



# The Millrace

September 2018

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## UPDATE FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Greetings to all the members of the Historic Centreville Society (HCS)!

For our quarterly event in June, we visited Sully Historic Site. At first, it looked like only two of us showed up for that, but there were four: two at the Visitors Center near the parking lot plus two already in the house. Once I realized this, we put those two groups of two together and began the tour with our knowledgeable tour guide, Jim Daniels. We learned all about Sully, the 18<sup>th</sup> Century home of Richard Bland Lee, who was an uncle of General Robert E. Lee and the first representative of Northern Virginia in the United States House of Representatives. He was also a planter and jurist. The house tour was interesting. Our tour guide said 90% of the flooring and about half the window glass is still original. The house has a large central hall with doors on both ends, a dining room with a door toward the kitchen, and a

**SATURDAY, SEPT. 8<sup>TH</sup>**

## **GROWING UP IN CENTREVILLE**

**3:30-5:00 PM**

**CENTREVILLE LIBRARY  
14200 ST GERMAIN DR  
CENTREVILLE VA 20121**

**A panel of Centrevillians  
will share their experiences  
and recall what Centreville  
Was like during the  
20th century.**



## Update continued ...

parlor with pianoforte and card table for entertainment. A notable feature of that room is a stuffed and mounted white squirrel to remind us of the white squirrel that the Lees kept as a pet.

We went through the upstairs bedrooms and heard how Mrs. Lee was pregnant nine times but only four children lived to adulthood. The top level is the garret with a lodger's chamber for travelers that may also have been used as an office or storage room. Flax was in production there. Our tour guide told us much about construction and renovation over the years. He also told us some of the history of the Lee family, including Richard's brother, Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee, a Revolutionary War hero.

At Sully, Lee raised tobacco, wheat, corn, and barley. He had a total of 80 different slaves over time, but the total at any given time varied between 29 and 40 slaves. Eventually, Lee had to sell Sully to pay his debts. Sully had numerous owners over the years, including the Haight family from Dutchess County, New York, who lived at Sully during the Civil War. As was so common in this area, wounded soldiers were in the house during the war to recuperate.

The government condemned Sully as part of the Dulles Airport construction project back in the 1950s, but a law was passed in 1959 that saved it. This historic home now sits on a plot of 120 acres, all that remains of the original estate of about 3,300 acres.

After our tour of Sully Historic Site, we held our usual summer potluck picnic at Mount Gilead with 16 people present. This was also a little birthday party for our member Mildred DeBell, who is now 100 years old.

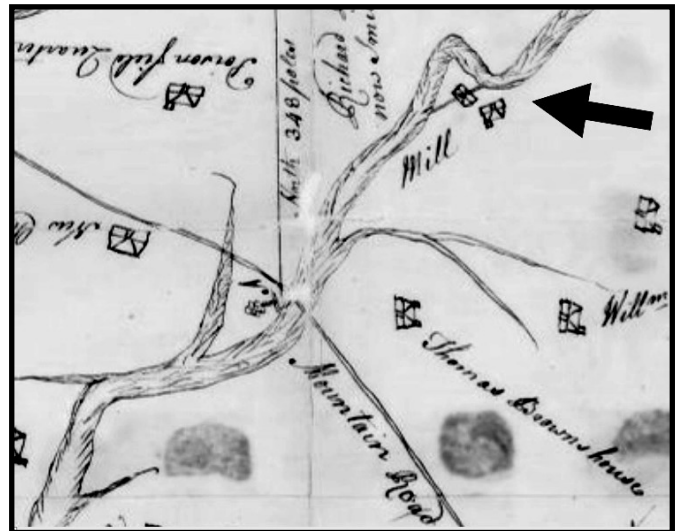
Please join us at our next event: Growing Up in Centreville. A panel of native Centrevillians (is that a word?) will reminisce about what Centreville was like in the old days. This may be pleasant nostalgia for some but new information for others. You are all invited to join us.

— Paul Hancq, President



## Early Mills

by Claudette Couch Ward



The mill shown on the 1748 map (see above) of Willoughby Newton's land is the mill Willoughby Newton constructed about 1746. There were many laws enacted by the General Assembly in regard to the location and operations of grist mills. The miller could keep a portion of the flour or corn meal as his charge for grinding the grain. There was a law as to how much he could take. In 1748 the Assembly set the allowable toll for all grain at 1/8 portion.

