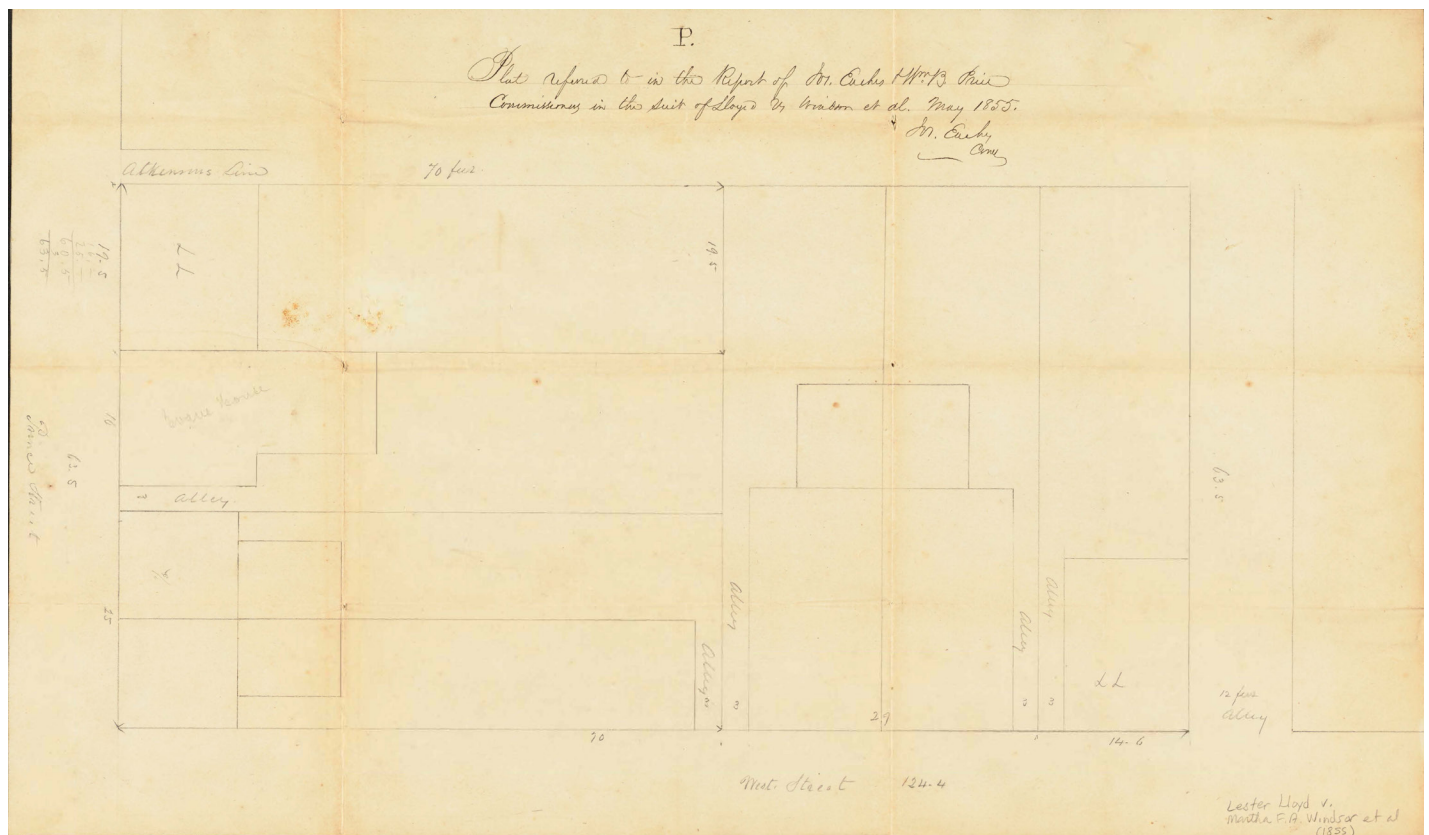
¹¹Lynch, *Compendium of Early African Americans*, 1:22; 1829 Alexandria tithables and property tax lists.

