

# Braddock – Parker Gray Historic Preservation Context

Mary Means  
Braddock Workshop  
October 20, 2007



## **Braddock Metro Neighborhood Plan**

City of Alexandria, Department of Planning & Zoning  
[www.alexandriava.gov/planningandzoning](http://www.alexandriava.gov/planningandzoning) 703.838.4666

# Braddock – Parker Gray

## Historic Preservation Context

- Point of View:
  - Alexandria resident since 1980, have watched changes as Metro brought regional connectivity
  - MMA public interest planning firm, national practice
  - Have worked with similar neighborhoods, redevelopment issues in many other cities
  - Today, provide context and frame issues

# Braddock – Parker Gray Historic Preservation Context

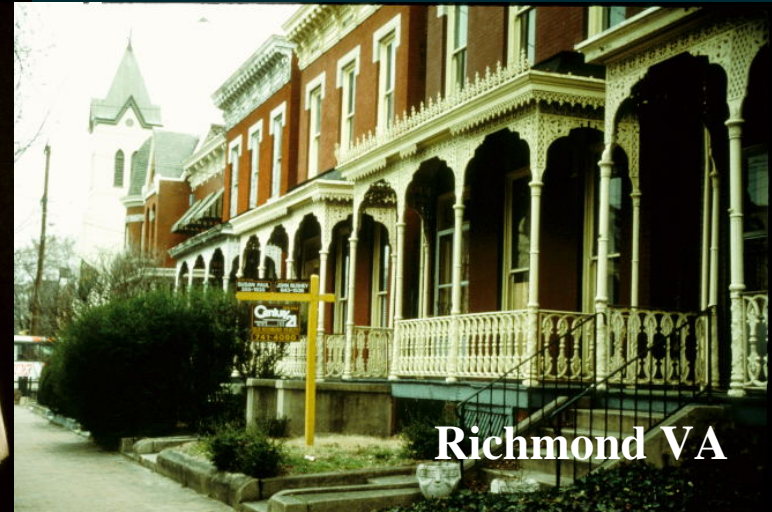
- Uptown / Parker Gray is one of what were some 10 historically African American neighborhoods.
- Diverse building stock reflects industrial roots, working class residents, era of segregation



# Not just Alexandria. In many cities historically African American neighborhoods are at risk.



**Richmond VA**



**Richmond VA**



**Jackson MS**



**Jackson MS**

# Perspective on Preservation

- Historic preservation is about more than economic value
- But other values – cultural -- are in minds of beholders
- How to arrive at broad understanding of multiple values
- How to factor non-economic values into the redevelopment equation

# Braddock – Parker Gray Historic Preservation Context

- Parker Gray locally designated historic district with design review process
- Nomination to NRHP pending



# Braddock – Parker Gray Historic Preservation Context

- Benefits of NRHP listing?
  - Protection from adverse Federal actions
  - Some properties qualify for rehab tax credits
  - Prestige. Validation.



# Braddock – Parker Gray Historic Preservation Context

- Benefits of NRHP listing? Mixed bag.
  - May not have much real benefit here.
  - Land values too high for most rehab to qualify for tax credits





# Braddock – Parker Gray Historic Preservation Context

- Dilemma:
  - Parker – Gray historic fabric is small scale, 2-3 story, often detached
  - Land values have skyrocketed
  - How to make preservation work in the real world.



# Braddock – Parker Gray Historic Preservation Context

- Adjacent to now-trendy Old Town as well as Metro station



# Braddock – Parker Gray Historic Preservation Context

- Mix of longer term residents, newer residents whose reasons for choosing here are diverse



# Braddock – Parker Gray Historic Preservation Context

- Preservation = more than buildings.
- Community “third places”



# Braddock – Parker Gray Historic Preservation Context

- Preservation = more than buildings.
- Community institutions and cultural history.



