UNIVERSITY OF MARY WASHINGTON
FACULTY RESEARCH GRANT
PROPOSAL COVER SHEET

Due November 5, 2012
Academic Year 2012-2013
Application for Funding in Fiscal Year 2013-2014

Name of Applicant: Douglas W. Sanford

Department: Historic Preservation

Project Title: Field Study of Urban Slave Housing (Fredericksburg, Richmond and Petersburg)

Requested Funding Period (Month/Year-Month/Year): June 2013 – July 2013

Funding For: X Summer Stipend  Project Expenses $500 (See note below concerning amounts)

Course Release: Fall 2013 Spring 2014

Required UMW Institutional Review Board Information:
Date Review was submitted
Check here if IRB is not required for this project  X

Project Summary (50-75 words):
I propose to examine, record, and interpret six to seven slave buildings in the cities of Fredericksburg, Richmond, and Petersburg as the fieldwork stage of my research effort to study urban slavery in Virginia. This project derives from my past documentary and secondary source studies on urban slavery and slave housing, while addressing the current lack of architectural studies of surviving slave buildings in urban, as compared to rural, contexts in the Chesapeake region.

Budget Summary: $500 in expenses for a student aide during the 2nd summer session to assist in the proposed fieldwork.

Itemize and justify the project expenses. If you are requesting a stipend or a course release, you may request a maximum of $500 in expenses. If your grant request is for expenses only, the maximum is $3,500.

Applicant Signature: Douglas W. Sanford
Date: Nov. 5, 2012

Chair Signature: Mary W. Stanton
Date: Nov 2012
Faculty Development Research Grant proposal, Summer 2013 stipend ($3,500) and $500 in expenses request

Title: Field Study of Urban Slave Housing (Fredericksburg, Richmond and Petersburg)

Douglas W. Sanford, Professor, Department of Historic Preservation

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Introduction

I propose to intensively examine, record, and interpret six to seven slave buildings in the cities of Fredericksburg, Richmond, and Petersburg as the fieldwork stage of my long-term research effort to study urban slavery in Virginia. This project marks a logical outgrowth of my past documentary and secondary source studies on urban slavery and slave housing, while also addressing a recognized research gap, namely the lack of close architectural study of surviving examples of slave-related structures in urban, as compared to rural, contexts in the Chesapeake region. The proposed fieldwork also would inform my anticipated future research regarding the archaeological investigation of slave-related urban sites. Such excavations would supply artifact-based interpretations for comparison with the analytical results based on documentary and architectural data.

I have not submitted a previous professional activity grant for this project and, I have not received a faculty development grant in the last three (and more) years. I am not applying elsewhere for grant funds for this project simultaneously. By the summer time period of the project I will have spent my $500 faculty development funds on texts and on travel to the 2013 Middle Atlantic Archaeological Conference in Virginia Beach.

I did receive funding for a one-semester sabbatical in Fall 2011 that in part, addressed the study of urban slavery, slave housing and household composition in Virginia from the perspectives of period documents (tax and census data, fire insurance policies) and of secondary sources. That research established the appropriate historical and cultural contexts for the proposed study, including by developing expectations of the varied types of urban slave housing. The proposed fieldwork will generate a new (and previously un-existing) dataset for standing, urban slave buildings. Surprisingly, at present it remains difficult to name a single, well-known, documented, and published example of an urban slave-related building in Virginia.

Project Background: Research and Scholarly Context

The history and archaeology of the African Diaspora in the Chesapeake region overwhelmingly have focused on rural and plantation contexts, a logical development since 90% of slaves labored and lived in non-urban settings. In that regard scholars know much about plantation slavery and slave cabins and quarters. Many buildings from these contexts survive and have been studied from architectural and archaeological perspectives. The same buildings have received more public interpretive attention by historic preservationists and house museums. Yet, towns and cities held significant numbers of enslaved African Americans who often represented from 20 to 30% of these settlements (Vlach 1997:151). Visitors to Southern cities understandably viewed these places as “black landscapes,” given slaves’ and free blacks’ constant presence for work at markets, government buildings, shops, factories, and railroad stations (Ibid.:151, 159). Thanks
to research by historians, we know the basic parameters for urban slavery and African American societies in such locations, topics that until recently, archaeologists and architectural historians have tended to neglect.

