

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
NATIONAL UNDERGROUND RAILROAD NETWORK TO FREEDOM

GENERAL INFORMATION

Type (pick one): X Site ___ Facility ___ Program

Name: The Site of John Little's Manor House

Address: Kalorama Park, bordered by Columbia Road, Kalorama Road and 19th Street, N.W.

City, State, Zip: Washington, D.C.

County: NA

Congressional District: NA

Physical Location of Site/facility (if different):

Date Submitted: July 9, 2008

Summary: Describe in 200 words or less, the significance to the Underground Railroad, of the site, program, or facility nominated for inclusion in the Network.

In the spring of 1861, at the start of the Civil War, 20-year-old Hortense Prout made a daring bid for freedom from this site in Washington, D.C., where she worked as an enslaved servant in the manor house of John Little. Little held 12 enslaved African Americans on his cattle farm, including three generations of the Prout family.

Hortense fled during a time of great excitement in the District of Columbia, as thousands of newly organized Union troops pored into the city to quell the rebel uprising in Virginia. We know of her escape only because the Washington Evening Star on June 17, 1861, reported on her capture: She was found in an encampment of Ohio soldiers, about two miles east of John Little's house. She was, according to the newspaper, "completely rigged out in male attire."

As punishment, John Little put Hortense in the City Jail for "safekeeping," before taking her back to work in his home.

Less than a year after her escape, President Lincoln in April 1862 declared all enslaved African Americans in the District of Columbia free. Hortense Prout thus became one of the last Washingtonians who chose to risk her life to win her freedom.



FOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE USE ONLY

I hereby certify that this ___ site ___ facility ___ program is included in the Network to Freedom.

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date



Owner/Manager (Share contact information ___Y ___ N)
Name: Washington, D.C., Department of Parks & Recreation

Address: 3149 Sixteenth Street NW

City, State, Zip: Washington, D.C. 20010

Phone: 202-673-7647 **Fax:** 202-673-2087 **E-mail:** dpr@dc.gov

Owner/Manager (Share contact information ___Y ___ N)
Name:

Address:

City, State, Zip:

Phone: **Fax:** **E-mail:**

Application Preparer (Enter only if different from contact above.) (Share contact information __X_Y ___ N)

Name: Mary Belcher
Address: 1869 Mintwood Place NW, #44
City, State, Zip: Washington, D.C. 20009

Phone: 202-462-9069 **Fax:** NA **E-mail:** maryjbelcher@comcast.net

Privacy Information: The Network to Freedom was established, in part, to facilitate sharing of information among those interested in the Underground Railroad. Putting people in contact with others who are researching related topics, historic events, or individuals or who may have technical expertise or resources to assist with projects is one of the most effective means of advancing Underground Railroad commemoration and preservation. Privacy laws designed to protect individual contact information (i.e., home or personal addresses, telephone numbers, fax numbers, or e-mail addresses), may prevent NPS from making these connections. If you are willing to be contacted by others working on Underground Railroad activities and to receive mailings about Underground Railroad-related events, please add a statement to your letter of consent indicating what information you are willing to share.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Park Service's National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom to nominate properties, facilities, and programs to the Network to Freedom. A Federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. Response to this request is required for inclusion in the Network to Freedom in accordance with the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Act (P.L. 105-203).



Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 15 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the National Coordinator, National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom, NPS, 601 Riverfront Drive, Omaha, Nebraska 68102.



SITES:

In addition to the responses to each question, applications must also include the following attachments:

- 1) **Letters of consent from all property owners for inclusion in the Network to Freedom (see sample)**
- 2) **Text and photographs of all site markers**
- 3) **Photographs illustrating the current appearance and condition of the site being nominated**
- 4) **Maps showing the location of the site [USE your watercolor map]**

S1. Site type:

Building Object District (neighborhood)

Structure Landscape/natural feature Archeological site

Other (describe): The house was located at the site of today's Kalorama Park.

