

# The Life and Times of George Lewis Seaton



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with Appendices by  
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# **THE LIFE AND TIMES OF GEORGE LEWIS SEATON**

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Front Cover

Front entry to the Seaton house, 404 South Royal Street. Illustration by Adele Dunne.

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## Foreword

I am delighted that Alexandria Archaeology can provide this informative publication on George Lewis Seaton to the public. Seaton has been known by name, but we had not been able to put together his story until several people pursued his extensive documentary history. Penny Morrill brought Seaton's contributions as a builder to attention through her 1979 publication, *Who Built Alexandria?* (pages 32-33). Ruth Lincoln Kaye (1987) has also discovered important information about Seaton in her research on 323 South St. Asaph Street, one of the houses he constructed.

This publication is based upon the research of several people. Margarete Cooper, a past member of the Alexandria Archaeological Commission and a member of the Alexandria Society for the Preservation of Black Heritage, began the study of Seaton by reading newspaper microfilm for more than two years. She was able to amass an impressive chronology of Seaton's accomplishments (see Appendix A). These sources told us much about the builder and public man, but did not provide a full accounting of his life. Additional research was conducted by Anna Lynch, an Alexandria Archaeology volunteer and author of *A Compendium of Early African Americans in Alexandria, Virginia, Volumes I and II* (1993; 1995). We are also indebted to Cristina Lawhead for her research into the Seaton family (1993). Lastly, Peter Bernstein conducted more research into Seaton's most public contributions and wrote a manuscript incorporating the previously collected information. Elizabeth Foxwell, Jennifer Barker, Steven Shephard, and Shirley Scalley contributed many hours in editing the manuscript to produce this publication. Since no image of George Seaton has been found to date, Adele Dunne provided the illustration of the doorway of his last home at 404 South Royal Street.

It is clear from reading about this man that he was a distinctive person. Seaton, with both his building talent and organizational/leadership abilities, probably would have stood out during any era, yet he lived during an extraordinary period of American history. In his early years, Seaton witnessed a society entrenched in slavery. The son of a woman born enslaved on George Washington's Mount Vernon estate, Seaton, as a free man, became one of the most influential African Americans in nineteenth-century Alexandria.



He purchased and sold property, built structures, organized efforts for new schools, took on major political issues, and served in respected positions. George Seaton made lasting contributions at a pivotal time in African American history.

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2003

## NINETEENTH-CENTURY ALEXANDRIA: BACKGROUND

For a free person of color in 1800, Alexandria was a relatively safe haven. Part of the District of Columbia, the town was a bustling port, one of the ten busiest in the country (Blomberg 1988:62). Alexandria's small group of free African Americans was increasing in number at the turn of the nineteenth century. One reason for this growth was that some slaves gained their freedom as a result of a shift in the region's agricultural economy from tobacco to wheat. The expanding economy and the excess number of slaves on plantations provided incentives for owners to allow slaves to hire themselves out to others. Working as carpenters, brick makers, brick layers, and coopers, many slaves were eventually able to earn enough money to secure their freedom. Up to the 1830s, many whites in northern and western Virginia were in favor of abolition (*Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, May 1867:728).

As the port's activity increased, so did the town's population. According to the 1790 federal census, Alexandria's population totaled 2,748, with 2,153 whites, 52 free blacks, and 543 slaves. By 1820, the numbers had dramatically risen, with 5,615 whites, 1,168 free blacks, and 1,435 slaves. Free blacks experienced the greatest increase (Cressey 1985; Blomberg 1988:217b).

By 1820, Alexandria was undergoing a recession that lasted until about 1843. With many local farmers choosing to use the ports of Richmond and Baltimore, Alexandria lost much of the area's vital trade business. This decreased the availability of skilled work, such as barrel making, pushing some free black craftsmen into the lower paying, unskilled work. Another factor in the town's decline was the devastating 1827 fire that destroyed 40 houses, as well as several warehouses and stores in Alexandria. In addition, Ted McCord states, "President Andrew Jackson deliberately strangled the Bank of the United States out of existence, which, in 1834, also doomed the Bank of Alexandria" (1985:17). Because Alexandria was part of the District of Columbia until 1847, free African Americans living there had a greater degree of protection than those living in Virginia towns. When their bank closed, Alexandrians began petitioning

Congress to retrocede Alexandria to Virginia in order to secure a local bank charter. The status of free blacks was threatened by retrocession into this slave state (McCord 1985:17).

### ***Booming Slave Trade***

As the recession deepened, the business of slave trading grew, affecting not only slaves, but also free blacks. The port's declining wheat and tobacco trades and the abolition of foreign slave trading made buying and selling local slaves to the deeper South profitable. Cotton began to play an important part in the commerce of the world, and slave prices doubled and trebled in cotton-producing areas (*Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, May 1867:728). The Alexandria firm of Franklin and Armfield became the largest slave dealer in the South. Free blacks were challenged daily on their status, and many lived in fear of being mistaken for a slave and sold into bondage.

In 1831, Nat Turner, a bondsman and religious leader, led a rebellion against slavery in Southampton, Virginia. This rebellion added tension to already difficult economic times. Many whites in Alexandria feared that the large population of free blacks would lead a similar rebellion in the town. After the Nat Turner Rebellion, the governor of Virginia proposed appropriating funds to remove all free blacks from the state, but the proposal was not accepted. In response, 43 freedmen signed a petition and presented it to the mayor of Alexandria declaring to "unite heart and hand in defending the authorities of this town and community against whatsoever enemy should rise up against them" (Rosenthal 1975:90; Blomberg 1988:63-67; Cressey 1985:60).

### ***Haven for Fleeing Slaves***

Alexandria's port offered work for African Americans, with many involved in ship building, repair, maintenance, and operation, and movement of goods. Free blacks started to establish independent homes and neighborhoods in the 1790s (Cressey 1985). Runaway advertisements frequently appeared in the local newspaper as slaves sought refuge in this urban environment. The 1840 census revealed that there were 2,701 free

blacks and slaves living in Alexandria. In 1850, there were four small free African American neighborhoods in town. Between 1846 and 1860, Alexandria experienced growth in commerce and industry. Despite economic difficulties caused by the Civil War, the town experienced a population boom as thousands of fleeing slaves sought refuge in the town, which was occupied by federal troops in 1861. Many of these refugees perished from illness once they reached Alexandria.

An account in *Harper's Weekly* of January 31, 1863, described the circumstances of a group of slaves entering an encampment of Union soldiers:

There is something very touching in seeing these poor people coming into camp—giving up all the little ties that cluster about home, such as it is in slavery, and trustfully throwing themselves on the mercy of the Yankees, in the hope of getting permission to own themselves and their children from the auction-block. This party evidently comprises a whole family from some farm; the mule cart, without a particle of leather about its rope harness, and with a carpet thrown over it for wagon-cover, is unique in its dilapidation. The old party with the umbrella is a type. Down in the Peninsula it appeared constantly on the Sabbath. No matter how fine a day, the old darkeys, clad in ancient dress-suits, white cotton gloves, and tall bell hats, always made their appearance with large “Gampish” umbrellas—as I conjecture an insignia of respectability. Somehow or other the Ladies of the Colored persuasion manage to get hoops, although bonnets and other fashionable frivolities are out of their reach.

One of the females represented in the picture had a nearly white child, a girl; and, young and old, all seemed highly delighted at getting into our lines. Let us hope they may fare better than the thousands who found a refuge from the institutions in Alexandria last year; the poor creatures died there as though a plague had smitten them.

Reconstruction, the period that followed the Civil War, was a time of momentous changes in American political and social life. In the South, former masters and former slaves struggled to shape the new labor systems that arose from the ashes of slavery, and new institutions—black churches, public schools, and many others—redefined the communities of both blacks and whites and the relationship between them. No development during the turbulent years that followed the Civil War marked so dramatic a break with the nation's traditions, or aroused such bitter hostility from Reconstruction's

opponents, as the appearance of large numbers of African Americans in public office only a few years after the destruction of slavery (Foner 1993:xi). Despite the hostile environment, African Americans established productive lives. George Seaton was one man to do just so.

### **GEORGE LEWIS SEATON (1822-1881)**

The life of the Alexandria carpenter and builder, George Lewis Seaton, and his work can be seen as a metaphor for the African American experience in America: faith, hardship, struggle, perseverance, optimism and renewal. Seaton is best known for the houses he built in Old Town; a splendid example is the two-and-a-half-story white frame house on the northwest corner of South St. Asaph and Wolfe streets.

Yet Seaton's greatest accomplishments resulted from his leadership role in the community to better the lives of other African Americans. His accomplishments under restrictive conditions were considerable. He was head trustee of the First Free School Society of Alexandria and founder and builder of schools for African American boys and girls in the city; an outspoken Radical Republican in the party of Abraham Lincoln; the first African American member of the Virginia General Assembly from north of the Rappahannock River; a member of the grand jury that indicted Jefferson Davis for treason (Foner 1993:191-192); a prosperous entrepreneur and property owner; and a civic, church, and business leader who was highly regarded by whites and blacks alike. He lived with his wife and children for many years at 404 South Royal Street, until his death in 1881. He was a mainstay of this largely African American neighborhood known as Hayti.

George Lewis Seaton and his brother John Andrew Seaton, an Alexandria alderman, were "well remembered by the older citizens of Alexandria" and were recognized for their contributions in Luther Porter Jackson's (1945) work about the Reconstruction era, *Negro Office-Holders in Virginia 1865-1895*. Both George Lewis and John Andrew Seaton prospered in real estate and emerged as important political leaders of the black community.

Eric Foner states that George Seaton “acquired \$4,000 worth of property before the Civil War and according to the 1870 census, owned \$15,000 in real estate and \$1,200 in personal property. During the 1870s, he was the largest black grocer in Alexandria and was said to be worth \$100,000 at his death” (Foner 1993:191-192).

Born in the midst of the recession in 1822, George Lewis Seaton was the third of eleven children. The Free Negro Registers indicate both his parents, George Seaton and Lucinda Seaton, were free blacks (Provine 1990:98). Both Fitzpatrick and Rosenthal state that Seaton’s mother, Lucinda, was born a slave to George Washington and that after his death, when Lucinda was an infant, Martha Washington freed her (1940:259; 1975:83). The Free Negro Registry entry of 1841, however, states that she was born free (Provine 1990:98). According to the 1820 ledger of James Hewitt Hooe, the senior George was a “colored man, carpenter” and a tenant at Burgundy Farm who paid \$15 annually (Hooe 1820). Yet Ruth Lincoln Kaye described George Sr. as “a wealthy white man” (Kaye 1987:13).

The Seatons lived near Franklin and South Washington streets. The children, four sons and seven daughters, were listed in the Free Negro Registers of July 30, 1841. All of the children’s ages are approximate. The boys were George Lewis (19), Adolphus (17), John Andrew (7), and Thomas (5); the girls were Hannah (32), Mary Ann (nee Seaton) Rodgers (25), Catherine (nee Seaton) Williams (23), Lucinda (15), Sarah (13), Martha Ann (11), and Laura Virginia (9) (Provine 1990:98, 99; Free Negro Registers 1797-1861, Vol.1:749-753; Vol. 2:187, 752, 753). Hannah’s age was noted also on August 4, 1847, as about 20 years old (Provine 1990:98, 99, 194). Given the age of her mother, it is more likely that Hannah’s age listed in 1847 is correct. On March 15, 1846, Hannah wed Alfred Hamilton at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church (Register, St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, B:292).

The Free Negro Registers provide descriptions of some members of the Seaton family. The July 30, 1841 registrations state that George Lewis Seaton’s mother, Lucinda, was a “dark mulatto woman, about 42 years old, 5 feet 4 3/4 inches tall, with a slight scar on the back of her left hand caused by a burn.” Three of Seaton’s older sisters are identified. Mary Ann Seaton Rodgers was “about 25 years old, 5 feet 6 1/4 inches tall,

and of a copper complexion." Catherine Seaton Williams was registered as "a dark mulatto woman about 23 years old, 5 feet 5 1/4 inches tall, of a copper complexion with several small scars on her right hand." Hannah Ann Seaton was described as being "about 32 years old, 5 feet 7 3/4 inches tall, of a copper complexion, with a small black speck in the corner of her right eye" (Provine 1990:98-99). In 1846, Adolphus was 5 feet 10 inches, with "a brown complexion, with no visible marks" (Provine 1990:127). Another series of registrations in 1847 give more information. George's sister Lucinda, at age 20, was 5 feet 7 1/2 inches and was "a copper color, with a black mole on her left cheek." Martha Ann, 17 years old, was 5 feet 7 inches, "with a black spot on the left side of the white of her right eye." In the 1858 registration, she was "a very bright mulatto" and 5 feet 8 inches (Provine 1990:287). Laura Virginia, the youngest sibling, was 5 feet 3 3/4 inches at age 14. She also had "a scar on her left cheek and another on her forehead." John Andrew was described as 5 feet 1 1/2 inches at age 12. The 1847 registration for Seaton's mother, Lucinda, stated that she had a stammer.

According to the 1829 Tax Assessments, "Geo Seaton Col'd [owned a] house + lot [on] Franklin and Washington [valued at] \$300." The house was a one-story structure, and there were two horses on the property (Land and Property Tax Assessments 1825-1833:Reel No. 6). George Seaton later purchased adjoining properties and built another four houses. His estate was noted as owning five adjoining houses at Franklin and Washington streets assessed at \$1,900 total in 1850 (Land and Property Tax Assessments). Four of these one-story houses were inhabited by whites, but the fifth house was two stories and the dwelling of George's widow, Lucinda. George L. Seaton owned a two-story house next door on the 600 block of South Washington Street (east side) assessed at \$775. The tax records indicate he rented the structure to Daniel Sullivan. Lucinda owned the adjoining lot valued at \$150.

George Seaton died in 1844 at age 53 and was buried beneath a sycamore tree at Trinity United Methodist Cemetery in Alexandria. Lucinda died in 1865 at age 67 and was buried next to her husband (Pippenger 1991:138). In accordance with a will drawn up September 13, 1843, and filed January 20, 1845, which George signed with an "X," his

properties were left to family members. To his oldest son, George Lewis Seaton, who was named executor, George left:

. . . a house and lot in the Town of Alexandria fronting on Washington Street, beginning North from Franklin Street fifty-eight feet, from thence, South on Washington Street seventeen feet—then East, and parallel to Franklin Street, seventy feet—then north, and parallel to Washington Street, seventeen feet—then West, seventy feet to the Beginning.

. . . should my son George marry, then it is my will and desire that, after that event, he shall occupy the property before given him free of rent: and, after the death or marriage of my said wife, it is my will and desire that all of my personal property shall be divided among my children (Will Book Orphans Court 4:387).

By 1847, George Lewis Seaton, Jr., had married Maria Bryant of Loudoun County, Virginia. Maria was born free in 1826. She was described in 1947 as “a bright mulatto, about 23 years old, 5 feet 1 inch tall with a small scar between the first and second joints of the first finger of her left hand and a small dark mole on her upper lip” (Provine 1990:211). George Lewis Seaton was described in the Free Negro Registers of 1847 as follows:

George Seaton is a dark mulatto, about 26 years old, 5 feet 10 3/4 inches tall, with a scar on his right cheek, another just below his under lip, and another on the back of his right hand. He was born free as appears by oath of Mrs. Jane Rye (Provine 1990:178).

The census from 1860 shows that George L. and Maria Seaton had six children—George C. (13), Catharine (10), Edwin (8), Sallie (6), Constance (5), and Colcote (11 months) (Alexandria Virginia City and County Census 1860). Cristina Lawhead’s 1993 research indicates that Maria and George had another girl, Virginia, one year before Catharine’s birth. Aside from the year of her birth, Lawhead could find no other information on Virginia.

Little is known about Seaton’s personal life. One interesting event is found in the Record of Marriages in the Gladwin Record (Pippenger 1992:10). During the Civil War, the George Seaton home was the scene of a marriage, on May 24, 1863, between Isaac Griffin and Ellen Mitchell. Reverend Gladwin officiated at the wedding and remarked in



his log that the black couple had “traveled over a hundred miles from vicinity of Richmond on foot over 100 miles together to get married.” The couple’s relationship to the Seatons is unknown, but Alexandria’s occupation by U.S. troops provided an environment of greater freedom.

George Seaton lost his oldest brother, Adolphus, only two years his junior, at 41 years of age, on March 19, 1865, at the close of the Civil War. He was buried in Trinity United Methodist Church Cemetery, the same burial ground as his parents. The tombstones in the same cemetery indicate that two of George Seaton’s sisters also passed away: Sarah in 1847, at 18 years, and Lucinda in 1869, at 43 years (Pippenger 1991:138).

After Maria died, Seaton married Catherine (Caroline/Kate) Turley in 1874 in a ceremony attended by a large “assemblage” at the Colored First Baptist Church, as reported in the *Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*. The article stated that Seaton wed “Miss Caroline Turley,” but in deeds she used the name Catherine, not Caroline (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser* March 19, 1874; Deed Bk 7, p.147; *Alexandria City Directory* 1915). The 1880 census shows that George and Catherine, listed as Kate, had three young children: George A. (5), Bertha (4), and Courtland J. (2) (Federal Census for Alexandria Virginia 1880).

## **THE PLIGHT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN EDUCATION IN ALEXANDRIA AND SEATON'S EDUCATION**

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Alexandria held few opportunities for educating African Americans. Schooling in private homes was available to a few African Americans in Alexandria as early as 1809. Perhaps the earliest was a primary school for African American boys and girls on the corner of Duke and South Fairfax streets operated by Mrs. Cameron, a white Virginian. Around that time period, Mrs. Tutten, also a white Virginian, ran a school in a house on the corner of North Pitt and Prince streets. After the War of 1812, a free colored school was founded by an

association of free colored people who received aid and encouragement from antislavery whites. The school was held in the Washington Free School Building on South Washington Street and was taught by the Rev. James H. Hanson, white pastor of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church. Nearly 300 African American boys and girls attended the school (U.S. Department of Education 1870:283).

The same federal publication reported that several others taught African American children, including Joseph Ferrell, an African American baker who had a school in an alley between Duke and Prince streets. A leader of the African American community, Ferrell was imprisoned for assisting in the escape of a number of slaves.

Alfred H. Parry, a former slave who had attended the Washington Free School, opened a small night school, which gradually drew so many children that it attracted the attention of Alexandria Mayor Bernard Hooe, who, in 1837, called Parry before him and declared his school to be an “unlawful assembly.” In Alexandria, black schools were subjected to annoyance and restraints under the provisions of a city ordinance prohibiting all assemblages, day or night, “under the pretense or pretext of a religious meeting, or for any amusement.” It was this provision that Mayor Hooe read when he called Parry before him. Although Parry was allowed to continue teaching by hiring a white man to be present at his night school, he eventually left Alexandria in 1843 and took up residence in Washington, D.C. (U.S. Department of Education 1870:284).

As Parry's experience demonstrated, it was difficult for a young African American in Alexandria to obtain an education in the 1830s. At the time, Alexandria was part of the District of Columbia; even so, it was still affected by an 1830 Virginia law that forbade teaching free African Americans and slaves. In Virginia, constables were ordered to disband every school caught teaching African Americans, whether a day or night school, in a church or private home. This law led to secrecy in educating African Americans. Children and adults alike hid their ability to read or write. Another law instituted in 1839 prevented those who were educated outside of Virginia from reentering the state.

In 1870, one educator wrote about the antebellum environment of black education in Alexandria:

The hostility to the instruction of the colored people had become so strong that the children were obliged to conceal their school books on the street, and to dodge to and fro like the young partridges of the forest.

But when the laws of Virginia took effect, by the ratification of the retrocession on the part of the state, matters became still worse, for the constables of the city were at once ordered to disperse every colored school, whether taught by day or night, on the week-day or on the Sabbath, and the injunction was most zealously executed.

Every humble Negro cabin in which it was suspected that any of these dusky children were wont to meet for instruction was visited, and so stern and relentless was the rule that the free colored people dared only in a covert manner to teach even their own children, a colored person not being allowed to read openly in the street so much as a paragraph in a newspaper. Some used to meet in secluded places outside the city and, with sentinels posted, hold their meetings for mutual instruction, those who could read and write a little teaching those less fortunate (U.S. Department of Education 1870:284).

Education, regarded as a path to a better life, was important for African Americans, whether free or enslaved. Education could mean a better job or even freedom. Determined to learn, despite the restrictions placed on the African American community, many did receive some schooling. Others obtained the necessary skills to become craftsmen and tradesmen (Rosenthal 1975:85).

The federal occupation of Alexandria in 1861 improved the educational opportunities available to African Americans. Local blacks, churches, and benevolent groups from the North provided the primary instruction for some students. "Contraband" schools were organized for slaves fleeing the South. Federal troops organized one contraband school, and other such schools were held in private homes and churches. The first to be organized was a pay school established by Mary Chase, who was freed during the federal occupation of Alexandria. Referred to as the "Columbus Street School," it operated from 1861 to 1866 near Wolfe Street and then was absorbed by one of the free schools of the benevolent societies (U.S. Department of Education 1870:283-284).

The Freedmen's Bureau assisted in the organization of schools for black children. Established in March 1865, the bureau was formed as a result of pressure from

abolitionists who perceived the necessity for a period of federal tutelage for the former slaves after emancipation (Cruden 1969:118). The bureau's commissioner was General Oliver Otis Howard, a graduate of Bowdoin College and a Civil War veteran, whose close ties to the freedmen's aid societies earned him the sobriquet "Christian General."

Education, for General Howard, was the foundation upon which all efforts to assist the freedmen rested. The encouragement and oversight of black schools occupied a significant portion of the bureau's time. Because of its limited resources, however, the bureau did not establish schools but coordinated the activities of Northern societies committed to black education. Harriet Jacobs, an escaped slave, came to Alexandria and helped set up classes for contraband children; however, most of the teachers were middle-class white women, the majority from New England. Their letters of application invoked the example of husbands and brothers who had fought for the Union and spoke of teaching as a way women could enlist as "soldiers" in a peacetime campaign to fulfill the promise of emancipation (Foner 1988:142).