Slavery defined a social and economic institution critical to the functioning of American cities during the 18th and 19th centuries, whether New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C.; or, Richmond, Charleston, and Atlanta. The lack of intensive study for slave-related buildings in such locations remains surprising, particularly given the importance of architecture for understanding the nature of slavery as a political and cultural negotiation between masters and slaves, and as a defining element of urban, enslaved African Americans' living conditions and social life. For current day historians, architectural historians, archaeologists, and historic preservationists, slave-related buildings offer valuable reference points for the scholarly and public interpretation of American slavery, including in relation to African American descendant communities with their own viewpoints on this institution, its history, and its modern outcomes.

Only in Charleston, South Carolina can one talk about a set of well-studied slave buildings and attendant scholarly writings (Herman 1997, 1999, 2005). Virginia, a premier Southern colony and state with respect to slavery, remains a noticeable lacuna as to urban slave housing as well. To date there have been no comprehensive architectural survey efforts, including for larger cities with significant slave populations, such as Richmond, Petersburg, and Norfolk; or, smaller cities like Alexandria, Charlottesville, Fredericksburg, Lynchburg, and Williamsburg.

As noted above, my proposed project fits into this research context as the logical field phase, especially through the close examination of multiple examples of urban slave housing. Through my past studies (see “Previous Research” section below) I have developed detailed and predictive contexts for urban slavery and slave housing, particularly during the 19th century and antebellum periods for the cities of Fredericksburg and Richmond, as well as for other Virginia cities and towns for future comparative purposes.

**Urban Slavery and Slave Housing**

While at different scales, Fredericksburg and Richmond symbolized the expanding populations and economies of Virginia’s fall line towns. Between 1790 and 1860 both cities experienced high rates of population growth, rebuilding, advances in transportation, and diversified economies – all involving slavery (Goldin 1976:52-55; Kimball 1991:121-22). Slaves toiled in elite households; in skilled trades; in municipal public work projects; in various forms of transportation; and in vital industries, such as iron and tobacco. All this economic growth and labor demand meant that slaves commanded higher prices and more housing arrangements.

As compared to those on plantations, urban slaves had wider contacts with various people and more access to resources. Opportunities exited to learn artisanal trades, engage in marketing and self-hire, shop in stores, and take advantage of African American churches and relief organizations. These opportunities and interactions did not go unnoticed and prompted more white concerns and legal restrictions on slave gatherings and social life. Masters and white citizens wanted to effect what they considered a necessary degree of control and surveillance over African American movements and activities. Slave codes and court orders limited unlawful assemblies and dances, and drinking and gambling at “disorderly houses” – often the boarding houses and tenements increasingly rented by free blacks and slaves who were hired out by their
owners for various types of urban employment. Many hired slaves also "lived out," that is, away from their owners, whether in housing secured by their employers or by themselves (Berlin 1998:284-89; Campbell 2007; Goldfield 1991:132-33; Kulikoff 1986:432; Morgan 1998:20; Mayor's Court Order Books 1821-1835; Nicholls 2000:156-161; Tyler-McGraw and Kimball 1988:9).