Someone wanting to construct a mill had to get a license from the court. "When the petitioner's land extends so far on both sides of the water way so as not to affect or overflow the land of any other person" the court could issue a license without further delay. This was the case with James Lane who on November 12, 1760 obtained a license to build a mill on his land on Cub Run "It appearing that he owns land on both sides of the run!"

September 1765 a tithable list returned by William Carr Lane identifies William Broadhurst as the "Miller for Capt. James Lane at his mill on Cub Run." After obtaining a license to build a mill, it must be constructed within a year, and in operation within 3 years. If the mill is destroyed by fire or freshet (flood) the owner had three years to reconstruct the mill, otherwise he would have to start over.

It is uncertain how long Newton's mill was in operation. In 1769 William Carr Lane petitioned the court to build a water grist mill on Big Rocky Cedar Run (at the same place Newton's Mill had been). A jury of local citizens (land owners or at least holders

### *Early Mills continued ...*

of life leases) were selected by the court to view the proposed site and report back.

On August 16, 1769 "We the subscribers summoned to meet on the land petitioned by William Carr Lane for the building of a water grist mill on Great Rocky Cedar Run find that it will not be any prejudice to any person whatever." Signed by George Hancock, Adam Mitchell, Benjamin Mason, William Whitely, Nathaniel Grigsby, William Buckley, Thomas Cockerille, Jacob Ramey, Sr., Jacob Ramey, Jr., Jeremiah Hutchison, and Benjamin Hutchison (The Millrace August 1990 from Loudoun Co. Court Records, Carol Drake Friedman.) The court granted permission. This is the mill known today as Cabell's Mill.

By about the middle of the 1700's grain had become the principal money crop in Northern Virginia, instead of tobacco. There was a huge demand for flour to export from Alexandria. This required more mills.

To read more about this, see "Alexandria and the Flour Trade", Fairfax Harrison in Landmark of Old Prince William and Frontier to Suburbia, Charles P. Poland, Jr. Other source - Colonial Laws Virginia and County Court Orders 1757-1766, Loudoun Co., VA, John T. Phillips, II.

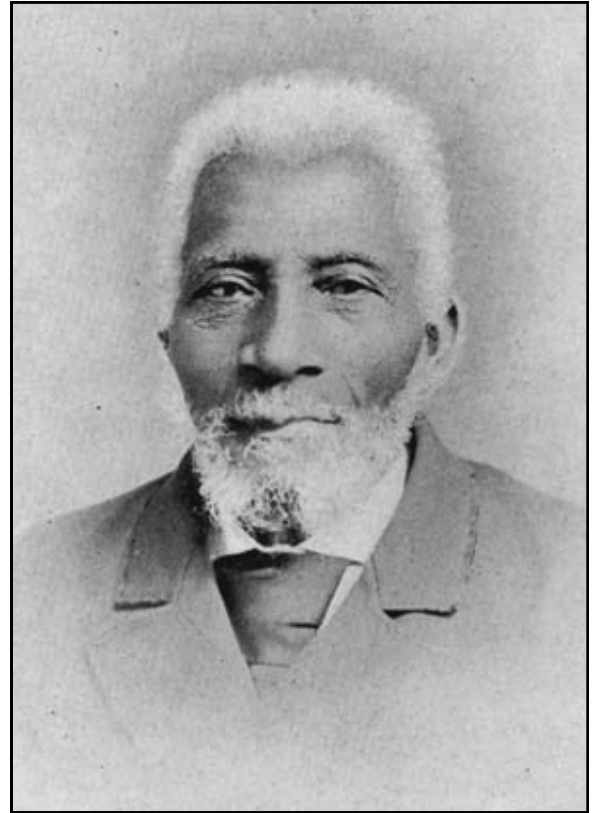
Note: William Carr Lane and James Lane were brothers. William Buckley was the 4X Great Grandfather of the author.



A 1924 photograph of a deserted mill in Fairfax, most probably Cabell's Mill. Picture taken By Harry Derr, Fairfax County Extension Service Annual Report. The original caption noted how bread delivery to local stores had led to the demise of many small mills.