¹²1829 Alexandria tithables and property tax lists.

to the elder Evans, and another was owned by James L. Evan, perhaps the same man.¹³

Evans's son of the same name followed him into the brickmaking profession. The younger James Evans was born around 1810 (1812, according to the 1860 census) and was probably married to Milly Evans.¹⁴ A James Evins appears on the 1829 list of tithables; Evins's household included only himself, recorded as a free Black male over 16.¹⁵ Evins may be the younger James Evans, living alone before he married Milly and began a family. They had at least five children—Mark (or “Monk”) (born circa 1835-40), James (1842-43), Robert (sometimes recorded as “Roba” or “Robe”) (1846), John (1847-48), and Hannah (1849-50). Milly Evans was born 1812 and is described in the *Free Negro Registers* as “4 feet 11 inches tall, of a dark complexion, with a slight scar on the lower part of the left side of her face.” She was born into slavery and was owned by Thomson Francis Mason, grandson of George Mason IV and mayor of Alexandria between 1827 and 1830, for some years before he manumitted her in 1835.¹⁶

No James Evans appears on the 1858 Alexandria County Register of Free Negroes, suggesting that the older Evans may have died before that year.¹⁷



James Evans Plat, 1855

¹³ Blomberg, “Free Black Adaptive Responses to the Antebellum Urban Environment,” 335-336.

¹⁴ Seventh Census of the United States, 1850; (National Archives Microfilm Publication M432, 1009 rolls); Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29; National Archives, Washington, D.C.; “James Evans in the 1860 United States Federal Census.”

¹⁵ 1829 Alexandria tithables and property tax lists.

¹⁶ Seventh Census of the United States, 1850; (National Archives Microfilm Publication M432, 1009 rolls); Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29; National Archives, Washington, D.C.; “James Evans in the 1860 United States Federal Census”; Lynch, *A Compendium of Early African Americans*, 2:16-17.

¹⁷ Alexandria Register of Free Negroes 1858.

WILLIAM EVANS

There were several men named William Evans active in Alexandria in the late-seventeenth and early-to-mid-nineteenth centuries. The William Evans who signed the 1831 petition was probably born free around 1783 or 1784, perhaps to Robert and Lucilla Evans.¹ Robert and Lucilla had at least three children, including William, a son named Robert, and a daughter. William was likely younger than his brother Robert.² Like James Evans, William was a brickmaker.³

William married Elizabeth “Betsey” Thompson (born around 1783) on October 15, 1807, with William Evans (perhaps a different man of the same name) and John Smith serving as bondsmen.⁴ William does not appear in the 1810 Alexandria census, but if he had left Alexandria, his absence was only temporary.⁵ He was baptized at the First Baptist Church on December 5, 1819.⁶

William was a trustee of the Coloured Baptist Society of Alexandria; in that capacity, he worked with other trustees to secure land for the society’s use. William also bought and sold land on behalf of the African Baptist Church of Alexandria, of which he was also a trustee. In 1842, he purchased from Romulus Riggs and Mercy Ann Riggs of Philadelphia an annual ground rent of \$32.50 for a lot in Alexandria for \$650. Four years later, William sold the lot to Beverly Yeates, William Weaver, and James Webster for \$5 for the land’s continued use by the African Baptist Church.⁷

In 1823, a William Evans sold to Charles E. Eckle of Georgetown an enslaved 27-year-old man named Hanson or Henson and a five-year-old girl for \$572.⁸ This may have been the William Evans who signed the 1831 petition.

In 1829, according to the list of tithables taken in March of that year, Evans was free and the only member of his household.⁹

According to the 1819-1822 Alexandria tax records, William owned a two-story house and the lot on which it was situated at the intersection of Columbus & Gibbon worth \$400.¹⁰ This was probably the same property he is reported as owning in Alexandria’s Ward 4 in 1830, 1847, and 1850.¹¹

Evans served as a bondsman at the 1827 marriage of Walter Bennett and Mary Frumpuson and as bondsman for Sarah Bearcroft in her capacity as the administrator of Domini Bearcroft’s will.¹²

¹ Anna Lynch, *A Compendium of Early African Americans in Alexandria, Virginia* (Alexandria, Virginia: Alexandria Archaeology Publications, 1993), 2:18, 17.

² Lynch, *Compendium of Early African Americans*, 2:17.