S2. Is the site listed in the National Register of Historic Places? Y N

What is the listing name:

S3. Ownership of site:

Private ownership Private, non-profit (501c3) Multiple ownership

Public, local government Public, state government Public, federal government

S4. Describe the site's association and significance to the Underground Railroad. Provide citations. Supplemental chronologies are encouraged.

Hortense Prout--born into slavery on John Little's Washington, D.C., cattle farm around 1841—made a daring attempt for freedom from this site at the start of the Civil War in the spring of 1861. She was one of 12 bondspeople held by Little. She, her sisters and mother worked in John Little's manor house, while her brother and other enslaved males on the farm tended cattle and worked in Little's butchery.

The spring of 1861 was a time of great excitement and change in Washington, D.C., as thousands of newly organized Union troops arrived, ready to defend the city and quell the rebel uprising in the Virginia countryside. There was little expectation at that time that a years-long Civil War would ensue, or that it would lead to the end of slavery.

Nearly four out of every five African Americans who lived in the District of Columbia in 1861 were free, but the institution of slavery persisted on many of the farms that dotted



the city's rural outskirts.¹ On the hills bordering the northern edge of the city, in what was then known as Washington County, John Little (born 1805) owned a 56-acre cattle farm and butchery along a stream called Slash Run.² Soon after purchasing the land in 1836, he began acquiring enslaved men and women to work the farm and butchery. In January 1839, he purchased the enslaved Prout family from downtown slave traders William H. Williams and B.O. Shekell.³ The Prout family at that time included Delilah, who was about 40 and probably pregnant; her husband whose name is unknown; their son Leander, 5; and two-year-old daughter Tabitha.⁴

Over the next two decades, Delilah gave birth to at least three daughters: Celeste, Hortense, and Kalisti, and possibly some sons. Tabitha gave birth to three children, and Kalisti had one child. Because one's enslaved status passed down through the mother, all of Delilah's children and her daughters' children became John Little's property. John Little purchased at least two other bondsmen: Benjamin Purnell, 8, in 1844; and Geoffrey McKenzie, 35, in 1847. When John's younger brother Samuel Little died in 1855, John Little inherited 28-year-old William Crown, whom the Little brothers had bought together in 1834 when Crown was only seven years old. John Little also became

¹ Provine, Dorothy S., *Compensated Emancipation in the District of Columbia, Petitions under the Act of April 16, 1862*, Heritage Books Inc., Westminster, Maryland, 2005. In 1860, there were 3,185 enslaved and 11,131 free African Americans in the District of Columbia.

² The Sunday Star, Washington, D.C. January 28, 1934, "Story of Famous Taylor's Lane Road," John Clagett Proctor; Washington, D.C., Deed Book WB 123, Deed of Release for land by John H.B. Smith to John Little, recorded March 27, 1846, to replace deed executed December 7, 1836, which was lost. National Archives, Record Group 351. In Christian Hine's *Early Recollections of Washington City*, September 1866, June League reprint 1981, the editor writes in the introduction that "Christian Hines and his brother Matthew were able to buy 56 acres of the farm 'Mt. Pleasant' near 18th & Columbia Road from Mrs. William Thornton, for \$100 an acre. Later on they lost the house and land." This was the land sold to John Little.

³In the National Intelligencer, December 31, 1838, the slave dealers Birch & Shekell placed this ad: "Cash for Negroes—We will [pay] cash and liberal prices for any number of likely negroes, families included. We can be found at B.O. Shekell's Tavern, a few doors below Lloyd's Tavern, opposite the centre market, on 7th Street. – Birch & Shekell, May 1." Little later reported the Prouts were going to be sent south.

⁴ Provine, Dorothy S., *Compensated Emancipation*, Petition No. 744, p. 183.

