HOUSE TO HIGHWAY

RECLAIMING A COMMUNITY HISTORY

LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

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THE JXN PROJECT

303 E. Bates Street
Richmond, VA 23219
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LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

THE JXN PROJECT

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

Mellon Foundation

Enjoli Moon (left) and Sesha Joi Moon, Ph.D. (right)

WHO IS JACKSON? WHAT'S IN A NAME

It began with a simple question—"Who is the Jackson in Jackson Ward?".

In October 2020, this inquiry led me to the Library of Virginia and little did I know, but those seven words would help to unearth some of the hidden histories of the nation's first historically registered Black urban neighborhood. My question intrigued Dr. Gregg D. Kimball, who was serving as Director of Public Services and Outreach for the Library—and he, along with other archivists and librarians, would help to guide me towards the answer. And unbeknownst to either of us, in the midst of a pandemic, not only would a project and partnership be born out of this inquiry about the ward's origin story, but more importantly, so would a deep friendship that would eventually embrace others at the Library.

Since that initial introduction four years ago, the Library of Virginia and The JXN Project would forge a partnership that began with a summer lecture series in collaboration with Richmond Public Library to share the findings of our collective research—and House to Highway: Reclaiming a Community History serves as a capstone to share the untold story of Abraham Peyton Skipwith as "The Founding Father of Jackson Ward". Through this exhibition, Skipwith's life, liberty, lineage, and legacy as the first known Black homeowner in Jackson Ward, a home commonly called the Skipwith–Roper Cottage, will be used to tell to the Black American experience as part of the U.S. Semiquincentennial—to include the fate of his home due to the Richmond–Petersburg Turnpike, which devastated the community in the city's sixth ward.

The Library served as the Project's first official partner and we hope that our exhibition helps to encourage future community collaborations as so many more untold stories are waiting to be found in the research room. Onward always.

— Sesha Joi Moon, Ph.D., Co-Founder and Executive Director, The JXN Project

BECOMING A BLACK FOUNDING FATHER: ABRAHAM PEYTON SKIPWITH

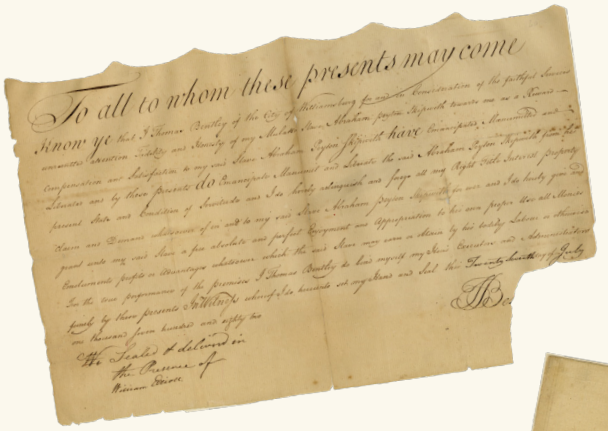
Born into slavery, probably sometime before 1750, Abraham Peyton Skipwith became a skilled and successful businessman who purchased his freedom and left his heirs with the financial resources to prosper.

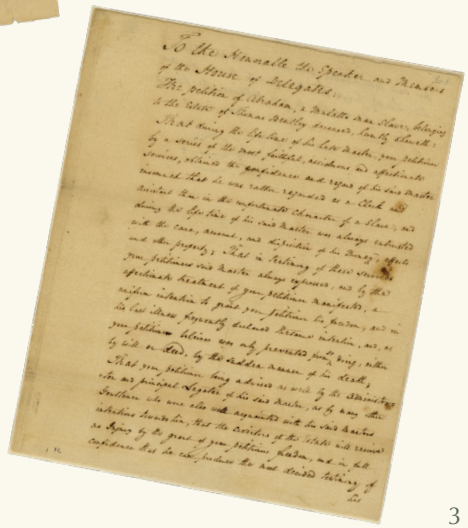
Racial slavery defined Virginia society in the eighteenth century and made gaining freedom almost impossible. Perhaps no more than two dozen Black people were freed in Virginia between the 1730s and 1782, a power closely held by the government. In 1782, the Virginia General Assembly enacted legislation that allowed enslavers to free a person by deed or will without government approval. Freedom, however, did not convey legal status equal to white men, and freed Black Virginians were required to carry documents proving their free status.

Influenced by the Revolutionary spirit, Skipwith seized the moment to make a bid for freedom. During a brief period in the nation's early history when religious fervor, ideas of natural rights, and the American Revolution loosened constraints on freedom, enslaved people pursued avenues to achieve their freedom.

(left) Skipwith–Roper Cottage. This gambrel-roof house was home to Abraham Peyton Skipwith.

The road to freedom was fraught with twists and turns, but Skipwith took the initiative to achieve his freedom. He earned the trust of his white enslavers, Jaquelin Ambler and Thomas Bentley, working as a clerk and managing their business ventures while still enslaved. Bentley died before completing his planned manumission of Skipwith, who later petitioned the General Assembly for his freedom in 1785 with support from former governor Benjamin Harrison V, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and Ambler, then treasurer of Virginia. Although his petition was denied, Skipwith purchased his freedom in 1789 for the significant sum of £40.


To all to whom these presents may come
Know ye



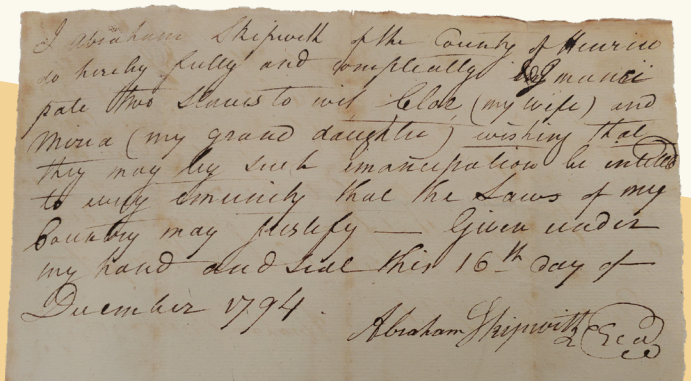
Thomas Bentley purchased Abraham Peyton Skipwith from Jaquelin Ambler in February 1782 and in May wrote a deed of manumission to free him (top). The deed was not recorded in the court and Skipwith legally remained the property of Bentley's estate when Bentley died in 1785. Skipwith then petitioned the Virginia General Assembly for his freedom (right) and provided a copy of Bentley's deed of manumission.

