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To cite this article: Nancy Perry & Nigel M. Waters (2012) Southern Suburb/Northern City: Black Entrepreneurship in Segregated Arlington County, Virginia, Urban Geography, 33:5, 655-674, DOI: [10.2747/0272-3638.33.5.655](https://doi.org/10.2747/0272-3638.33.5.655)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.2747/0272-3638.33.5.655>



Published online: 16 May 2013.



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SOUTHERN SUBURB/NORTHERN CITY: BLACK ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN SEGREGATED ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA¹

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Abstract: Most scholarship on racial segregation in U.S. cities retraces the Great Migration, from the rural South to the urbanizing, industrializing North. Arlington County, Virginia, adjacent to the large, prosperous black community of Washington, D.C., provides a unique opportunity to study processes that transcended this dichotomy. During segregation blacks were limited to living and doing business in three of the County's 38 census tracts. Using census data, telephone records, and interviews with black residents, this paper explores the black-owned businesses that grew in Arlington during segregation and the fate of those businesses following integration, concluding that the nature of the businesses was largely determined by the County's unique context. The black neighborhoods were dispersed, lacking public transportation, with insufficient residents to support the self-contained business infrastructure found in many segregated cities of similar size. Conversely Arlington's black residents were welcomed in the extensive black-owned business infrastructure of nearby Washington, D.C. [Key words: Arlington, black entrepreneurship, segregation, integration.]

INTRODUCTION

Arlington County, Virginia has been home to blacks ever since the 1600s, when black slaves worked on tobacco farms in the county (Rose, 2009). Until early in the 20th century, Arlington was largely farmland (Netherton and Netherton, 1987). Some black Arlingtonians are descendants of the original farm slaves, living on land their ancestors purchased from their masters (Rose, 2009). Others are descendants of fugitive slaves who fled to the District of Columbia (the District) and were housed temporarily in Freedman's Village on the grounds of Arlington Cemetery (Williams, 2006). Yet others were part of the Great Migration or are descendents of those migrants (Ruble, 2010). Unlike migrants to northern cities who moved to what once were white neighborhoods, or migrants to southern cities who moved to undeveloped land on the outskirts of town (Tacuber and Tacuber, 1965), black migrants to Arlington moved to established black neighborhoods built on land where blacks have always lived (Rose, 2009). With the turn of the 20th century, an influx

¹The authors wish to acknowledge the comments and suggestions of four anonymous reviewers that greatly contributed to the final version of the manuscript. We also wish to thank Steve McClure for help creating the map. Finally, we wish to thank the residents of Arlington's historically black neighborhoods who graciously invited us into their homes and businesses, and patiently answered our questions. Their kind efforts to help us understand this period in Arlington's history are appreciated. Thanks to Dr. Alfred O. Taylor, Delores Taylor, Irene West, Charles Collins, Hattie Oliver, Gary Barbee, Aaronita Brown, George Moore, Eddie Corbin, Arlene Corbin, Florence Ross, Loretta Reid, Welbe Deskins, George E. Jones, Sr., Una Warrington, Vivian Bullock, Mary Koblit, and Sandra Green.

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of whites moved to Arlington and a series of Jim Crow laws were passed, segregating the blacks in their historic neighborhoods (Guild, 1969). Severely limited in their ability to work with or shop in the white community, Arlington's blacks built businesses in their own neighborhoods. Largely working out of their homes, they supported their families and provided many of the goods and services needed by their neighbors. In the process their neighborhoods grew cohesive and self-reliant. Black entrepreneurs faced many obstacles during segregation, including the inability to borrow money from white-owned banks, buy land or buildings in white areas zoned for business, obtain business licenses from the County, hire white workers, or work for white customers.

Integration dismantled many of the barriers to blacks—where they could live, where they could shop, where they could work. Integration also removed the need for many of the black-owned businesses built during segregation. While most of the small businesses eventually had to close, the communities they had served remained cohesive.

This paper examines the black-owned businesses built during segregation. The questions it addresses are:

1. What forces influenced the types of businesses built by Arlington's blacks during segregation?
2. What impact did integration have on those businesses?