³ William Evans in the 1850 United States Federal Census, Year: 1850; Census Place: *Alexandria, Alexandria, Virginia*; Roll: 932; Page: 309a.

⁴ Lynch, *Compendium of Early African Americans*, 1:23; William Evans in the 1850 United States Federal Census.

⁵ 1810 Alexandria census, 1810 Census typescript.

⁶ Lynch, *Compendium of Early African Americans*, 1:23.

⁷ Lynch, *Compendium of Early African Americans*, 3:16-24.

⁸ Lynch, *Compendium of Early African Americans*, 2:17-18.

⁹ 1829 Alexandria tithables and property tax lists, 1829 Free Black tithables, 1829 FB tithables.

¹⁰ Lynch, *Compendium of Early African Americans*, 2:17.

¹¹ Belinda Blomberg, “Free Black Adaptive Responses to the Antebellum Urban Environment: Neighborhood Formation and Socioeconomic Stratification in Alexandria, Virginia, 1790-1850,” PhD diss., (The American University, 1988), 336, 345, 348; 1829 Free Black tithables; 1847 FB land tax; Lynch, *Compendium of Early African Americans*, 1:23.

¹² Lynch, *Compendium of Early African Americans*, 1:23.

In 1850, William lived with his wife, Betsey, a 23-year-old man named Simeon Evans, perhaps their son, and a 12-year-old boy named Benjamin Ashton.¹³ Simeon, who worked as a carpenter, died on November 21, 1883, at the age of 56, in Henrico County, Virginia.¹⁴ He had moved there sometime before 1880, when census records show he lived in Fairfield with his wife, Mary (age 51); five of their children; and a granddaughter.¹⁵

The 1858 Alexandria County Register of Free Negroes includes a 59-year-old named William Evans, suggesting that he was born around 1799.¹⁶ However, given that the William Evans who signed the petition was born around 1783, this was probably a different man. No other William Evans appears on this list; perhaps the petition signer had died by 1858.



The African Baptist Church of Alexandria, of which William Evans was a trustee, eventually became known as the Alfred Street Baptist Church and is still an active congregation. The church's first building was constructed in 1855; between 1881 and 1884, a larger edifice was constructed around that structure. Today, that building is known as the 'old church.' *Photo: Ser Amantio di Nicolao, "Façade of old building of Alfred Street Baptist Church," January 29, 2020, Wikimedia Commons.*

¹³ William Evans in the 1850 United States Federal Census.

¹⁴ Simon Evans in the Virginia, U.S., Deaths and Burials Index, 1853-1917, Ancestry.com. *Virginia, U.S., Deaths and Burials Index, 1853-1917* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

¹⁵ Simon Evans in the 1880 United States Federal Census, Year: 1880; Census Place: *Fairfield, Henrico, Virginia*; Roll: 1370; Page: 332D; Enumeration District: 074.

¹⁶ Alexandria Register of Free Negroes 1858, 1858 Alexandria County Register of Free Negroes.

TRISTRAM GARNER

Tristram H. Garner was born into slavery in Virginia in about 1800.¹ He was manumitted on December 11, 1821 by Samuel B. Larmour and John Adam, who had purchased Garner earlier that year from George L. Tuberville of Fairfax County for \$550. Garner's emancipation was witnessed by Edmund Jennings Lee, Jr.²

Garner held a variety of jobs over his life. In 1837, he took out an advertisement in the *Alexandria Gazette* offering laundry-scouring services.³ In 1839, Garner was looking for work as a musician, writing in the *Alexandria Gazette* that he would play at balls, barbecues, and parties.⁴ In 1850, he was a sexton for Trinity Church, a position he still held in 1864.⁵

A Tristram Garner of Alexandria appears in the 1820 federal census, but it is unclear if this man was the one who would later sign James Evans's petition. The Garner in the 1820 census was free and between the ages of 26 and 44, suggesting that he was born between 1776 and 1794.⁶ If there two Tristram Garners in Alexandria, perhaps Tristram H. Garner began using his middle initial to differentiate himself from his similarly named neighbor.