The Prout family had ties to Prince George's County, Maryland, where they probably were held at one time by Anthony Page. In The Baltimore Sun, on September 11, 1844, the following ad appeared: "FIFTY DOLLARS REWARD—Ranaway from the subscriber, living near Good Luck, Prince George's county, Md., on Monday, the 26th ult., my negro man Abraham, who calls himself ABRAHAM PROUT. The said negro is about 5 feet 6 inches high, 22 years of age, stout made, very black, and very pleasant when spoken to; no marks recollected. Had on when he left home, white summer roundabout, grey summer cloth pantaloons, and black fur hat. He has a father and mother living with a Mr. Little, adjoining the National Race Course, near the District of Columbia, where he may probably be lurking. I will give the above reward if taken and secured in jail in the State or Maryland or District of Columbia, or \$100 if taken elsewhere. ANTHONY C. PAGE, Good Luck P.O., Prince George's county, Md."

Anthony Page in 1849 sold George Prout to George Duvall of Prince George's County (Maryland State Archives, *Beneath the Underground: The Flight to Freedom*, electronic publication.) In 1862, city dweller Leonard Harbaugh and his wife Winifred Page Harbaugh held an enslaved young woman named Sarah Prout, age 30, and her children; Harbaugh acquired Sarah Prout through his wife; based on her age, she might have been a daughter of Delilah. (Provine, *Compensated Emancipation*, Petition No. 698, p. 171.)



the guardian of his niece Julia A. Little, who held four people enslaved, and his nephew John O. Little, who held one person enslaved.⁵

By 1861, therefore, there were a total of 17 enslaved African Americans living and working on John Little's farm, including 12 held by John Little and five held by his orphaned niece and nephew. The white people living in the household at that time were John Little and his wife Margaret, their five children, two women who were probably John Little's adult sisters, John Little's niece and nephew, and a male farmhand.⁶

In the District of Columbia, slavery was legal at the start of the Civil War in April 1861. Free and enslaved African Americans alike were subjected to a repressive set of laws known as the "Black Code." Among other things, the Black Code set a 10 p.m. curfew for all African Americans, prevented black people from meeting in groups for anything other than religious purposes, and barred blacks from testifying in court against whites.⁷

Free and enslaved African Americans in the District attended the same churches, worked in the same workplaces, and often lived in the same families. Leander Prout, enslaved by John Little, had a free wife, Sophia, and three free children.⁸

Despite the intermingling of free and enslaved people in the nation's capital, most slaveholders held tight to their property. Men like John Little exploited the system to full economic advantage: By 1860, he owned \$40,000 in real estate and \$17,000 in personal property.⁹ He bought and apparently sold enslaved people.¹⁰ He put enslaved people in jail.¹¹ There is no evidence in the public record that he ever voluntarily freed an enslaved person.

⁵ Provine, *Compensated Emancipation*.

⁶ 1860 U.S. Census of Free Inhabitants, First Division in the County of Washington State of D.C., p. 24.

⁷ Clephane, Walter C., "The Local Aspect of Slavery in the District of Columbia," Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Volume 3, Washington, D.C., 1900.

⁸ As an enslaved person, Leander Prout's name did not appear in the 1860 U.S. Census of Free Inhabitants; instead, only his gender and age were reported in the 1860 U.S. Slave Census, as one of 12 bondpeople belonging to John Little. But the 1860 U.S. Census of Free Inhabitants does list a free black woman living next door to John Little: Her name is Sophia Prout, 30, a washerwoman, and her three young children. Records following emancipation show that Sophia was Leander's wife.

In the 1850 U.S. Census of Free Inhabitants, the Little household counted two free African Americans: Ben Linton, 40, and Daniel Roberson, 19, both of whom were farmhands.

⁹ U.S. Census of Free Inhabitants, 1860.

¹⁰ In 1841, an enslaved man named Moses Bell filed a Petition for Freedom in the D.C. Circuit Court. He complained that he was purchased from Lawrence Hoff in Alexandria, Va., in 1837 by a man identified only as "Little," who resided in Washington County. According to the petition, Little sold Bell to a man named "Keeting", although it is likely the individual was John Reiling, a butcher near the Navy Yard; he was re-sold to James Rhodes, another butcher near the Navy Yard. In *Bell v. Rhodes*, an all-white jury found in favor of Bell, in part because it was illegal for Little to have bought Bell in Alexandria for the purpose of re-selling him in the District. The U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the lower court's verdict, and Moses Bell's freedom was secured. National Archives Record Group 21, Washington, D.C. Circuit Court, March Term 1842, Civil Trials #332.