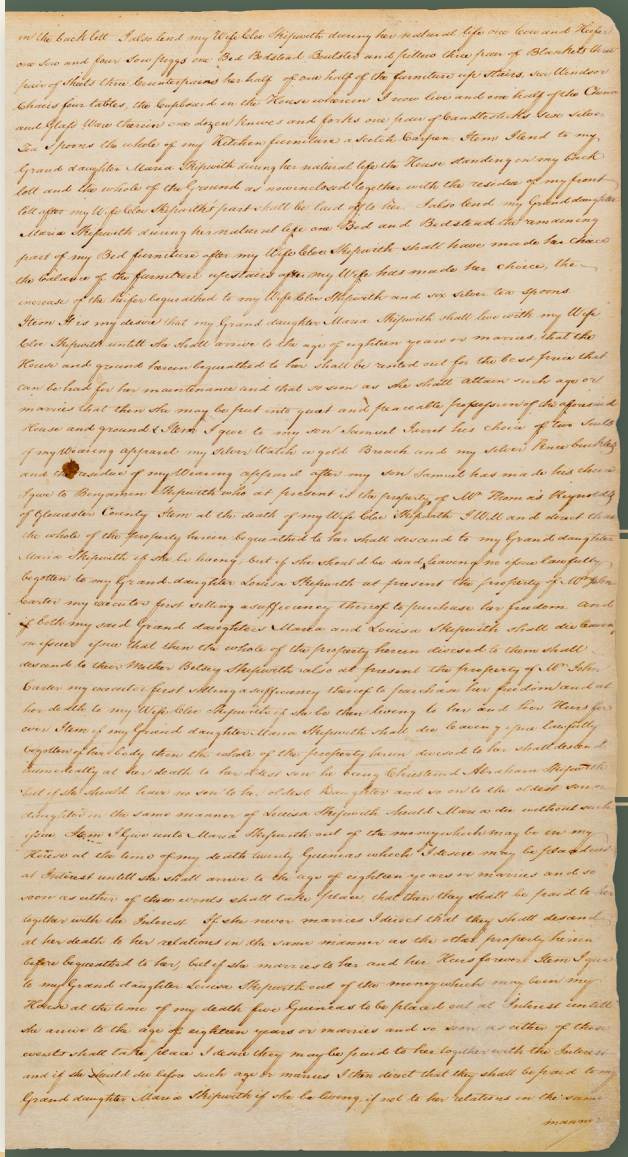
In 1793, Skipwith bought several lots from Martin Baker, who operated nearby Goddin's Tavern, to build his home. Originally part of William Byrd III's landholdings sold by lottery in 1768, the land was annexed by the City of Richmond in 1793. When Skipwith purchased his land, Richmond was a city of only about six thousand souls. He knew and lived near prominent white merchants and workers, free Black residents, and enslaved laborers. Among his neighbors was Jewish merchant Isaac Judah, as well as Judah's foster son, Benjamin Wythe Judah, a prominent free Black man. Benjamin's aunt, Lydia Broadnax, who was emancipated by famed Virginia jurist George Wythe, also lived nearby. Brook Road, close to Skipwith's home, became a major artery for organizers of Gabriel's Conspiracy, the aborted 1800 uprising of the enslaved in Richmond.

Skipwith died in 1799, only ten years after gaining his freedom. His will demonstrates his keen business acumen, his regard for his kin, enslaved and free, and his belief in education. He left his house and furnishings to his wife, Cloe, whom he had purchased and freed in 1794, and left instructions on investments for the benefit of his granddaughter, Maria, whom he also purchased and freed.

(below) Manumission for Cloe and Maria Skipwith.
(right) Page from Abraham Peyton Skipwith's will.

The goods and property Abraham Peyton Skipwith bequeathed to his wife, Cloe, and granddaughter, Maria, both of whom he had manumitted, included gold coins, silver buckles, clothing, furniture, a gun, and a cart and horse. Skipwith also left clothing and money to his other children who remained enslaved—daughter, Betsy, and her daughter, Louisa, and his sons, Benjamin and Samuel Jarret. Skipwith directed his executor, Reverend John D. Blair, to invest his capital for the education of Maria.


I Abraham Skipwith of the County of Henrico do hereby fully and completely Emancipate Manumit Liberate Cloe (my wife) and Maria (my grand daughter) wishing that they may by such Emancipation be entitled to enjoy equally that the Laws of my Country may justly — Given under my hand and Seal this 16th day of December 1794. Abraham Skipwith [Seal]


in the back Hall I also lend my Wife Cloe Skipwith during her natural life one Cow and Heifer one Sow and four Sow pigs one Bed Bedstead Bolsters and pillows three pair of Blankets three pair of Sheets three counterpanes her half of one half of the Furniture of Stairs Hall window Chairs four tables the Cupboard in the House wherein I now live and one half of the China and Glass Ware Chairs one dozen Knives and forks one dozen of Candlesticks one Silver Tea Spoons the whole of my Kitchen furniture a Scotch Calyan Stone Stand to my Grand daughter Maria Skipwith during her natural life in House standing on my back Lott and the whole of the Grounds as now enclosed together with the reversion of my front Lott after my Wife Cloe Skipwiths decease Shall be held by Cloe Skipwith during her natural life one Bed and Bedstead the remaining Maria Skipwith during her natural life one Bed and Bedstead the remaining part of my Bed furniture after my Wife Cloe Skipwith shall have made her Choice the Bolsters of the Feather Bed after my Wife has made her Choice the remainder of the Feather Bed to my Wife Cloe Skipwith and six Silver Tea Spoons Item It is my desire that my Grand daughter Maria Skipwith shall live with my Wife Cloe Skipwith until she shall arrive to the age of eighteen years or marries that the House and ground herein bequeathed to her shall be rented out for the best Price that can be had for her maintenance and that so soon as she shall attain such age or marries that then she may be put into quiet and peaceable possession of the aforesaid House and ground & Item I give to my Son Samuel Jarret his choice of two Suits of my Wearing apparel my Silver Watch my gold Breach and my Silver Knee buckles and the residue of my Wearing apparel after my Son Samuel has made his choice I give to Benjamin Skipwith who at present is the property of Mr Thomas Haywood of Gloucester County Item at the death of my Wife Cloe Skipwith I will and devise that the whole of the property herein bequeathed to her shall descend to my Grand daughter Maria Skipwith if she be living but if she should be dead leaving no issue lawfully begotten of my Grand daughter Louisa Skipwith at present the property of Mr Peter Carter my Executor first selling a sufficiency thereof to purchase her freedom and I both my said Grand daughters Maria and Louisa Skipwith shall die without issue then the estate of the property herein devised to them shall descend to their Mother Betsy Skipwith who at present the property of Mr Peter Carter my executor first selling a sufficiency thereof to purchase her freedom and at her death to my Wife Cloe Skipwiths if she be then living to her and her Heirs for ever Item if my Grand daughter Maria Skipwith shall die leaving issue lawfully begotten of her body then the estate of the property herein devised to her shall descend immediately at her death to her first son he being Christened Abraham Skipwith and if he should leave no son to be eldest Daughter and so on to the eldest son or daughter in the same manner of Louisa Skipwith Should Maria die without such issue Item I give unto Maria Skipwith out of the money which may be due me Rebecca at the time of my death twenty Guineas which I leave me to be placed at Interest untill she shall arrive to the age of eighteen years or marries and so soon as either of those events shall take place that then they shall be paid to her together with the Interest If she never marries I direct that they shall descend at her death to her relations in the same manner as the other property herein before bequeathed to her, but if she marries to her and her Heirs forever Item I give to my Grand daughter Louisa Skipwith out of the money which may be due me Rebecca at the time of my death four Guineas to be placed out at Interest in all she arrive to the age of eighteen years or marries and so soon as either of those events shall take place I and they may be paid to her together with the Interest and if she should die before such age or marries I then direct that they shall be paid to my Grand daughter Maria Skipwith if she be living if not to her relations in the same manner