## Aaron Burton—A Slave in Mosby's Battalion

by John Carter



A photograph of Aaron Burton, age 84 in 1898, published in the 1916 edition of *The Memoirs of Colonel John S. Mosby*.

Aaron Burton was a slave. He was born in May of 1814 to Aaron and Polly Burton, on a small plantation in Albemarle County, near Charlottesville, Virginia. Little is known about his birth or early childhood, other than he lived in the Albert Mosby household. Some say that he was part American-Indian, and that he was a wedding gift to Mosby's mother, Virginia, from her father James McLaurine, of Powhatan, Virginia. The Mosby household, according to the Federal 1850 slave census for Albemarle County, included twenty one slaves. By the 1860 Census, fewer slaves were shown as living in the Mosby household, and Aaron's name was not listed.

His education and occupational skills are uncertain. Since it was unlawful to educate a slave, what education he may have received probably came from listening in to the tutorial sessions of John Singleton Mosby and his brother, William. He was,

*Aaron Burton continued ...*

however, listed as illiterate by the 1900 census of Brooklyn, New York. It has been mentioned that he was skilled in carriage-making. The Southern Historical Collection at Chapel Hill, North Carolina indicates he was a coachman for Mosby's father.

Family lore and post-war interviews with Aaron indicate that he was a cherished member of the Mosby household. He claimed to have "raised Colonel Mosby," whom he considered a bright boy, and to whom he became attached [Mosby Scrapbook]. Being fifteen years older than Mosby, also meant that he was probably not the playmate that Mosby had brought with him to school one day and had watched the other children "auction him off."

Aaron also mentioned that he was specifically asked for by Colonel Mosby to take with him to the war. Many southern officers took their most trusted, personal slaves to the war with them. It would have been a little odd for an enlisted man to bring a body servant with him, however, Mosby at the time was a lieutenant. Aaron apparently was living with Mosby and Pauline in Bristol just before the war, as the tax records show that Mosby had one slave. Before the war, Mosby had joined the Washington Mounted Rifles, under William "Grumble" Jones, and when they were called into Confederate service, Mosby took Aaron with him.

Confederate officers' body servants would have relieved them of the more more mundane camp duties that were usually performed by the enlisted men. These men would also provide services in other roles. Civil War historian, Bell Irvin Wiley, best described those roles:

*The visitor to the southern camps in the first year of the war might expect always to encounter large numbers of Negroes. These, to be sure, were not soldiers, but their relation to the fighting force was so vital and so intimate as to merit consideration as part of the army. Conspicuous among the Negroes attached to military personnel were the body servants. When members of slaveholding families enlisted in 1861 it was quite common for them to take along black members of the household to serve them in camp ... non-slaveholders sometimes hired Negroes to act as body servants.*

Wiley went on to mention that,

*the life of a body servant was generally not a hard one. He seldom lacked food, and he usually recouped his wardrobe in the wake of each battle from Yankee sources. He had opportunities to earn money by doing odd jobs for his master's comrades ... in camp his ready laugh ... was a valuable stimulus to soldier morale, as was his proficiency with song and guitar (The Life of Johnny Reb," Bell Irvin Wiley, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, New York, 1943, p. 327-328).*

It must have seemed odd and somewhat unsettling to see the Black servants of the officers marching with the army. While their status remained unchanged as slaves, it was as close to being free as any of the slaves had ever known. The slaves may have also found it amusing to see Southern soldiers suddenly finding themselves taking orders and performing tasks similar to what slaves traditionally performed back home. Aside from the color of their skin, the obvious thing that separated Black from White in the army, was that the Black servants were not put into the fights. This is demonstrated by the resistance by the Confederate Government to use slaves in battle, even at the end of the war, when the situation had become so desperate. If they fought alongside the white soldiers, they would not only be free, but they could be considered to be equal.

One of the curious features of the Civil War was the reaction of rank and file Confederate soldiers experiencing military life for the first time. Whether they were from large or small slave-holding families, or from non-slave-holding families, these young men had not been used to taking orders or performing menial tasks. Officers were set-off from the enlisted men, and had less of this demeaning experience. This was generally the role of the servant, the slave, or the work hand. In becoming a soldier, it was one of the more difficult things to learn to accept. For many of the young men in the war, they were also learning how to function as adults out on their own. Now, they also had to adjust to being soldiers. In their letters sent to home to the to the family, they mentioned the evolution of this process: boys to men; men to soldiers. Whatever their background had been, the war would change them.

