

Hayti

In 1804, Francois-Dominique Toussaint L'Ouverture, a formerly enslaved Haitian Black military leader, led the only successful uprising of enslaved people in the Western Hemisphere. As a result of the rebellion, the Caribbean island of Haiti declared independence from European powers. This international event reverberated throughout the world all the way to Alexandria.

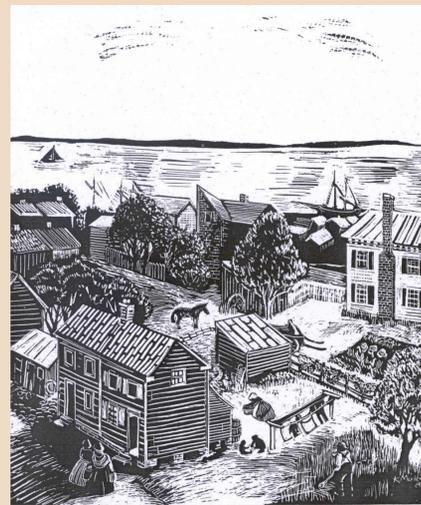
Around this time, free African American residents in the City formed a neighborhood that came to be called Hayti (pronounced *Hay-tie*), generally located from South Fairfax to South Pitt Streets and Prince to Gibbon Streets. The first documented use of the neighborhood name came in the *Alexandria Gazette* in 1860. A few years later, the Union Army established a hospital in Alexandria for wounded soldiers called L'Ouverture in solidarity with the cause of freedom. The name Hayti is also associated with other historic African American communities in the United States. Alexandria's neighborhood appears to be one of the oldest.

By 1860, Alexandria had the third largest population of free Black residents among Virginia's cities. Opportunity for jobs, relative safety and stability, and the potential to gain freedom contributed to the rapid growth of the free Black population beginning around 1820. The influence of local Quakers, guided by anti-slavery beliefs, may have also supported the development of Hayti and other African American neighborhoods through the practice of renting and, in some cases, selling houses to free African Americans. Quakers William Hartshorne, Mordecai Miller, and his son Robert H. Miller owned property in this neighborhood in the formative years of Hayti's development.



Excerpt from Sanborn Map and Publishing Co. Atlas of Alexandria, Virginia, July 1885 showing the 400 block of S. Royal St. and the Wilkes Street Tunnel (outlined in red).

Library of Congress

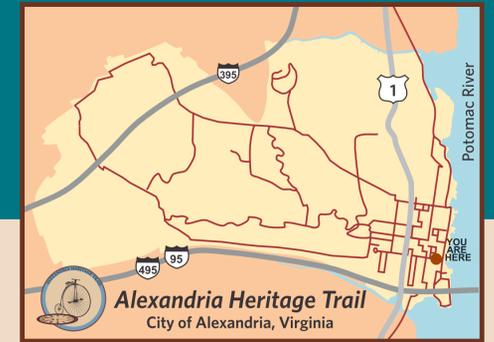


Karen Murley, woodcut, conjectural drawing of Hayti, 1985. Alexandria Archaeology



Closeup of Alexandria in 1865 showing Hayti and the surrounding area.

Prepared for the Office of Historic Alexandria by Howard+Revis Design.



"Toussaint L'Ouverture, Leader of the Black Insurgents of Saint Domingue [now Haiti]," ca. 1800.

The John Carter Brown Library



Archaeological excavations of the Coleman Site (44AX30), 1980.

Alexandria Archaeology

In the 1980s and 1990s, Alexandria Archaeology conducted a series of backyard excavations and archival research into the heart of the Hayti neighborhood on the 400 block of South Royal Street (Coleman Site, archaeological site number 44AX30). Documents revealed that between 1815 and 1861, free Black households occupied most of the residences on this block (see Sanborn map). Hannah Jackson, a free Black laundress who purchased a house from Mordecai Miller in 1820, owned one of these lots (what became 406 and 408 South Royal Street today). This purchase made her one of the earliest Black residents and Black women in Alexandria to own property. Jackson purchased and emancipated family members, including her son and sister, along with her sister's four children. Jackson's nephew was Moses Hepburn, who became a prominent businessman and local leader.

Archaeological excavations also included George Lewis Seaton's house at 404 South Royal Street (archaeological site number 44AX157). Though excavations were limited, archaeologists discovered what they believed to be the earliest material culture related to free Blacks in Alexandria and evidence of the development of the Hayti neighborhood. Seaton, a well-known free Black Alexandrian, became a master carpenter and built residences and prominent civic structures, including two schools for Black children after the Civil War and Odd Fellows Hall (today located at 411 S. Columbus St.), home to fraternal organizations and community events for decades. In the 1870s, residents elected him to the Virginia General Assembly, and he was the highest-ranking Black officeholder in the state.



CITY OF ALEXANDRIA EST. 1749

Created by the Alexandria African American Heritage Trail Committee, Alexandria Archaeology, and the Alexandria Black History Museum.