In 1865, of the 7,763 African Americans living in Alexandria, 1,734 were able to read. Children under the age of 20 accounted for more than a third of the African American populace. Of these, some 2,635 were 14 and under and another 1,144 were between the ages of 14 and 20 (U.S. Department of Education 1870:292).

George Lewis Seaton possessed a fair education. He may have attended one of the schools for free African Americans in the District of Columbia (Jackson 1945:38). This education did not come easily, as he later indicated at the 1871 opening of the Public Free Schools for black children (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, January 3, 1871).

Education for black and white children was still very much a separate affair. In 1868, Republicans assured white voters that their children would not be forced to attend classes with blacks, and they generally kept their word. Usually, black politicians acquiesced when officials established separate schools. Even Frederick Douglass deemed separate schools "infinitely superior" to no schools at all. Black parents appeared mainly concerned with ensuring an equitable division of school funds. Many blacks believed all-black schools would be more open to parental control and more likely to hire black

teachers than those enrolling whites (Foner 1988:367).

Seaton, who placed great value on education, expressed concern over segregationist efforts to deny schooling to black children. At a meeting of the First Ward Radicals on October 20, 1872, there was a discussion about attempts by the conservative-dominated Alexandria City Council to persuade General Howard to turn black school buildings over to the city. Seaton's brother John Andrew Seaton warned that the city "was a drift to deprive colored children of their education." Chairman George Seaton clarified that colored schools belonged to the colored people, not to General Otis Howard (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, October 20, 1872).

### **HOUSE CARPENTER, BUILDER, AND LANDOWNER**

George Seaton engaged in a variety of property transactions and building projects for more than 20 years. Possibly learning his trade from his father, Seaton began building when he was in his twenties. His brothers Adolphus and John Andrew were carpenters as well (Morrill 1979:32).

#### ***Residential and Commercial Projects***

In January 1846, Seaton and his wife, Maria, sold a lot at South Washington and Gibbon streets to A.D. Collingsworth for \$140 (Deed Book H3:176), launching a series of property transactions for Seaton. In 1851, at 29 years of age, Seaton bought a lot at 323 South St. Asaph Street from John Roberts, a former mayor (Deed Book M3:335). The price of the transaction was not noted, although a deed of trust dated the same day shows Seaton owed Roberts \$250 as the balance of the transaction. "George Seaton to James W. Green for \$250 plus interest, payable in two years, being the balance of the purchase money of the above described lot" (Deed Book M3:336).

The purchase on the 300 block of St. Asaph Street is interesting. Many Quakers lived on the block, and the Meeting house was across Wolfe Street. In the nineteenth

century, many Quakers, including the Stablers, who resided at 305 and 307 South St. Asaph Street, supported freedom and rights for blacks (Bromberg, et al. 2001; Jenkins 1986; McCord 1985) The Quaker School once stood at 311 South St. Asaph Street (Kaye 1987:preface).

Since it appears that the total cost of Seaton's property at 323 South St. Asaph Street was more than \$250, it is likely that some small buildings already existed on the lot, which measured 30 feet by 115 feet. Seaton built a large house on the property. It is thought that two smaller, preexisting structures were attached to the house built by Seaton. One of the dwellings may have been built in 1797 by Colonel John Fitzgerald, one of the first citizens of Alexandria and an aide to General George Washington in the Revolutionary War. Ruth Lincoln Kaye writes: "It would have been an easy matter for George Seaton, master carpenter, to join onto the front of the buildings his handsome two and a half story house" (1987:14).

In 1851 or early 1852, the St. Asaph Street home was completed. The accomplishment was duly noted in a long list of newly built houses in the *Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser* of April 3, 1852: "A large frame building corner St. Asaph and Wolfe for Geo Seaton—built by him." Penny Morrill described the house as being typical for its time, with Greek Revival ornamentation on its façade:

On the first floor above the side entrance and the large windows are cornices supported by brackets. On the second floor are pedimented window heads. The large modillioned cornice, as well as the other decorative elements on the façade, were possibly millwork purchased locally (Morrill 1979:32).

The house displayed Seaton's understanding of architectural styles and his excellent craftsmanship. Kaye notes the "fine woodwork, combined with a side hall plan and the generous use of windows which bring light to this spacious home" (1987:preface, 13).

Water permits, issued in order of initial hookup, show owner, address of property, and tenant, if any. Seaton's permit indicates 323 South St. Asaph Street was the fiftieth property in Alexandria to hook up to the new water system, the latest in household conveniences (Erickson 1988:preface). The permit states:

Permit #50, Office of Alexandria Water Company, June 26, 1852:  
Permission is hereby granted to George Seaton to insert 5/8" ferrule in  
main pipe on St. Asaph corner of Wolfe, Edward S.Hough, Sect.  
(Virginia-America Water Co. records)

Although the 1857 newspaper notice indicated that Seaton lived in the newly  
completed house, tax rolls and another water record, from later in the summer, showed  
that he rented 323 South St. Asaph Street to R.S. Huck (Kaye 1987:14-15):

Permit #50, Class 1 st building 1 August 1852. I request a supply of Mount  
Cameron water through 1/2" ferrule from public pipe for following  
purposes at premises on corner St. Asaph and Wolfe Street belonging to  
George Seaton, now occupied by Richard S. Huck: one hydrant in yard  
and kitchen, one bath. NO wash pavement, water closet, opening in  
chambers, horse, carriage. \$13 per annum. Water rent paid by R.S.Huck -  
\$3.25

Ferrule & inserting, by Geo. Seaton - \$2.00 (Virginia-America  
Water Co. records)

The 323 South St. Asaph house was assessed at \$2,000 from 1851 to 1854;  
Richard Huck was the occupant, and his furniture was assessed at \$300 (Kaye 1987:16).

During the early 1850s, Seaton lived with his wife and children in a small house  
fronting on South Washington Street assessed at \$900. Meanwhile, his widowed mother,  
Lucinda Seaton, lived with tenants on the corner of South Washington and Franklin  
streets in a house assessed at \$2,300 (1987:16).

While many homes and public buildings in Alexandria were confiscated and  
converted into prisons and hospitals during the Civil War, Seaton's property at 323 South  
St. Asaph escaped this fate. Ruth Lincoln Kaye comments: "The John Marshall home,  
directly east on Wolfe Street, [was] taken over and used as a hospital for Union soldiers.  
Down the street at 209 and 211 South St. Asaph were two stately Southern mansions,  
taken for personal use of a federal judge and the Union general in charge of defense of  
Northern Virginia. Nearby were churches used as hospitals, with cots suspended on the  
tops of pews" (1987:preface).

Seaton used his equity at 323 South St. Asaph to buy other properties. Kaye notes:

The deed books at Alexandria Court House are full of his transactions, buying houses and lots, obtaining mortgages, losing some deals, but coming out ahead (Kaye 1987:13; Deed Book No. 9:97; Deed Book 5, No. 3:5; Deed Book No. 1:542). On February 19, 1853, he placed the [323 South St. Asaph Street] house in trust with Quaker Robert H. Miller to secure payment of \$800 to Sarah S. Janney, another Quaker (Deed Book O3:293), promising to keep insurance on the buildings (1987:17).

Seaton also acted as a third party, holding property in trust for one party in debt to a second party until the debt was resolved (Deed Book 9:97).

In 1856, Seaton purchased a house and lot, on the south side of the 700 block of Gibbon Street between South Washington and Columbus streets, from T.A. Stoutenburgh and James A. Stoutenburgh and his wife. Five days later, he sold the property to John Paine, an African American, for \$900 (Corporation Court, Deed Book 5, No. 3:5).

Seaton's real estate holdings rose from \$500 in 1850 to \$4,000 in 1860, a substantial sum for the period. In Virginia, there were only 100 other free African Americans in 1860 whose holdings compared to Seaton's (Schweninger 1990:125).

On May 19, 1864, Seaton bought a large lot, adjoining his 323 South St. Asaph Street property, at the northeast corner of South Washington and Wolfe streets for \$1,000 from L. E. Chittenden of the District of Columbia. Chittenden had bought the lot at a tax sale, held January 11, 1864, of property belonging to "insurrectionists" (Deed Book V3:552; Kaye 1987:17). During that period, the U.S. government confiscated property of Alexandrians who were sympathetic to the Confederacy. Five years later, on December 3, 1869, Seaton put the 323 South St. Asaph Street house and the confiscated property he had acquired in "trust with H.O. Claughton, to secure payment of \$1,000 he owed James F. Carlin, plus another note of \$4,000 due Carlin" (Kaye 1987:17; Deed Book A4:46). "Seaton renewed the deed of trust on March 14, 1870" (Kaye 1987:17; Deed Book A4:202).

In 1866, he purchased a town house for \$1,675. This house at 404 South Royal Street would become his permanent home (see Appendix C). That same year he built a frame building on Duke Street near South Washington Street (*Alexandria Gazette and*



*Virginia Advertiser*, February 28, 1866). Seaton's lumber arrived on the schooner *Eleanor T. Fooks* from Richmond (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, July 30, 1866).

On October 17, 1870, Seaton sold the 323 South St. Asaph house for \$3,000 to Anna R. Jamieson (Deed Book 1:118; Kaye 1987:22). Seaton did not profit from the sale. The deed records show that \$2,700 of the purchase money paid off trusts, and \$300 went against a judgment on the property. Ruth Lincoln Kaye states: "Seaton acknowledged the deed before a Justice of the Peace in Richmond" (1987:22).

On July 13, 1871, Seaton placed the following advertisement for his business in the *Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*:

Having resumed my old business as House Carpenter and Builder, at the old stand, northeast corner of Wolfe and Washington Streets, I ask that my friends and the public give me a share of their patronage, promising that all work given in my charge shall receive prompt attention, and shall be done in a substantial and workmanlike manner and upon the more moderate terms. Many thanks for past favors.

On April 15, 1868, Seaton bought land in Fairfax County at what is now 3402 Russell Road, Alexandria. He built a house on the property and rented it to a tenant. He built another frame house on Duke and South Washington streets, as well as a house on 419 North Alfred Street. He rented "a large frame house" at "59 South St. Asaph Street" (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, November 13, 1868). By 1870, with real-estate holdings worth \$15,000 and personal savings of \$12,000, Seaton was considered a wealthy man (Morrill 1979:32). An article in the *Richmond Dispatch* in 1869 claimed that he was worth \$100,000 (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, October 23, 1919). In 1874, George, his second wife, Catherine, and his youngest brother, John Andrew Seaton, sold a large lot on South Union Street between the Strand and Franklin Street to Alexandria Marine Railway & Shipbuilding Co. (Deed Book 4:178).

### ***Builder of African American Schools***

In 1867, Seaton constructed two schools in Alexandria for African American children. The Seaton School, later known as the Snowden School for Boys, was located on the west side of the 600 block of South Pitt Street between Gibbon and Franklin streets. The Hallowell School for Girls was on the west side of the 400 block of North Alfred Street, between Princess and Oronoco streets (Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools 1875). The work was done with money and materials provided by the Freedmen's Bureau (Bovey 1983). These schools subsequently became part of the public school system organized in 1870 (Miller 1999:6).

From the outset, Seaton played a major role in organizing the school initiative, as well as obtaining land and building materials for the schools. Under his leadership, a group of African Americans established the Free School Society of Alexandria shortly after the Civil War. In July 1867, working with the Freedman's Bureau, the society's trustees commissioned Seaton to construct two public schools. The trustees then held the Public Free Schools for colored people "under deed from Commissioners of the Freedman's Bureau at Washington" (Morrill 1979:33).

Seaton was paid \$600 in cash to build the boys' school, a two-story structure 100 by 50 feet, according to "Articles of Agreement" between Seaton and Colonel Samuel Phillips Lee, superintendent of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands. The agreement, typical of government contracts, provided specifics:

The building shall be of framed lumber, second hand and new, but all good and of sufficient size for a strong frame. There shall be five windows in each school room. The roof shall be shingled with Cypress Shingles and shall project sufficiently and shall have a good Gutter on each side, or if a tin gutter is used, all the wood work connected with it shall be done (Seaton 1867).

The schools were built on land purchased in 1866 by the Free School Society of Alexandria, of which Seaton was founder and member of the executive committee of the board of trustees (Alexandria Court, Deed Book Y3:110; U.S. Department of Education 1870:291). Each lot cost about \$800, paid for with funds raised at public meetings by

Freedmen (U.S. Department of Education 1870:292).

At the request of the Freedmen's Bureau, wood for school construction was taken from the War Department's Sickles Hospital, a series of barrack-like structures (on the block bounded by Oronoco, Pendleton, North West, and North Payne streets) that had been used for the physical rehabilitation of African American Union soldiers wounded during the Civil War (Lee 1867a). The War Department demolished one building of the barracks and sold the wood and other materials at public auction to the Freedmen's Bureau (Letter of June 12, 1867, War Department, No. 2117). The Freedmen's Bureau subsequently conveyed the building to the Free School Society of Alexandria (Deed Book A:81). Other barracks at Sickles Hospital and nearby L'Overture Hospital were transferred to the Freedmen's Bureau to be used as dwellings for recently freed slaves.

In a letter dated August 30, 1867, Captain Lee, writing on behalf of Seaton, requested an advance of \$1,000 to complete work on the Hallowell School, the frame of which was up and nearly weatherboarded (Lee 1867b:269). Another letter on the same day from Captain Lee said the school would be ready to open October 1. He stated that the building was expected to have eight rooms, each accommodating 50 children, with 25 benches and a table for the teacher (ibid.:268). In a letter of July 24, the Army said Seaton agreed to fit the windows of the building with box frames so that a sash could be hung with weights, thus facilitating raising them and increasing ventilation. For construction, Seaton used lumber that was already available (ibid.:171).

Under a separate contract dated September 6, 1867, Seaton furnished 200 desks and 18 tables for the Hallowell School at a cost of \$624. In a letter dated Nov. 9, 1867, to Captain George White, chief of the Army's Quarter Master Department, another captain in the Freeman's Bureau wrote that the schoolhouse was completed on that day in accordance with the contract and included Seaton's vouchers for labor and materials required to build the school (Freedmen's Bureau 1867).

The following is a list of George Seaton's fees for labor and supplies to construct Hallowell School:

| <u>Date-</u>       | <u>On what Account</u>   | <u>Amount</u> |
|--------------------|--|---------------|
| 1867               | Dolls cts.   |               |
| Oct. 15            | Material purchased   | 2832 20       |
| July 15 to 19      | Services 5 laborers digging foundation,<br>5 days at \$1.00 per day each | 25 00         |
| Oct. 1 to 11       | 5 Laborers whitewashing,<br>10 days at \$1.00 per day each               | 50 00         |
| Aug. 26 to Oct. 14 | 10 carpenters, building School House,<br>43 days at \$2.50 per day each  | 1075 00       |
| Oct. 1 to Oct. 23  | 5 painters, painting School House,<br>20 days at \$3.00 per day each     | 300 00        |
| Oct. 31            | Plasterers, plastering 1847 yards at<br>40c a yard                       | 738 80        |
| Oct. 31            | Bricklayers, laying 2600 bricks at \$4.00 a<br>[illegible]               | 104 00        |
| Oct. 31            | Tinner pulling up 275 feet of gustering [ <i>sic</i> ]<br>& spouting     | 75 00         |
|                    | TOTAL for building School House  | \$5200 00     |
| Oct. 15            | School Desks and Tables for School House                                 | 624 00        |

The Snowden School and the Hallowell School had a combined attendance of 420 children. The Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Schools (1875) related that each school was a two-story frame building containing six rooms, an assembly room, a wide hall, and two staircases. The report also noted that the wooden desks were of modern construction and far better than those that the city furnished for white children (1875).

The typical school day opened with prayer, Scripture reading, and the singing of

patriotic hymns, such as the “Battle Hymn of the Republic” and “John Brown.” The curriculum included reading, composition, arithmetic, and geography. In addition to traditional subjects, teachers often felt they must teach the freedmen values such as thrift, industry, cleanliness, civic responsibility, political awareness, and religious topics. The school day was from four to six hours, equally divided between morning and afternoon. Whether the education took place during day or night, the teachers often needed volunteers to help them teach and tutor the large numbers of eager students. Government workers volunteered their spare time to teach people to read and write, joining many volunteers from the black community. Several soldiers stationed with the U.S. Colored Troops volunteered to help students read at a freedmen’s school in Arlington and may have also helped in Alexandria (Arlington Historical Society 1995).

On January 26, 1870, federal military rule ended in Alexandria, and civilian control was reestablished. Under the terms of Virginia’s readmission to the Union with the adoption of a new state constitution, a public school system was established. The City of Alexandria took over the two former Freedmen’s Bureau schools for use as grammar schools for black boys and girls (Miller 1999:6).

On January 2, 1871, the Public Free School system for African Americans was officially inaugurated in a ceremony at the First Colored Baptist Church attended by many children and their parents, along with most of the city’s white establishment. This was a momentous event for George Seaton. The newspaper reported:

He had never before addressed an audience...he felt called upon, on this occasion to represent his race. He could not but look back to a few years ago, and to the difficulties he had experienced in obtaining his education, and be thankful for the chance his people now had (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, January 3, 1871).

The Seaton School educated black children for many years until a fire in 1915 forced its closing. Classes were taught in two other buildings until 1920, when the Seaton and Hallowell schools were combined and replaced by the Parker-Gray School, an elementary school for black children located on the 800 block of Wythe Street, the present site of the Charles Houston Center (*Alexandria Gazette*, c.1955). The Parker-Gray

School was named for John F. Parker, who was the first principal of the Seaton School, and Sarah J. Gray, principal of the Hallowell School from 1871 to 1881 and from 1883 to 1893 (Bovey 1983).

### ***Seaton Completes Odd Fellows Hall***

The Odd Fellows is a fraternal organization that began in England during the late eighteenth century. In America, racial biases kept African Americans from joining this white organization. In 1846, the first chapter of the National Grand United Order of Odd Fellows, Harmony Lodge #818, was granted dispensation by the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows, Friendly Society in England. It was the second African American lodge to be established in Alexandria, after the Masonic Universal Lodge #10 (Calvit 1994:Sec.8, 3).

With the end of the Civil War, it was legal for African American secret societies and organizations to meet, helping “the growth and strength of the African American community in Alexandria” by providing opportunities “to develop leadership skills and a professional network for African American men and women” (Calvit 1994:Sec. 8, 4). In 1869, the Odd Fellows Joint Stock Company was organized by three African Americans: James Webster, Robert Darnell, and John Credit (Calvit 1994: Sec.7, 1).

The Odd Fellows bought property at 411 South Columbus Street with a one-story brick building that was erected in 1864. George Seaton is credited with expanding this building. In 1870, he completed Odd Fellows Hall with funds from the Freedmen’s Bureau (Morrill 1979:32;Calvit 1994:Sec. 7, 1; Sec. 8, 4). The hall is located in the “Bottoms” neighborhood, a predominantly African American area. It served as a community meeting place for organizations such as the Rising Star, the Lincoln Lodge, the Good Samaritans, the Daughters of Zion, and Galilean orders such as the Eastern Star, and the Golden Star (Calvit1994:Sec. 8, 3-4). As chairman of the Odd Fellows trustees, Seaton helped negotiate a loan to repay the Freedmen’s Bureau to prevent foreclosure on Odd Fellows Hall (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, August 4, 1875).

Seaton built Odd Fellows Hall as a two-and-a-half-story brick building with a

slate mansard roof and Second–Empire style detailing. In the Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, Elizabeth Calvit writes: “It is one of the largest structures on the block and the largest structure built by an African American except for churches” in Alexandria (1994: Sec. 7, 1).

From 1870 to recent times, the Odd Fellows Hall has been used for numerous gatherings, festivities, and secret fraternal affairs (Miller 1984:5). It was vacant for a while, but was renovated in the 1980s and turned into condominiums. In 2002, the Odd Fellows Hall and several other historic African American properties, including the Seaton house at 404 South Royal Street, were nominated to the National Register of Historic Places (Appendix C).

## **POLITICAL AND CIVIC LEADER**

One outcome of the Civil War in Virginia was the elevation of African Americans to the status of voter and officeholder. Under the terms of the Reconstruction Acts of Congress passed in 1867, virtually all male black adults became eligible to vote. Both protected by the U.S. military government in the Southern states, and lured by the Republican party that penetrated the region, the freedmen registered and voted in large numbers in 1867 and for a number of years afterward (Foner 1993:vii). Blacks in 1870 constituted between 40 and 50 percent of the population in Virginia (Foner 1993:xiii).

For 30 years, African Americans were active in Virginia politics and held many elective offices, especially at the local level (Foner 1993:viii). This was the case in Alexandria, since thousands of freedmen had fled into the city during and after the war.

During Reconstruction, party affiliation was determined chiefly by race. Most Virginia whites were associated with the Conservative or Democratic party, while the overwhelming majority of blacks were in the Radical or Republican party.

### ***Radical Republican Politician***

George Seaton and his brother John Andrew, also an important African American businessman and leader, were active Republicans in the Fourth Ward Radicals, which was comprised of blacks and whites ("Radical Meeting," *Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, August 6, 1866; July 23, Sept. 10, 1867).

Seaton was present at a meeting of the Fourth Ward Radicals on July 23, 1867, where the following resolutions were passed to promote good race relations:

In view of repeated representations made, by parties interested, to prevent the establishment of relations of amity and good feeling between the white and colored people of the city, the following preamble and resolutions were offered and unanimously accepted.

WHEREAS, the report has been very extensively circulated that we, the colored people of Alexandria, are being taught to hate the white citizens, whom we have always lived among, therefore,

*Resolved*, That we, the colored citizens, regard the report as base and false, and that in the future, as in the past, we shall do all in our power to cultivate the best of feelings towards the white citizens, trusting that the same may be done on their part toward us.

*Resolved*, That while we may differ in political matters, our friendship toward our white friends is not changed (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, July 23, 1867).

George Seaton was a delegate in 1866 to the Radical Convention in Richmond. On his return, Seaton criticized the convention proceedings during a meeting of the Republican Club (Fourth Ward Radicals) at the Bethlehem Church. The meeting was marked by a debate over Reconstruction between R.C. Armstrong, a radical Republican, and Navy Captain Samuel P. Lee of the Freedmen's Bureau regarding the performance of General Schofield, military commandant of the district. Seaton endorsed Lee's explanation of Reconstruction law and his implicit rejection of Armstrong's tactics. Armstrong's resolutions were rejected by a large majority (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, August 6, 1866). Seaton was one of four delegates from the Fourth Ward elected to go to "the Mass State Convention," a Republican convention, held in



August 1967 in Richmond (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, July 23, 1867; Morrill 1979:32).