¹¹ Hynson, Jerry M. *District of Columbia Runaway and Fugitive Slave Cases, 1848-1863*, Heritage Books Inc., Westminster, Maryland, 1999, pages 1, 46, 48, 87 and 95. Between 1848 and 1863, John Little



In the District of Columbia, there were three ways an enslaved person could become free. You could be freed voluntarily by your owner. You could strike a deal with your owner to purchase your freedom for a set price. Or you could run away, heading north to Canada to complete freedom or to a larger city like Philadelphia or New York where you might assume a new, free identity. If you decided to run, you might seek the help of sympathetic and courageous people, both black and white, who made up Washington's Underground Railroad.

In May 1861, Washington City began filling with thousands of young troops, newly organized in New York, Rhode Island, Ohio and other states loyal to the Union. They encamped on the hillsides surrounding the city, awaiting their marching orders. On May 27, the First and Second Ohio regiments--numbering about 1,750 men under the command of A.D. McCook--were sent to the northeastern boundary of the city, near a farm known as Bloomingdale, about two miles east of John Little's farm.¹²

The Ohio encampment and Bloomingdale were near two main arteries that lead north and northeast out of the city: one is today's North Capitol Street; the other is Bladensburg Road. The Beale family held slaves at Bloomingdale farm, but next door was a farm owned by Jonathan Seaver, a prominent Massachusetts-born Quaker.¹³ Jonathan Seaver did not hold slaves. He paid for the freedom of at least one enslaved person, and he testified on several occasions on behalf of African Americans seeking to certify their free status before District officials.¹⁴ Before he became a farmer, he was a clerk in the Treasury Department.¹⁵ He had free blacks living in his household.¹⁶ Jonathan Seaver was a trustee of the Quaker burial ground just north John Little's farm two miles away.¹⁷

committed six enslaved people to the city jail, including "Ben" in 1848; "Mary and two children" in 1855; Caroline Bush in 1855; "Robert" in 1860; and "Hortence" in 1861. The record does not state how these enslaved people came into John Little's custody.

¹²The Evening Star, Washington, D.C. May 24, 1861, "MORE TROOPS. -- *Arrival of the First and Second Ohio Regiments.*" On May 27, 1861, the National Intelligencer reported that the Ohio Regiments have "gone into camp north of the city." On June 5, 1861, the National Intelligencer reported: "Festival—There will be a Strawberry Festival held in the grove on the Bloomingdale Farm, the residence of Mrs. Emily Beale, near the encampment of the Rhode Island and Ohio regiments ..."

¹³ National Intelligencer, January 13, 1864, reported that Jonathan Seaver died in Brookline, Mass., his native state, at the age of 71. Seaver was described as "a much esteemed citizen of Washington."

¹⁴ Provine, Dorothy S., *District of Columbia Free Negro Registers 1821-1861*, Heritage Books Inc., Westminster, Maryland, 1996.

¹⁵ Force, Peter, *The National Calendar and Annals of the United States for MDCCCXXXV*, Vol. XIII, 1835, Washington, D.C. Seaver worked in the Second Comptroller's Office, where he oversaw naval expenditures. In 1835 he earned \$1,400 a year.