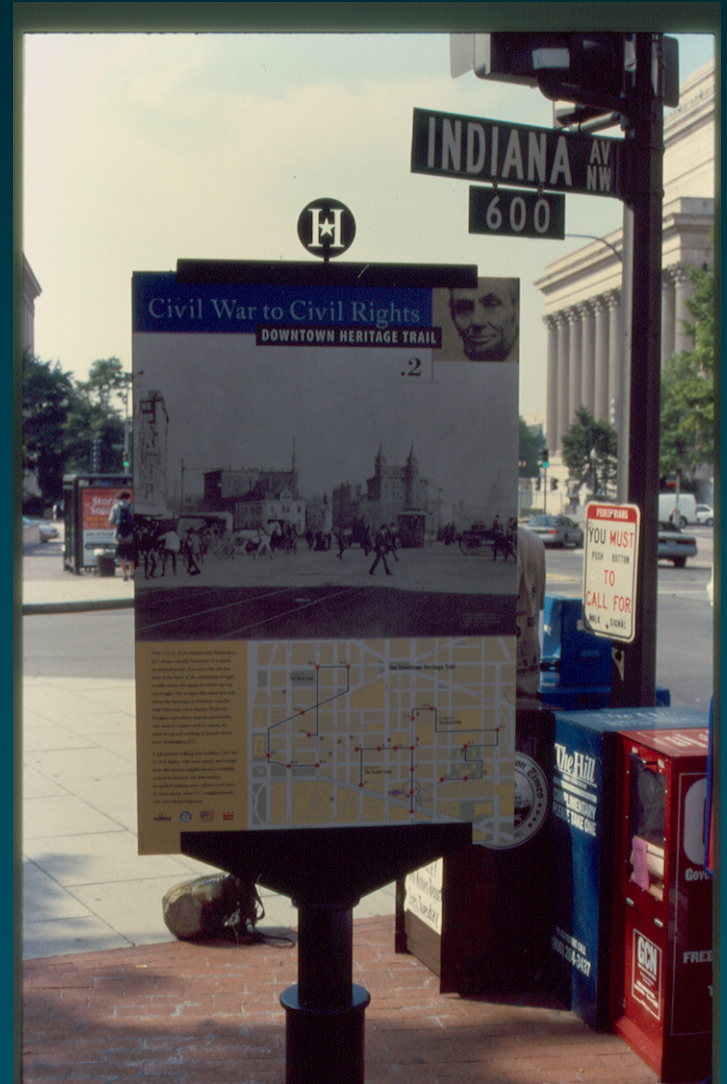
# Helping mute places speak, tell their story.

Interpretation – answers unasked questions:

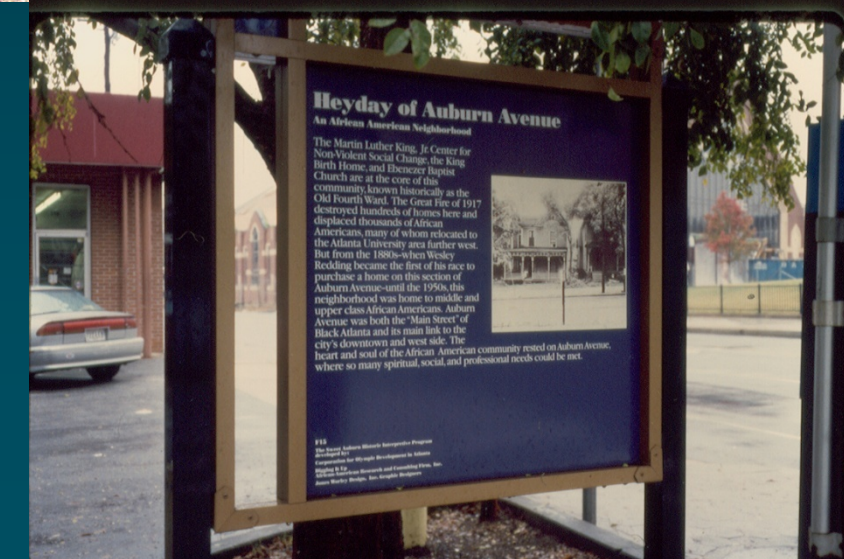
What happened here?

Who were they?

What meaning should any of it have for us today?



# Helping mute places speak, tell their story.



# Helping mute places speak, tell their story.

## FINDING FREEDOM



### The Call of Freedom

In the mid-19th century, 8,000 African Americans lived in Dorchester County. Roughly half were slaves; most of the rest worked as free laborers. Enslaved blacks, free blacks, and abolitionist whites worked together to operate the Underground Railroad, a secret network of "stations" and "conductors" that led hundreds of enslaved people to freedom and became a powerful national symbol of resistance to slavery.