On May 1, 1867, the Stevens Republican Club was formed as a committee within the Fourth Ward Radicals (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, May 2, 1867). Several resolutions were made during a meeting of this committee held September 9, 1867.

*Resolved*, That to better the organization of the Republican party in the county and city of Alexandria, the Fourth Ward elect seven members of the Stevens Republican club, to be called the Executive Committee.

*Resolved*, That the Republicans of the Fourth Ward cordially request their friends in the First, Second and Third Wards, and in the county, to elect the same number to represent their clubs, in a meeting, called by the several committees, to transact business for the different clubs, as a consolidated body, in order that all, as Republicans, may work harmoniously.

*Resolved*, That this committee shall have power to elect their own President, Secretary, and other officers of their own choice, out of the different committees.

*Resolved*, That this committee shall have power to call a mass meeting of the wards and county together, whenever they deem it necessary to act in carrying out the Reconstruction law.

During this meeting, Seaton and his brother John Andrew were elected to the Executive Committee of the Fourth Ward Club. The Executive Committee was integrated—five blacks and two whites (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, September 10, 1867). At another meeting, held October 1, 1867, Seaton opposed a resolution for the Executive Committee to show support for John Hawxhurst, the “great friend and Republican,” at a convention to be held the next evening; however, the resolution was passed despite his objections (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, October 2, 1867).

Already established in political circles, George Seaton was recommended for the Fourth Ward vacancy on the Alexandria Common Council in April 1867, but he never

became a council member. John Andrew Seaton, however, was elected Fourth Ward alderman in 1871. He was the first black elected to that office in Alexandria (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, April 6, 1867; Miller, T. Michael, 1999:6). He served three terms until 1876 (Miller 1992:36-38).

Penny Morrill writes that John A. Seaton was also on the Capital Police Force and later became a guard in the Equitable Life Insurance Company in New York. She notes: "He was a tall and handsome man with presence, these characteristics being reported in newspapers in New York and as far away as New Orleans." She references the *New York World* as stating that he was a builder who ". . . has directed the erection of a very tasty cottage in a Virginia plantation owned by him." After he returned to Alexandria, John A. Seaton was on the board of the John Hay Industrial School (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, March 30, June 20, 1887; July 6, 1897).

By 1872, George Seaton was president of the First Ward Radicals. On October 19 of that year, he presided over a meeting at "the colored school house, near the Bridge pump." A committee was formed to ensure "that every Republican of the ward voted." The meeting went on to encourage participation in voting. The newspaper reported that Joseph Colton said, "Let every one suppose the entire success of the Republican party depended upon his individual shoulders." Colton "was confident that there would be a victory which would make some of the 'old rebels' tremble." Seaton agreed with these statements "and urged unity in the party" (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, October 20, 1872).

In August 1867, George Seaton chaired a meeting at the First Colored Baptist Church on South Alfred Street, the oldest African American congregation in town, where John M. Langston, a Radical Republican and general inspector for the Freedmen's Bureau, addressed the congregation. The meeting was held under the auspices of the National Reform Educational Society (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, August 17, 1867). Langston, the Republican party's most prominent national black spokesman apart from Frederick Douglass, was an outspoken advocate for black suffrage. In an October 1865 speech in Indiana, he declared: "The Colored man is not content when

given simple emancipation. . . . He demands the free and untrammelled use of the ballot.”

A month later, Langston said,

We ask more than the liberty to work and to eat and to die. The negro steps up in the presence of the white American lawmakers, statesmen and politicians . . . and demands none other than absolute equality before American law. . . . We plant ourselves back on the great American idea that our fathers gave, on July 4, 1776, to the world (Foner 1993:128).

### ***Juror***

With the headline reading “COLORED JURYMEN,” an article in the *Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser* stated, “George Seaton, colored, a respectable and well to do resident of this city is said to be included in the list of jurymen to serve at the session of the United States District Court, which meets in Richmond to-day” (May 2, 1867).

Because of hostility toward blacks, there were some tense and unpleasant moments on the jury. In July 1867, Seaton was one of 12 jurors—six blacks and six whites. They were instructed to perform an inquest upon a young woman whose body had been found in a river. In the courtroom, the brother and brother-in-law of the deceased woman protested angrily against the idea of blacks participating in the inquest. Also, a prospective juror refused to serve when he learned that he would be on the same panel with blacks. Nonetheless, the jury was impaneled, and the death was ruled a suicide (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, July 1867; Lawhead 1993).

Seaton served on a grand jury that indicted Jefferson Davis for treason (Foner 1993:191-192). On March 26, 1865, the grand jury returned an indictment against Davis charging him in many counts with treason and conspiracy with Robert E. Lee, James Longstreet, and others to make war against the United States (Report July 1866, H Rept 104, 39 Cong. 1 sess., serial 1272). The case never went to trial, and the indictments were dismissed.

### ***State Assemblyman***

In 1869, George Seaton was elected to the Virginia State Assembly, making him the highest-ranking black officeholder in the state. The *Richmond Dispatch* described him as an “industrious, thrifty man” (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, October 23, 1869). He served one term in the State Assembly from 1869 to 1871. Seaton was appointed to the standing Committee of Schools and Colleges and served on the Banks, Currency and Commerce Committee (Virginia General Assembly House of Delegates 1870:53-54). During Reconstruction, 87 blacks were elected to the Virginia State Assembly, but only two were from Northern Virginia—Seaton and John B. Syphax, a member of the Arlington Board of Supervisors, who served from 1874 to 1875 (Jackson 1945:vii, 38, 41).

On February 7, 1871, the Senate voted to amend the Charter of the City of Alexandria, but not before Seaton offered an amendment to allow Alexandria voters to ratify or reject the amended charter. His amendment was rejected 58 to 28 (Virginia General Assembly House of Delegates 1870:174). He also introduced a resolution relating to the management of public schools in Alexandria and the exclusion of the Holy Scriptures. His resolution was referred to the Committee of Schools and Colleges (Virginia General Assembly House of Delegates 1870:199).

During Reconstruction, there were eight black members of the Virginia Senate and 36 black members in the House, but no major black state officials (Foner 1993:xvi). A large number of the 1,465 black Southern officeholders during Reconstruction were artisans, including 125 carpenters, 50 barbers, 47 blacksmiths, 37 masons, and 37 shoemakers (Foner 1993:xxi). Businessmen comprised another large group—104 were small shopkeepers and grocers. Considering their elevated status in black communities, it was not surprising that there were 237 ministers and 172 teachers among those elected. Fifty-two earned their living as merchants, and there was a scattering of building contractors, saloonkeepers, and hotel owners. Foner writes: “Ridiculed by their opponents as incompetent and corrupt, most black officials in fact proved fully capable of understanding public issues and pursuing the interests of their constituents and party” (1993:xxiii).

Most black officials during Reconstruction served in office for only a single term.

Seaton was no exception:

Seaton was one of two Delegates elected by Alexandria city and county to the Legislature which convened in December 1869. James T. Close, his confere [*sic*], who was a white man, died shortly after the election, and an election to fill his place followed. The republicans with their negro coadjutors were in the majority hereabouts at that time, and the democrats then calling themselves conservatives nominated the late Ruben Johnson, a mild union man, and the opposition party placed the late Robert Armstrong into the ring. Johnston [*sic*] was elected. Seaton served one term. He was defeated in the next nominating convention (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, October 23, 1919).

Many reasons explain this high turnover rate, including: the early end of Reconstruction (1873) in Virginia when the election produced simultaneous Democratic control of the governorship and both houses of the state legislature; the widespread desire among blacks to hold office; the threat of violence and economic retaliation against Republican officials; and the fact that few nineteenth-century officeholders, black or white, were professional politicians (Foner 1993:xxxii).

With Virginia readmitted to the Union and Alexandria an independent city, the first municipal election under the new constitution was held on May 25, 1870. In a close vote, former mayor Hugh Latham, standard bearer for the Conservative party, was elected. Reverend George Parker, pastor of the Third Baptist Church, became the first black man elected to Alexandria's City Council. T.B. Pinn, another black, was elected magistrate (Miller 1999:6).

On August 10, 1871, Seaton endorsed sending delegates to a convention for Southern blacks to be held in Columbia, South Carolina, but in most parts of the South and locally in Alexandria, political power had shifted back to the white establishment (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, August 10, 1871). Miller states: "In 1871, the Conservative Party again emerged victorious and retained control of the city despite efforts by blacks and white Republicans to create a permanent bloc in opposition" (1999:6).

### ***Supporter of Black Institutions and Rights***

News items and other documents show Seaton as organizer of a number of black civic and business groups. On April 11, 1868, the *Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser* printed this announcement:

Colored Building Association—A meeting of the colored citizens of Alexandria was held last night at the house of George L. Seaton for the purpose of organizing a Building Association.

Seaton became chairman of this association (Morrill 1979:32).

An item about Seaton appeared in the *Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser* for August 31, 1871:

FLAG POLE - George L. Seaton, the colored member of the legislature from this county, has presented the Columbia Fire Company with a valuable flag pole, which was erected on their engine house to-day.

On March 13, 1872, Seaton chaired a large meeting of Alexandria's black citizens who wished to persuade the directors of the Freedmen's Savings Bank and Trust Company of Washington to establish an Alexandria branch (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, March 14, 1872). The newspaper report went on to say:

A resolution was unanimously adopted requesting the Freeman's Savings Bank & Trust Company of Washington to establish a branch in this city with Fields Cook as Cashier, and that all present make deposits in the bank when it shall be established.

In April 1873, Seaton organized the Colored Young Men's Christian Association in Alexandria and was elected president (Morrill 1979:32). Less than a month later, the newspaper reported an increase in the local "Colored" YMCA membership and that meetings were "well conducted and interesting" (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, April 22, 1873).

Seaton devoted much time to the black cause. In August 1871, while a member of the Virginia State Assembly and a leader of Alexandria's Fourth Ward Radicals, he signed a manifesto urging blacks throughout the South to send delegates to a Radical Republican convention (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, August 10, 1871).

When Charles Sumner, a Republican senator from Massachusetts who was in the forefront of the effort in Congress to establish the Freedmen's Bureau, died in 1875, Seaton and his brother John Andrew organized a meeting in his memory (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, March 13, 1875). Sumner, who was the first major American politician to advocate voting rights for blacks, was author of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1875 (Bennett 1967:35).

### SEATON'S LAST YEARS

While George Seaton was engaged in political action, he also began a new business. The local paper reported the opening of George Seaton's grocery business at 179 King Street, between Washington and Columbus streets and asked readers to look for his advertisement (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, May 16, 1868). On June 18, 1868, Seaton placed an advertisement in the newspaper that announced: "Having bought the stock of Messrs Loomis & Facer . . . [he was] now prepared to furnish to [his] friends and the public in general, as fine a selection of GROCERIES as can be found in any house in the city." The advertisement goes on to describe a selection of groceries available, including sugar, tea, flour, molasses, cheese, ham, lard, coffee, oils, wooden ware, willow ware, crockery and glassware. The building was owned by B.F. Price, who probably rented the first floor space to Seaton (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, June 18, 1868). He seems to have gone back and forth between the grocery and carpentry businesses (see page 16). The grocery was not listed in either the 1871 or the 1873-74 City Directory. Later, it was listed at 94 South Royal Street (City Directory 1876-77; 1877-78), and Seaton had captured the greatest portion of the grocery trade in Alexandria (Jackson 1945:38). At the time of his death, Seaton was listed in Chataigne's City Directory as carpenter (City Directory 1881-1882).

Seaton secured a political job as the Alexandria County clerk for his oldest son, George C., who had worked as a grocery clerk in his store. But an item in the *Alexandria*

*Gazette and Virginia Advertiser* of January 2, 1871, said that Judge R.H. Cockerille adjourned the County Court and suspended proceedings on criminal cases “in consequence of the incompetency of the clerk, George Seaton.” Young Seaton died two years later at age 27 (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, July 16, 1873). He is buried in Union Cemetery of the Washington Street United Methodist Church in the Wilkes Street cemetery complex.

By the mid-1870s, Seaton’s health and finances began to suffer. In 1874, in the midst of bloody skirmishes between whites and blacks in Alabama and Louisiana, the Freedmen’s Bank failed, sending seismic shocks of despair through African American communities. The bank had been chartered by Congress in 1865 to encourage thrift among the freedmen and had branches in major cities in the South and North. Tragically, the Freedmen’s Bank, like so many institutions founded ostensibly for freedmen, had fallen under the control of dubious white financiers and speculators who had recklessly squandered the funds in high-risk ventures. The failure of the bank seared the consciousness of blacks and checked the growth of black initiative and enterprise. Even more disheartening was the failure of Congress to authorize full payment to the black men and women who had more than \$2 million on deposit when the bank closed its doors (Bennett 1967:361). It is likely that Seaton, who had led the effort to open a branch of the Freedmen’s Bank in Alexandria, lost money when the bank failed.

Seaton was not alone in his financial difficulties. Foner concludes that among black Reconstruction officeholders, at least 24 black entrepreneurs, mostly grocers and small merchants, went out of business during the depression of the 1870s (1993:xxiii).

Those who knew him later in his life apparently did not remember that Seaton was once a rich man, as evidenced by the this quote from the then 50-year-old files of a Richmond paper:

The statement that he was worth \$100,000 will prove strange to some now living who were acquainted with him and his affairs. He was of a prominent free colored family, which possessed some property in Alexandria, in pre-war days, most of which was on south Washington street or Franklin street. He was of the old-style colored man, mild-mannered, courteous, in short a reflex of the white race among whom he



was born and reared (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, October 23, 1919).

On April 9, 1878, James F. Carlin loaned Seaton money which he used to pay assessments on two insurance policies he had taken out four years earlier, each worth \$2,500. Carlin also agreed to loan Seaton's wife, Catherine, money so she could start her own business. In exchange, Carlin assumed all rights, title, and interest to the insurance policies (Deed Book 7:147). On June 18, 1879, the City of Alexandria auctioned George and John Seaton's properties on Wythe and North Payne streets to collect delinquent taxes (Deed Book 10:147). Two days later, the City auctioned a house and a lot on Gibbon Street assessed to George Seaton (Deed Book 10:291) and two Seaton-owned houses on Washington Street, also for delinquent taxes (Deed Book 10:297).

In 1880, George Seaton became seriously ill. An item in the July 2, 1881, issue of the *Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser* stated:

George L. Seaton, a well-known and respected colored man, was stricken, for the third time, with paralysis, while sitting at the door of his house, on south Royal Street, yesterday a' ternoon. He is extremely ill, and no hopes are entertained of his recovery.

He died at home, 404 South Royal Street, four days later on July 6, 1881, at age 60 (Pippenger 1995:280). He was survived by his wife "Kate," their three children, all under six years of age, as well as the children from his first marriage. A paid notice on the day of his death in the *Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser* stated:

Funeral will take place at 2 o'clock tomorrow, Thursday, afternoon from the First Baptist Church. Rev. Samuel Madden will officiate. The friends of the family are very respectfully requested to attend (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, July 6, 1881).

The weather seemed to make a statement on the day of Seaton's funeral. An article entitled "Echo of Reconstruction" gives this chilling description:

One of the fiercest thunder storms ever experienced in Alexandria prevailed that afternoon. The horses attached to the hearse and carriages became frightened at the heavy peals of thunder and it was said at the time that lightning ran into the grave while the body was being lowered into it (*Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, Oct. 23, 1919).

After his death, the house on South Royal Street was put up for auction because Seaton had defaulted on a loan of \$2,664. His widow, Catherine, paid \$175 for the property (1927 Will Book 4:40). Her oldest son, George L., died in 1899 just a month before turning 15. He was buried at the Union Cemetery of the Washington Street United Methodist Church (Pippenger 1992:2:70). His gravestone reads:

A precious one from us has gone/ A voice we loved is stilled/ A place is vacant in our home/ Which never can be filled.

Catherine lived at the house on South Royal Street until her death in 1926 and left the bulk of her estate to her son, Courtland, listed in the *Alexandria Directory* as a driver. Two building lots at Sunnyside in Arlington County (now in Northern Alexandria) were left to Courtland's daughter, Catherine L. Seaton (City of Alexandria 1927:342). After Catherine Seaton's death, Courtland, his wife, Harriet, and daughter Catherine L. moved to Newark, N.J. (Will Book 4:40; Fennell 1994).

Well remembered by his contemporaries, George Lewis Seaton eventually sank into obscurity, disappearing almost entirely from the historical record. The same happened to many other local black leaders elsewhere in the South. Although some of their children achieved distinction, none of the Reconstruction black officials created a family political dynasty. Foner concludes that this situation is an indication of how the redemption of conservative Southern whites aborted the development of the South's black political leadership (1988:608).

While the house in which Seaton lived at 404 South Royal Street was substantially modified or rebuilt by his widow around 1900, the site has been associated with Seaton and his family for more than 60 years. The City of Alexandria, in tribute to Seaton, nominated the brick rowhouse that now stands at 404 South Royal for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (Appendix C).



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**Appendix A**  
**Articles Found in the *Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser***  
**Pertaining to the Seaton Family**

**Compiled by Margarete Cooper**



January 11, 1845

THIS IS TO GIVE NOTICE—That the subscribers have obtained from the Orphans' Court of Alexandria County, in the District of Columbia, Letters Testamentary on the personal estate of GEORGE SEATON, late of Alexandria, deceased. All persons having claims against the said deceased, are hereby warned to exhibit the same, to the subscribers, with the vouchers thereof, passed by the said Orphans' Court, on, or before the 11th day of January next; they may otherwise, by law, be excluded from all benefit of the said estate; and all those indebted thereto are requested to make immediate payment. Given under our hands this 11th day of January, 1845.

LUCINDA SEATON, Ex'x.,  
GEORGE F. SEATON, Ex'r. of  
George Seaton, dec'd.

December 30, 1851

LOCAL ITEMS

Charles Hamilton, free negro, was arrested on the night of the 25th instant. by officer Chipley, charged with cursing and swearing, and threatening to shoot somebody. He was committed to the Watch House, and taken before the Mayor the next morning, forfeited his "shooting Iron" and Powder, paid the usual fine, and was discharged. George Seaton, George Turly, and James Evans, all free negroes, were arrested by officers Chipley and Monroe, on the 27th inst., and taken before Justice Hewitt, charged with being engaged in a general fight. They were all held to bail to keep the peace for twelve months—pay the costs, and permitted to "slope."

April 3, 1852

LOCAL ITEMS

Building Improvements

To give some idea of the Improvements in the way of Building, going on, in different parts of the town, and to be commenced and completed, this Spring, we subjoin the following list:

. . . A large frame building, corner of St. Asaph and Wolfe, for Geo. Seaton—built by him.

February 28, 1866

CITY COUNCIL.—LAST NIGHT.—Mr. McKenzie was called to the chair on motion of Mr. Baker, in absence of W. D. Massey, President . . .

. . . Mr. Portner introduced a resolution granting J. C. Lee permission to erect a frame building on Duke street, between Patrick and Henry streets.

Mr. Moran thought the fire at the theatre should teach Council a lesson on the subject of

frame buildings in the settled part of the city.

Mr. Neale said that the neighbors, especially Mr. McBurney, objected, as he was about to build two brick buildings adjoining in the spring. He thought the law should stand.

Messrs. Portner and Daw supported the resolution which was rejected.

George Seaton was allowed to erect a frame building on Duke Street near Washington.

July 30, 1866

MARINE LIST

PORT OF ALEXANDRIA—JULY 30. ARRIVED.

Steamer E.C. Knight, Derity, New York, to H.C. Winship  
Schr. Fountain, Bennett, Fall River, to W. A. Moore  
Schr. Forward, Jones, Norfolk, shingles to Smoot & Perry  
Schr. Eleanor T. Fooks, Richmond, lumber to George Seaton.

August 6, 1866

RADICAL MEETING INTERRUPTED BY AN OFFICER OF THE FREEDMEN'S BUREAU—FOURTH WARD RADICALS.—A large meeting of the Republican Club of the Fourth Ward was held last night in Bethlehem Church, colored, on Columbus street, James Claggett, colored, the President, in the Chair, and Robert Darnell, colored, Secretary. The committee to whom was referred the resolution relating to the course to be pursued by the colored people with reference to riding on the cars of the Washington & Alexandria R.R., reported that the subject was one over which, at present, the colored people had no control, and they therefore asked to be discharged.

George Seaton and James Claggett, colored, delegates to the late Radical Convention in Richmond, then presented a report of the proceedings of that body, in which the course pursued by Messrs. Hunnicutt, Hawxhurst, and Tucker, was severely censured.

R.C. Armstrong offered a series of resolutions recommended the call of another Convention, to assemble in this city, for the purpose, in addition to the transaction of other important business, of nominating candidates to fill the offices soon to be vacant. He supported the adoption of his resolutions in a long speech, in which he denounced Gen. Schofield as hindering the reconstruction of the State from selfish motives, and in order to retain his position as commanding officer of this military district.

Col. Lee, who was present, at this point interrupted the speaker by saying: "Stop Mr. Armstrong! I do not, however, as an officer, command you to stop but because, as a citizen, I cannot patiently listen to such false statements as you are making concerning the military commandant of this district; and if the meeting would like to hear my reasons for

interrupting Mr. Armstrong I will briefly give them." It, immediately, being resolved that Col. Lee should have the floor, that gentleman lucidly explained the provisions of the reconstruction law, the duties of the colored people under it, and what, up to this time, had been done towards carrying it into operation. He cautioned the colored people against listening to the false representations of designing office seekers, made for the sole purpose of embittering them against all classes of the community who did not favor their personal aggrandizement and advancement, and would not follow their lead.

George Seaton, colored, in a few remarks, endorsed what had been said by Col. Lee, and on a vote being taken, the resolutions were rejected by a large majority.

Mr. Armstrong again took the floor, but in the midst of his speech a motion to adjourn was offered, and, almost unanimously adopted.