Past studies of urban slave ownership reinforce that the most common pattern was to have from one to three slaves per household (Goldin 1976:20; Kulikoff 1986:137; Personal Property Tax Records 1782-1921; U.S. Census 1850, 1860). Richmond's slave population grew from 4,387 in 1820 to 11,699 in 1860 (Goldfield 1991:126-27; Goldin 1976:52-53; Kimball 2000:16,156; Tyler-McGraw and Kimball 1988:20; Takagi 1999:75-78). As a statistical average, Richmond slave owners held about six slaves in the mid-19th century, but the majority of owners had one to three slaves, with this variation contributing to diverse housing arrangements. Between 1785 and 1860 Fredericksburg's slave population grew from 411 to 1,291. Beginning in 1790 most slave owners (73%) owned between one and three slaves and few (13.2%) owned more than five, a trend that continued until the Civil War (Personal Property Tax Records). Women comprised the majority of the city's slaves and dominated most household composition categories. Owners with more than 10 slaves had considerable influence across town, typically representing diversified entrepreneurs who had their slaves engaged in different activities. By 1850 free black and slaves represented 37% of the Fredericksburg's total population (U.S. Census 1850).

Translating such population figures into human dimensions requires inverting slave ownership into African American social and community life. Living either singly or in small groups challenged slaves when establishing families, marriages, and social networks. Relationships had to be accomplished between properties across town. Conversely though, slaves were widely distributed throughout town, and given the prevalence of hiring out, a practice noted for 43% of Fredericksburg masters in 1860, slavery functioned as a fluid system (U.S. Census 1860). As a result, slaves constituted a pervasive presence throughout the city, and these qualities of flexibility and movement, along with a sense of "separation" based in racism; could work in slaves' favor, allowing them to go about their business while developing opportunities for interaction and resource access.

Urban slave housing encompassed diverse accommodations, ranging from small spaces within masters' houses to separate quarters on urban estates following the plantation pattern of a mansion and its outbuildings. More common settings were the back buildings and various outbuildings on urban lots, with the combination of kitchens and slave rooms standing out as a repeated and critical format. Other arrangements included lodging (rental) tenements and boardinghouses, along with rude cabins and shacks confined to distinct residential districts, often located at a city's periphery. Free and enslaved African Americans shared life at the back of lots and on alleyways and side streets, a system that kept them distanced from white citizens, but offered opportunities for their own social life and cultural values (Goldfield 1991; Herman 1997, 1999; Kimball 1991, 2000; Morgan 1998:107; Stewart-Abernathy 2004; Takagi 1999:96; Vlach 1997; Yentsch 1994:186).

Looking at multiple examples of urban slave housing, namely four examples in the smaller city of Fredericksburg, and at least one each in the larger cities of Richmond and Petersburg, will help establish the range of architectural variation. In my past study of 19th-century fire insurance policies (Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia), these documents contained sketch plan
drawings and limited descriptions of slave housing. Relevant information included the number of stories, building dimensions, construction materials for walls and roofs, and placement within the urban lot. These documents underscore the greater variation in slave housing that once existed in Virginia towns and cities. Some buildings purposely were built as domestic spaces, what we would term slave quarters. Many structures held to a “mixed-use” pattern in which rooms for slaves were combined within outbuildings that had one or more other purposes, such as kitchens, stables, carriage houses, smokehouses, offices, and even privies.

Still, within this housing diversity, a key trend occurred, that of the kitchen-quarter, which represented the most common arrangement. Known examples survive in Fredericksburg. Such buildings comprise nearly the entire corpus of standing, slave-related structures in Charleston, South Carolina. These buildings are the larger, more substantially built, brick kitchen-quarters associated with upper class slave owners during the colonial, early national, and antebellum periods (Herman 1997, 1999, 2005). Recently, another example of the elite kitchen-quarter has been documented in Wilmington, North Carolina (Bishir 2010).

As part of my Fall 2011 sabbatical I had the opportunity to examine seven slave buildings in Charleston, both to have a comparative data set for the proposed study and to field test my recording methods. These upscale kitchen-quarters typically had two large rooms on the ground floor for the kitchen and a laundry, and then two or more rooms above for quartering household slaves. Room sizes varied considerably and some rooms were unheated, while most had plastered interior walls and windows.