FACT:
Abraham Peyton Skipwith died in 1799. Can you name two other founding fathers who died in 1799? Also passing on that year were Patrick Henry, who enslaved 67 people, and George Washington, who personally enslaved 123 people, although 317 enslaved people worked at Mount Vernon at the time of his death.

DID YOU KNOW?
Benjamin Harrison V was the father of the ninth president and the great-grandfather of the twenty-third president of the United States.

FACT:
In "Variety, or the vicissitudes of Long life," an unpublished story intended to instruct proper deportment for young women, Eliza Ambler, daughter of Jaquelin Ambler, mentioned Abraham Peyton Skipwith as serving tea.

BUILDING A BLACK COMMUNITY: THE ROPERS

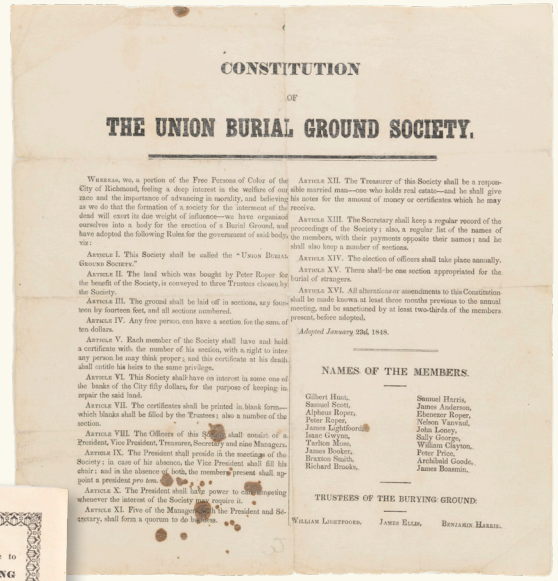
Abraham Peyton Skipwith's entrepreneurship enabled his descendants to establish themselves in Richmond as skilled artisans, community builders, and, later, political leaders.

By achieving social independence through his financial success, Skipwith created a model of Black success that his descendants followed. When Skipwith's granddaughter, Maria, married Peter Roper, a free Black man, she brought to the marriage property inherited from her grandfather. Peter Roper purchased his freedom from Hezekiah Wight in 1799, and in 1805, married Maria Skipwith. A skilled artisan, Roper enjoyed financial independence and helped build the city. Before and after the Civil War, the Ropers and their children helped construct a new Black independence through entrepreneurship, community building, and political action.

As in every other major southern city, free and enslaved Black laborers worked on virtually every structure in pre–Civil War Richmond. Building trades were not typically segregated before the Civil War. White artisans apprenticed and vouched for the skill of Black workers, as John Hillyard did for Ebenezer Roper, Peter's son. In the 1840s and 1850s, some white tradesmen, such as printers, ironworkers, and stonecutters, tried to exclude Black workers through trade unions and strikes. Labor competition increased with the growth of immigrants in the city. The Ropers advanced their community's interests through entrepreneurship and organizing in the face of laws preventing all free Black Virginians from voting, serving on juries, testifying against a white person, and many other activities.

Alpheus and Ebenezer Roper, sons of Peter Roper and Maria Skipwith, were founding members of the Union Burial Ground Society, established in 1848, one of several Black organizations that provided death benefits for its members. The society bought land near several existing Black cemeteries, the earliest established in 1815. Free Black Virginians formed fraternal and beneficial organizations to strengthen their communities and to provide for the sick.

(right) Union Burial Ground Society Constitution.



CONSTITUTION

OF

THE UNION BURIAL GROUND SOCIETY.

Whereas, we, a portion of the Free Persons of Color of the City of Richmond, feeling a deep interest in the welfare of our race and the importance of advancing in morality, and believing as we do that the formation of a society for the interment of the dead will exert its due weight of influence—we have organized ourselves into a body for the erection of a Burial Ground, and have adopted the following Rules for the government of said body, viz:

Article I. This Society shall be called the "Union Burial Ground Society."

Article II. The land which was bought by Peter Roper for the benefit of the Society, is conveyed to three Trustees chosen by the Society.

Article III. The ground shall be laid off in sections, say fourteen by fourteen feet, and all sections numbered.

Article IV. Any free person can have a section for the sum of ten dollars.

Article V. Each member of the Society shall have and hold a certificate with the number of his section, with a right to inter any person he may think proper; and this certificate at his death, shall entitle his heirs to the same privilege.

Article VI. This Society shall have on interest in some one of the banks of the City fifty dollars, for the purpose of keeping in repair the said land.

Article VII. The certificates shall be printed in blank form—which blanks shall be filled by the Trustees; also a number of the section.

Article VIII. The Officers of this Society shall consist of a President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, and nine Managers.

Article IX. The President shall preside in the meetings of the Society; in case of his absence, the Vice President shall fill his chair; and in the absence of both, the members present shall appoint a president *pro tem.*

Article X. The President shall have power to call meeting whenever the interest of the Society may require it.

Article XI. Five of the Managers, with the President and Secretary, shall form a quorum to do business.

Article XII. The Treasurer of this Society shall be a responsible married man—one who holds real estate—and he shall give his notes for the amount of money or certificates which he may receive.