#### April 6, 1867

DEPOSITION OF CITY OFFICIALS.—There have been as yet no changes made in the municipal offices of Alexandria—nor will the lists recommending persons to fill the soon-to be[sic] vacated offices be received in Richmond until Wednesday evening next. The new appointments consequently can not be made for several days. Of the present occupants of the elective offices to which emoluments are attached, Thomas Whittington, Clerk of the Market; S.K. Field, Tax Collector; Wm F. Vincent, Measurer of Lumber; J.P. Coleman, Measurer of Wood and Bark; and Jacob Roxbury, Assessor, have been determined to be eligible, and will, it is supposed, be allowed to retain their positions. For the other offices to which pay is attached, W.N. Berkley has been recommended for Mayor; T.A. Stoutenburgh, for Auditor; I.B. Lovejoy, for Guager; E.S. Boynton, for Measurer of Lumber; I.C. O'Niel, for Collector of Taxes; P.G. Henderson, for Assessor; S.F. Beach, for Corporation Attorney; Robert Bell, jr., for Surveyor; Edward Hughes, for Superintendent of Fire Department; and G.C. Hewes, for Superintendent of Gas. Of the present Board of Aldermen Messrs. Markell, Brewis, Prettyman and Robertson having been elected for two years, hold over, and Mr. Bryan having been determined to be eligible, will, it is supposed, be retained in his office and to fill the vacancies in the Board, Messrs. L.D. Harmon of the 1st Ward, J.L. Dyson of the 2nd, and Robert Bell of the 4th, have been recommended. Of the present Common Council, Messrs. J.B. Smoot and H.S. Martin of the 4th Ward, and W.S. Moore and C. L. Neale of the 1st, are considered eligible, and for the vacancies to occur in the board, Messrs. Lewis McKenie, white, and Ewd. Evans, colored, for the 1st Ward; D. Turner, A. Moran, Lewis Stein, white, and Henry Marshall, colored, for the 2d; W.D. Massey, J.M. Stewart, E.E. White, white, and R.D. Beckley, colored, for the 3d; and William Arnold, white, and George Seaton, colored, for the 4th, have been recommended.

#### May 2, 1867

FOURTH WARD REPUBLICANS—At a meeting of the Republicans of the Fourth Ward, held last night, in Bethlehem Church, colored, on Columbus, between Wikes [sic] and Wolfe streets, which was numerously attended, a "Stevens Republican Club" was formed,



and its temporary officers elected. After the transaction of some other routine business the meeting adjourned, to meet again next week.

**COLORED JURYMEN.**—The name of George Seaton, colored, a respectable and well to do resident of this city, is said to be included in the list of jurymen to serve at the session of the United States District Court, which meets in Richmond to-day.

July 9, 1867

**COLORED SCHOOL HOUSE.**—A frame building, on a brick foundation, 100 feet long by 50 feet deep, to be used as a school house for colored children, is in process of erection on Alfred street, between Princess and Oronoco. George Seaton is doing the carpenter's work.

July 26, 1867

**CORONER'S INQUEST**—The body of the young woman, Ellen Beavers a full account of all the circumstances connected with whose suicide, so far elicited, was published in yesterday's Gazette, was caught this morning between nine and ten o'clock, off the northern end of the city, by Mr. John Williams, who was dragging for it. It was conveyed to the house of Mr. George Beavers, the poor girl's brother near Wolfe street dock, where, at eleven o'clock, a jury, composed of T.A. Stoutenb\_rgh [?], the Coroner, and Washington Fisher, James Nickens [?], George Seaton, Harrison Blackburn, Robert Williams and George Seaton, Jr., colored, and T.J. Edelin, A.D. Warfield, Eli Pettey, Orlando Wood, James Owens, and Joseph Hopkins, white, held an inquest upon it, and rendered a verdict in accordance with the statements in yesterday's Gazette. While the oath was being administered by the Coroner to the jurymen, some excitement was created, among the crowd collected in the immediate vicinity by the emphatic protestations of Messrs. George Beavers and James Spencer, the brother and brother-in-law of the deceased, against colored men holding an inquest upon the body of their sister. They both stated also that if they had supposed that twelve white men could not be procured in the city of Alexandria to hold an inquest upon the body of a white woman, they would have taken it across the river to Maryland, where that number could be readily obtained. The protest, however, being the only obstruction in the way of the impannelled [*sic*] jury, they proceeded to hold their inquest with the above stated result.

Mr. Richard Rudd was summoned as a juror, but refused to serve when he discovered that he was to be associated with colored men.

July 23, 1867

**FOURTH WARD RADICALS.**—A regular meeting of the Stevens Republican club of the 4th Ward was held in Bethlehem church, colored, on Columbus street, last night, James H. Claggett, colored, President of the club, in the chair. Resolutions looking toward increased efficiency on the part of the club, were offered and adopted. In view of repeated representations made, by parties interested, to prevent the establishment of relations of

amity and good feeling between the white and colored people of the city, the following preamble and resolutions were offered and unanimously adopted.

WHEREAS, the report has been very extensively circulated that we, the colored people of Alexandria, are being taught to hate the white citizens, whom we have always lived among, therefore,

*Resolved*, That we, the colored citizens, regard the report as base and false, and that in the future, as in the past, we shall do all in our power to cultivate the best of feelings toward the white citizens, trusting that the same may be done on their part towards us.

*Resolved*, That while we may differ in political matters, our friendship towards our white friends is not changed.

*Resolved*, That a copy of these resolutions be printed in all the newspapers of this city.

On motion the club proceeded to the election of delegates from the Fourth Ward to the Mass State Convention to be held in Richmond next August, and the following were chosen: G.W. Parker, James H. Claggett, Geo. Seaton, and G.W. Simms. The old officers of the club were re-elected to their positions for the ensuing quarter. Several speeches were delivered by members of the club, after which, at 11 o'clock, the meeting adjourned.

#### August 17, 1867

EDUCATIONAL ADDRESSES.—The educational addresses, advertised to take place last night at the First Colored Baptist Church, on Alfred street, and to hear which a large audience assembled, consisted—after the organization of the meeting by the election of George Seaton, colored, Chairman, and a prayer by the colored pastor of the African Methodist Church, whose name is Henry Elbert—of a Radical speech by a colored lawyer of some note, named John M. Langston, from Oberlin, Ohio, which, however, contained a good deal of excellent advice, and was delivered in a forcible and oratorical style, and with telling effect—indeed his speeches throughout the South are acknowledged, wherever they have been delivered, to have greatly excelled in matter, rhetoric and oratory those of the white members of his party who have lately been making speeches through the country. A white man named Dudley, introduced as from Washington, consumed about ten minutes of the meeting's time, previous to the delivery of the colored speaker's address, in the unhappy utterance of a few trite ultra Radical expressions, of which he held notes in his hand. The meeting, it was stated, was held under the auspices of the National Reform Educational Society.

#### September 10, 1867

RADICAL MEETING.—A meeting of the Stevens Republican club of the Fourth Ward was held last night, in Bethlehem Church, colored, James Claggett, colored, the President of the club, in the chair. After prayer by a colored preacher, named Murray, Judge

Underwood favored the meeting with an address of some length, at the conclusion of which the following resolutions were offered separately and adopted:

*Resolved*, That to better the organization of the Republican party in the county and city of Alexandria, the Fourth Ward elect seven members of the Stevens Republican club, to be called the Executive Committee.

*Resolved*, That the Republicans of the Fourth Ward cordially request their friends in the First, Second and Third Wards, and in the county, to elect the same number to represent their clubs, in a meeting, called by the several committees, to transact business for the different clubs, as a consolidated body, in order that all, as Republicans, may work harmoniously.

*Resolved*, That this committee shall have power to elect their own President, Secretary, and other officers of their own choice, out of the different committees.

*Resolved*, That this committee shall have power to call a mass meeting of the wards and county together, whenever they deem it necessary to act in carrying out the Reconstruction law.

G. W. Bryant, J.A. Seaton, G.L. Seaton, A.S. Perpener, and R. Williams, colored, and Lysander Hill and Josiah Millard, white, were elected as the members of the Executive Committee of the Fourth Ward club, after which the meeting adjourned.

#### October 2, 1867

FOURTH WARD RADICALS.—A meeting of the members of the Fourth Ward Radical Club was held last night. Proceedings opened with prayer by R.W. Williams, colored. A committee of three was appointed, on motion of J.A. Seaton, colored, to meet the committees from Fairfax for the purpose of nominating a delegate for the counties of Alexandria and Fairfax, jointly, to the proposed State Convention, and R.H. Lyles, J.A. Seaton and R. Darnell, all colored, were appointed to said committee. By invitation Jonathan Roberts, white, addressed the meeting. He was followed by G.R. Bryant and C. Williams, colored, who advised their colored hearers to think and act for themselves, and not allow others to think and act for them. On motion of C.P. Henry, colored, the instructions heretofore given the executive committee, were reconsidered, and a motion carried, by a rising vote, instructing the delegates to the convention, which meets to-night, to support John Hawxhurst, the "great friend and Republican." The passage of the resolution was opposed by Geo. Seaton and James Clagett, colored, but was of no avail, the friends of Hawxhurst having it all their own way.

#### November 29, 1867

JURORS.—Among the Jurors in the U.S. Court, in Richmond, are the following from Alexandria: Thomas Davy, J.T. Stantonburg, L.D. Harmon, G. Seaton, J. Millard, G.W.

Simms, Wm. Arnold, R.D. Beckley, J. H. Claggett, jr., John Slater, S.N. Garwood, G. Chapman, G.P. Douglass, and one or two others.

April 11, 1868

COLORED BUILDING ASSOCIATION.—A meeting of the colored citizens of Alexandria was held last night at the house of Geo. L. Seaton, for the purpose of organizing a Building Association.

Geo. L. Seaton called the meeting to order, and stated its object.

It was then resolved that George L. Seaton be temporary chairman until an organization was effected.

George W. Bryant was chosen Secretary.

A.S. Perpener made some remarks favoring such an organization as that proposed, which should seek to benefit the laboring class of colored men who were unable to build, except through the aid to be derived from a building association.

It was then resolved that the meeting organize a Building Association, and choose permanent officers to carry into effect the purposes of such an organization.

Several persons having spoken of the advantages of building associations, and of the benefits derived from the same in places where they had been carried into operation, the meeting adjourned to reassemble at the same time and place on Wednesday, the 13th instant.

May 16, 1868

GEO. SEATON has commenced the grocery business, in the store formerly occupied by Loomis & Facer, No. 179 King street, and respectfully requests attention to his advertisement.

June 18, 1868

#### GROCERIES

TO THE PUBLIC.

Having bought the stock of Messrs. Loomis & Facer, No. 179 King Street, I am now prepared to furnish to my friends and the public in general, as fine a selection of GROCERIES as can be found in any house in the city.

Among our stock may be found the following articles which have been selected with the greatest care.

In Sugars, we have Crushed, Granulated, Pulverized, A.B., and Extra O, and a fine lot of

Cuba and Porto Rico Sugars.

TEAS.

A very Superior Article of Gunpowder, Japan, Imperial and Oolong Teas.

FLOUR.

A choice article of Family and Extra Flour.

MOLASSES.

New Orleans Molasses and Golden and Honey Syrups.

Prime Factory Cheese,

25 Boxes Stearine, Babbitt's Electric and Dobbin's Soap.

Sugar Cured Hams, Breast Pieces, Shoulders and Middlings, also a fine lot of Country Cured Hams and Middlings.

A choice article of Lard.

COFFEE.

A fine assortment of Old Government, Java, Laguyara and Rio Coffee.

Pure Ground and Whole Spice.

Italian Maccaroni, Baker's Chocolate, Cocoa and Broma.

OILS.

Marseilles and Bordeaux Oils; also a large assortment of Wooden and Willow Ware, Crockery and Glass Ware,

GEORGE SEATON.

November 13, 1868

FOR RENT.—A large FRAME HOUSE, 69 St. Asaph street, corner of Wolfe. Gas and water all through; large yard, stables and other conveniences. Possession given the first day of December. For terms apply to GEO. R.*[sic]* SEATON, 179 King street.

October 23, 1869

THE COLORED DELEGATE FROM ALEXANDRIA.—The Richmond Dispatch says: "George Seaton, the colored member of the House of Delegates from Alexandria, is said to be worth [\$100,000.]" Hardly that, we suppose. But *[still]* that may be the figure. He has been an *[industrious]*, thrifty man, and saved money.

[\* the article is ripped and words in brackets are illegible.]

January 10, 1870

## GROCERIES

Having just returned from the North, where I, with great care, have selected a very choice lot of GROCERIES, consisting of every article found in the grocery line, I would invite a call from my friends and the public generally,

In my stock can be found —

Sugars, Teas and Coffee, of all grades.

Brandies, Wines, Whiskies, &c, Foreign and Domestic.

Preserved Fruits, in cans and jars

Jellies, Sauces, Catsups, &c.

American Pickles, in jars and bbls. [*sic*]

Also Cross and Blackwell's Pickles.

Flour —Fine, Super, Extra and Family.

Tobacco —Smoking and Chewing, of all kinds.

Cigars and Cigarettes, of the finest quality.

Soaps —Common, Patent and Toilet.

Syrups and Molasses.

Fine Salts, in sacks, small bags and boxes.

Candles —Sperm, Adamantine and Tallow.

Vinegar —Common, Cider, and White Wine.

Vegetables, in cans and jars.

Nuts —Walnuts, Pecans, Almonds, &c.

Boxed Fruits, such as Citron, Figs and Raisins, in quarter, half and whole boxes; also, Seedless Raisins, Dates, Mince Meat, and Currents.

A large lot of Wood, and Willow Ware, Brooms, &c.  
Hams —Country and Sugar-cured, covered and uncovered.

Shoulders, Breast Pieces and Sides.

And every other article found in a first-class grocery store, and which I purpose to sell cheap for cash. Give me a call.

GEO. L. SEATON  
179 King street

March 9, 1870

TRUSTEE'S SALE OF THE ENTIRE STOCK OF A FIRST-CLASS GROCERY STORE, &c., &c.—The undersigned, will sell, at auction, the sale to commence, on WEDNESDAY, the 9<sup>th</sup> day of March, 1870, at 10 o'clock a. m., and continue from day to day until the whole stock is disposed of, the entire stock of GROCERIES, LIQUORS, &c., of George L. Seaton, at his store, No. 179 King street. This stock comprises every article kept in a first-class Grocery store; is well-selected and recently purchased. An excellent opportunity will be afforded to housekeepers and retail grocers to purchase Teas, Sugars, Coffees, Spices, Bacon, Lard, Soap, Candles, Canned Fruits and Vegetables, Wooden and Willow Ware, and other articles too numerous to mention. The stock of Liquors, Brandies, Whiskies, Wines, &c., is very large, and the best quality.

There will be sold, also, TWO fine HORSES, TWO CARTS, TWO LUMBER WAGONS, one spring WAGON, one BUGGY, several sets of HARNESS, SADDLES and BRIDLES,

TERMS —All bills of fifty dollars and under for cash; bills over fifty dollars, a credit of thirty days, to be secured by the negotiable notes of the purchasers, satisfactorily endorsed; and if terms are not complied with, the goods to be resold at the cost of the purchaser.

H.O. CLAUGHTON, Trustee.

N.B.—All persons indebted to Geo. L. Seaton are required to make payment at once, as further indulgence cannot be given.

H.O.C., Trustee

December 31, 1870

OPENING OF COLORED SCHOOLS.—On Monday afternoon next, at 3 o'clock, the teachers and children of the colored schools, with their parents and friends, will meet at the 1st Colored Baptist Church, South Alfred street, near Duke, to inaugurate the new system. The County Superintendent will explain the new school system and its workings, and addresses are expected from the Hon. Lewis McKenzie, Mayor Latham, George L. Seaton, of the House of Delegates, several of the School Trustees, and others. It would be gratifying to the colored people if their white friends, who feel an interest in their progress in education, would attend.

January 2, 1871

COUNTY COURT. CLERK'S OFFICE.—Messrs. Jefferson Tacey and J.R. Caton, Clerk and Deputy Clerk of the County Court for this county, turned over the record and keys of that office this morning, to the new clerk, George Seaton, colored, who with a colored deputy entered at once upon the duties of the position.

COUNTY COURT.—The January term of the County Court, Judge R.H. Cockerille presiding, commenced this morning.

In the case of the Commonwealth vs. John Wetzel, indictment for horse stealing, the grand jury reported not a true bill.

The case of the Commonwealth vs. William Kames for breaking into the house of a colored man being then called and there appearing an informality in the proceedings, the Judge stated that the trial of Criminal cases would be suspended in consequence of the incompetency of the clerk,—George Seaton, colored, and adjourned the court until tomorrow.

January 3, 1871

VIRGINIA:—At Rules held in the Clerk's office of the Corporation Court of the city of Alexandria, on the 5th day of December, 1870:

George L. Seaton vs. James G. Verplanck: Case of certified account and attachment.

The object of this suit is to recover of the defendant, James G. Verplanck, the sum of seventy-seven dollars and twenty-two cents, with interest thereon from the first day of January, 1870, and to attach and subject to the payment of the same the brick dwelling and lot on the west side of Water street, occupied by G.W. Clifford.

The defendant, James G. Verplanck, not having entered his appearance and given security, according to the act of Assembly and the rules of this Court, and it appearing by plaintiff's affidavit that he is not a resident of this State, it is ordered that the said defendant appear here within one month after due publication of this order and do what is necessary to protect his interest in this suit: and that a copy of this order be forthwith inserted in the Alexandria Gazette, a newspaper published in the city of Alexandria, once a week for four successive weeks, and posted at the front door of the Court House of this city.

MORTON MARYE, Cl'k.



OPENING OF THE COLORED SCHOOLS.—As announced in Saturday's Gazette, the Public Free Schools for colored people were formally inaugurated at the 1st Colored Baptist Church, yesterday afternoon, the church being densely crowded with the children and their parents.—Quite a number of white persons were also in attendance, and besides those who spoke, we observed, on or about the platform, Col. Suttle, of the Board of Aldermen; Mr. Wheat, of the Common Council, Chairman of the Committee on Public Schools; Messrs. Addison, W.F. Carne, and O.C. Whittlesey, of the Board of School Trustees; Rev. Dr. Lewinsohn, of the Hebrew Congregation; Col. T.H. Fieclin, of St. John's Academy, and other well known gentlemen.

Mr. Richard L. Carne, County Superintendent of Schools, opened the meeting in a plain, practical address to parents, teachers, and children. He first recounted the work which had been done within the last six months,—a work for which the Constitution allowed six years—then called attention to the readiness with which the people of Alexandria,—first of all the counties in the State,—had voted its tax by 1,912 to 311, when the people were already paying 2 ½ per cent taxes, and insisted that now the colored people must do their part. They must send their children regularly and punctually to school, make them obey their teachers, and govern them well at home. The teachers he advised to be kind, yet firm, to govern by love, yet to cause their authority to be respected; to love the children and make themselves loved by them. The children he admonished to be diligent and obedient; no law of Congress or of the Legislature could make them good and wise men and women; that must be their own work. If they studied and work hard, and above all, if they were virtuous, they would be respectable; but education without virtue would be a curse and not a blessing. They had rights, but they had also duties, and if they were to be equal citizens of the glorious old Commonwealth in whose history there was no page of which her sons could be ashamed, they must qualify themselves for that position.

Hon. Lewis McKenzie of the U.S. House of Representatives, then delivered a sensible address. He wanted solid, plain education. None of your Greek and Latin, and badly spelled English; no cart loads of costly books; no fine airs, but plain, solid learning that would be of use to them in after life.

Edgar Snowden, jr, of the State Senate, then addressed the audience. He had intended to address the children, but the County Superintendent had said pretty much all that could be said. Education, he said, was now made easier than when he went to school, but he doubted whether more was learned. People couldn't learn without study, and some wouldn't study without punishment. He hoped they would all study, but if they do not the teachers must see to it. He alluded, in terms of praise, to a colored man with whom he had served in the State Senate. (Bland) That man was a credit to his race. He had worked his way up by his own industry: but he put on no airs, and his remarks were always listened to with as much respect as those of any white man in the Senate. The secret was that he had always something to say which was worth hearing, and he gained respect by the courtesy of his manner.—Had he lived, he would have made his mark, and his death was regretted by the men of both races.

Mayor Latham next arose. He congratulated the County Superintendent very highly. No better man could have been found for the place, and it was owing to his energy and zeal that Alexandria was ahead of her sister counties in this matter. When he was about to submit the question of tax to the people, he (the speaker) had "Yes" printed on all the ballots, thinking that few would want to strike it out, and he had not been disappointed. He then addressed a few words of earnest advice to parents, teachers and children.

George L. Seaton, of the House of Delegates, then spoke. He had never before addressed an audience, but he felt called upon, on this occasion to represent his race. He could not but look back to a few years ago, and to the difficulties he had experienced in obtaining his education, and be thankful for the chance his people now had. He called upon Mr. Wm. T. Powell, the newly elected principal of the colored schools, who delivered a brief but practical address, urging upon the colored people attention to their children and upon the teachers, the faithful performance of their duties. Some teachers who had been sent down from the North taught for money; he would have them teach for the love of their race.

Mr. John B. Smoot, President of the Board of Common Council, then briefly stated what the city authorities had done in the matter of public education, and after a few words of instruction from the County Superintendent, the meeting closed, all seeming pleased with the proceedings.

January 21, 1871

CORPORATION COURT.—*Judge E.M. Lowe presiding.*—Geo. L. Seaton vs. Catharine Hansbury; unlawful detainer; verdict for plaintiff.

July 13, 1871

GEO. L. SEATON,  
HOUSE CARPENTER AND BUILDER.

Having resumed my old business as House Carpenter and Builder, at the old stand, northeast corner of Wolfe and Washington streets, I ask that my friends and the public give me a share of their patronage, promising that all work given in my charge shall receive prompt attention, and shall be done in a substantial and workmanlike manner and upon the more moderate terms. Many thanks for past favors.