Such kitchen-quarters denote a common and important housing pattern, since elite slave-owners were a constant feature in Southern cities and owned greater numbers of slaves. Yet this end result, preservation and interpretation-wise, distracts from understanding the broader range of more typical slave housing arrangements. We need to look at smaller kitchen-quarters and other types of housing, whether specifically built domestic structures – such as duplexes, two-roomed structures sharing a central chimney, or other examples of mixed-use housing.

**Field Work (methods, timeline, budget)**

The goal is to study and carefully document six to seven examples of slave housing in three locations – Fredericksburg (4 buildings), Richmond (1 building), and Petersburg (1 building). Given the lack of broader scale architectural surveys for surviving slave buildings in Petersburg and Richmond, I must begin with initially identified examples. Willie Graham, an architectural historian with the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, has identified a kitchen-quarter in Petersburg. For Richmond, I have established primary contacts for three properties in the Church Hill area (on East Grace and North 19th streets), all of which look to be kitchen-quarters. At another location in west Richmond, a series of “modular” brick quarters built in tandem with several brick row houses survive as modern hotel rooms within of the Linden Row Inn complex (East Franklin Street).

In Fredericksburg I thankfully can draw upon previous research by a local historian, John Hennessy, National Park Service; and, architectural historians, Gary Stanton and Michael Spencer, faculty from the Department of Historic Preservation, to pick from over 20 examples that provide a range of kitchen-quarters and some duplexes. The local proximity and
convenience of the Fredericksburg buildings explain my greater attention to this location, as does my future research goal of conducting archaeological testing on some of these properties.

Overall, I have identified more than enough buildings and properties to enable my field research, but I realize access to some of the properties will vary as to the landowner’s permission and the buildings’ availability during the summer, depending on the structures’ uses and/or occupants.

**Methods:** Based on my previous experience recording slave buildings, I will need three to four days in the field for each building. During this time I will complete a standardized field form; take a series of measurements for plan drawings of the building’s first and upper stories; take a standard series of digital color photographs of the building’s exterior and interior elements; and, record field notes that address the building’s construction details and its history of changing use. Slave buildings surviving from the pre-Civil War period almost invariably have had various historic and modern alterations, making it important to distinguish, as possible, “slave period” construction practices, materials, and room arrangements. For example, original duplex buildings had separate rooms for two distinct slave households. After the Civil War, these structures typically were altered for a single household, with doorways cut through formerly solid partitions. Original doors and windows can be changed as well.

Information on the field form includes: location (address, GPS coordinates); a summary description (with dating evidence); building dimensions, stories, height; construction type and materials; number of rooms and their dimensions; number, location, and dimensions of doors and windows; roof type, framing, and covering; interior wall construction, materials, and finish; chimney and fireplace location, materials, and dimensions; stair location, format, and dimensions; and, information on additions and porches.

Hard and/or electronic copies of the field form, field notes, drawings, and photographs will be provided to the individual property owners. This same information will be integrated with the database of slave housing generated by the afore-mentioned NEH project.

**Timeline:** If this proposal is successful, I will begin lining up permission and access during the Spring 2013 semester. Next I would begin compiling background research on the selected properties – such as the property ownership through time (“chain of title”); period documentation (such as fire insurance policies, maps, photographs); and, public records (tax and census information) regarding the pre-Civil War property owners and the numbers of slaves. I would conduct some of this work during the first summer session (May-June), while teaching HISP 101: *The American Heritage*. If that course were not enrolled successfully, I would have more time for the background research.