Article XIII. The Secretary shall keep a regular record of the proceedings of the Society; also, a regular list of the names of the members, with their payments opposite their names; and he shall also keep a number of sections.

Article XIV. The election of officers shall take place annually.

Article XV. There shall be one section appropriated for the burial of strangers.

Article XVI. All alterations or amendments to this Constitution shall be made known at least three months previous to the annual meeting, and be sanctioned by at least two-thirds of the members present, before adopted.

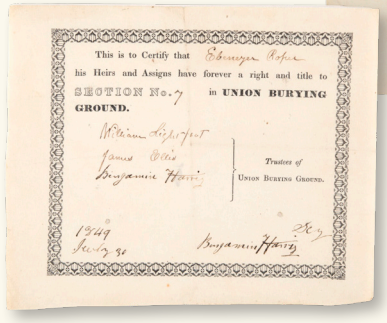
Adopted January 22*d*, 1848.

NAMES OF THE MEMBERS.

Gilbert Hunt,
Samuel Scott,
Alpheus Roper,
Peter Roper,
James Lightfoot,
Isaac Gwynn,
Tarlton Moss,
James Booker,
Braxton Snaith,
Richard Brooks,
Samuel Harris,
James Anderson,
Ebenezer Roper,
Nelson Vanvaul,
John Lowry,
Sally Georges,
William Clayton,
Peter Price,
Archibald Goode,
James Boatmin.

TRUSTEES OF THE BURYING GROUND.

William Lightfoot. James Ellis. Benjamin Harris.



This is to Certify that E. Ebenezer Roper
his Heirs and Assigns have forever a right and title to
SECTION No. 7 in UNION BURYING
GROUND.

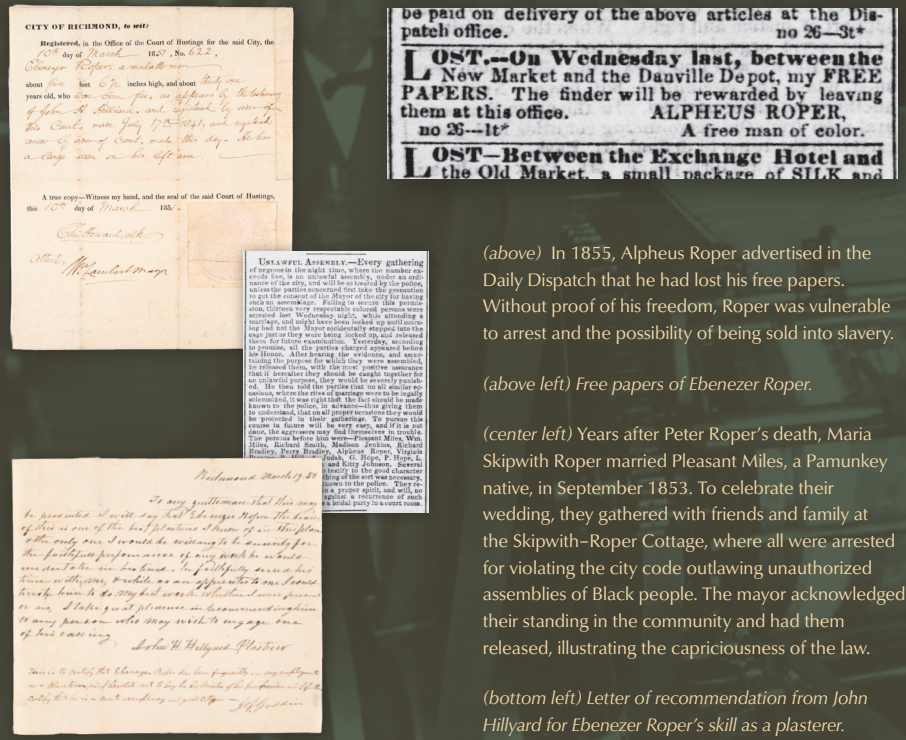
William Lightfoot
James Ellis
Benjamin Harris
Trustees of
Union Burying Ground.

1849
Feb'y 5th
Benjamin Harris Sec'y

(left) Ebenezer Roper's membership.

By 1803, Virginia law required free people of color to register and carry their "free papers"—documents attesting to their free status—at all times. In the wake of Gabriel's Conspiracy, an 1806 law required freed people to leave the state within one year of their emancipation unless they received government permission to stay. White leaders and citizens increasingly saw free Blacks residents as threats to a cultural and economic system that made Richmond the largest slave-trading center in the Upper South after the transatlantic trade in enslaved people ended in 1808.

The Ropers and other Black Richmonders built on Abraham Peyton Skipwith's legacy by advancing economic and political freedom. Being free enabled families like the Ropers to accumulate wealth and to gain some education. Likewise, enslaved people exploited Richmond's urban and industrial landscape, where many were hired out to businesses and manufacturers. Often housed away from both hirers and enslavers, they built secret societies, formed Black churches, established businesses, and surreptitiously learned to read and write. In 1861, the Confederate government identified several Ropers as "enemy aliens" because of their outspoken advocacy for the end of slavery. Timothy Roper, a son of Peter and Maria Roper, joined the 24th United States Colored Infantry when it was organized in Pennsylvania in March 1865.



CITY OF RICHMOND, *to wit:*

Registered, in the Office of the Court of Hustings for the said City, the 10th day of March 1857, No. 622,

Edmund Roper, a mulatto man

about five feet 6½ inches high, and about thirty one years old, who was born free, as appears by the testimony of John H. Gilliard, and registered by order of this Court, made July 17th 1841, and registered anew by order of Court, made this day. He has a large scar on his left arm.

A true copy—Witness my hand, and the seal of the said Court of Hustings, this 10th day of March 185-.

Test. W. Leonard Mayo

be paid on delivery of the above articles at the Dispatch office. no 26—3t*

LOST.—On Wednesday last, between the New Market and the Danville Depot, my FREE PAPERS. The finder will be rewarded by leaving them at this office. ALPHEUS ROPER,
no 26—1t* A free man of color.