By 1830, Tristram H. Garner was the head of Alexandria household of three—himself, a free Black woman between the ages of 24 and 35, and free boy under 10.⁷ The free Black woman was most likely Garner's wife, Priscilla (née Pipsico). In 1840, still living in Alexandria, Garner's household totaled seven people, all of whom were free Blacks.⁸ This number included Garner's father-in-law, a 98-year-old veteran of the Revolutionary War named John Pipsico [Ripsorrow]. In 1850, his household consisted of three free people of color: his wife, Priscilla, 45, whose race was recorded as "mulatto"; a five-year-old girl, Catherine, perhaps their daughter; and a 40-year-old woman named Catherine Dick.⁹

In 1833, Garner manumitted an enslaved man named Fincastle Garner, perhaps a relative. Tristram had purchased Fincastle in 1830 from the executor of the estate of Daniel Grinnan. In 1843, Tristram freed Lucien B.L. Pipsico, whom the former had purchased with Julia H. Pipsico from Thomas Pipsico under the condition that Lucien and Julia would serve until they were 21.¹⁰ Tristram may have purchased Lucien and Julia through his role as the administrator of John Pipsicoe, Jr.'s, estate, which he took on after the latter's death in late 1842 or early 1843.¹¹

In 1863, Garner lived in Washington, D.C., at 408 4th Street W, although the quadrant of the city in which he lived is unknown.¹² Two years later, he was still in the city, where he owned a 1620-square-foot lot (number 41 in square 569), situated in an alley between E and F streets North and First and Second streets West. Besides his

¹ "Tristram H Garner in the 1850 United States Federal Census," Year: 1850; Census Place: Washington Ward 2, Washington, District of Columbia; Roll: 56; Page: 111a.

² Timothy J. Dennee, "Slave Manumissions in Alexandria Land Records, 1790-1863," *The Friends of Freedmen's Cemetery*, 2004, <http://www.freedmenscemetery.org/resources/documents/manumissions.shtml>.

³ "Dyeing and Scouring," *Alexandria Gazette*, September 23, 1837.

⁴ "A Card," *Alexandria Gazette*, May 9, 1849.

⁵ "Tristram Garner in the 1850 United States Federal Census"; "Tristram H Garner in the U.S., City Directories, 1822-1995."

⁶ "Tristram Garner in the 1820 United States Federal Census," 1820 U S Census; Census Place: *Alexandria, Alexandria, District of Columbia*; Page: 172; NARA Roll: *M33_5*; Image: 179.

⁷ 1829 Alexandria tithables and property tax lists, 1829 Free Black tithables, 1830 census.

⁸ "Tristram H Gamer in the 1840 United States Federal Census," Year: 1840; Census Place: Alexandria, Alexandria, District of Columbia; Roll: 35; Page: 209; Family History Library Film.

⁹ "Tristram Garner in the 1850 United States Federal Census."

¹⁰ Dennee, "Slave Manumissions."

¹¹ "The last Will and Testament of Tristram H. Garner."

¹² "Died," *Evening Star*, July 15 1863.

real estate, Garner's most valuable possessions in 1865, when he wrote his last will and testament, included a double-case silver watch, a double French bedstead (with bed and bedding), and a single French bedstead (also with bed and bedding), along with some other pieces of furniture. Garner had savings in Clarke and [Co.] Seaton House Savings Bank.¹³

Garner's wife, Priscilla, died on July 14, 1863, and her funeral was held two days later.¹⁴ Garner had a son named Dunmore Garner; Dunmore was to be the primary beneficiary of his father's will. In 1865, Tristram believed Dunmore was living near Vicksburg, Mississippi.¹⁵ Dunmore may have lived his life as a white man. In 1870, a man named Dunmore Garner was living in Warren County, Mississippi, which is home to Vicksburg; the only non-white member of his household was a woman.¹⁶ Dunmore's mother was described as "mulatto," and although Tristram was usually described as a Black man, his race is listed as "mulatto" in at least one instance.¹⁷ Perhaps this heritage allowed Dunmore to cross the color line.