¹⁶ The U.S. Census for 1830 shows one free African American woman living in Seaver's household; the 1840 Census lists two free African Americans; the 1850 Census shows three free African Americans; and the 1860 Census lists three free African Americans in the Seaver household: Sophia Marshall, 55, a servant; John Cole, 40, a farm hand; and [illegible first name] Johnson, 45, a male farm hand. In 1838, Seaver prepared for Congress a report about the adequacy of clerks' salaries based on a diary of his personal expenses; he noted, "It may be proper also to remark that the \$95 for servant hire in 1835 covers two years' wages paid to a nonresident owner, and hence relates to 1834 and 1835." (The Washington Post, March 9, 1910, "Living High in 1836".) It is likely that this \$95 was paid to the enslaved servant's



In the excitement and confusion of Washington in the spring of 1861, 20-year-old Hortense Prout saw her chance for freedom. She disappeared from John Little's farm.

On June 17, 1861, the *Washington Evening Star* newspaper published the following:

A FUGITIVE – A slave woman belonging to Mr. John Little having eloped, Mr. Little made diligent search and ascertained that she was in one of the Ohio camps. He made visit to the camp and told the colonel commanding what he wanted, and the reply was, "You shall have her, if she is here." Search was made and the fugitive was found, completely rigged out in male attire. She was immediately turned over to the custody of Mr. Little, and was taken to jail. Every opportunity is afforded loyal citizens of loyal States to recover their fugitive slaves.

How do we know the fugitive was Hortense? District of Columbia jail records on June 15, 1861, show that John Little committed a woman named "Hortence" to the City Jail for "safekeeping." She was released to John Little 10 days later, on June 25.¹⁸

Six months after Hortense was jailed for "safekeeping," President Lincoln in January 1862 outlawed the practice by executive order.¹⁹ Less than a year after her daring escape attempt, the April 1862 emancipation act was signed by the president, proclaiming freedom for all enslaved African Americans in the District of Columbia.

After Emancipation

The first time the full names of the Prout family, Benjamin Purnell and Geoffrey McKenzie appear on the public record are in 1862. They are finally named because John Little sought compensation from the federal government when they were freed.

Under a unique plan, District of Columbia slaveholders who swore oaths of loyalty to the Union could submit claims to a special government panel to offset the economic loss

owner in a lump sum for her freedom, because on February 1, 1836, Jonathan Seaver manumitted Judy Godfrey in consideration of \$96. (Provine, *Free Negro Registers*, Registration No. 1372.)

¹⁷ Washington, D.C. Land Records, Deeds Liber WB 122, folio 58-60; cited on the Smithsonian-National Zoo website, www.si.edu/ahhp/holthous/cemetery.htm .

¹⁸ Hynson, Jerry M., *District of Columbia Runaway and Fugitive Slave Cases*, p. 95.

¹⁹ Clephane, Walter C. In 1829, Rep. Miner of Pennsylvania reported that 742 people had been committed to the D.C. City Jail during the preceding five years, "not one of whom had been accused or convicted of a crime;" 452 were lodged there for "safe keeping prior to exportation. On January 6, 1862, Rep. Grimes of Iowa introduced a bill to end the abuses in the City Jail. Finally on January 25, 1862, President Lincoln told Secretary of State William Seward to order the Marshall of the jail "not to receive into custody any persons claimed to be held in service or labor within the District or elsewhere, not charged with any crime or misdemeanor ..."



caused by emancipation. Slaveholders would submit a dollar claim to the Emancipation Commission for each individual who was freed; ironically, an experienced slave trader from Baltimore was employed to assess the value of each formerly enslaved person. For his 12 bondsmen John Little claimed \$12,850 and received \$3,636.40. This act was a US experiment in compensated emancipation, never repeated elsewhere in the US.

For historians and genealogists, the records of the Emancipation Commission provide a unique window into slavery in the District of Columbia.