Historian Reid Mitchell studied this subject:

*The Civil War experience changed men; its subjective component matched its physical reality. Most men who were soldiers for any period of time underwent a psychological transformation ... as they became isolated from their old patterns of life, men had to make themselves a new identity from the very military life that threatened to degrade them .... Men had valued their autonomy so much that they went to war when they felt it was threatened. Military life itself, however, proved a powerful threat to men's self-esteem. Military discipline required that their autonomy be curailed ... Americans found military regimentation hard to accept ... the soldier of the 1860s was most likely an independent farmer or a farmer's son ... the authority immediately over him was personal ... the patriarchal rule of a father or older brother ... The rules and restrictions of the army reminded the Confederate of the humiliation of slavery and of the degraded position that blacks held in society ... Southerners of all classes referred to military discipline as a form of slavery ... the volunteers feared what might best be called dehumanization (Civil War Soldiers. Reid Mitchell, Viking, New York, 1988, pp. 56-59).*

The young Southern Civil War soldier was faced with an unpleasant reality. In the camps they had to follow orders by officers, they had to cook and clean, and in the cavalry, to take care of their horses. They were sent on errands, put to work in the construction of fortifications and winter cabins, and were at the beck and call of most any officer. They only had to look around at the Black servants in camp to realize they were performing many of the same duties as described by Bell Irvin Wiley: "The duties of these Negroes consisted mainly of cooking, washing, and of cleaning quarters. Those attached to the cavalry companies were required to look after their master's horses. Many became adept at foraging..."

There is much debate today as to whether Black Confederates, as a group, actually took up arms in the field for the cause. I think it's safe to say that individuals probably did on an ad hoc basis for personal reasons. Generally, Blacks with the army, who were not body servants, served as teamsters on the wagon trains; built fortifications, railroads, and roadways; and performed necessary camp duties when the army was on the move. Once camp was broken, and the Army was moving, the body servants and other

Blacks, who were assigned as drivers and workers, would march in the rear of the army with the supply wagons. They were unarmed, and were not allowed to fight.

In general they were kept out of range of the enemy, even when in camp near the enemy. Wiley noted that,

*during battles, the body servant usually remained in the rear out of reach of Federal shells. But a few became so thoroughly imbued with the martial spirit as to grab up muskets during the battle and take pot shots at the enemy...when fighting abated, the colored aide usually loaded himself with canteens and haversacks and went in search of his master. If the later was wounded, the servant carried him to shelter and sought medical assistance; if he was killed, the domestic made arrangements for his burial or escorted the body home... (Wiley, p. 328).*

Mosby mentioned in one of his letters that, "I left Aaron back out of danger of their [Union] shell, but after awhile the Yankees advanced their battery and threw a shell which passed entirely through a house in which Aaron was standing. He was awfully scared and scampered off" (November 15, 1862 Culpeper Court House, letter to Pauline, p.27.). Later he wrote that, "Aaron thinks himself quite a hero now though he does not want to come again in such disagreeable proximity to a bombshell" (December 9, 1862 Manassas, letter to Pauline, p. 28.). There is no mention in Mosby's letters or writings that Aaron actually picked up a gun and fought, nor that he went out with the Rangers on raids.

Mosby's rather infrequent mention of Aaron in his letters usually revolved around the duties he was performing: "Aaron is going to wait on me which will be a great assistance as I cook, curry my horse, etc; Aaron just came home with his cart loaded down with vegetables, etc. we get from their gardens [Yankee settlement]... Aaron is sitting by me shelling out butter beans. Aaron relieves me of all of the drudgery of camp - is a very good cook. I write this sitting outdoors by a log fire. Aaron is cooking breakfast." Aaron is often sent out to pick up food, deliver books, take horses to and from Mosby, deliver clothing to Mosby, and tend to Mosby's belongings ("The Letters of John S. Mosby," Adele H. Mitchell, Stuart- Mosby Society, 1986).

The measure of a man can be taken by both what he does, and what he does not do, in times of crisis.



Colonel Mosby circa 1900.