Other beneficiaries of Tristram H. Garner's will included Eliza Woodson, Garner's niece; Charlotte Pipsico, his late wife's niece; Sally Dyson and her daughter, Harriot Ann Dyson; his sister-in-law; a woman whose last name was Jennings; and Ann Gibson of Philadelphia. Paul Jennings and Peter Hogan were named the executors of his estate and given \$20 each.¹⁸

DYEING AND SCOURING.
HAVING obtained full information from N. Berteau, the French Dyer and Scourer, who lately carried on the business in King street, the subscriber now very respectfully offers his services to his friends and the public in general, as a Scourer, and returns his grateful thanks for the past favors he has received, and thinks, with the additional aid he has received from the above named person, he will be able to give general satisfaction. Persons wishing clothes scoured will please call at his clothing cellar on Fairfax street, near the corner of King.
TRISTRAM H. GARNER.
sept 21—3t

One of several jobs he held over the course of his life, as a scourer, Tristram H. Garner would have cleaned textiles prior to their dyeing. His business was located near the intersection of Fairfax and King streets, in the heart of Alexandria.

"Dyeing and Scouring," *Alexandria Gazette*, September 23, 1837.

¹³ "The last Will and Testament of Tristram H. Garner."

¹⁴ "Died," *Evening Star*, July 15, 1863.

¹⁵ "The last Will and Testament of Tristram H. Garner."

¹⁶ Dunmore Garner in the Mississippi, U.S., State Archives, Various Records, 1820-1951," Mississippi, U.S., State Archives, Various Records, 1820-1951 [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2021, https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/discoveryui-content/view/743625:61949?tid=&pid=&queryId=9ba28bd25c2a1e924d7956509d312891&_phsrc=CHy7&_phstart=successSource.

¹⁷ "Page – Provine," Peyton family papers, 1760–1919. 1,286 items. Mss1P4686c, Guides for Researchers, Virginia Museum of History & Culture, June 4, 2009, <https://virginiahistory.org/research/research-resources/guides-researchers/page-provine>.

¹⁸ "The last Will and Testament of Tristram H. Garner."

DAVID JARBOUR

David Jarbour (alternatively “Jarbor,” “Jarber,” “Jarboe,” “Jarbo,” “Tarbor,” “Tarbour,” and “Garber”) was an Alexandria potter employed at the Wilkes Street Pottery under Benedict C. Milburn between 1816 and 1841.¹ Jarbour is listed in the Virginia Free Negro Registers of 1821 as a Black man of about 33 years of age, suggesting that he was born around 1788. Jarbour was enslaved until he purchased his freedom from Zenas Kinsey for \$300, a sale recorded in an 1820 Alexandria deed book. The manumission was witnessed by Charles C. Smoot and Lewis W. Plum, a potter from St. Mary’s City. Because Jarbour and Plum shared a profession, some scholars have suggested that they may have trained together, perhaps in St. Mary’s City.² Jarbour married a Black woman named Rebecca Dover, daughter of Samuel and Betty Dover; together, they had at least five children, including David (born around 1819), Rachel, Samuel (1829), Mary (1831), and Chloe (1822).³ Based on the Alexandria Free Negro Registers of 1823, Rebecca was probably born around 1795.⁴

In 1818 and 1819, Jarbour lived in a one-story home at Wolfe, Wilkes and Alfred streets, next to Ezra Kinsey (brother of Zenas). He had previously purchased land from Ephraim and Rebecca Mills, a sale recorded in an 1807 deed book.⁵ The younger David Jarbour may have moved to California; a Black man named David Jarber born in Virginia around 1825 appears in the 1880 United States census as a miner living in Mud Springs, El Dorado, California and in El Dorado voter rolls from the 1870s and 1880s.⁶



This jar, which stands over two feet tall, was made by David Jarbour while he was employed at Alexandria’s Wilkes Street Pottery, and is one of the few pieces of eighteenth-century pottery that can be associated with a Black potter. Jarbour made this pot in 1830, ten years after he purchased his freedom.



Left: Salt-glazed stoneware storage jar with cobalt decoration by David Jarbour, 1830, Alexandria, VA.; HOA: 27-3/4”, DIA (at widest point): 14-1/2”. MESDA Collection, Acc. 2964, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Byron J. Banks. Above right: Detail of inscription on base of storage jar: “1830 / Alexa / Maid By / D., Jarbour”. Photos by Wes Stewart.