Studio photograph of Harriet Tubman, probably from the late 1860s. (Collection of the City of Annapolis, Maryland Historical Society)

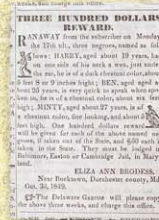
### A Childhood in Slavery

The Bucktown area has changed little since Harriet Tubman's childhood. Born Araminta "Minty" Ross in the early 1820s, Tubman grew up to become a daring and successful Underground Railroad conductor. After escaping bondage herself in 1849, she made 13 trips back to the Eastern Shore and led over 70 people from slavery to freedom.

With strong family ties to this area, Tubman often returned to rescue her own cherished relatives and friends. Tubman, her mother and siblings were owned by Edward Brodess and lived on his farm. As early as age six or seven, Tubman was hired out to nearby farms and endured extended separations from her family.



Harriet Tubman first tried to escape with two of her brothers; the attempt failed. She later successfully escaped on her own. (Courtesy of Jay and Susan Meredith)

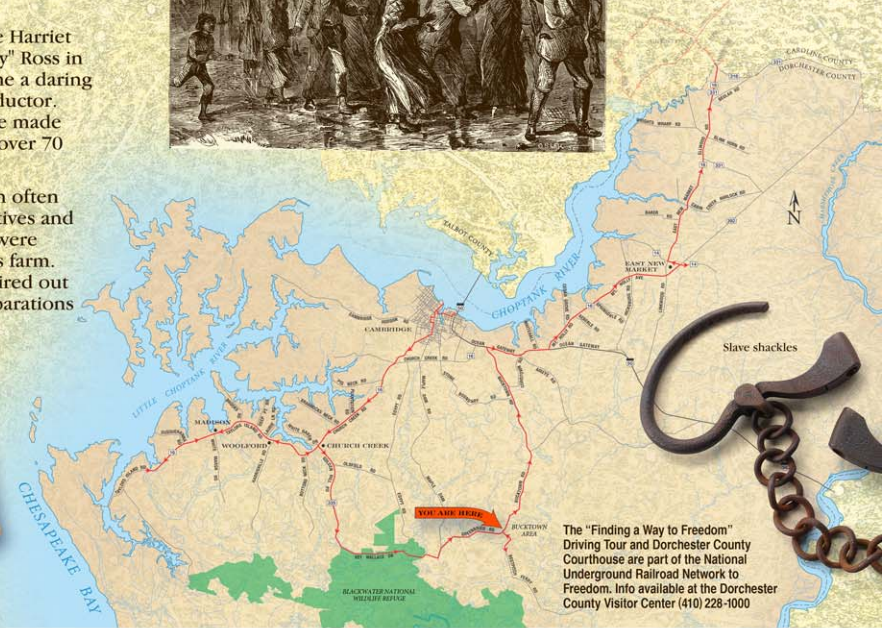


### The Birthplace Question

Some written accounts and local oral history identify the Brodess farm as Tubman's birthplace although historians have been unable to verify the actual birth site. Such uncertainty is common because few slaves' births were officially documented. Other records suggest that Edward Brodess moved Tubman's mother, "Rit" Green, here from the Madison/Woolford area just after Tubman was born.



Tubman was able to help large groups travel by night using back roads and the Underground Railroad network. (Illustration from *The Underground Railroad* William Still, 1875)



The "Finding a Way to Freedom" Driving Tour and Dorchester County Courthouse are part of the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom. Info available at the Dorchester County Visitor Center (410) 228-1000





As you walk around this afternoon, think about how the view should change or stay the same.



# Braddock – Parker Gray

## Historic Preservation Questions

- What **MUST** not be lost?
- What **SHOULD** not be lost?
- Whose history gets included?
- Whose story gets told?
- How can higher redevelopment values be captured for historic preservation benefit?

Think about who should be living in the neighborhood in 20 years.

“The award citation [for North Beach in San Francisco, named one of America’s Top Ten Neighborhoods] praised the area’s mom-and-pop stores and nightclubs, and the tolerance and tradition of both its developed and social environments.”

San Francisco Chronicle article.

Should this be said about Braddock / Parker Gray in 20 years?

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