August 10, 1871

COLORED CONVENTION.—H.M. Turner, President of the Georgia State Convention, has published a call on the colored people of the different Southern States to arrange for sending delegates to a convention to be held at Columbia, South Carolina, on the 18th day of October, 1871. This call is endorsed recommended by another call, addressed to the colored people of Virginia, signed among others by "R.D. Beckley and Geo. L. Seaton, of the Seventh Congressional District."

August 31, 1871

FLAG POLE.—George L. Seaton, the colored member of the legislature from this county, has presented the Columbia Fire Company with a valuable flag pole, which was erected on their engine house to-day.

September 13, 1871

VIRGINIA:—In the Clerk's office of the Circuit Court of the county of Alexandria, September 4, 1871: Francis Dane & Co., plaintiffs, against C.A. Baldwin & Co., defendants: In debt and upon an attachment. Balderaton Ward & Co., plaintiffs, against same, defendants: In debt and upon an attachment. Kimball Robinson & Co. plaintiffs, against same, defendants: In debt and upon an attachment. The Asiatic Bank of Salem, plaintiff, against same, defendants: In debt and upon an attachment; and James H. Prentice, plaintiff, against same, defendants: In debt and upon an attachment.

A Rule having been entered in the above cases on the 18th day of May, 1871, against John B. Alley, Oakes Ames and Samuel Hooper, returnable to the first day of the next term, to show cause why the sale of the real estate mentioned in the proceedings and made to them by the Sheriff of Alexandria should not be set aside and annulled. An affidavit having been made and filed that the said John B. Alley, Oakes Ames and Samuel Hooper are not residents of the State of Virginia, it is ordered that the said John B. Alley, Oakes Ames and Samuel Hooper do appear here within one month after due publication of this order, and do what is necessary to protect their interests in these suits; and that a copy of this order be forthwith inserted in the Alexandria Gazette, a newspaper published in the city of Alexandria, once a week for four weeks and posted at the front door of the Court House of this county. A copy teste:

GEORGE C. SEATON, Clk.

Brent & Wattles, p.q.

September 26, 1871

FOURTH WARD RADICALS.—Notwithstanding the fact that the circus exhibited here last night, the meeting of the Radicals of the Fourth Ward was tolerably well attended by colored people. The proceedings were of a non-interesting character.

The only business transacted was the election of the following delegates to a Nomination Convention. G.W. Simms, T.B. Pinn, William Miller, Lewis Baltimore, Charles Seales, R.W.P. Garnett, Wm. Claggett, and Eli Thompson, with C.A. Sheales, J.A. Seaton and O.C. Whittlesey as alternates.

Isiah Fisher was then invited to address the club. He reiterated all he uttered at the Third Ward meeting on Thursday night last, and was frequently applauded.

He was followed by Geo. L. Seaton, who spoke in defense of his course in the last Legislature. He stated that he endeavored to have a proviso inserted in the new charter of

the city before it passed that body, and that he had also seen a petition that had been sent to Richmond, signed by some colored Republicans, favoring the passage of said instrument, and that he had their names. He was requested to read, which he did. A member remarked that all on the petition were wood-sawyers. [Laughter.]

W.D. Massey was then called on. His remarks were to the effect of what he had said on former occasions.

At the conclusion of Mr. Massey's speech, John Birrell gave notice that there would be a meeting in the First Ward to-night.

The meeting then adjourned.

#### February 28, 1872

FREEDMAN'S SAVINGS BANK.—Last Friday night about one hundred colored and several white persons, met at the U.S. Court room to take into consideration and discuss the propriety of "establishing" a Freedman's Savings Bank in Alexandria, or rather a Branch of the Washington Freedman's Savings Bank. George L. Seaton was called to the chair, who after stating the object of meeting, introduced Wm J. Wilson, Cashier of the Washington "Freedman's Savings and Trust Company," who made a speech advocating the object of the meeting. Judge Underwood next spoke and he was followed by T.B. Pinn, on whose motion the chair appointed Judge Underwood, Wm. Gray, J.F. Pinkney, T.B. Pinn and G.L. Seaton a committee to confer with the Directors of the Washington bank, and secure a Branch at Alexandria if possible.

#### March 14, 1872

FREEDMEN'S SAVINGS BANK.—A large meeting of the colored people of the city, at which a few white persons were present, was held last night in the colored Baptist Church on Princess street, George L. Seaton in the chair, and T.b. Pinn, Secretary. Speeches were made by Fields Cook, T.B. Pinn, George L. Seaton, and A.J. Wedderburn, and a resolution was unanimously adopted requesting the Freedmen's Savings Bank and Trust Company of Washington to establish a branch in this city with Fields Cook as Cashier, and that all present make deposits in the bank when it shall be established.

#### June 29, 1872

THE EXAMINATION OF HALLOWELL SCHOOL for colored girls, located on Alfred street, near Princess, and taught by Miss Sarah A. Gray, assisted by Mrs. Jane A. Crouch and Miss Harriet B. Douglas, took place yesterday by Messrs. A. E. Addison and Henry B. Whittington, of the City School Board, assisted by the Superintendent. It lasted from 9 ½ to 1 ½ o'clock, and was considered an excellent one, the Superintendent declaring that the reading was decidedly better than that of the white schools which had been examined. In Arithmetic too the work of some of the children was surprisingly rapid, and in the other studies they did well, especially in spelling, in which some of the white schools have been found deficient.

The award of the Superintendent's medal was not announced, nor were any prizes given, as this school will unite with the colored male school in a public distribution on Tuesday evening next.

At the end of the examination, Mr. Addison addressed the children, complimenting them highly on their proficiency. Messrs. Ficklin and Harper, of Washington and Custls [*sic*] Schools with the principal of Lee School, were present, as were, also, most of the colored teachers, and many of the children's parents. Geo. L. Seaton, Rev. G.W. Parker, Geo. P. Douglas, and other prominent colored citizens, also, attended.

September 4, 1872

TO THE PUBLIC.

Through the columns of the two papers published in this city—the Gazette and the Sentinel—you have learned that I have been removed from the clerkship of the County Court of Alexandria county, by an order entered on the minutes of the Court by the Judge thereof, on Monday, September 2, 1872. Although the papers have given the report of the proceedings, yet the public have neither learned all the facts nor the animus that entered into the whole transaction. By your kind indulgence I will state in a fair and candid manner all that has been done, and appeal to those present to say whether I have not done so. . . . On the 26<sup>th</sup> day of December, 1870, I, in company with my bondsman, went to Judge Cockerille's residence, between five and seven miles beyond Fairfax Court House to qualify and give bond for the performance of my duty as the clerk elect for the said Court, but he was not to be found. We started again on the Wednesday following; I had everything ready, except that I had not prepared a bond. We found Mr. Cockerille at home, but as I had no *printed* form of a bond he refused to qualify me. I offered to prepare a bond, but he would not permit me to do so. I suggested that, it being a long distance to come for nothing, and he having the law before him, it would accommodate me very much to be allowed to prepare the bond, to which he replied that, "it can't be done here, you must bring them with you." Thus we were obliged to return to Alexandria for the mere purpose of preparing a bond, which however, was at last prepared and executed in Judge Thomas' office on the Friday following, at Fairfax Court House, the penalty being fixed at *ten thousand dollars*, an amount which had never been required of any other clerk of said Court. I now come to the assumption of my duties on the second day of January, 1871, but the scenes of the Court room that day, are, perhaps, to [*sic*] well remembered, to need repetition here. Without an hour's time to look through the office, or become, in the smallest degree, familiar with its workings; unable to obtain a competent deputy to assist me, I was expected (by Judge Cockerille, no one else) to take up and discharge in regular form and manner duties which he himself could not then, nor now, do. The contumilly [*sic*] and disgrace which his honor heaped upon me that day were enough to appal [*sic*] a braver heart than mine. But in the firm belief in the power of right, I bore it all, nor has he ever ceased to expose my faults, and hide my virtues, if I have any, and to create and foster prejudice against me.

At the July term, 1872, Judge Cockerille awarded a rule against the board of Supervisors of Alexandria county to show cause why they had made certain allowances, &c. *He drafted the order himself*. I entered it on the minutes, and issued it just as *he ordered* it to be done—*verbatim*. It so turned out that an error was made. A new rule was ordered at the August term, *he, again drafting the order*, which was entered and the rule issued, *embracing, as before, the exact order of the Court*. It now appears that another error was made. Who committed these blunders? Judge Cockerille, who drafted the order, or I, who issued the rule exactly as he ordered it should be done? as the records of the Court will show.

At the August term the Court also directed a rule to issue against George C. Seaton, Clerk of the County Court, to show cause why he should not be removed from office for malfeasance or gross neglect of duty. Upon this order the judgment of the Court was entered, removing me from the clerkship—a judgment made up before the rule was heard, and immediately upon my removal my deputy was appointed clerk pro tem, who qualified under a bond of *three thousand dollars*—not quite one third of the amount required of me.

Upon the hearing of the rule against me, there was not a single specific charge made, either of malfeasance or neglect of duty. My counsel on my behalf courted and demanded an examination, which was refused, the Judge satisfying himself by saying that the facts in the case were well known to me, but not a word was permitted me in defence [*sic*]. The general charge of the Court, false in every particular, and degrading to a Virginia Court, was sustained without proof.

The only thing that might be called a charge made against me, was that I had summoned a Grand Jury without authority of law. This was untrue. I summoned the Grand Jury under the old law, and not until five days afterwards had I official knowledge of the change in the law, when the Acts of Assembly for the years 1871-72, in which said charge was made, was received from the Secretary of the Commonwealth, a fact well known to his honor Judge Cockerille. What became of the action against me has never yet appeared. I did not appear in the rule. The Court refused to name his charges against me on the hearing of the rule, but violating every principal [*sic*] of justice that permits every man a fair trial, and ignoring every sense of common decency, when the time came for the fulfilment of a preconceived purpose the order of the Court, ready written, was taken from his pocket and handed to the deputy clerk for entry, and I am made to suffer for the blunders of the Court.

The proceedings of the Court are condemned by every man who loves or has the least respect for justice. My most bitter political enemies have said to me that “the removal was an outrage upon justice.”

The fathers of Virginia law, could they witness the disgrace brought upon the sacred bench, would blush to own the action and hide their shame in the bosom of their mother earth.

I now appeal to those who were present on Monday last to say if I have mistated [sic] anything.

Very respectfully

Your obedient servant,

GEO. C. SEATON.

September 16, 1872

On the 14th instant, at 6.50 o'clock p.m., Mrs. VIRGINIA SEATON, wife of John A. Seaton, in the 34th year of her age. Her funeral will take place to-morrow (Tuesday) afternoon, at 3 o'clock, from her late residence, Washington street, near Franklin. The friends and relatives are invited to attend.

October 20, 1872

FIRST WARD RADICALS.—A meeting of the Radicals in the First Ward was held last night in the colored school house, near the Bridge pump. There were but nineteen present in all, only one-half of whom resided in the First Ward.

At about nine o'clock, the President, Geo. L. Seaton, arrived and called those present to order saying the meeting had been called for the purpose of appointing a committee whose duty it should be to see that every Republican of the ward voted.

The following were then elected members of said committee: Wm. Edwards, Thos. Tansley, John Birrell, Moses Kipp, Chas. Whittlesey, L.I. O'Neal, Edward Evans, Geo. C. Hewes, I.C. O'Neal, Thos. Davy, Eli Smith, Wm. Credit, Robt. Jenkins, Frank Chase, E.H. Delehay, Wm. R. Howard, and Thomas Dwyer.

Calls were made for Richard Miles, who straightened up, and asked to be excused, but at the same time showed himself to be anxious to say something. He was proud of the honor which had been thrust upon him—to speak before that august assemblage. One serious object on his part of public speaking was that his remarks were invariably misrepresented; everybody knew he was no orator, but he never used "dis," "dat," &c. He said he was not prepared to make a speech, but would have one ready for to-night, which he would deliver in the Second Ward, and invited all to come and hear him. He was confident of the success of the Republican party, said you must fight the devil with fire, &c. The speaker hoped he was not worrying any one, as some were leaving the room. He concluded by saying the country had been drenched in blood to secure freedom to the colored race, &c, &c.

John A. Seaton was then called for, who said he was also unprepared to make any remarks, as Miles in his speech had covered all the ground. He said he endorsed the platform of the Reform party heartily, and hoped he would rise from slumber on the morning following the election, to hear the gratifying intelligence of a Republican victory.

Some called for Joseph Colton. He said he was no speaker, but would give some wholesome advice, viz: Let every one suppose the entire success of the Republican party

depended upon his individual shoulders. He was confident that there would be a victory which would make some of the "old rebels" tremble.

The chairman endorsed Colton's advice, and urged unity in the party.

J.A. Seaton said the City Council had appointed a committee to wait upon Gen. Howard to request that official to turn the colored school houses over to the city of Alexandria, which was a drift to deprive colored children of education. In his opinion the constitution of the State never intended to deprive children of education because their parents didn't pay taxes, as that was not the fault of the children. Ex-Gov. Wm. Smith had said "it would never do to educate the poor white children of the State," because he knew there would be genius spring up from that class some day or other which the aristocracy of the State would have to make place for. They were trying to carry that policy out in Alexandria. In the Board of Aldermen of which body he had the honor of being a member, a bill had been presented granting the right of way through the city to the Alexandria Passenger Railway Company, and that he offered an amendment that no one should be excluded from the cars on account of color. The members of that board were liberal men and accepted his amendment without a dissenting voice; but it had been lost in the Common Council, by a colored man speaking against it. This colored member could ride in the "Jim Crow" car if he felt so disposed, but if the speaker paid his full fare he wanted to ride where every one else did. Such colored men should be kept at home.

The Chairman explained in regard to the colored school houses. They did not belong to Gen. Howard, as the Government had given them to the colored people.

The meeting then adjourned.

#### April 8, 1873

A colored Young Men's Christian Association has been organized in this place—Geo. L. Seaton, president.

#### April 22, 1873

The Colored Young Men's Christian Association, of this place, is increasing in numbers, and their meetings are well conducted and interesting. Geo. L. Seaton, President; A.W. Parker, secretary; H. Robinson, recording secretary, and R. W. White, corresponding secretary.

#### June 16, 1873

#### LOCAL BREVITIES.

George C. Seaton, colored, late the clerk of the Alexandria County Court, died this morning of consumption.



June 16, 1873

This morning, in the 27th year of his age, GEORGE C. SEATON, eldest son of George L. Seaton. His funeral will take place at 3 o'clock to-morrow afternoon, from the residence of his father, south Royal street.

October 15, 1873

#### LOCAL NEWS

CORPORATION COURT.—*Judge E. M. Lowe presiding* —CONTINUATION OF YESTERDAY'S PROCEEDINGS.

Adminstration upon the estate of George C. Seaton, deceased, was granted to G. L. Seaton.

March 12, 1874

FIRE.—The alarm of fire about three o'clock this morning was caused by the partial burning of the rear part of the store No. 179 King street, occupied by Geo. L. Seaton & Bro., colored grocers. The fire was undoubtedly the work of an incendiary, and was kindled on the floor among empty boxes and barrels. It was discovered, however, befor [sic] it had made much headway, and the fire department arriving speedily, was extinguished before much damage was done. The stock of goods upon which there was an insurance of \$3,000, in the agency of Janney & Co., was uninjured. The partial loss to the building was fully covered by insurance in the Continental Insurance Company of New York of which Mr. Wise is the agent in this city.

March 19, 1874

A large assemblage was present in the 1st Baptist Church last night to witness the marriage of George L. Seaton, the former Delegate in the Legislature from this city, to Miss Caroline\* Turley, both colored.

\*Note that deeds list her name as Catherine, not Caroline.

January 30, 1875

#### POLICE REPORT

George Douglas, colored, ex-U.S. Internal Revenue Storekeeper, for an assault upon W. F. Powell, the colored principal of Snowden public school, was fined \$10, and, together with the complainant, bound over to keep the peace. Defendant, who had employed Mr. C. E. Stuart as his counsel, appealed from this decision, but afterwards paid the fine and withdrew the appeal. The evidence educed at the examination held at the Mayor's court this morning was to the following effect: Thursday the defendant wrote a note to the complainant asking him to allow his (defendant's) son to come out of school, which request, according to the rules of the school, could not be complied with. Yesterday he wrote him another note asking if the former one had been received. This note the complainant answered by simply stating that the note had been received. Deeming this short answer an insult, defendant started out of his house for the residence of the complainant, and meeting Hann-bal King on the way told him where he was going, and that

if Powell didn't give him satisfaction he would break his neck. He then proceeded to the house on King street in which G. L. Seaton keeps a store, and over which Augustus Lumpkins keeps a boarding house, where complainant boards, and knocking at the front door he sent up for complainant to come down, with the intent on [*sic*] of getting him to come outside of the house, but complainant sent word that if he wanted to see him he must come to his room. Entering complainant's room, he produced the note he had received, and asked in a pompous manner what complainant meant by sending him such a note. Complainant replied by saying that when asked a question in a civil manner he would answer it. Upon this defendant hit complainant in the face and choked him; complainant resisted the assault, striking defendant on [*sic*] the head with a pitcher and with a lighted oil lamp. In the scuffle the stove, full of burning coals, was knocked down, but fortunately neither it nor the lamp, which had been smashed, set the house on fire. The noise of the conflict attracted the wife of Lumpkins from the back of the house and Seaton from his store below, and by their united efforts the combatants were separated.

#### February 16, 1875

SERGEANT'S SALE —By virtue of executions directed and delivered to me, I have levied on the GROCERIES, etc., at the store of George L. Seaton & Bro., No. 179 King street, and will expose the same at public auction, on FRIDAY, the 19<sup>th</sup> day of February, 1875, at 11 o'clock a. m., at said store. Terms of sale cash.

J. M. Steuart, late City Sergt.

#### March 13, 1875

THE LIEN OF CORPORATION TAX.—The mooted question of the right of the Corporation to have its taxes satisfied by levying a distress warrant upon the property of a judgment debtor after the same had been taken in execution under a writ of fieri facias, which was lately argued in the Corporation Court by Mr. Stuart, Attorney for the city, in the matter of the City Council vs. the creditors of Geo. L. Seaton, was yesterday decided by Judge Lowe in favor of the lien of the Corporation, the Judge holding that under the Code and the Charter the taxes constituted a prior lien upon the property, and that the fi. fa. did not divest the title out of the judgment debtor, but was effectual as a lien subject to the claim for taxes.

#### July 1, 1875

##### Closing Exercises

The closing exercises of the colored public schools took place last night in the Alfred street Baptist Church, which was crowded to its full capacity. The children, who had assembled at the school houses, marched in procession to the Church, attracting general attention by their good appearance, and occupied the centre, the side pews and gallery being occupied by spectators, who, by their attention, evinced the interest they took in the proceedings.

At eight o'clock the exercises began by singing by the scholars, followed by a well timed address by Superintendent Carne.

Appropriate addresses were then made by Geo. R. Shinn, esq., Hon. Lewis McKenzie, Rev. Fields Cook, O. C. Whittlesey, esq., Rev. C. C. Robinson, and Mr. George L. Seaton.

August 4, 1875

COLORED TRUSTEE'S MEETING.—At a meeting of the Trustees of the Colored Odd Fellows' building, held last night, Geo. L. Seaton in the chair, and W.H. Morgan, Secretary, the following letter was read:

Office Freedman's Savings and Trust Co.,  
Washington, D.C., July 21, 1875.

Geo. L. Seaton, esq., President Odd Fellows' Joint Stock Co.,  
Alexandria, Va.:

Dear Sir: Unless the loan to James Webster et al., secured on the Odd Fellows' Hall of your city, is paid by the 8th proximo, at which time one year's interest will be due thereon, we shall at once instruct the trustee to advertise the property for sale according to the terms of the deed of trust. Respectfully,

R. H. T. Leopold,  
of the Commissioners.

The President then stated that the Building Company was \$1,100 in debt which must be paid.

M. Williams thought that the debt could be paid if the amounts of the books could be collected.

H. King said that if \$100 could be raised then and there the difficulty could be obviated.

After remarks by J. Madella, R. Lyles, R. D. Beckley and other [*sic*], a motion that each one present pay \$2, was adopted.

It was then resolved that the trustees borrow \$200 at a moderate rate of interest for the purpose of discharging the debt against the building, after which the meeting adjourned.

August 17, 1875

JOHN SEATON —A correspondent writing from New York says, "The annexed is from the New York Commercial of the 11<sup>th</sup> inst., and refers to John Seaton. I thought I would send it to you for a local. I am told he has been appointed a Deputy Sheriff as well, and that his pay and perquisites of office are something like \$2,500. Pretty good this for an Alexandria Darkey."

"A HUGE COLORED POLICEMAN —A new feature in the Equitable Building is a mammoth colored policeman, who, decked in blue clothes, brass buttons and peaked hat, parades the corridors as proud as a peacock. He has a body like a whale, is of splendid *physique* handsome in face, and woe to the man who is caught in his terrible grasp."

[There is another, more detailed *Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser* article dated

September 2, 1875, about John Seaton being a policeman for the Equitable Life Insurance Company. It gives some history about John Seaton and details his physical stature.]