¹ Angelika R. Kuettner, “...my friend David Jarboe...”: The Unfinished Portrait of an Alexandria Potter,” *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts* 41 (2020); Anna Lynch, *A Compendium of Early African Americans in Alexandria, Virginia* (Alexandria, Virginia: Alexandria Archaeology Publications, 1993), 2:42.

² Lynch, *Compendium of Early African Americans*, 1:38; Alexandria, Virginia Deed book, K2:205.

³ Kuettner, “...my friend David Jarboe...”; Lynch, *A Compendium of Early African Americans*, 2:42-43.

⁴ Lynch, *A Compendium of Early African Americans*, 1:38.

⁵ Lynch, *A Compendium of Early African Americans*, 1:38.

⁶ Year: 1880; Census Place: *Mud Springs, El Dorado, California*; Roll: 65; Page: 102D; Enumeration District: 054; California State Library; Sacramento, California; Great Registers, 1866-1898; Collection Number: 4-2A; CSL Roll Number: 12; FHL Roll Number: 976460; California State Library; Sacramento, California; Great Registers, 1866-1898; Collection Number: 4-2A; CSL Roll Number: 12; FHL Roll Number: 976460.

ALFRED PERRY

Alfred H. Perry (sometimes “Parry”) was born into slavery in Alexandria in 1805.¹ As a child, he attended a Lancasterian school founded in 1813 by a group of free Black Alexandrians; Perry’s teacher at the school, which was on the third floor of the Washington Free School Building on the 400 block of South Washington Street, was a white Methodist pastor named James H. Hanson.² When Perry was a child, his mother foiled an attempt to separate them by sale; later, she purchased the freedom of herself and Perry, his for \$50. As an adult, Perry became a teacher. By the early 1830s, he had opened his own night school for Black students, but in 1837, Alexandria’s mayor, Bernard Hooe, attempted to close the school on the grounds that Perry’s classes were unlawful assemblies. To keep the school open, Perry hired a white man to be present as a chaperone when classes were in session. Although Hooe never officially approved of the school, he gave up his attempts to close it after Perry hired a white man to be present when classes were in session.³ Shortly after his clash with Hooe, Perry opened a day school, Mount Hope Academy, to educate free and enslaved Black Alexandrians.⁴ Mount Hope Academy, located between Duke and Wolfe streets, enrolled between 75 and 100 male and female students at any given time. Tuition for some of the enslaved students was reportedly paid by their owners. Perry taught at his school until he moved to Washington, D.C., in 1843.⁵

In the 1840s, Perry became a founding member of Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church (now known as Ebenezer United Methodist Church), which came to be located near the intersection of 4th and D Streets Southeast.⁶

Perry was an active member of the D.C. community. In 1865, he represented D.C.’s fifth ward on a committee to make arrangements for the celebration of the homecoming of the First District Colored Regiment, returning to the city after their deployment during the Civil War.⁷ Later that year, Perry joined the executive committee of an association designed to “disseminate correct views among the colored people as to the value and importance of education” and to coordinate with Northern organizations doing similar work.⁸ Perry was also a member of the Fifth Ward Republican Club, and in 1867, he was elected as a delegate to the city’s Republican convention.⁹ The following year, Perry was tasked with counting votes in the club’s delegate election.¹⁰ In 1869, Perry was nominated for the position of Clerk of Eastern Market.¹¹ Perry was a juror in the 1871 murder trial of Dennis D. Darden.¹²

¹ U.S. Department of Education, *Special Report of the Commissioner of Education on the Condition and Improvement of Public Schools in the District of Columbia*, Henry Barnard (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1871), 283.

² Department of Education, *Special Report*, 283; David Freedman, “African-American Schooling in the South Prior to 1861,” *The Journal of Negro History* 84, no. 1 (1999), 36; Alexandria City Public Schools, “The History of ACPS,” accessed July 8, 2021, <https://www.acps.k12.va.us/Page/2396>; Belinda Blomberg, “Free Black Adaptive Responses to the Antebellum Urban Environment: Neighborhood Formation and Socioeconomic Stratification in Alexandria, Virginia, 1790-1850,” PhD diss., (American University, 1988), 81.