LOST—Between the Exchange Hotel and the Old Market, a small package of SILK and

UNLAWFUL ASSEMBLY.—Every gathering of negroes in the night time, where the number exceeds five, is an unlawful assembly, under an ordinance of like city, and will be so treated by the police, unless the parties concerned first take the precaution to get the consent of the Mayor of the city for having such an assemblage. Failing to secure this permission, thirteen very respectable colored persons were arrested last Wednesday night, while attending a marriage, and might have been locked up until morning had not the Mayor accidentally stepped into the cage just as they were being locked up, and released them for future examination. Yesterday, according to appointment, the parties appeared before his Honor. After hearing the evidence, and ascertaining the purpose for which they were assembled, he released them, with the most positive assurance that if hereafter they should be caught together for an unlawful purpose, they would be severely punished. He then told the parties that on all similar occasions, where the rites of marriage were to be legally solemnized, it was right that the fact should be made known to the police, in advance—thus giving them to understand, that on all proper occasions they would be protected in their gallantries. To pursue this course in future will be very easy, and if it is not done, the consequences will be serious. Some of the persons before him were—Pleasant Miles, Wm. Miles, Richard Smith, Madison Jenkins, Richard Bradley, Perry Bradley, Alpheus Roper, Virginia Judah, G. Hope, P. Hope, L. and Kitty Johnson. Several testify to the good character thing of the sort was necessary, known to the police. They rise a proper spirit, and will, no doubt a recurrence of such a bridal party in a court room.

Richmond March 19 1838

To any gentleman that this may be presented. I will say that Ebenezer Roper the bearer of this is one of the best Plasterers I know of in the place & the only one I would be willing to be security for. His faithful performance of any work he undertakes to do in the line of his calling I have had time to witness, & take pleasure in recommending him to any person who may wish to employ one of his calling.

John H. Hillyard Plasterer

This is to certify that Ebenezer Roper has been regularly ... my employ as a plasterer & I believe him to be a ... Boy, & a good workman. Given under my hand ... City of Richmond this 19th day of March 1838

J. H. Goodwin

(above) In 1855, Alpheus Roper advertised in the Daily Dispatch that he had lost his free papers. Without proof of his freedom, Roper was vulnerable to arrest and the possibility of being sold into slavery.

(above left) Free papers of Ebenezer Roper.

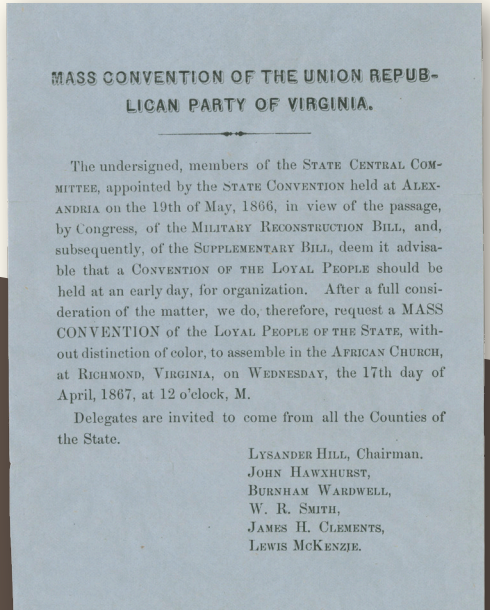
(center left) Years after Peter Roper's death, Maria Skipwith Roper married Pleasant Miles, a Pamunkey native, in September 1853. To celebrate their wedding, they gathered with friends and family at the Skipwith–Roper Cottage, where all were arrested for violating the city code outlawing unauthorized assemblies of Black people. The mayor acknowledged their standing in the community and had them released, illustrating the capriciousness of the law.

(bottom left) Letter of recommendation from John Hillyard for Ebenezer Roper's skill as a plasterer.

ESTABLISHING A BIRTHPLACE OF BLACK ENTREPRENEURSHIP: JACKSON WARD

When Emancipation came in April 1865, Black Richmonders were ready to lead, and the Ropers helped build the new society that emerged from the ending of slavery. In addition to owning Skipwith's cottage, the family purchased additional lots and houses for rental income.

Alpheus Roper took part in sweeping reforms after Emancipation, attending Black political conventions and holding elected office. When Jackson Ward was created as a gerrymandered political district in 1871, he was elected as one of the first two of thirty-three Black men elected to the Richmond Common Council between 1871 and 1900. Roper and his allies organized a massive voter mobilization effort that resulted in the election of twenty-four Black delegates to the 1867–1868 state constitutional convention that created Virginia's first statewide public school system and made Black Virginians full citizens. More than ninety Black men served in the General Assembly from 1869 to 1892.



MASS CONVENTION OF THE UNION REPUBLICAN PARTY OF VIRGINIA.

The undersigned, members of the State Central Committee, appointed by the State Convention held at Alexandria on the 19th of May, 1866, in view of the passage, by Congress, of the Military Reconstruction Bill, and, subsequently, of the Supplementary Bill, deem it advisable that a Convention of the Loyal People should be held at an early day, for organization. After a full consideration of the matter, we do, therefore, request a MASS CONVENTION of the Loyal People of the State, without distinction of color, to assemble in the African Church, at Richmond, Virginia, on Wednesday, the 17th day of April, 1867, at 12 o'clock, M.