January 17, 1876

#### COLORED SCHOOL ASSOCIATION.

The Sumner Tribune publishes the following account of the late meeting of the Colored School House Building Association of this city: "On last Monday night pursuant to a call Zion Baptist Alva Church was filled with the patrons of education to hear a report from the Trustees of colored school property. At 7 ½ o'clock Mr. G. L. Seaton, the President of the Board, called the meeting to order and said that persons interested had asked him to call a public meeting of the people and submit to them a report of the doings of the Board for the last eight years. Mr. Seaton further said that he could make a report from the organization of the Board up until within a few months past, and for that report they would have to call on the other President of the Board who was the Rev. S. W. Madden. At this point numerous inquiries were made as to who elected Mr. Madden the president? and by what authority was he elected? when Robinson, that audacious blackguard of a preacher, arose to his feet, looking like one of our mountain rabbits that has been shot at and missed, and said for the edification of those present that Mr. Madden was president by the right of usurpation and no other that he knew of which of course satisfied him to vent a little of his bad English on some one, even though it be a fellow-laborer in the cause of Christ. On motion, Mr. Seaton, after some debate, proceeded with his report. He started out by saying that, after the organization of the Board and the accumulation of a debt of twelve hundred dollars or more, the Trustees decided to give an excursion to Fredericksburg for the purpose of raising funds to liquidate that debt; that the excursion proved a failure and brought them in debt one hundred and forty dollars more. From this time until within the last year the whole Board forsook the property intrusted to them by the people and said to him to get on with it as best he could (this excursion was given six years ago), and after he had succeeded in getting the property out of debt and in good condition, he thought that he would pay himself something for his nine years trouble, but before even getting the money back which he had advanced these stupid trustees stepped in, elected another man President of the board and refused to pay him the sums advanced by himself. He then read the names of those contributing to the fund in the outset; and said that the trustees had his bills, vouchers, &c. Here a long and continued discussion took place. Mr. McR. Ware said that the reason this meeting was called was that Mr. Seaton had a bill for a little upward of a thousand dollars for service rendered which the board had refused to pay; and it was at the bottom of this meeting. Mr. Seaton replied by saying that under the new regime the collectors had been paid five percent. for all money which had passed through his hands; this, too, before any of the bills were met. This line of charges was stopped by Mr. Beckley offering the following resolution, that a committee of five be appointed to ask for a full examination and elaborate report from the Trustee Board and present it to the people two weeks from tonight. Mr. Ware thought that the President should not appoint the committee. Mr. Beckley here made one of his humorous but pointed speeches, saying, among other things, that it was a most remarkable thing that the first one to attack the resolution was a trustee. He thought that the objection came with very poor taste. The committee was then

appointed as follows: R.D. Beckley, R. B. Clarke, Samuel Lee, H. C. Robinson, Robert Smith.

A number of ladies and some of the best citizens of Alexandria attended this meeting.”

April 12, 1876

LOCAL BREVITIES

Among the visitors in town to day was ex-Alderman John A. Seaton, colored, now a resident of New York.

August 5, 1876

ONLY A DEAD DOG.—A box was received by Yundt's Express this morning which emitted such a noisome stench as to cause enquiries to be made as to its contents, and quite a crowd was collected, under the supposition that it contained a dead infant. When taken out on the commons, however, and opened it was found to contain the body of a pet dog, which John A. Seaton, formerly of this city, but now of New York, had sent to Robert Hopkins, to have buried in the yard of his house here, to gratify the whims of his little boy. The box had been detained on the road and hence the stench. The crowd disappeared rapidly on discovering the nature of the contents of the box.

November 13, 1876

PERSONAL.—Among the strangers in the city to day, was ex-Alderman John A. Seaton, now living in New York. He says that he is an out and out democrat and firmly believes in Tilden's election.

February 7, 1877

BEULAH CHURCH.—Rev. C. Robinson, colored, and those who adhered to him in the recent troubles in Beulah Baptist, Church have, it is understood, organized a new congregation, and meet regularly, each Sunday, in the Seaton School Building on south Pitt street. The other party in the congregation still hold services in the church building on Washington street.

TRUSTEE'S SALE.—By virtue of a deed of trust from William Miller, dated October 17th, 1871, the subscriber, as trustee, and at the request of the creditor by said deed secured, will sell, by public auction, on SATURDAY, the 10th day of February, 1877, at twelve m., in front of the Market building, on Royal st., the property conveyed to him by said deed of trust, namely: A certain LOT OF LAND, situate, being and lying in the said city of Alexandria, on the east side of Henry street, fronting 32 feet 9 inches on said Henry street, and running east 55 feet, more or less, bounded west on Henry st., north on land of the late James English, east on land of Lewis Baltimore, and south on land of Lewis Baltimore.

Terms of sale—Cash.

GEORGE L. SEATON, Trustee.

March 13, 1877

SALE. —City Sergeant Lucas sold this morning, under an execution against Albert Reed, a small frame house on the north side of Wolfe street, west of Royal, to George L. Seaton, for \$50.

May 19, 1877

RADICAL MEETINGS.—The radicals held meetings in the various wards last night to nominate Councilmen, and appoint delegates to the convention to nominate city officers.

The First ward radicals met at Little Zion Church with Thomas Tancil, colored, in the chair and Jolin Paine, colored, secretary.

The nominations made were as follows:—Alderman, A. C. Harmon; Councilmen, George L. Seaton, J. S. Fowler, George C. Hewes and Jacob Thomas; Delegates, Gus Ramey, Edward Evans, John Paine, Edward Fry, W. P. Graves and David Middleton; Alternatives, Geo. L. Seaton and —Arrington; Magistrate, R. F. Tancil; Constable, Wm. Jones.

August 29, 1877

RADICAL MEETINGS.—The radicals of the First and Second Wards met last night, to nominate delegates to the county convention.

The meeting in the First ward was held at the house of T. L. Tancill, colored, near the tunnel.

T. L. Tancill presided and R. F. Tancill was secretary.

The Following delegates were appointed:—Edward Evans, T. L. Tancill, G. L. Seaton, Benjamin Coram, R. F. Tancill, Benj. Smith and Augustus Ramey. Alternate, J. A. Watson.

February 1, 1878

PERSONAL.

Geo. L. Seaton, a well known colored man of this city, and formerly a member of the House of Delegates, was stricken with paralysis last night, at his residence on Royal street, near Wolfe. He was insensible during the whole night, but regained consciousness this morning. His condition is considered critical.

June 18, 1879

TAX SALE  
THIRD WARD

Seaton Geo L and John, A ½ sq Wythe and Payne

8 00

March 18, 1880

BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF MOSES.—The incorporators of the Brothers and Sisters of Moses met last night in the Pitt street school building, with Wm. H. Matthews in the chair, and R. D. Beckley secretary.

The following officers were elected: President, Geo. L. Seaton; vice president, Muncy Shepherd; Treasurer, Thornton Shepherd. The action of the late convention of the order, expelling R. D. Ruffin and Alfred Jones, was endorsed and a committee consisting of Geo. L. Seaton, Thos. Allen and John A. Seaton, was appointed to prosecute the course of the organization before the courts of the State for the recovery of the property of the order in the hands of Ruffis and Jones.

March 24, 1880

#### LOCAL MATTERS

MOSES AGAIN.—The two factions of the Brothers and Sisters, and Mothers and Daughters of Moses—one side led by Seaton and Matthews, and the other faction headed by R. D. Ruffin, between whom a quarrel has existed for some time as to who are the right “Moses”—are still firing away at one another. A day or two ago Geo. L. Seaton and others sued out a warrant against Ruffin, an expelled member, charging him with having in his possession property belonging to the Order, which he had no right to hold and this evening the case was to have been tried before Justices O. C. Whittlesey, John H. Thompson and Jas. W. Nails, but, on account of the sickness of Mr. Geo. A. Mushbach, one of the counsel in the case, the trial was continued until Monday at 10 o’clock. Mr. S. G. Brent appeared for the Seaton Faction and Mr. John M. Johnson for Ruffin. After the books have been recovered from Ruffin a suit will be entered against James E. Piper, who will be expelled from the Order, for the recovery of money in his hands belonging to “the Moses.” These “brothers and sisters” of the great Jewish law giver don’t seem to enjoy the privileges that celebrated man did in the cases that came up among the brethren in his day. He was privileged to take them to the Great Jehovah himself for decision, and it must be a source of sorrow to the “descendants” of this good man, living in our day, when they have to resort to petty gentile magistrates in order to settle their disputes. But they are not the only great ones of which the humiliating name “Ichabod” has been written in the last few centuries.

April 20, 1880

ATTENTION, BROTHERS AND SISTERS, SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF MOSES — By recommendation of the Board of Supervisors of the Incorporators of the Ancient Order of Brothers and Sisters, Sons and Daughters of Moses recommending to me “a call” of a convention of all the lodges which have adopted and are working under the act of incorporation passed February 10<sup>th</sup>, 1880 to settle all differences and to adopt rules and regulations for the better government of the order, and to form a more perfect union, I, George L. Seaton, President of the Board of Incorporators, by the power vested in me as President of said Board, do hereby call a convention of all the lodges in this State to

assemble in the city of Alexandria, Va., on TUESDAY, May 4<sup>th</sup>, at 12 o'clock m., in Star Bethel Lodge room, south Pitt street school house.

The basis of representation for each lodge shall be as follows: Star Bethel Lodge, Alexandria, four delegates; Mount Maria Lodge, Alexandria, four delegates; St. John's Lodge, Warrenton, four delegates; Mount Olive Lodge, Jeffersonton four delegates; Potomac City Lodge, Prince William county, four delegates.

It is earnestly requested and enjoined upon all the lodges to be fully represented in the convention, as matters of great importance will come before them for their consideration.

GEORGE L. SEATON,

President of Board of Incoporators [*sic*]

THOMAS ALLEN, Secretary

June 8, 1881

GEORGE A., son of Jno. [*sic*] A. Seaton. Funeral to-morrow afternoon at 5 o'clock, from the residence of his father, 131 south St. Asaph st.

July 2, 1881

George L. Seaton, a well known and respected colored man, was stricken, for the third time, with paralysis, while sitting at the door of his house, on south Royal street, yesterday a'ternoon. He is extremely ill, and no hopes are entertained of his recovery.

July 5, 1881

DEATH OF A WELL KNOWN COLORED MAN. George L. Seaton, a well known and respected colored man, died about one o'clock this afternoon, at his home, on south Royal street, from paralysis, in the 60<sup>th</sup> year of his age. He was stricken with paralysis for the third time last week, and continued ill till last night, when he was rendered unconscious by a forth [*sic*] attack, from which he died, as above stated. The deceased was a member of the Legislature of 1869-'70, and was at the time of his death a Colored School Trustee. He was a member of Oriental Lodge of Masons, and several other colored organizations. He leaves a wife and seven children.

July 6, 1881

DIED

July 6<sup>th</sup>, 1881, at his late residence south Royal street, Geo. L. Seaton, in the 60<sup>th</sup> year of his age, [illegible word] Funeral will take place at 2 o'clock to morrow, Thursday, afternoon from the First Baptist Church. Rev. Samuel Madden will officiate. The friends of the family are very respectfully requested to attend. (Washington and Richmond papers please copy)

In as much as it has pleased the Almighty God to remove from our midst our respected friend and fellow citizen Geo. L. Seaton, the hearts of the surviving friends throb with a



feeling of deep interest, and we, the surviving citizens express the deepest sympathy with the surviving relatives, and join them in mourning their loss.

March 30, 1887

#### LOCAL BREVITIES.

The New Orleans *Pelican* says: "John A. Seaton, the colored porter of the Equitable Life Insurance Co., in New York, is six feet six inches high, and is a magnificent specimen of physical manhood. He is from Virginia, and was for a long time on the Capitol police force in Washington. He receives a salary of \$2,200 a year." Seaton is a native of this city, and once represented the Fourth ward in the Board of Aldermen. He was here last week looking after some property he owns.

June 20, 1887

#### LOCAL BREVITIES

John A. Seaton, jr., the big colored Cerberus of the Equitable Building, is a builder and has directed the erection of a very tasty cottage on a Virginia plantation owned by him.—*New York World*.

July 6, 1897

DEDICATION.—A large concourse of people (mostly colored) assembled Sundry [*sic*] afternoon at the John Hay Industrial School building in the northern part of the city, to witness the dedication of the first of the school buildings. The ceremonies were conducted by the colored Odd Fellows of this city. P.N.J. Robert Darnell, the orater, made an appropriate address, P.N.F.T Montgomery Watson, acted as master of ceremonies. P.N.F. James Holmes, chaplain, was assisted by P.G.M. Lucas Gaines and Chris C. Brooks. Rev. R.B. Robinson, president of school, spoke as to its status and he was followed by several colored ministers and others. Secretary Robinson read letters from many prominent men regretting their absence and expressing the kindest interest in the school. President McKinley's letter received marked attention and was loudly applauded. The following is a list of officers:

Board of Directors,

Rev. Robt B. Robinson, President; Rev. Alexander Truatt, Treasurer; Magnus L. Robinson, Secretary; J.P. Williams, and W.C. Payne; Honorary Board of Visitors, J.M. Buckner, Alexandria, Va.; G.E. Bruce, Albany, N.Y.; Jacob D. Brown, New York city; Hon. John G. Jones, Chicago; D.F. Seville, Washington, D.C.; Prof. J.C. House, Kane, Pa., and John A. Seaton, Va. Announcement was made that the school would be opened on the first Monday in September.

October 23, 1919

#### ECHO OF RECONSTRUCTION.

"George L. Seaton, the colored member of the House of Delegates from Alexandria, is said to be worth around \$100,000"

The above was one of the paragraphs from the files of a Richmond paper of fifty years ago published yesterday.

George L. Seaton died on the fifth of July 1881, and was buried the following Thursday, July 8th.[\*] One of the fiercest thunder storms ever experienced in Alexandria prevailed that afternoon. The horses attached to the hearse and carriages became frightened at the heavy peals of thunder and it was said at the time that lightning ran into the grave while the body was being lowered into it.

Seaton was one of two Delegates elected by Alexandria city and county to the Legislature which convened in December 1869. James T. Close, his confere [*sic*], who was a white man, died shortly after the election, and an election to fill his place followed. The republicans with their negro coadjutors were in the majority hereabouts at that time, and the democrats, then calling themselves conservatives, nominated the late Ruben Johnson, a mild union man, and the opposition party placed the late Robert Armstrong into the ring. Johnston [*sic*] was elected. Seaton served one term. He was defeated in the next nominating convention.

The statement that he was worth \$100,000 will prove strange to some now living who were acquainted with him and his affairs. He was of a prominent free colored family, which possessed some property in Alexandria, in pre-war days, most of which was on south Washington street or Franklin street. He was of the old-style colored man, mild-mannered, courteous, in short a reflex of the white race among whom he was born and reared. At the close of his legislative career he opened a grocery store on the north side of King street, between Washington and Columbus, which proved a failure. He subsequently suffered a stroke of paralysis, which was soon followed by the second stroke which caused his death. Some of his descendants are still among us.

[\* note that July 8, 1881, according to the virtual calendar from [WWW.vpcalendar.net](http://WWW.vpcalendar.net), was a Friday.]



**Appendix B**  
**Deeds Pertaining to George L. Seaton**

**Compiled by Anna Lynch**



1854 [Deed Book No. 9, p. 97]

This Deed made the 25th day of September 1854, between Saml F. Beach, of the first part, George Seaton, of the second part, and John H. Davis, of the third part, all of the City of Alexandria, Virginia: Witnesseth: that the said Beach, with the consent, and by the direction of the said Seaton, doth grant unto the said Davis, in consideration of five dollars, that lot of ground, which the said Davis conveyed to the said Beach in trust to secure a debt due from the said Davis to the said Seaton, which debt is now fully paid. Said deed is dated the 22d day of March 1854 + recorded in the proper office of Alexandria County Book P. No 3, pa. 545 + reference is thereto had for all necessary particulars of Description.

Witness the following signatures and seals.

Sl F. Beach

George Seaton

1856 [Deed Book 5, No. 3, Corporation Court, p. 5]

This Deed, made the twenty ninth day of November in the year Eighteen hundred and fifty six between George Seaton and Maria Seaton his wife of the City of Alexandria, Virginia of the first part and John Paine (colored) of the same place of the second part, Witnesseth, that the said parties of the first part in consideration of nine hundred dollars to grant unto the said John Paine with general Warranty a certain tenement and lot of ground in the city of Alexandria Virginia, and bounded as follows:

Beginning at the North west Corner of the lot of ground now in possession of George Bryan (colored) on the south side of Gibbon, between Washington and Columbus Street, 156 feet 5 inches west of Washington street, and running thence westerly with Gibbon Street sixteen feet six inches, thence South, parallel to Washington Street 100 feet to a 10 feet alley, thence east on said alley 16 feet 6 inches, then North 100 feet to the beginning, being the same lot of ground which T.A. Stoutenburgh and James A. Stoutenburgh + wife conveyed to George Seaton by deed of the 24th of November 1856, And the said George Seaton covenants that he has the right to convey the said lot of ground to the grantee, that the grantee shall have quiet possession of the said lot of ground free from all incumbrance, that he will execute such further assurances of the said lot of ground as may be requisite

Witness the following Signatures and Seals.

George Seaton

Maria Seaton

1871 [Deed Book No 1, Corporation Court, p 542]

This Deed, made this 17th day of October 1871 between William Miller of the one part and George L. Seaton, Trustee, of the other part all of the City of Alexandria + State of Virginia. Witnesseth that the Said William Miller doth grant unto the Said George L. Seaton Trustee with general warranty the following property to wit: A certain Lot of Land Situate being and lying the Said City of Alexandria on the east side of Henry St. fronting thirty two feet nine inches on Said Henry St., and running east fifty five feet more or less

bounded west on Said Henry St North on land of the late James English, East on land of Lewis Baltimore—south on Land of Lewis Baltimore—being the Same lot of Land conveyed from Lewis Williams by deed dated the 18th day of Feb. 1871. In trust to Secure to John A. Seaton of Said City of Alexandria the payment of the sum of a note drawn by the Said Wm Miller dated the 17th day of October 1871, and payable to the Said John A. Seaton, or order three months after its date with interest at the rate of ten percent being for the Sum of Sixty Five Dollars.

Witness the following signature and Seal  
William Miller

1871 [Deed Book No 2, Corporation Court, p. 98]

This Deed made the Fifth day of December in the year Eighteen Hundred and Seventy One between George L. Seaton of the first part, and John Wilkins of the second part, both of the City of Alexandria in the State of Virginia, Witnesseth, That the said party of the first part in consideration of the sum of Six Hundred Dollars (\$600.00) doth grant unto the said party of the second part with general warranty a certain piece or parcel of land in the said City of Alexandria, Bounded as follows to wit, Beginning at a point 108 feet West from the South West corner of Washington and Gibbon Streets—thence West with Gibbon Street 12 feet to an alley—thence South and parallel with said Alley 57 feet 7 inches—thence East and parallel with Franklin Street 12 feet—thence North and parallel with Franklin Street 57 feet 7 inches to the place of beginning. And the said party of the first covenants that he has the right to convey the said land with all the buildings privileges and appurtenances [*sic*] belonging to said land to the said party of the second part. And that the said party of the second part shall have quiet possession of the same free from all encumbrances, and that he will execute such further assurances thereof as may be requisite

Witness the following signature and Seal  
George L Seaton

State of Virginia  
County of Alexandria} to Wit

I, George C. Seaton Clerk of the County Court for the County aforesaid do certify that George L. Seaton whose name is signed to the writing above bearing date on 5th day of December 1871 has acknowledged the same before me in my office in the County aforesaid. Given under my hand this 26 day of January 1872

George C Seaton Clerk/  
Co Ck Alexa Co

1872 [Deed Book No 2, Corporation Court, p. 84]

This Deed made this 1st day of January 1872 between John H. Davis of the first part and George L Seaton of the second part all of the City of Alexandria + State of Virginia,

Witnesseth, That the said party of the first part, doth grant unto the said party of the second part the following property, to wit: A certain piece or parcel of ground lying in the City of Alexandria, and bounded as follows, Beginning at a point on St. Asaph St 60 feet from the NorthWest Corner of Franklin + St. Asaph—Thence North with St. Asaph St 20 feet, Thence West parallel with Franklin St 123 feet. Thence South and parallel with St. Asaph 20 feet Thence East 123 feet to the beginning—In trust to secure to John A. Seaton the payment of the sum of a note drawn by the said John A. Davis dated 1st day of January 1872 and payable to the said John A Seaton, or order six months after its date with interest at the rate of Ten per cent

being for the sum of One Hundred Dollars

Witness the following Signature + Seal

John H Davis

Examined and Delivered to Jno. A. Seaton June 29th 1872

Test. M. Marye Clk

1873 [Deed Book No 2, Corporation Court, pp. 545-546]

This Deed made this 7th day of April AD 1873, between George Chapman, & Helen Chapman, his wife of the first part & George L. Seaton, Trustee of the second part all of the City of Alexandria and State of Virginia. Witnesseth, that the said parties of the first part do grant unto the said party of the second part, the following property, to wit: A lot of ground in the City of Alexandria, bounded as follows: Beginning on the north side of Duke St, fifty six feet, two inches to the westward of Alfred St, & running thence westwardly with Duke St Eighteen feet. Thence northwardly, parallel with Alfred St, Eighty Eight feet to an Alley twenty feet wide. Thence Eastwardly with said Alley Eighteen feet—Thence southwardly to the beginning, being the same lot that was conveyed by Phineas Janney & others "Trustees of the Bank of Potomac" by Betsey Clarke, by deed bearing date Sept 4th 1846 duly recorded, and by Betsy Clarke conveyed to George Chapman by deed duly recorded. In Trust, to secure to John A Seaton, of the City & State aforesaid the payment of the sum of a note, drawn by the said George Chapman, dated the 7th day of April 1873, and payable to the said John A Seaton or Order Twelve months after its date with interest at the rate of Eight per cent, being for the sum of One Hundred Dollars

Witness the following signatures & seals

George Chapman

her

Helen X Chapman

mark

1874 [Deed Book 4, Corporation Court, pp 178-179]

This Deed made this Eighteenth day of May, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Seventy Four between George L. Seaton and Catherine Seaton his wife and John A. Seaton parties of the first part, and The Alexandria Marine Railway and Shipbuilding Company party of



the second part all of Alexandria City, State of Virginia: Witnesseth, That in consideration of the sum of four hundred dollars, the said George L. Seaton, and Catherine Seaton his wife, and John A Seaton do grant unto the said Alexandria Marine Railway and Shipbuilding Company, with general warranty, all that lot, piece or parcel of ground situate in the said City of Alexandria, State of Virginia. Beginning at the intersection of the double line of Franklin Street and the West line of Strand Street at a point 180 feet East of Union Street, thence South with the Strand Street parallel to Union Street 93 feet 31/2 inches, thence West parallel to Franklin Street 911 feet, thence North parallel to Union Street 93 feet 31/2 inches to the South line of Franklin Street, thence East with Franklin Street 90 feet to the beginning, it being the same lot piece or parcel of ground, which was conveyed to the said George L. and John A. Seaton by deed dated the Twenty Seventh Day of April 1874, and the same property conveyed by John Harper and Sarah his wife to James H. Veitch, by deed dated September 27, 1824 recorded in Liber O., No 2. folio 143 land records of Alexandria City and County:

reference to said deeds is made for a more particular description. And the said John A Seaton and George L Seaton covenant that they have the right to convey the said land to the grantee, that they have done no act to encumber the said land, that the grantee shall have quiet possession of the said land free from all encumbrances; and that the said parties of the first Land will execute such further assurances of the said land as may be requisite

Witness the following signatures and seals.