John Little's claim, filed on June 21, 1862, for the first time reveals on the public record the names of the Prout family and the others he held enslaved in 1862.²⁰ He described them as follows:

- Delilah Prout, 63, black, well-built, over 180 pounds. She is an old woman of good appearance and a first-rate cook. (Little asked \$100; he was paid \$65.70)
- Leander Prout, 28, child of Delilah, black. He is a butcher by trade and a first-rate hand. He could easily bring \$25 or \$30 a month. (Little asked \$3,000; he was paid \$613.20.)
- Tabitha (Prout) Rigney, 25, child of Delilah, copper colored. She has a good appearance but complains considerably. She is a first-rate house servant. (Little sought \$1,000; he was paid \$350.40.)
- Celeste Prout, 23, child of Delilah, black. She is a healthy and industrious house servant. (Little asked for \$1,500; he was paid \$448.)
- Hortense Prout, 21, child of Delilah, black. She is a healthy and industrious house servant. (Little asked for \$1,500; he was paid \$525.60 for "Hortensi.")
- Kalisti Prout, 20, child of Delilah, black. She is a healthy and industrious house servant. (Little asked for \$1,500; he was paid \$481.80.)
- Narcissa Rigney, 7, daughter of Tabitha, mulatto. She is healthy and promising. (Little asked for \$300; he was paid \$175.20.)
- Fermore [sp?] Worthington, 5, child of Tabitha, mulatto. He is healthy and promising. (Little asked for \$300; he was paid \$87.60 for "Fermour" Worthington.)
- Matilda Rigney, 6 months, child of Tabitha, mulatto. She is healthy and promising. (Little asked for \$50; he was paid \$21.90 for "Ann Matilda.")
- Elsie Grey, 5, daughter of Kalisti, black. She is healthy and promising. (Little asked for \$300; he was paid \$43.80 for "Elisie" Gray.)
- Benjamin Purnell, 26, black. He is a butcher by trade and a first-rate hand and could easily bring \$25 or \$30 a month. (Little asked for \$3,000; he was paid \$613.20.)
- Geoffrey McKenzie, 50, black. He is a very good farm hand. (Little asked for \$300; he was paid \$219 for "Geoffray" McKenzie.)

²⁰ Provine, Dorothy S., *Compensated Emancipation*, Petition No. 744, p. 183.



Little told the Emancipation Commission he purchased Delilah and her two children Leander and Tabitha from slave traders B.O. Shekell and W.H. Williams in January 1839 “while they were on their way south.” Celeste, Hortense, Kalisti, Narcissa, Fermore, Elsie and Matilda were born while their mothers were held by Little. He purchased Ben from Mr. Darnell about 1844, and he purchased Geoffrey from J.B.H. Smith about 1847.

In addition, John Little filed a claim as guardian of his nephew John O. Little, who held in bondage William Crown, 33, mulatto, very strong, honest, good-tempered and an experienced butcher who hires out for \$25 a month; Little was paid \$549.60 for his claim. Little, as guardian of his niece Julia A. Little, filed claims for Lucie Simms, 25, described as a bright, good-looking mulatto woman; Lucie’s 3-year-old son Willie; Lucie’s 5-month-old daughter Lillie; and for John Hamilton, 22, black, very strong and hired out as a farm hand for \$25 a month. Little received \$2,200 for his claim on behalf of Julia.²¹

We don’t yet know what became of Hortense Prout and her sisters after emancipation; additional research is needed. There is no obvious mention of them on the public record, including the 1870 Census. But Delilah Prout, their mother, is listed in the 1870 Federal Census as living in a household next door to John Little. The household includes Thomas Evens, 30, a black farmhand born in Georgia; Mary Evens, 29, black, keeping house, born Maryland; Maria Evens, 2, black, born in the District of Columbia; Amelia Chase, 13, black, born in Maryland, and Delila [sic] Prout, 70, black, born in Maryland.²²

Hortense’s brother Leander Prout and his wife Sophia are found in the 1870 Federal Census, living in Philadelphia’s 8th Ward, where he worked as a “drug packer.” The Census indicates that Leander’s family shared a house with another family. The individuals in the household included: David Feeland, 35, black, a packer of drugs, born in Maryland; Melinda Feeland, 30, black, keeping house, born D.C.; Leander Prout, 35, black, packer of drugs, born D.C.; Sophia Prout, 32, black, keeping house, born D.C.; and Amelia Smith, 18, black, no occupation listed, born D.C.²³