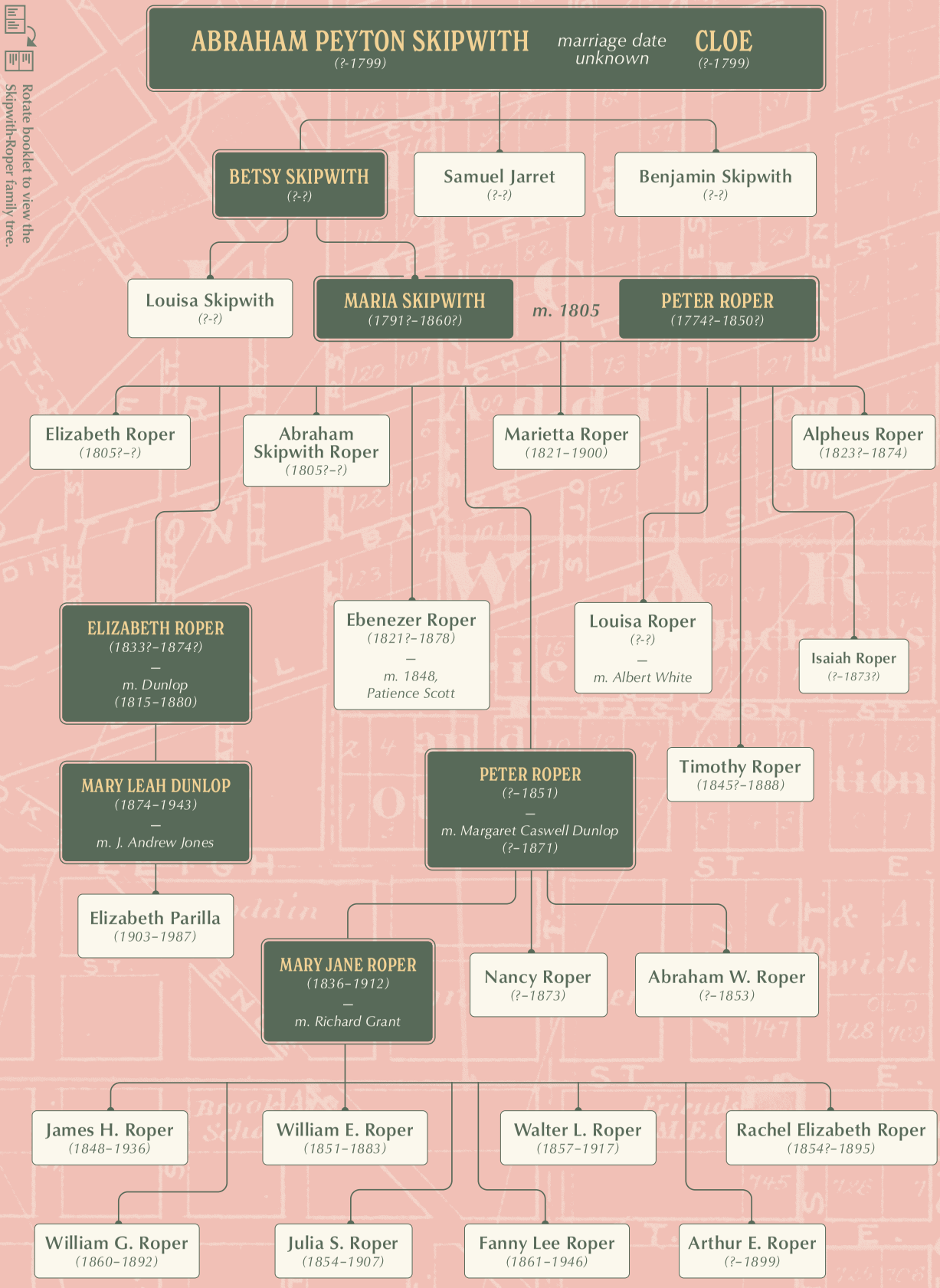
Delegates are invited to come from all the Counties of the State.

Lysander Hill, Chairman.
John Hawxhurst,
Burnham Wardwell,
W. R. Smith,
James H. Clements,
Lewis McKenzie.

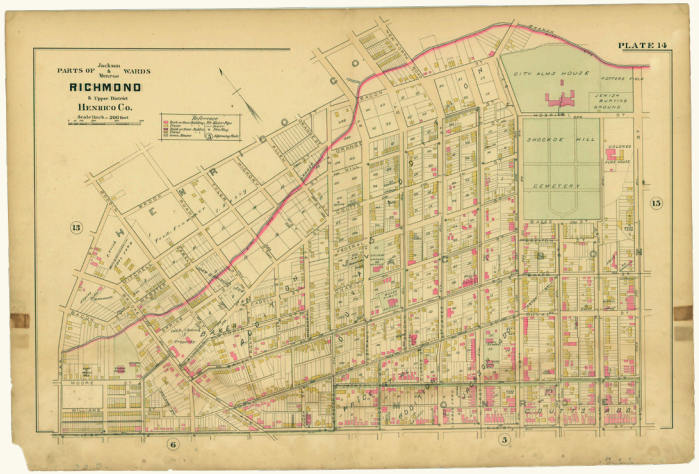
(right) Broadside, Mass Convention of the Union Republican Party of Virginia.

SKIPWITH-ROPER FAMILY TREE

Rotate booklet to view the Skipwith-Roper family tree.



Jackson Ward, the newly created city ward that Alpheus Roper represented in Richmond's Common Council, was designed to limit Black political power by encompassing as many Black voters as possible. Known as the "shoestring ward," its original boundaries stretched across northwest Richmond, where the Skipwith–Roper Cottage stood, and down to Shockoe Valley. After the passage of the 1902 state constitution that removed almost all Black voters from the rolls, the ward as a political unit was disbanded, and the term "Jackson Ward" then designated a Black neighborhood hedged in by segregation.



(left) Map of Jackson Ward

Black Richmonders built their own vibrant institutions and sustained them even as their political power eroded. As one of the original "Black Wall Streets," Jackson Ward became the crown jewel for Black Richmond. Burial societies of the antebellum years grew into insurance companies, while fraternal orders thrived and businesses and banks were developed, such as the country's first banks to be owned and operated by a Black man and Black woman. The city's sixth ward also became known as a "Harlem of the South," with venues along Second Street appearing in The Negro Motorist Green Book.


The Daily State Journal.

RICHMOND, VA., MONDAY EVENING, APRIL 24, 1871. VOL. III. NO. 141

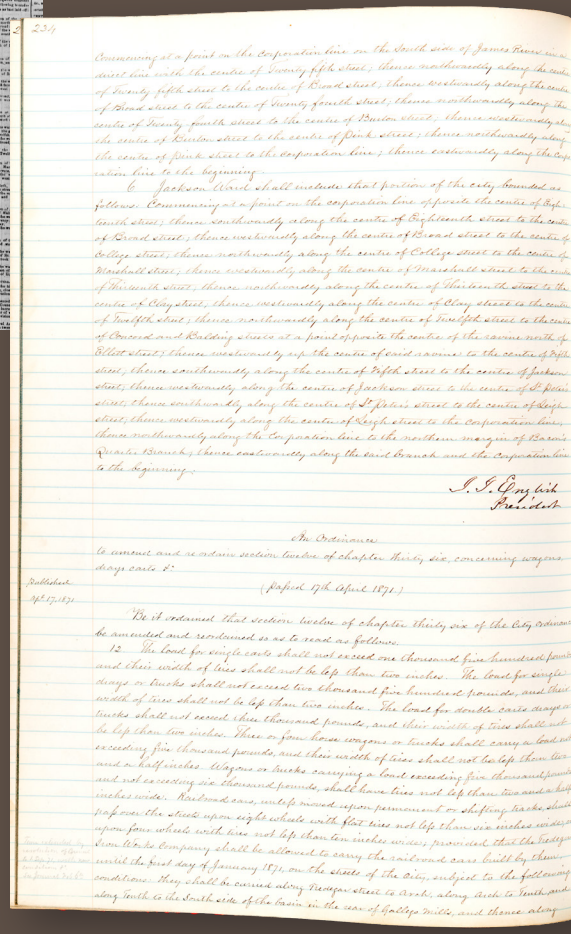
CLAY MONROE MADISON JEFFERSON BROAD ST. CAPITOL MARSHALL

AS IT WAS.