³ Department of Education, *Special Report*, 283.

⁴ Alexandria Public Schools, “The History of ACPS.”

⁵ Department of Education, *Special Report*, 284.

⁶ “Ebenezer Church – Corner Stone of the New Edifice Laid Today,” *Evening Star*, May 10, 1897; Streets of Washington, “Ebenezer United Methodist Church, AKA ‘Little Ebenezer,’ turns 180,” May 29, 2018, <http://www.streetsofwashington.com/2018/05/ebenezer-united-methodist-church-aka.html>.

⁷ *Daily National Republican*, “The First District Colored Regiment—Preparations to Receive Them,” September 28, 1865.

⁸ “Local Affairs – Educational Association,” *Daily National Republican*, November 28, 1865.

⁹ “Meeting of the Fifth Ward Republican Club,” *Evening Star*, May 14, 1867.

¹⁰ “Fifth Ward,” *Evening Star*, May 7, 1868.

¹¹ “Corporate Affairs – Nominations and Confirmations of Corporation Officers, & c,” *Evening Star*, July 20, 1869.

¹² “The McCarthy Murder – The Trial of Dennis D. Darden – Second Day,” *Evening Star*, September 26, 1871.

According to a report on the condition of public schools in Washington, D.C., issued by the Department of Education in 1871, Perry's wife was born into freedom at Ravensworth (a plantation in Annandale) to a woman named Kitty Jones, who was enslaved at Mount Vernon by George Washington for some time before he freed her.¹³ The wife of Perry described in the report may have been Lucinda Perry, perhaps Alfred's second wife. Census records from 1870 suggest that Alfred and Lucinda were married by that year and living in D.C.'s fifth ward with a 35-year-old woman named Mary Parry, probably Alfred's daughter.¹⁴ However, it is likely that Mary's mother was not Lucinda, but instead was Sarah Ann Perry. The 1850 U.S. census records a Black man named "A Perry" of approximately Alfred Perry's age living in D.C.'s fifth ward with a 40-year-old woman named "S Perry" and three children, along with a 22-year-old named "W Robbins."¹⁵ One of these children was a 16-year-old named "M J." "M J" may be the same person as Mary, as both were born around 1835. Further evidence in support of the argument that "A Perry" was Alfred Perry is a death notice from an 1862 issue of *The National Republican* recording the passing on August 9 of that year Sarah Ann Parry, wife of an Alfred Parry. Sarah Ann was 56 at the time of her death, meaning she was born around 1806; "S Perry" was apparently born around 1810, close enough to Sarah Ann's birthdate that they could be the same woman. Sarah Ann Parry was a long-time member of the Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church. Funeral services were held on August 11 at the church.¹⁶

In 1829, Perry was the only tithable member of his household.¹⁷ In 1875, he was assessed taxes of \$131.46 on four improved lots held by Perry and others in Washington, D.C., perhaps in their capacity as trustees of Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church.¹⁸ Perry does not appear in the record after 1875, suggesting that he may have died around this date.



Constructed beginning in 1785 and still standing today, the Alexandria Academy building was home to a school founded in 1813 by a group of free Black Alexandrians. Alfred H. Perry was educated at the school as an enslaved child. As an adult, Perry established his own schools in Alexandria before moving to Washington, D.C.

Photograph No. 30-N-36510; "Alexandria Academy - the first Free School in Alexandria, Virginia - founded in 1785." J. K. Hillers. 1929; Department of Commerce; Bureau of Public Roads, Record Group 30; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

¹³ Department of Education, *Special Report*, 284.

¹⁴ "Alfred Parry in the 1870 United States Federal Census," Year: 1870; Census Place: *Washington Ward 5, Washington, District of Columbia*; Roll: *M593_125*; Page: *98B*.

¹⁵ "A Perry" in the 1850 United States Federal Census, Year: 1850; Census Place: *Washington Ward 5, Washington, District of Columbia*; Roll: *57*; Page: *30b*.

¹⁶ "Died," *The National Republican*, August 11, 1862.

¹⁷ 1829 Alexandria tithables and property tax lists, 1829 Free Black tithables, 1829 FB tithables.

¹⁸ *The National Republican*, June 9, 1875, page 44.