George L. Seaton

Catherine Seaton

John A. Seaton

Probated June 19, 1874

Examined and delivered to W.A. Smoot, July 24, 1874

Teste: M. Marye, Clk.

### 1876

This Deed made this twentieth day of July in the year one thousand eight hundred and seventy six, between George Chapman, party of the first part, George L Seaton trustee party of the second part, Robert Darnell trustee, party of the third part, John A Seaton, for himself, and as guardian for his son John A. Seaton Jr, party of the fourth part, and George Parker Chapman party of the fifth part:

Whereas by deed dated the 7th day of April in the year 1873 and of record in the Clerks Office of the Corporation Court, Liber 2 folio 545 the said George Chapman and Helen Chapman his wife, in order to secure to the said John A Seaton the payment of a certain note drawn by the said George Chapman for \$100, bearing date the 7th day of April 1873 and payable 12 months after its date, to the said John A Seaton on order, with interest at rate of 8 per centum per annum, did convey in trust to the said George L. Seaton certain

property set forth and described in said deed as follows: A lot of ground in the City of Alexandria bounded as follows. Beginning on the North side of Duke Street, fifty six feet two inches, to the Westward of Alfred Street, and running thence Westwardly with Duke Street eighteen feet, thence Southwardly parallel with Alfred Street, eighty eight feet to an Alley twenty feet wide thence eastwardly with said alley eighteen feet, thence Southwardly to the beginning, and whereas the said note has been fully paid and the said George Chapman desires the said property to be released from said trust; And whereas by deed dated the 26th day of September in the year 1874 and of record in the Clerk's Office of the Corporation Court Liber 4 folio 303 the said George Chapman, in order to secure to the said John A Seaton as guardian of his said son the said John A Seaton Jr the payment of a certain promissary [*sic*] note, drawn by the said George Chapman, dated the 26 day of September 1874 and payable one year after its date to the said John A Seaton as guardian of his said son the said John A. Seaton, jr. for the sum of \$150 with interest thereon from date, did convey a certain annuity or rent charge of four pounds nineteen shillings Virginia currency, payable on the      day of      in every year forever with the power of distress and reentry, issuing out of the lot of ground hereintoforesaid, together with all the right and title to the said lot of ground by virtue of a re-entry made thereupon by Alice Holbrook on the 15th of October 1819 together with all arrears of said rent payable to the said George Chapman, and whereas the said last mentioned note has been fully paid and the said George Chapman desires the said annuity or rent charge and property to be released from the said last mentioned trust.

Now therefore this deed witnesseth that the said George Chapman and the said George L Seaton and Robert Darnell, trustees as aforesaid in consideration of the premises and of the sum of Two hundred and fifty five dollars and thirty three cents and by and with the consent of said John A Seaton for himself and as guardian of his said son, the said John A. Seaton Jr testified to by his becoming a party to this deed and signing and sealing the same, do grant and release unto the said George Parker Chapman, with general warranty as to the said George Chapman and with special warranty to the said George L. Seaton and Robert Darnell trustees as aforesaid, all that annuity or rent charge and property hencebefore described to wit, a certain annuity or rent charge of four pounds nineteen shillings Virginia currency payable on the      day of      in every year forever with power of distress and re entry issuing out of a lot of ground in the City of Alexandria situated and bounded as follows Beginning on the North side of Duke Street, fifty six feet two inches to the westward of Alfred Street, and running thence northerly parallel with Alfred Street eighty eight feet to an alley twenty feet wide, thence West and parallel to Alfred eighty eight feet to Duke Street Eighteen feet, thence Southerly and parallel to Alfred Street eighty eight feet to Duke Street, thence on Duke Street to the beginning together with all right and title to the said lot of ground by virtue of a re-entry made thereupon by Alice Holbrook on the 15th of October 1819 together with all arrears of said rent payable to the said George Chapman or Robert Darnell which rent charge and lot were conveyed to the said George Chapman by Betsey Clarke, by deed dated the 4 day of June 1857 and recorded in the Clerk's Office of the County Court Liber S. No. 3. folio 243. The said George Chapman covenants that he

has the right to convey the said property to the grantee, that the grantee shall have a quiet possession of the said property free from all encumbrances and that he will execute such further assurances of the said property as may be requisite

Witness the following signatures and seals

George Chapman  
Robert Darnell  
Geo. L. Seaton  
John A Seaton

1878 [Deed Book 7, Corporation Court, City of Alexandria, pp. 147-148]

This Deed made the 9 day of April A.D. 1878 between George L. Seaton and Catharine Seaton his wife, Sarah I. Seaton and Connie I. Carrington and Thomas A. Carrington her husband, of the first part, and James F. Carlin of the second part, all of the City of Alexandria, State of Virginia: Whereas the said George L. Seaton did on the 17 day of April 1874 effect two policies of insurance upon his life for the benefit of his wife and children, the said policies being each for the sum of twenty five hundred dollars and numbered respectively 145 and 146 and issued by the Virginia Protection Life Insurance Company of Richmond, Virginia: and whereas the said James F. Carlin has heretofore made advances of money to the said George L. Seaton to pay the Assessments upon the said policies of insurance and for other purposes and now proposes to advance to the said Catharine Seaton the sum of Five Hundred dollars for the purpose of starting her in business, and may from time to time as occasion requires make other and further advances of money to pay future assessments upon said policies of insurance:

And whereas the parties hereto of the first part are desirous of securing the said James F. Carlin for the advances of money heretofore made, that which he now makes and for such sum or sums of money as he may be required to pay in the way of assessments upon the said policies of insurance\_\_\_\_\_.

Now, therefore, this deed witnesseth, that the said parties hereto of the first part for and in consideration of the promises and the further sum of five dollars to them in hand paid by the party hereto of the second part do hereby bargain, sell, assign, transfer and set over unto the said James F. Carlin, his executors administrators and assigns, all their right, title and interest in and to the said policies of insurance and to all sum or sums of money that may become due, and payable thereon provided, nevertheless, that the said James F. Carlin, after having first paid off and discharged the sum or sums of money due to him by reason of his

advances of money as herein before set forth, shall pay over the residue if any to the parties named as the beneficiaries in the said policies of insurance

Witness the following signatures and seals

Geo. L. Seaton  
Catharine Seaton  
her  
Sarah J. X Seaton  
mark  
Connie G. Carrington  
T.A. Carrington

Witness  
K. Keniper

Probated April 19, 1878

1879 [Deed Book No 10, p. 147]

City of Alexandria: Eighteenth day of June 1879

Sold this day at Public Auction, by the authority of the City Council of Alexandria, as delinquent for taxes, the following property:

1/2 Square Wythe + Payne belonging or assessed to Geo. L. + Jno. A. Seaton.

Purchase fee \$8.96. Aggregate amount of taxes xc \$10.26.

Received Payment this day and certificate delivered.

I.T. Hill, Collector Northern District

[Deed Book No 10, p. 291]

City of Alexandria: 20th day of June 1879

Sold this day at Public Auction, by the authority of the City Council of Alexandria as delinquent for taxes, the following property:

House + lot Gibbon St belonging or assessed to Geo L. Seaton

Purchaser fee \$34.86 Aggregate amount of taxes xc \$40.00

Received Payment this day and certificate delivered

S.K. Field Collector South District

[Deed Book No 10, p. 297]

City of Alexandria: 20th day of June 1879

Sold this day at Public Auction, by the authority of the City Council of Alexandria, as delinquent for taxes, the following property:

2 houses Washington St belonging or assessed to G.L. Seaton

Purchaser fee \$102.10 Aggregate amount of taxes xc\$116.28

Received Payment this day and certificate delivered

S.K. Field Collector South District

[Deed Book 8, Corporation Court, City of Alexandria, pp. 514-515]

This deed, made the twenty fifth day of September in the year Eighteen hundred and Seventy nine between Jonathan R. Coutee, and Laura Virginia Coutee (formerly Laura Virginia Seaton) his wife, of the first part. Robert Darnell + Martha Ann Darnell his wife, of the second part, and John A. Seaton of the third part (the said parties of the first part, being residents of the City of Washington in the District of Columbia and the said parties of the second and third parts being residents of the City of Alexandria in the State of Virginia:

Witnesseth, First, That in consideration of the sum of two hundred dollars (\$200.00) the said Jonathan R Coutee and Laura Virginia Coutee, his wife, do grant unto the said John A. Seaton, with general warranty all that lot of ground with the improvements thereon situate in the said City of Alexandria and bounded as follows: Beginning at a point on the North side of Franklin Street ninety nine feet (99') East of Washington Street and running thence West on Franklin Street thirteen feet (13'): and extending North the same width as in front, Sixty feet (60'): being the same lot of ground which was devised to the said Laura V. Coutee, by the last will and testament of her father George Seaton, duly of record in Will Book No 4 now in the Clerk's Office of the Corporation Court for the City of Alexandria, Virginia. Second, that the said Robert Darnell and Martha Ann Darnell his wife, in consideration of the sum of one hundred dollars (\$100.00) do grant unto the said John A. Seaton with general warranty all that lot of ground with the improvements thereon situate in the said city of Alexandria, and bounded as follows: Beginning at a point on the North side of Franklin Street, Eighty six feet (86') East of Washington Street, and running thence West on Washington Street Sixteen feet (16') and extending North, the same width as in front Sixty feet (60'): being the same lot of ground of which one undivided morety [*sic*] was devised to the said Martha Ann Darnell (formerly Martha Ann Seaton) by the last will and testament of her father George Seaton duly of record in Will Book, No 4, now in the Clerk's Office of the Corporation Court for the said City of Alexandria and the other undivided morety [*sic*] of which was conveyed to the said Martha Ann Darnell by Beach[?] and Minor, Commissioners, by a deed dated on the 5th day of December 1866 and of record in the Land Records of Alexandria County, Virginia Liber Y. no 3. folio 130

Witness the following signatures and seals

Jonathan R Coutee  
Laura V Coutee  
Robert Darnell  
Martha A. Darnell

**Appendix C**  
**National Register Nomination**  
**George L. Seaton House,**  
**404 South Royal Street, Alexandria, Virginia**



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

**1. Name of Property**

historic name George Lewis Seaton House  
other names: NA; site number: DHR #100-5015-0007

**2. Location**

street & number 404 South Royal Street not for publication N/A city or town Alexandria  
vicinity N/A state Virginia code VA county Alexandria (Independent City) code 510  
zip code 22314

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this \_\_\_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_\_\_ nationally \_\_\_\_\_ statewide \_\_\_\_\_ locally. ( \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Virginia Department of Historic Resources**

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:  
\_\_\_\_\_ entered in the National Register  
\_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.  
\_\_\_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register  
\_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.  
\_\_\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register  
\_\_\_\_\_ removed from the National Register  
\_\_\_\_\_ other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper

Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_



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## 5. Classification

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Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

| Contributing | Noncontributing     |
|--------------|---------------------|
| <u>1</u>     | <u>0</u> buildings  |
| <u>0</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

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) African American Historic Resources of Alexandria, Virginia

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## 6. Function or Use

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: single dwelling

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: single dwelling

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## 7. Description

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK  
roof METAL  
walls BRICK  
other \_\_\_\_\_

## 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 a grave.

☐ D a cemetery.

☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ F a commemorative property.

☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions)

ETHNIC HERITAGE/Black

**Period of Significance** 1810-1927

**Significant Dates** N/A

**Significant Person** (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

George Lewis Seaton

**Cultural Affiliation** N/A

**Architect/Builder** Unknown

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (See footnotes in Architectural Description and Statement of Significance sections of this form.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS)**

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

☐ previously listed in the National Register

☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register

☐ designated a National Historic Landmark

☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

George L. Seaton House

Alexandria, Virginia

Multiple Property Listing: African American Historic Resources of Alexandria, Virginia

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**Primary Location of Additional Data**

☐ State Historic Preservation Office

☐ Other State agency

☐ Federal agency

☐ Local government

☐ University

☐ Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

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**Acree of Property** 1,300 square feet

**UTM References** (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing

1 18 322490 4296660

3

\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Zone Easting Northing

2

4

**Verbal Boundary Description**

Alexandria, VA: Map 74.04, Block 07, Lot 04.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary includes the entire city lot historically associated with the Seatons' ownership of the property.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title Elizabeth Calvit for the Office of Historic Alexandria

organization City of Alexandria, Office of Historic Alexandria date August 1994

Revised by Pamela Cressey, Francine Bromberg and Steven Shephard, November 2001

street & number Box 178 City Hall telephone 703-838-4554

city or town Alexandria state VA zip code 22313

**CONTINUATION SHEET**  
**Section 7                      Page 1**

**ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION**

Summary Description

The Seaton house is located at 404 S. Royal Street in the heart of "Hayti," the second oldest African American neighborhood in Alexandria. The house is a three and one-half bay, two story, side hall brick rowhouse. It is possible that the structure was originally constructed between 1861 and 1866, just before its purchase by George Seaton on April 14, 1866. An examination of the Alexandria tax records between 1820 and 1907 has revealed that the greatest increase in the value of the property occurred between 1861 and 1866. During this five-year period, the values of the other houses on the 400 block of South Royal Street remained constant or increased a few hundred dollars, while the property at 404 South Royal more than tripled in value from \$400 to \$1500.<sup>1</sup> This increase suggests that there was a substantial improvement to the property, and it is clear from the G.M. Hopkins Insurance map for Alexandria that a brick house with rear frame additions was present on the property in 1877. However, it is likely that there was a substantial modification to or rebuilding of the structure around the turn of the century. Tax records for the property indicate that the house and lot were valued at \$800 in 1880, decreased in value to \$600 by 1885, and rebounded to an \$800 value by 1902. Since the value of several other properties on the block remained constant from 1880 to 1907, it is probable that the condition of the house was deteriorating at the end of nineteenth century and that substantial modification or rebuilding, at least of the front section, occurred around 1900. Evidence of these alterations is also apparent from an examination of nineteenth and early twentieth-century insurance maps, for the 1896 Sanborn shows a three-story section of the front portion of the house, while the 1907 map depicts a two-story dwelling.

Detailed Description

The west facade of the Seaton House, the only one visible from the street, is of red-painted pressed brick in a running bond pattern. The low-pitched shed roof is covered in standing-seam metal and slopes to the rear. The house has one-over-one sash wood windows with decorative brick segmented arches. Arches above the windows and door, display carving. Also above the front door is a transom. The building facade's most distinctive feature is the decorative pressed brick detailing on the facade, which is topped by a seven-course corbelled brick cornice. The south side of the facade contains a ground level opening, commonly known in Alexandria as a "horse alley" with a gate for pedestrian access to the rear yard. The exposed wall within the alley is of common brick. The wrought-metal gate is composed of eight thin, vertical, metal rods, and three horizontal rods. The entrance to the house features a brick stoop of three steps and a plain, black, metal railing. The wooden front door has a single, large, oval pane of glass.

The house was recently renovated, with new windows added that are appropriate for the period. Other alterations have been made to the interior and rear sections of the house.

Interior Description

This two-story, brick, rowhouse was originally a two-room-deep side-hall-plan building with a narrow ell on the rear for a kitchen. The house retains its three-foot-square entry vestibule with shutters and

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<sup>1</sup> Alexandria Tax Records, 1820, 1825, 1830, 1835, 1840, 1845, 1850, 1855, 1861, 1866, 1870, 1872, 1875, 1880, 1891, 1895, 1902 and 1907.

**CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Section 7                      Page 2**

transom over the exterior door. A contemporary sandblasted glass door on the interior of the vestibule retains the original transom but has new Victorian-period symmetrically moulded trim with corner blocks. The flooring in the entry hall is 1x2 tongue-and-groove heart pine. The flooring in the parlor and dining area is 1x4 pine boards which appears to be a replacement. The walls between the entry hall, parlor, and dining area have been removed to create a common open space.

Ghost marks on the floor indicate the wall location of original side entry/stair hall and double-parlor plan. Two masonry fire boxes, which were previously corner fireplaces with a shared flue, now stand back-to-back at 45 degree angles in the center of the south wall. The design and construction of both mantels are typical of the Victorian period. The present owner notes that the mantel in the dining room was relocated from the parlor and the parlor mantel is a newly installed antique, not original to the house.

The straight run of stairs are in their original location but the side wall has been removed to display an open, Colonial Revival-style balustrade and spiral volute at the newel. Treads and risers have also been replaced. The doors throughout are 6-panel, late-twentieth-century replacements.

The plaster has been removed from the party wall on the north side to expose the brick. The other walls are still plaster or drywall, as is the ceiling. The dining area ceiling is dropped approximately one foot with a 45-degree bevel around the perimeter. The new Victorian-style trim with corner blocks on the windows was milled to match the original. The chandelier is a gaslight reproduction with a plaster ceiling medallion. The ceiling in the kitchen is roughly two feet lower than the first-floor rooms in the front of the house. The second-floor plan matches the original first-floor plan and has the original 2 1/4" wide tongue-and-groove heart-pine flooring.

**Archaeological Description**

This property is registered as an archaeological site with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources as 44AX157. Alexandria Archaeology conducted an investigation in July 1991 as a result of the City of Alexandria's Archaeological Protection Code.<sup>2</sup> The owners of the house at that time planned to construct a small enclosure between the front section of the house and the rear addition. Two small archaeological test units were excavated in this area, one measuring 4 by 3 feet and the other a two-foot square (Figure 1).

The excavations yielded eleven soil levels extending to a depth of about 3 feet below the existing ground surface. Archaeologists have recovered over 2000 artifacts (ceramics, glass, building materials, etc.) and food remains from the site dating back to the late eighteenth century. The uppermost level, a late twentieth-century deposit about .2 feet in thickness, rested upon two nineteenth-century layers (with a total thickness of about half a foot) containing primarily clinkers, the refuse from burning coal. These in turn lay on top of three levels, deposited as early as the mid-nineteenth century. The lowest of the three levels was a layer of oyster shell, which did not seem to be a midden deposit but appeared to have been purposefully put in place for use as a patio or walkway area. The shells rested upon a .2-foot thick gravel layer, deposited sometime after 1830, which may have helped provide drainage for the overlying patio or walkway. Underlying the gravel was a clay level about a foot in thickness which contained artifacts dated to the 1820s. The archaeological assemblages from the lowest three levels of the site indicated

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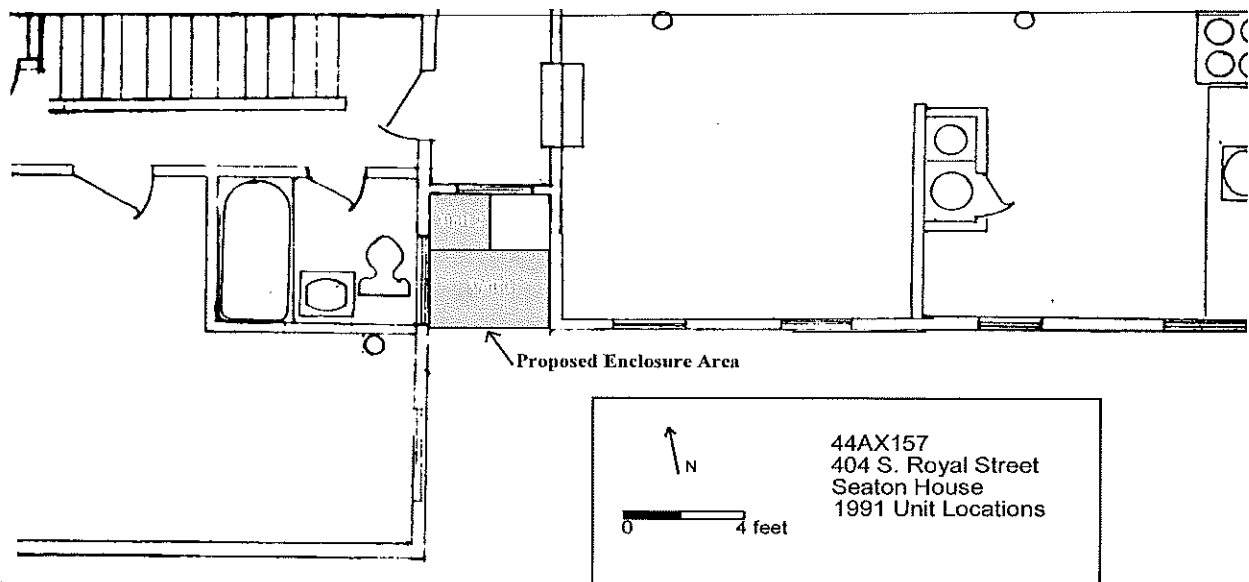
<sup>2</sup>Alexandria Archaeology, Notes and Collections, Alexandria, Virginia, 1991.

**CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Section 7** **Page 3**

that they had been deposited between 1795 to 1820. One of these deeply buried layers was a rich trash midden yielding over 100 sherds of creamware and pearlware along with over 150 bone fragments. Other features discovered during the excavation include two intrusive modern utility trenches, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century construction or utility trench, and a square post hole dated to the mid- 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Figure 1**



**CONTINUATION SHEET**  
**Section 8                      Page 4**

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The significance of the property at 404 South Royal Street stems from its association with George Lewis Seaton, a successful African American entrepreneur and property owner as well as a civic and political leader in Alexandria throughout the mid-nineteenth century and from the fact that it has yielded a sequence of archaeological deposits which reflects the development of the community once known as "Hayti." The Hayti (pronounced hay-tie) neighborhood was established in the early 1800s around the 400 block of South Royal Street and was the home of many black leaders. Haiti, site of the only successful slave uprising in the western hemisphere, inspired the name for this free African American neighborhood. Quakers supported the growth of Hayti by renting and selling property to free black families. In fact, the block on which the Seatons lived was associated with free black families prior to 1810. Archaeological work by Alexandria Archaeology at 404 South Royal Street has led to the discovery of artifacts which relate to the occupants of the site from this early period. These may represent the earliest record of material culture for free blacks in Alexandria.