JACKSON. MADISON. JEFFERSON. BROAD. CAPITOL. MONROE. CLAY. MARSHALL.

AS IT IS

(above) *Jackson Ward "As It Was. As It Is."* This map, published in the Daily State Journal, shows how Richmond Common Council carved out Jackson Ward.


Commencing at a point on the corporation line on the South side of James River ... street with the centre of Twenty fifth street; thence northwardly along the centre of Twenty fifth street to the centre of Broad street; thence westwardly along the centre of Broad street to the centre of Twenty fourth street; thence northwardly along the centre of Twenty fourth street to the centre of Burton street; thence northwardly along the centre of Burton street to the centre of Pink street; thence northwardly along the centre of Pink street to the corporation line; thence eastwardly along the corporation line to the beginning.

6 Jackson Ward shall include that portion of the city bounded as follows: Commencing at a point on the corporation line opposite the centre of Eighteenth street; thence southwardly along the centre of Eighteenth street to the centre of Broad street; thence westwardly along the centre of Broad street to the centre of College street; thence northwardly along the centre of College street to the centre of Marshall street; thence westwardly along the centre of Marshall street to the centre of Thirteenth street; thence northwardly along the centre of Thirteenth street to the centre of Clay street; thence westwardly along the centre of Clay street to the centre of Twelfth street; thence northwardly along the centre of Twelfth street to the centre of Leigh and Baker streets at a point opposite the centre of the avenue north of Elliott street; thence westwardly up the centre of said avenue to the centre of Fifth street; thence southwardly along the centre of Fifth street to the centre of Jackson street; thence westwardly along the centre of Jackson street to the centre of St. Peters street; thence southwardly along the centre of St. Peters street to the centre of Leigh street; thence westwardly along the centre of Leigh street to the corporation line; thence northwardly along the corporation line to the northern margin of Baronis Quarter Branch; thence eastwardly along the said branch and the corporation line to the beginning.

J. T. Conyngham President

An Ordinance

To amend and re-ordain section twelve of chapter thirty six, concerning waggons, drays carts &c.

(Passed 17th April 1871.)

Be it ordained that section twelve of chapter thirty six of the City ordinances be amended and re-ordained so as to read as follows:

12 The load for single carts shall not exceed one thousand five hundred pounds ... and their width of tires shall not be less than two inches. The load for single drays or trucks shall not exceed two thousand five hundred pounds, and their width of tires shall not be less than two inches. The load for double carts drays or trucks shall not exceed three thousand pounds, and their width of tires shall not be less than two inches. Three or four horse waggons or trucks shall carry a load not exceeding five thousand pounds, and their width of tires shall not be less than three and a half inches. Waggons or trucks carrying a load exceeding five thousand pounds ... not exceeding six thousand pounds, shall have tires not less than three and a half inches wider. Railroad cars, not to be moved upon permanent or shifting tracks, shall pass over the streets upon eight wheels with flat tires not less than six inches wide; upon four wheels with tires not less than ten inches wide; provided that the Richmond City Railroad Company shall be allowed to carry the railroad cars built by them ... until the first day of January 1872, on the streets of the city, subject to the following conditions: they shall be carried along Fourteenth street to Ann, along Ann to Tenth and along Tenth to the South side of the basin in the rear of Gallego Mills, and thence along

(right) *Richmond Common Council minutes establishing Jackson Ward from 1871.*

(left) *Maggie Lena Walker and St. Luke Penny Savings Bank Staff.* Maggie Lena Walker established the St. Luke Penny Savings Bank in 1903 and became the first Black woman to charter a bank.

SHATTERING BLACK EXCELLENCE: THE RICHMOND–PETERSBURG TURNPIKE

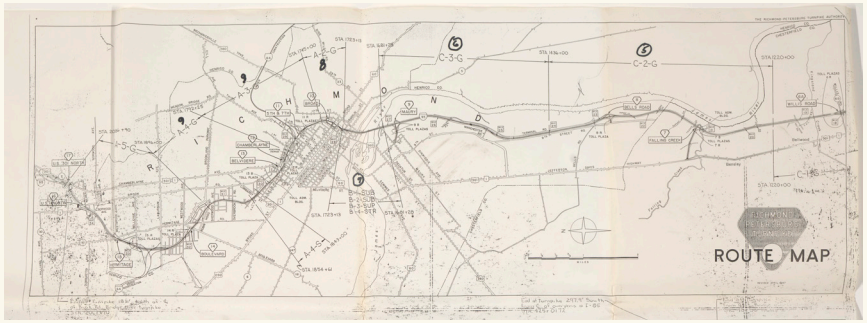
The expansion of urban renewal projects in the twentieth century focused on inner city Black or minority communities that were deemed blighted or slums by white political leaders. These projects removed access to capital and eroded generational wealth created by people such as Abraham Peyton Skipwith and his Roper descendants.

Redlining, residential segregation, absent white ownership of rental housing, and chronic employment discrimination were just some of the factors that led to the decimation of Jackson Ward. In 1941, The City of Richmond built Gilpin Court, the first federally funded public housing project in the city, in the north part of Jackson Ward. When city officials proposed the Richmond–Petersburg Turnpike late in the 1940s, Jackson Ward became the prime target for "slum clearance."

With the death of Marietta Roper in 1900, the last descendant of Abraham Peyton Skipwith, the cottage passed into the ownership of Abram Coleman by 1904. The Coleman family and their heirs retained ownership of the cottage until 1957, when the Richmond–Petersburg Turnpike Authority and the City of Richmond seized the property by eminent domain. Through purchase, condemnation, and eminent domain, more than 1,000 residents and business owners in Jackson Ward were displaced.

(left) Gilpin Court in 1941
Gilpin Court was named for Charles Sydney Gilpin, a native of Jackson Ward who became a prominent African American stage actor.
(above) The Skipwith–Roper Cottage, 400 West Duval Street.

Shattering Black Excellence: *The Richmond–Petersburg Turnpike*



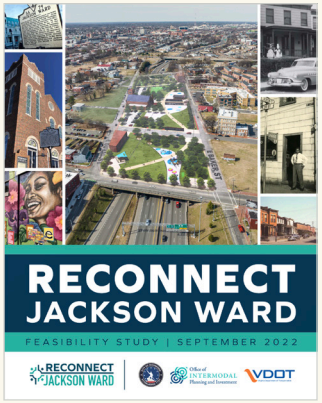
(above) Key Map, Richmond–Petersburg Turnpike.
(left) Destruction of Houses in Jackson Ward.
(right) The Skipwith–Roper Cottage in Goochland County.