There were other duties that Aaron performed which were much more significant. He must have often been close by to Mosby since he was called upon at least three times to carry a wounded Mosby to safety. While Mosby doesn't mention it in his writings, his personal treatment and care of Mosby may have been what kept him alive. On the three occasions, Mosby was badly wounded during the war. Once when he was shot in the side, then when he was shot in his left groin, and later toward the end of the war when he was shot in the abdomen. Death from shock or an infected wound killed more men during the war than the bullets. In each case he was moved from location to location before he was sent to his father's home near Lynchburg, Virginia. While Mosby's surgeon, Dr. William Dunn, or others may have initially dressed the wounds, Aaron, would have been by his side taking care of him in transit.

What he did not do was run- from the sound of the guns, or from Mosby and his Rangers. As much as Aaron Burton was left alone, or sent away on errands, the opportunity for "escape" must have been endless. There would have been many opportunities for a body

servant to simply walk away from a camp, especially when the Army of Northern Virginia was close to the Potomac River. In a partisan ranger unit like Mosby's, it would also be easy for him to not just escape, but to inform Union forces as to the exact location of Mosby and his men. It came down to the devotion of the slave, who was brought from home by his Confederate master, and the continued devotion shown to him in the field.

When the war was over, Aaron was free, free even without Mosby telling him that he was. On April 21, 1865 in Salem, Virginia (today's Marshall, Va.). Mosby sat on his horse in front of nearly 200 of his men, and read his farewell message to them. Neither Mosby, nor his biographer, Virgil Carrington Jones, mentioned the presence of Aaron Burton. Did he later follow Mosby to Ivor Station when he went to his father's home two months later? It had to be a little ironic that Aaron was now free, while John S. Mosby was still a man on the move, waiting to get his own parole.

We know little of what Aaron's life was like over the next twenty years. Mosby stayed in touch with him, and he would help him find work, sending him money to help him out. Aaron told a reporter late in his life that Mosby had told him he was free and go anywhere he pleased ("The Mosby Myth- A Confederate Hero in Life and Legend," Paul Ashdown and Edwards Carnell, SR Books, Wilmington, 2002, p. 18.). Somewhere in the fields between Fauquier County and Amherst County, Aaron Burton probably took his leave of Mosby to start his own life. Records show that he had a family that he left behind when he joined Mosby and his Rangers. Alfred Mosby may have moved Aaron's family with him when he moved from Charlottesville to Amherst County at the start of the Amherst County at the start of the war.

From his obituary, it appears that Aaron continued to live in Virginia until he moved to New York after 1900. Aaron himself mentioned that he "he took his family and left the Mosby farm ... living in towns and cities about Virginia" (Jones "Ranger" Mosby, p. 29). Alfred Mosby would never return to Charlottesville, and Aaron seems to have travelled across the state for a few years. However, according to the 1870 U.S. Federal Census for St. Anne's Parish in Albemarle County, Virginia, Aaron and his wife, Mary A., lived there in an African-American community. He was listed as a farmhand, and she as keeping house. They had five children: Polly, age 22; Rose, 20; Aaron Jr., 10;



### *Aaron Burton continued ....*

Frank, age 10; and Mary A., age 8 (Gregory P. Wilson, "Private John S. Mosby, First Virginia Cavalry," 2015).

Aaron Burton died on December 20, 1902 of chronic diarrhea and old-age at the age of 89. He had come to Brooklyn, New York around 1895 to live with three of his daughters- rotating his residence among the three. The funeral services were held at the home of his daughter, Rosa Hamilton, and was conducted by the Rev. William T. Dixon, pastor of the Concord Baptist Church of Christ, of which Aaron was a member. He is buried in an unmarked grave in the Cedar Vale section of Evergreen Cemetery in Brooklyn. His daughter, Rosa, was buried alongside of him in 1911 (Wilson, p. 22-23).

The December 22, 1902 Richmond Times obituary noted that, "the colonel had the greatest confidence in his body servant, and he was frequently left in charge of all booty that was captured from the Union soldiers, while the cavalry raiders went out on other expeditions. The high estimate in which he was held by Mosby was the same as those of recent times who knew Burton. He was a familiar character in the vicinity of Princeton and Willoughby streets, and was to be found on all sunshiny days seated upon the stoop of the house in which he lived. He was the perfection of politeness, and if even a child said "Good morning, Father Burton," this old fellow would lift his hat. Mosby did not forget Aaron in his old days, and frequently sent him checks for substantial sums of money to keep him housed."