For the five-week period of second summer session (June 24th to July 26th), the stated rate of spending three to four days per building would permit six to seven buildings to be recorded. During this period I would have a student aide to assist me for 12 to 14 hours per week, mainly for help take measurements, photographs, and fill out the field form. The student aide also will develop AutoCAD versions (digital drawings) of the building’s measured plans. Lastly, I would use the late July to mid-August period to finalize the above products, and generate an initial comparative analysis of the buildings along with letter-style summary reports for each building.
**Budget:** Beyond the requested faculty stipend of $3,500, this proposal includes a request for $500 in expenses for a student aide, who would work with me 12 to 14 hours per week, for five weeks. Paid at $7.25 per hour, for a total of 68 hours, this request represents a total of $493.00. The Department of and Center for Historic Preservation have agreed to provide assistance with travel reimbursement funds for trips to Richmond and Petersburg, whether through securing a State vehicle of the University’s, or the use of a personal vehicle, if necessary.

**Previous Research**

Throughout my professional career as a historical archaeologist I have maintained a focus on African American studies, primarily through the study of archaeological sites of enslaved African Americans on plantations, such as Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello (near Charlottesville, Virginia) and the Lee family’s Stratford Hall (Westmoreland County, Virginia). Since my first sabbatical semester in Fall 2004, I have placed more research and scholarly emphasis on architectural resources related to slavery in Virginia, whether from documentary sources or surviving buildings. A National Endowment for the Humanities grant project between 2006 and 2009 led to a significant, first-ever compilation of slave housing in Virginia, again from the comparative vantage points of archaeological sites, standing buildings, and period documents, such as tax and census records and fire insurance policies. Since 2006 I have centered more of my research efforts towards the study of urban slavery and slave housing, given the limited nature of work to date on these subjects by architectural historians and archaeologists.

**Grant Project**


**Publications**


Conference Presentations


Relation to Teaching

I regularly incorporate the topics of African American archaeology and slave housing into my courses, particularly our department’s introductory course, HISP 207: American Archaeology; the advanced analytical course, HISP 462: Laboratory Methods in Archaeology; and, the summer field school, HISP 467: Field Methods in Archaeology, which occurs at Stratford Hall Plantation. In many instances our research at Stratford has centered on slave quarter sites. As an outgrowth of the NEH grant project on slave housing in Virginia, in the Spring 2010 semester I taught a student group research course (HISP 491: Individual Studies) entitled “Slave Housing.” Students participated in the discussion of scholarly readings; background research (use of the 1860 U.S. Census data on patterns of slave and slave house ownership); and, the field recording of surviving slave quarters in the region through measured drawings (later rendered in AutoCAD), a standardized survey form, field notes, and digital photographs that contributed to the NEH database. The students produced an exhibition on the course’s results within Combs Hall as part of the University’s Student Research and Creativity program. I also involved our students, whether as volunteers or paid student aides within the NEH project.

Products, Outcomes and Evaluation

Products of the proposed project first include the field forms, field notes, photographs, and drawings per building. Second, a letter-style report also will be generated for each building, summarizing the essential results of the field investigation. Hard and digital copies of these materials will be provided to the property owners and kept within the Department of Historic Preservation. Third, an initial comparative analysis of the field results will be generated that summarizes the range and any patterns of the architectural practices for the investigated buildings.

To allow peer evaluation, I will share the above information with Prof.’s Gary Stanton and Michael Spencer in the Department of Historic Preservation; historian John Hennessy of the National Park Service; and, architectural historian Willie Graham of Colonial Williamsburg. I
will seek their feedback concerning the project’s methods and results and, their advice for continuing this type of study.

I plan to present the results of the project at the 2014 Virginia Forum, a conference largely composed of historians studying this State, but one which also includes architectural historians, archaeologists, museum professionals, and historic preservationists. I also plan to present the project’s results at either the Vernacular Architectural Forum conference or that for the Society for Architectural Historians. Both organizations have scholars with a history of researching and interpreting slave-related buildings.

In May 2014 I will submit this grant project’s required, descriptive final report. This report will summarize the project’s nature, methods, and results; including how it met its proposed goals concerning the field study of urban slave housing. The report will address the adequacy of the employed methods and how the project’s results have been or will be disseminated as of this date.

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