Construction of the turnpike sliced Jackson Ward in two, and Skipwith's most tangible legacy—his house and property—faced demolition. Recognizing the architectural importance of the house but ignoring its historical significance for Black Richmond, a white preservationist purchased the cottage for approximately $25 in 1957, and moved the house to Goochland County. It was rebuilt on the former tobacco plantation of the secretary of war for the Confederacy. Subsequent renovations and reworkings have left little of its original fabric. Removed from its historical context, the house and the contributions of Abraham Peyton Skipwith and his descendants to the American Revolution, Civil War, and Civil Rights Movement largely became invisible.

Richmond–Petersburg Turnpike in 1957. Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church *(right)* and the Southern Aid Insurance building *(left)* remain silent sentinels to the destruction caused by the turnpike construction.

RECLAIMING A COMMUNITY HISTORY: RECONNECTING JACKSON WARD

Infrastructure projects like the Richmond–Petersburg Turnpike shattered communities of color across the United States. Beginning in the 2010s, many cities began to re-examine the urban renewal and slum clearance projects of the previous century, such as the City of Richmond's first city-wide master plan in 1946 by Harland Bartholomew and Associates, which helped to split Jackson Ward. Grassroots organizations established reparative justice initiatives, such as The JXN Project, to help heal the communities and neighborhoods that had been devastated by such projects. The Project introduced "The Skipwith–Roper Homecoming" as an initiative to reconstruct the home of Abraham Peyton Skipwith. The reconstruction will sit on land donated by the Maggie Walker Community Land Trust and Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority, which oversaw the development of Gilpin Court.



City of Richmond's conceptual design for Reconnect Jackson Ward.

With support from the Virginia Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment and the Virginia Department of Transportation, the City of Richmond created "Reconnect Jackson Ward" to conduct a feasibility study to determine how the two sections of Jackson Ward might be reconnected physically and economically. In 2023, the city received a grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation to continue community engagement and develop design concepts for Reconnect Jackson Ward. Through legislative enactment in 2022, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources established the Black, Indigenous and People of Color Historic Preservation Fund, a grant program "to protect and support Virginia's historically underserved and underrepresented communities and the cultural and historical sites associated with them."

UNCOVERING A HIDDEN HISTORY: THE JXN PROJECT

The JXN Project, also known as JXN, is a historic preservation nonprofit organization dedicated to capturing the pivotal role of Jackson Ward in the Black American experience as the nation's first historically registered Black urban neighborhood —after gaining its designation from the U.S. Department of the Interior in 1976. Founded in 2020 by sisters Sesha Joi Moon, Ph.D. and Enjoli Moon, JXN has partnered with the Library of Virginia to examine the origin story of Jackson Ward, including the recovery of the untold history of Abraham Peyton Skipwith, the first known Black homeowner in Jackson Ward —and for whom the project considers as "The Founding Father of Jackson Ward."

Since it's inception, JXN has helped to establish a series of honorary street designations for Black Richmonders and has invested over $250,000 in sponsorships for community-based organizations and/or scholarships for marginally-serving institutions.

(above) Abraham Skipwith Alley. (middle) August Moon Way. (left) Giles B. Jackson from Unveiling The Vanguard.

(above) Groundbreaking Ceremony for "The Skipwith-Roper Homecoming". (below) Baskervill's concept design for the Skipwith–Roper Cottage and The JXN Haus.

JXN also coordinated a year-long sesquicentennial celebration to mark the 150th anniversary of Jackson Ward in 2021, beginning with "Illuminating Legacies: Giles B. Jackson Day" and followed by a six-part "The JXN Project Summer Lecture Series" with the Library of Virginia and the Richmond Public Library. The celebration culminated with the city's largest mass honorary street installation for "Unveiling The Vanguard," which included "Abraham Skipwith Alley" named in tribute to Abraham Peyton Skipwith.

"The Skipwith–Roper Homecoming" is an initiative to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence through the lens of the life, liberty, lineage, and legacy of Abraham Peyton Skipwith and his Roper descendants. To interpret the role of Jackson Ward in the origin story of the United States of America, JXN reconstructed the Skipwith-Roper Cottage as a historic site as part of the U.S. Semiquincentennial. The cottage sits alongside The JXN Haus as the project's operational headquarters—which upon full completion will include a research lab and library, as well as a co-working space and green space for community programming and placemaking.

HOUSE TO HIGHWAY: RECLAIMING A COMMUNITY HISTORY

The House to Highway: Reclaiming a Community History exhibition resulted from a lively partnership between The JXN Project and the Library of Virginia with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Virginia Humanities, and The Community Foundation for a greater Richmond, as well as the Mellon Foundation for programming. Riggs Ward Design and Mindhatch Creative designed the exhibition, which began at the Library of Virginia and will be transferred to the Skipwith–Roper Cottage and The JXN Haus as its permanent site as part of the U.S. Semiquincentennial during Jackson Ward's Founding Week from April 17-19, 2026. The JXN Project recognizes its research partners who supported this exhibition, including the Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia, the Virginia Museum of History and Culture, The Valentine, Preservation Virginia, Historic Richmond, the Poe Museum, the Richmond Times-Dispatch, the Richmond Free Press, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, and the William & Mary Bray School Lab.

The reconstruction team for the Skipwith–Roper Cottage and The JXN Haus includes Baskervill, Team Henry Enterprises, Timmons Group, Jones Archaeology Consulting, Schnabel Engineering, and Habitat for Humanity. As part of the reconstruction process, JXN hosted an archaeological community dig, as well as a community build day in partnership with Habitat for Humanity and Richmond Public Schools. The project also worked with PBS (Public Broadcasting Service), and VPM (Virginia's home for public media) to document the homecoming initiative in a documentary by director Stacey Holman titled Declarations of Independence for release in 2026.

Among the community partners who have contributed to The JXN Project and "The Skipwith–Roper Homecoming" are the Commonwealth of Virginia, City of Richmond, Maggie Walker Community Land Trust, Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority, Mellon Foundation, Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation, Nike Jordan Brand, Airbnb, Weissberg Foundation, The Mary Morton Parsons Foundation, Cabell Foundation, iF: A Foundation for Radical Possibility, Greater Washington Community Foundation, Richmond Memorial Health Foundation, and Meyer Foundation —as well as grassroots gifts and grants from the community.