Benjamin Purnell, 30, born in Virginia, appears in the 1870 Census in Philadelphia’s 7th Ward. He is listed as black and a laborer.²⁴ He lives in a household headed by Sarah Davis, 60, a black restaurant keeper born in Pennsylvania; also in the house is Frances Ann Simmons, 44, a black domestic servant born in New York. Military records also show that Benjamin Purnell served in the 31st U.S. Colored Infantry, organized in New York in 1864 and attached to the Army of the Potomac.²⁵ Living two houses away from

²¹ Provine, Dorothy S., *Compensated Emancipation*, Petitions No. 745 and 746, p. 184.

²² U.S. Census for 1870.

²³ U.S. Census for 1870.

²⁴ U.S. Census for 1870.

²⁵ Ancestry.com Civil War Service Records.



Benjamin Purnell in Philadelphia in 1870 is a household headed by Isaac Purnell, born in Maryland, who also served in the Civil War.²⁶

Jefferson McKenzie appears in the 1870 Federal Census for the District of Columbia in the city's 5th Ward. McKenzie, 55, born in D.C., is listed as a "man of all work;" he owns \$300 in real estate and \$100 in personal goods. Other members of the McKenzie household, all of whom were born in D.C., include Ann, 30, keeping house; Eliza, 7, at home; Ann, 5, at home; and Mary 2, at home.²⁷

William Crown, 45, is also found in the 1870 Census, working as a butcher and living with his family in the District's 5th Ward.²⁸ The household includes his wife and six children, three of whom are attending school.

John Little died in 1876 at the age of 71.

Questions and Speculation

We know the facts of Hortense Prout's escape, capture, and jailing. But we don't know whether she had the help of Washington's Underground Railroad.

Several elements of Hortense's story echo that of others whose escapes by way of the UGRR are known:

--She was hiding in the Ohio encampment, near two main roads out of the city. William Still in *The Underground Railroad* wrote about enslaved people hiding out until the "storm" of their disappearance "blew over." Most likely she was awaiting transportation from the Ohio camp and out of the District of Columbia, perhaps as part of a group.

--She was disguised as a man. William Still recounts several instances where women dressed as men to facilitate their safe passage.

--She might have had the help of sympathetic Ohio soldiers. John Little's farm was just steps away from the city's Quaker burial ground, where Hortense might have met sympathetic members of the Society of Friends, including Jonathan Seaver, whose farm was next to the Ohio encampment.

--Enslaved people from the Kalorama estate, bordering John Little's farm on the west, had successfully fled via the Underground Railroad into Philadelphia, according to William Still. Others from nearby farms also escaped.²⁹

²⁶ U.S. Census for 1870.

²⁷ U.S. Census for 1870.

²⁸ U.S. Census for 1870



William Still, in *The Underground Railroad*, wrote that “females in attempting to escape from a life of bondage undertook three times the risk of failure that males were liable to, not to mention the additional trials and struggles they had to contend with. In justice, therefore, to the heroic female who was willing to endure the most extreme suffering and hardship for freedom, doubled honors were due.”³⁰

Whether Hortense Prout acted alone or with help, her story shines a light on one young woman’s courageous quest for freedom, in what would be the final months of slavery in the District of Columbia.

S4a. Type(s) of Underground Railroad Association (select all that apply)

Station Assoc. w/ prominent person Rebellion site Legal challenge

Escape Rescue Kidnapping Maroon community

Destination Church w/active congregation Cemetery Transportation route

Military site Commemorative site/monument

Other (describe):

S5. Provide a history of the site since its time of significance to the Underground Railroad, including physical changes, changes in ownership or use of the building(s) and site.

John Little died in 1876 at the age of 71. After his death, his heirs sold off parcels of his 56-acre farm for the construction of houses and apartment buildings. By the start of the

²⁹Still, William, *The Underground Railroad*, Revised Edition 1878, Philadelphia, Pa. Still reported that in August 1857 three runaways arrived in Philadelphia, including George Johnson who lived at the Kalorama estate. His owner, Eleanor J. Conway, lived in Baltimore and hired him out in Washington, and was “very much opposed to freedom.”