George Seaton purchased the property at 404 South Royal Street in the heart of Hayti in 1866. Well regarded by blacks and whites alike, Seaton was described as a "respectable and well to do resident of this city"<sup>3</sup> in a local newspaper article in 1867. Born free in Alexandria in 1822, Seaton is perhaps best known for his work as a master carpenter and as the builder of a number of homes and civic buildings in Alexandria during the 1850s and 1860s. His business dealings also included the management of a thriving grocery store near the center of town. A list of his considerable civic accomplishments, achieved under restrictive conditions, includes many positions which illustrate his leadership in the community. An outspoken Radical Republican after the Civil War, Seaton associated himself with many movements for racial improvement, and was elected the first African American member of the Virginia General Assembly from north of the Rappahannock River. He served as head trustee of the First Free School Society of Alexandria and constructed two schools for African American children in the city. In addition, he was a founding member of the Colored Building Association and the Colored YMCA. He was not only active in the establishment of the Odd Fellows Society, but also constructed the Odd Fellows Hall for use by the organization.

The property at 404 South Royal Street served as Seaton's home from the early 1870s until his death in 1881. While the house was modified around 1900, his widow continued to live there until 1927. The alterations to the house after Seaton's death attest to both the resilience of his family and the continuing strength of their ties to the Hayti community. Given Seaton's involvement in and commitment to the betterment of Alexandria's African American citizens, it is not surprising that he and his family decided to settle in this neighborhood, and it is fitting for this house in the heart of Hayti to serve now as a tribute to Seaton and as a reminder of his contributions to the city during the mid-nineteenth century.

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<sup>3</sup>Alexandria Gazette May 2, 1867.

**CONTINUATION SHEET**  
**Section 8**                      **Page 5**

Historical Background

*The Early Land History: A Lot in Hayti*

The property at 404 S. Royal Street was part of a larger parcel of land (the northern half of the block bounded by Fairfax, Wilkes, Royal and Wolfe Streets) auctioned by the City trustees to John Orr in 1763 and owned by William Hartshorne, a Quaker, by 1785.<sup>4</sup> Like other members of Alexandria's Quaker community, Hartshorne aided in the development of free black communities by renting property to African Americans, and he constructed a house on the property for this purpose. Although the exact construction date and location of the house are not known, it probably faced Royal Street in the vicinity of the lot at 404 S. Royal. The house was occupied by Ben Dawson, a laborer, and Elizabeth Dice, a seamstress, sometime before 1810.<sup>5</sup>

Although archaeological work on the site was very limited and confined to a small area of proposed construction disturbance, the investigation yielded material remains related to this early free black occupation of the site. The earliest deposits recovered date from about 1795 to 1820, the period of Hartshorne's ownership. The deeply buried midden discovered during the excavation may thus relate to occupation of the site by Dawson and Dice, Hartshorne's earliest known lessees, in the early nineteenth century. The artifacts may represent the earliest record of material culture for free blacks in Alexandria and provide tangible evidence of the early development of the free African American community known as Hayti along a corridor of Royal Street extending from Duke to Wilkes.

By 1815, ownership of much of Hartshorne's property on the block had been transferred to Mordecai Miller, another Quaker, who continued to aid in fostering the development of Hayti through the practice of renting and selling to African Americans.<sup>6</sup> By 1820, the property at 404 S. Royal Street definitely had a house situated on it, and Miller leased the structure to free African Americans. Michael Morris lived on the lot in 1820,<sup>7</sup> Betsy Marple was there in 1825, and William Dogan leased it in 1835.<sup>8</sup> By 1850, Miller had sold the property to Betsy Duvall, a housekeeper.<sup>9</sup> Several members of the Dogan family (Governor, a laborer, and George, who worked as a laborer and then became an apprentice butcher) continued to live on the site with Duvall until at least 1855.<sup>10</sup> In 1861, Duvall rented space to George Douglass, a ship caulker, and Andrew Bell,<sup>11</sup> and in 1866 she sold the property

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<sup>4</sup>T.B. McCord, Jr., Across the Fence, but a World Apart: The Coleman Site, 1796-1907, Alexandria Archaeology Publications, Number 126, Alexandria, Virginia, 1985, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.14.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.78.

<sup>7</sup> Alexandria Tax Records, 1820.

<sup>8</sup> McCord, 1985, p.80, 81.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.81, 82.

<sup>11</sup> Alexandria Tax Records, 1861; 1860 census.



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to George Seaton.<sup>12</sup>

The archaeological resources recovered from the upper levels of the excavation give us additional insight into the lives of Hayti's nineteenth-century residents. The thick clay level contains glass, ceramics and clay pipe fragments which may have been used by Michael Morris, and the walkway or patio could have been constructed by Morris or Marple. The mid-nineteenth century levels contain artifacts which may relate to the households of Betsy Duvall and the Dogans as well as Duvall's other lessees. The 3-foot-thick deposit of eleven soil layers, perhaps going back into the late eighteenth century, provide a record of the continuing development of the Hayti neighborhood throughout the nineteenth century, and the artifacts and features recovered provide a physical connection with the free African Americans who lived and worked in the community.

*The Seaton Connection*

George Lewis Seaton was the oldest son of George Seaton and Lucinda Seaton. Lucinda was a dower slave of George and Martha Washington, who freed her while she was still an infant.<sup>13</sup> Seaton's father was a free black master carpenter and builder who had once been a tenant at Burgundy Farm in Fairfax County.<sup>14</sup> When George Seaton, Sr., died in 1844, he left his five properties (four of which had been rented to whites) on Franklin and South Washington streets to his family. George L. Seaton acquired one of these parcels near the northeast corner of South Washington and Franklin streets upon his father's death.<sup>15</sup> Seaton married Maria Bryant of Loudoun County by 1847, and they had six children by the end of the 1850s.<sup>16</sup> After Maria's death, Seaton married Catherine Turley in 1874, and they had two sons.<sup>17</sup>

George L. Seaton became a master carpenter like his father and is best known in Alexandria for his buildings and entrepreneurial real estate dealings. He began his house building career in his 20s working with his brother, Adolphus.<sup>18</sup> In 1851 at age 29, Seaton purchased a corner lot at Wolfe and St. Asaph streets from a former mayor, John Roberts. He built a structure with Greek Revival facade onto two earlier buildings, which is now 323 South St. Asaph Street. The newspaper announced the

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<sup>12</sup> Alexandria Deed Book Y3, 530.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Bernstein, *The Life and Times of George Lewis Seaton*, p. 3, 2000, ms. On file, Alexandria Archaeology Museum. Elsa S. Rosenthal, 1790 Names-1970 Faces, *A Short History of Alexandria's Slave and Free Black Community*. In, *Alexandria A Composite History*, p. 83, edited by E. Hambleton and M. Van Landingham, Alexandria Bicentennial Commission, 1975.

<sup>14</sup> 1820 Ledger of James Hewitt Hooe, Fairfax Archives, Fairfax City, Va.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Bernstein, p.3.

<sup>16</sup> Provine, Dorothy, *Alexandria County, Virginia, Free Negro Registers, 1797-1861*, p. 211, Heritage Books, 1990. U.S. Census, 1850. Peter Bernstein, pp. 5, 7. *Alexandria City and County Census, 1860*.

<sup>17</sup> Peter Bernstein, p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Bernstein, p. 5.

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completion of the building in April 1852: "A large frame building corner St. Asaph and Wolfe for Geo. Seaton - built by him."<sup>19</sup> A permit was granted for a pipe to bring water from the new water system in June, and by August, the house had been rented to R. S. Huck.<sup>20</sup> This structure, described by architectural historians as being typical for its time, has been admired for its "fine woodwork, combined with a side hall plan and the generous use of windows which bring light to this spacious home,"<sup>21</sup> and displays Seaton's understanding of architectural styles, and his excellent craftsmanship. It is interesting to note that Quakers, who had such strong ties to Alexandria's free African American community, occupied much of the 300 block of South St. Asaph Street for the first half of the nineteenth-century, and their meeting house was just across Wolfe Street from this new Seaton-built house. Seaton was still listed as owner of the St. Asaph Street house in 1854, when the property was valued at \$2000. However, at this time, the Seatons lived in a smaller house valued at \$900 on South Washington Street near his mother's home, interestingly valued at \$2300, which was more than the new house Seaton had constructed.<sup>22</sup>

Seaton's real estate and construction enterprises continued to flourish throughout the 1860s. The Alexandria Deed Records and the local newspaper contain numerous references to his activities, which reflect his role in the development of Alexandria's communities. In 1864, he purchased a lot at the corner of Washington and Wolfe streets at a sale which resulted from the tax debts incurred by Confederates who had left the area.<sup>23</sup> In 1866, he built a frame house at Duke and Washington streets<sup>24</sup> and another at 419 Alfred Street.<sup>25</sup> He also rented out a large frame house at 59 South St. Asaph Street.<sup>26</sup> On April 14, 1868, Seaton purchased a lot at 3400 Russell Road, constructed a house on it, and rented it to tenants.<sup>27</sup>

Seaton purchased the property nominated for the National Register at 404 South Royal Street for \$1,675 in 1866.<sup>28</sup> Tax records indicate that a brick house was probably constructed on this lot just

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<sup>19</sup> Alexandria Gazette, April 3, 1852; Penny Morrill, *Who Built Alexandria? Architects in Alexandria, 1750-1900*, p. 32, Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, 1979.

<sup>20</sup> Virginia-America Water Company Records, Permit #50, June 26, 1852 and August 1, 1852.

<sup>21</sup> Ruth Lincoln Kaye, cited in Peter Bernstein, pp. 5-6.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Bernstein, p. 6. *Alexandria Land and Personal Property Tax Records*, 1854.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Bernstein, p. 7. *Alexandria Deed Book V3*, 552.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Bernstein, p. 7. Alexandria Gazette, February 28, 1866.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Bernstein, p. 13.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Bernstein, p. 13. Alexandria Gazette, November 13, 1868.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Alexandria Deed Book Y3*, 530.

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prior to Seaton's purchase, sometime between 1861 and 1866.<sup>29</sup> During the first few years of his ownership, Seaton rented this house out to tenants,<sup>30</sup> and in 1869, when it was occupied by the Tancils, another African American family, a small fire broke out and destroyed some of the furniture in the home.<sup>31</sup> George Seaton and his family moved into the house sometime around 1871, and it served as Seaton's home until his death in 1881.<sup>32</sup> His widow, Catherine, continued to live on the property until her death in 1927.<sup>33</sup> While substantial modification or rebuilding of the house took place around the turn of the century, it is clear that the property was associated with the Seaton family for over 60 years, from 1866 until 1927.

Seaton's training as a master carpenter gave him important skills which provided him an opportunity to exercise a leadership role in literally building up Alexandria's African American neighborhoods. In addition to the construction of residences, Seaton is credited with constructing a number of civic structures important to the city's black communities. He is perhaps best remembered for his contribution to the education of the city's African Americans as the builder of two schools for black children after the Civil War. Under Seaton's leadership, a group of African Americans established the Free School Society of Alexandria. Working with the Freedman's Bureau, the society obtained land for the schools and the materials to build them, and Seaton received a commission to construct them. The Seaton School for boys (later known as the Snowden School) was completed in April 1867, and the Hollowell School for girls opened in the following November.<sup>34</sup> With the completion of the first school, Seaton spoke at the opening ceremony for the city's Public Free School system, held at the First Colored Baptist Church in 1867. Addressing a public audience for the first time, Seaton claimed to have felt compelled to make a statement; he commented on the difficulty he had in obtaining an education and expressed his excitement about the increasing opportunities for African Americans.<sup>35</sup> The two wood-frame structures built by Seaton became part of the city's public school system in 1870. Although both were eventually demolished, the Snowden School continued in use until a fire forced its closing in 1915 and the Hollowell School served the community until 1922.<sup>36</sup>

Although not related to education, the Odd Fellows Hall is another important civic landmark built by Seaton and associated with the city's African American community. Seaton helped to establish the

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<sup>19</sup> Alexandria Tax Records, 1820, 1825, 1830, 1835, 1840, 1845, 1850, 1855, 1861, 1866, 1870, 1872, 1875, 1880, 1885, 1891, 1895, 1902 and 1907.

<sup>30</sup> Alexandria Tax Records, 1870.

<sup>31</sup> Alexandria Gazette, December 8, 1869.

<sup>32</sup> Alexandria Tax Records, 1872, 1875, 1880. Alexandria Gazette, July 1, 1881.

<sup>33</sup> Peter Bernstein, p. 17. Corporation & Circuit Courts, Alexandria, Virginia, Catherine Seaton, Inventory of Estate, May 26, 1927, Will Book 4, p. 40.

<sup>34</sup> Peter Bernstein, p. 11.

<sup>35</sup> Peter Bernstein, pp. 3, 11. Alexandria Gazette, January 1, 1871.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Bernstein, p. 11.

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Colored Odd Fellows, a fraternal organization, and served as the chairman of the Odd Fellows trustees.<sup>37</sup> Seaton was also responsible for enlarging an existing building at 411 South Columbus Street and completing the Odd Fellows Hall with funds from the Freedman's Bureau in 1870. Situated in the African American Bottoms neighborhood of Alexandria, the hall was used from the date of its completion until recent times as the site for numerous gatherings and secret fraternal affairs.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to his real estate and construction businesses, George Seaton served as a grocer.<sup>39</sup> He advertised the opening of his grocery at 179 King Street in 1868:

Having bought the stock of Messrs. Loomis & Facer No. 179 King Street, I am now prepared to furnish to my friends and the public in general, as fine a selection of GROCERIES as can be found in any house in the city.<sup>40</sup>

By 1873, Seaton had moved the grocery to 94 South Royal Street,<sup>41</sup> and by 1876, two of his sons were serving as clerks in the store.<sup>42</sup> He is reported to have controlled a significant portion of the grocery trade in the city.<sup>43</sup>

Through his business dealings, George Seaton became a wealthy man. His real estate holdings grew from an aggregate value of \$500 in 1850 to \$4000 ten years later;--only 100 other Virginia blacks had comparable holdings.<sup>44</sup> By 1870, his real estate holdings were valued at \$15,000, and his personal savings totaled \$12,000.<sup>45</sup> An 1867 article in the Alexandria Gazette cited him as a "respectable and well to do citizen of this city."<sup>46</sup>

However, George Seaton's leadership did not revolve merely around his business activities. With the end of the Civil War, there were many opportunities for his skills to be used in the civic and political

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<sup>37</sup> Peter Bernstein, p. 15. Alexandria Gazette, August 4, 1875. T. Michael Miller, The Odd Fellows Hall, ms on file at Alexandria Library, 1984.

<sup>38</sup> Peter Bernstein, p. 16. T. Michael Miller, 1984.

<sup>39</sup> Peter Bernstein, p. 15.

<sup>40</sup> Alexandria Gazette, June 18, 1868. Peter Bernstein, p. 15.

<sup>41</sup> Alexandria City Directory, 1870. Peter Bernstein, p. 15

<sup>42</sup> Alexandria City Directory, 1876-1877. Peter Bernstein, p. 15.

<sup>43</sup> Peter Bernstein, p. 15.

<sup>44</sup> Alexandria City and County Census, 1860; Loren Schweninger, Black Property Owners in the South: 1790-1915, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, Chicago, 1990, p. 125.

<sup>45</sup> Alexandria Census, 1870. Peter Bernstein, p. 13.

<sup>46</sup> Alexandria Gazette, May 16, 1867. Peter Bernstein, p. 9.

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arenas. During Reconstruction, blacks were given the vote and the right to hold office. The Republican Party sought out members from this new voting population. Since the majority of Virginia whites identified with the Conservative or Democratic party, most blacks became associated with the Radical or Republican Party. George Seaton and his brother John Andrew became active members of the Republican Club called the Fourth Ward Radicals, which had both black and white members. Both men were elected to the executive committee in September 1867,<sup>47</sup> and John Seaton was eventually elected Fourth Ward alderman, becoming the first African American elected to the Alexandria council.<sup>48</sup> George's political aspirations carried him even farther—to the state level. He attended a Radical Republican state convention in August 1867,<sup>49</sup> and in 1869 was elected to the Virginia General Assembly for two years. The highest ranking black officeholder in the state at that time, he was aptly appointed to two standing committees;<sup>50</sup> on the Committee of Schools and Colleges, he could emphasize his commitment to African American education, and on the Committee on Banks, Currency and Commerce, he could utilize his business expertise. While participating in the local Radical Republican meetings, George became identified with those wanting racial harmony. The newspaper reported on one meeting and the resolution of those attending:

In view of repeated representations made, by parties interested, to prevent the establishment of relations of amity and good feeling between the white and colored people of the city, the following preamble and resolutions were offered and unanimously accepted. Whereas, the report has been very extensively circulated that we, the colored people of Alexandria, are being taught to hate the white citizens, whom we have always lived among, therefore, Resolved, That we, the colored citizens, regard the report as base and false, and that in the future, as in the past, we shall do all in our power to cultivate the best of feelings towards the white citizens, trusting that the same may be done on their part toward us.<sup>51</sup>

In other meetings, Seaton stressed getting African Americans to vote and insuring education for the city's black children.<sup>52</sup>

Besides his political activities, Seaton took on many active leadership roles in local African American organizations. In addition to serving as the founder of the Free School Society and head trustee of the Odd Fellows, he was responsible for the formation of many civic groups in Alexandria including the Colored Building Association where he served as a trustee, and the Colored YMCA where he served as president in 1873. Seaton was a member of Alfred Street Baptist Church, the oldest African

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<sup>47</sup> Alexandria Gazette, September 10, 1867.

<sup>48</sup> Officialdom: 1749-1992, Heritage Books, Inc. 1992.

<sup>49</sup> Alexandria Gazette, August 6, 1867.

<sup>50</sup> Journal of the House of Delegates of the State of Virginia for the Session of 1869-70, February 9, 1870, 53-54, Virginia Historical Society. Peter Bernstein, p. 13.

<sup>51</sup> Alexandria Gazette, July 23, 1867.

<sup>52</sup> Alexandria Gazette, October 20, 1872.

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congregation in the city. In 1871, he donated a flagpole that was placed on the engine house of the Columbia Fire Company. He also demonstrated his leadership abilities in 1872 when he chaired a meeting to request that a Freedman's Savings Bank branch be opened in Alexandria. Seaton and his brother John, an important African American leader and businessman in his own right, chaired a meeting to honor the memory of Senator Charles Sumner, who was murdered in 1875.

George Seaton's health began to decline in the mid-1870s. He was listed as an invalid in Alexandria's 1880 census. An article in the local paper a year later stated that "George L. Seaton, well-known and respected colored man, was stricken for the third time with paralysis while at his home on Royal Street, yesterday afternoon. He is extremely ill, and no hopes are entertained of his recovery."<sup>53</sup> Seaton died three days later, on July 5, 1881.<sup>54</sup>

George L. Seaton was an important African American in his community, and in Alexandria. A free black businessman and builder prior to the Civil War, he rose to prominence with the end of the hostilities. His considerable leadership skills enabled him to build up the city's African American neighborhoods by continuing to build residences and community structures and by participating fully in numerous civic and political activities. He took an active role in the formation of many African American civic organizations. He also participated at the local and state level in politics, serving the African American community after the Civil War. He supported black education and actually constructed the schools used by the African American community for more than fifty years.

The house at 404 South Royal Street stands today as a reminder of Seaton's contributions to the city of Alexandria. The property was associated with Seaton and his family for over sixty years. It is noteworthy that the house, situated on the 400 block of South Royal Street, stands in what was the heart of Hayti, one of Alexandria's earliest African American neighborhoods, whose development had been assisted by Quaker land sales to African Americans. The house takes on added significance because of this location. In fact, the block on which the Seaton's lived was associated with free blacks families prior to 1810, and archaeological work by Alexandria Archaeology at 404 South Royal Street has led to the discovery of artifacts which relate to the occupants of the site from this early period. These may represent the earliest record of material culture for free blacks in Alexandria. Given Seaton's status as one of the pillars of the African American community after the Civil War, it is not surprising that he and his family decided to settle in this neighborhood, and it is fitting for this house to serve now as a tribute to one of Alexandria's leading African American citizens.

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<sup>53</sup> Morrill, Who Built Alexandria?, 32.

<sup>54</sup> Alexandria Gazette, July 5, 1881. Peter Bernstein, p. 17.

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All photographs are of:

**SEATON HOUSE**  
Alexandria, Virginia  
VDHR File Number: 100-5015-0007  
Elizabeth Calvit, exterior photographs  
Kristin B. Lloyd, interior photographs

All negatives are stored in the archives of the Department of Historic Resources in Richmond, Virginia.

DATE: April 1994  
VIEW OF: facade  
NEG. NO.: 19171: 9  
PHOTO 1 OF 10

DATE: November 15, 1995  
VIEW OF: kitchen, looking west  
NEG. NO.: 19028: 14  
PHOTO 8 OF 10

DATE: July 1994  
VIEW OF: facade detail  
NEG. NO.: 19170: 17  
PHOTO 2 OF 10

DATE: November 15, 1995  
VIEW OF: transom over main entrance, looking west  
NEG. NO.: 19028: 4  
PHOTO 9 OF 10

DATE: July 1994  
VIEW OF: facade detail  
NEG. NO.: 19170: 18  
PHOTO 3 OF 10

DATE: November 15, 1995  
VIEW OF: dining room, dropped ceiling  
NEG. NO.: 19028: 18  
PHOTO 10 OF 10

DATE: November 15, 1995  
VIEW OF: stairway from 1st to 2nd floor, north side of building  
NEG. NO.: 19028: 7  
PHOTO 4 OF 10

DATE: November 15, 1995  
VIEW OF: 1st floor, living room, looking west  
NEG. NO.: 19028: 16  
PHOTO 5 OF 10

DATE: November 15, 1995  
VIEW OF: parlor fireplace, angled out from south wall  
NEG. NO.: 19028: 19  
PHOTO 6 OF 10

DATE: November 15, 1995  
VIEW OF: dining room fireplace, angled out from south wall  
NEG. NO.: 19028: 9  
PHOTO 7 OF 10



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