Aaron Burton was a slave in 1861. By 1865, he was a former slave, independent from his former master, John S. Mosby. Mosby would return to his legal career, and to his pre-war Union beliefs and loyalty. He favored Virginia's and the South's full restoration to their former place in the Union. On the other hand, he was not apologetic about the slave-owing South or his own slave-holding. In a 1907 letter to former Ranger, Samuel Chapman, Mosby related:

*Now while I think as badly of slavery as Horace Greeley did, I am not ashamed that my family were slaveholders. It was our inheritance. Neither am I ashamed that my ancestors were pirates & cattle thieves. People must be judged by the standard of their own age. If it was right to own slaves as property, it was right to fight for it. The South went to war on account of slavery ... a soldier fights for his country-right or wrong- he is not responsible for the political merits of the course he fights in ... the South was my country.*

John S. Mosby's relationship with Ulysses S. Grant after the war, greatly altered the course of his life from that point on. He was perceived by some as going over to the other side, in that support of Grant, and in his failure to support the Lost Cause. Mosby, however, was back to being the pre-war Mosby. His country was now the United States. Mosby did not turn away from Virginia or the South. As a former Whig, he saw that the South would be rebuilt by bringing in industry and with internal improvements, but he would go even further in his view for the future of the South. Mosby contributed an article for Leslie's Weekly Magazine of April 6, 1901. In that article he stated:

*The real South is just at its birth. The growth of this child of the nation may be gradual, but in the end the South will be far richer and more powerful than the North. In the days to come the South will become the dominant section of the country...without the war of secession the South could never have hoped to attain the future that is now certain. Slavery was a great incubus, paralyzing natural energy. By abolishing this wrong, our war benefited every State south of the Mason-Dixon line. The negroes are producing more as freemen than they ever did as slaves; and, while there are a great many of the old slave owning families that were reduced to poverty, the great mass of the people are vastly better off today than they were under the old ante-bellum system."*

How better off were the former slaves in 1901? How better off was Aaron Burton? Mosby does not mention either, even though he stayed in touch with Aaron over the years. It would appear that Aaron did well enough to marry, raise a family, and to survive to old age, before moving in with his daughters in Brooklyn, New York. Aaron Burton probably shared one final thing with Mosby Ranger veterans: he lived well enough after the war, staying out of the newspapers and the history books, and only showing up much later in a local obituary as a beloved figure.

**Read More About It:** The Lost Cause used Confederate body servants to help rationalize and excuse slavery to the extent that they were provided pensions by some southern states. See: "[Why Pension?](#)" by Bryna Claire O'Sullivan, available online. Kevin Levin's forthcoming book, *Searching for Black Confederate Soldiers*, examines the myth that body servants were soldiers. Union officers also employed former slaves as servants see Eric Mink's blog on [Alonzo Gambel and Union Camp Servants](#) available online. — Editor.



From left to right: 1st Lieutenant Bird, Alonzo Gambel, 2nd Lieutenant Lefler, and Captain Walther, 7th Wisconsin Infantry. Gambel was paid a wage to be Walther's personal servant. From Erik Mink, Mysteries and Conundrums blog: <https://npsfrsp.wordpress.com/2015/02/24/>

Do you have a friend who might like to join the society?

Pass on our newsletter and bring potential members to quarterly meetings. Members receive *The Millrace* four times a year.

If you have an article or a brief book review that might be of interest to our members, please send it to the editor.

Deadlines for submissions are the 1<sup>st</sup> of February, May, August and November.

Send to: to Cheryl Repetti at [MillraceHCS@gmail.com](mailto:MillraceHCS@gmail.com)

or by US mail to:

The Historic Centreville Society,  
P.O. Box 1512,  
Centreville, VA 20122

### HCS OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

Paul Hancq, President; Ted McCord, First Vice President; Cheryl Repetti, Second Vice President; Claudette Crouch Ward, Secretary; Linda Mellott, Treasurer; Joan Orvis, Debbie Robison, Michael Frey



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Centreville, VA 20122