³⁰ Still, William, *The Underground Railroad*, p. 68. Still made this observation in recounting the 1856 escape of Maria Dorsey from Washington, D.C.



20th Century, much of John Little's farm had become what is today's dense and diverse Adams Morgan neighborhood.

John Little's manor house stood in what today is Kalorama Park, a well-tended green oasis bordered by early 20th Century apartment buildings and rowhouses. Little's house was situated on what would have been the highest point of his land, about 200 feet above sea level, on a plateau overlooking Rock Creek valley to the west. His butchery was located on the eastern edge of his 56-acre property, at the headwaters of Slash Run, which was downhill and several hundred yards from his manor house.

According to a preliminary archeological survey of Kalorama Park in 1981, John Little's house appears on city maps up until 1894. The survey observed that "A 1927 aerial photograph of the site shows that the structure once on the site was gone by the time of the photograph. Shadows of the foundation and the driveway configuration are still clear, however."³¹

Kalorama Park is owned and managed by the District of Columbia Department of Parks & Recreation. The surrounding buildings are included in the city's Kalorama Triangle Historic District and the Washington Heights Historic District.

S6. Describe current educational programs, tours, markers, signs, brochures, site bulletins, or plaques at the site. Include text and photographs of markers.

Twice a year there is a free public tour interpreting the escape attempt of Hortense Prout, who was enslaved by John Little. A site bulletin is in progress.

S7. Identify historical sources of information. Include a bibliography.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: THE SITE OF JOHN LITTLE'S MANOR HOUSE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

--Ancestry.com Civil War Records

--Baltimore Sun, September 11, 1844

--*Bell v. Rhodes*, National Archives Record Group 21, Washington, D.C. Circuit Court, March Term 1842, Civil Trial #332

³¹ Preliminary Archeological Survey, 23 Recreation Centers, Washington, D.C., by Engineering Science, Washington, D.C. 2001.



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S8. Describe any other local, state, or federal historic designation, records, signage, or plaques the site has.

None related to the Underground Railroad.

S9. Is the site open to the public, and under what conditions?

The site is located in a public park which is open 24 hours a day. It is handicapped accessible.

S10. Describe the nature and objectives of any partnerships that have contributed to the documentation, preservation, commemoration, or interpretation of the site.

The Kalorama Citizens Association (KCA), an all-volunteer neighborhood group, co-sponsors a free, twice-yearly walking tour, "Who Was Hortense Prout? From Slavery to Freedom in Adams Morgan," as part of Cultural Tourism DC's citywide range of tours known as "WalkingTown, DC." The tour is led by neighborhood residents who are members of KCA and who have uncovered the historical facts of John Little's farm.

The rich African American heritage of the neighborhood is the subject of an extensive archeological study in nearby Walter C. Pierce Community Park. A Howard University team, at the invitation of neighborhood residents and with the support of the Kalorama Citizens Association and Washington Parks & People, is conducting a non-invasive survey of the Quaker cemetery and the Colored Union Benevolent Association Cemetery, where more than 7,000 people were buried in the 19th Century.

Among those buried in the cemeteries at Walter Pierce Park were many members of the Edmonson family, whose names are remembered as part of Washington's largest known Underground Railroad operation, in which more than 70 people tried to escape slavery on board the schooner the *Pearl*.

The Hortense Prout tour leads walkers through both Kalorama Park and Walter Pierce Park, describing Washington's African American community both before and after the Civil War, as well as the archeological investigation that is underway.

S11. Additional data or comments. (Optional)

The twice-yearly tours have drawn people of all ages and races. Most are surprised to learn that the institution of slavery existed in Washington, D.C. up through the start of the Civil War. They seem especially touched by the details of the people who were enslaved on John Little's farm. All are ennobled by the story of Hortense Prout's daring escape.