The paper begins with this introduction, followed by a review of the literature describing black entrepreneurship in American cities since the Civil War. A third section explains the methods used in the study. The paper then explores the black business patterns in Arlington during segregation, as the community struggled to meet their basic human needs, before describing changes in residential and business patterns after integration. Finally, the paper draws conclusions about the business patterns uncovered by the research and proposes several research projects that the authors intend to pursue.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In America's complicated racial history, black business ownership has reflected black status in society (Tabb, 1988). The well-documented history of black entrepreneurship in older northern cities with large black populations—whether the city is Chicago, Cleveland, New York, or Washington, DC (Drake and Cayton, 1962; Osofsky, 1966; Kusmer, 1976; Ruble, 2010)—has certain familiar themes (see also Boyd, 2011). Free black entrepreneurs established shops providing goods and services before and during Reconstruction (Birmingham, 1977; Bates et al., 2007), often catering to a white rather than a black clientele. The blacks were constrained in the types of businesses they could build, but they dominated the fields that were open to them, such as hair care, catering, tailoring, and shoe repair (Ingham, 2003). There were also limitations imposed by a lack of financing. To overcome their inability to make business loans they formed mutual aid societies—fraternal lodges—which grew into insurance companies and banks (Butler, 2005).

Blacks lost their monopoly in certain fields that had traditionally been theirs—e.g. catering—with the immigration of Europeans in the late 1890s and early 1900s (Boyd,

1998; House-Soremekun, 2002). Jim Crow laws, reflecting growing racial prejudice, made black business ownership increasingly difficult (Rose, 1985). Beginning around 1915 a massive in-migration of blacks from the South intensified crowding in black ghettos and worsened the already tenuous relations with whites (Wilkerson, 2010). Tabb (1971) compares the black ghettos to colonies, where a superior group (whites) exploits their economic control over the inferior group (blacks), subjugating them and making them politically dependent. The close dependency relationship that black business owners had cultivated with the upper-class white clientele withered (Massey and Denton, 1993). As opportunities for serving white customers became problematic, blacks targeted their businesses toward other blacks. Isolated in the ghettos, the black residents made a ready market for their fellow black entrepreneurs (Aldrich et al., 1985; Boyd, 1998; Butler, 2005; Boyd, 2010) who built businesses such as grocery stores, restaurants, banks, and beauty parlors and barbershops (Light and Rosenstein, 1995; Boyd, 2000b; Harvey, 2005; Wood and Brunson, 2011). Professional blacks—lawyers, doctors, dentists—were limited to serving an all-black clientele (Bates et al., 2007).

Black businesses suffered disproportionately during the Great Depression. Not only retail stores, but also black banks and insurance companies collapsed (Massey and Denton, 1993). Black businessmen with a large, densely packed minority customer base were more likely to survive (Ingham, 2003). Their customers were encouraged to display racial loyalty to the black-owned businesses (Butler, 2005). Black wage earners also suffered disproportionately at this time, as they were often the first to lose their jobs when a company experienced a downturn (Tabb, 1971). The disadvantage theory of enterprise posits that when a minority group is excluded from the labor market, when they cannot get jobs sufficient to support themselves and their families, they often turn to trade—to starting a business (Light, 1979; Fischer and Massey, 2000). During the Great Depression the response of many blacks, choosing between joblessness and self-employment, was to become survivalist entrepreneurs—“persons who become self-employed in response to a desperate need to find an independent means of livelihood” (Boyd, 2000a, p. 648)³. When necessary, women worked as domestics in white homes or did “domestic” work in their own homes—supporting their families as dressmakers, laundresses, and proprietors of boarding houses. Establishing hair care salons was especially popular, as the training was easily available, the cost of establishing a shop was low, their customers could not get served in white-owned hair care shops, and the customers preferred black hair dressers who, they felt, could address their special hair care needs (Drake and Cayton, 1962; Aldrich et al., 1985; Willett, 2000; Boyd, 2000a; Boyd, 2010).⁴ These businesses, often cash-based and unregulated, produced an irregular income (Boyd, 2000a).

Civil rights legislation was passed in the 1950s and 1960s, opening employment opportunities for blacks in the general labor market (Harvey-Wingfield, 2008). After the mid-1960s black enrollment in colleges increased dramatically, with more blacks earning business degrees than any other degree (Bates, 1997). These new college graduates were less interested in owning the small personal service businesses their parents and grandparents

³For an example of survivalist entrepreneurship in present-day Ghana, see Yeboah and Waters (1996).

⁴One of the interview questions asks the length of time that elapsed between passage of Civil Rights legislation and the informant's first trip to a white-owned beauty shop. The female informants all assured the authors that they still do not go to white-owned beauty shops—that a white beautician could not cut their hair properly.

had owned than in establishing high-yield niche enterprises (*ibid.*). Kollinger and Minniti (2006) found, based on 2002 survey data, that today's black business-men and -women, confident in their entrepreneurial skills, are twice as likely to try starting a business as whites. However, contending with lingering residential segregation in cities, and lacking the protected market that their parents enjoyed, many black entrepreneurs struggle to succeed in business (Fairchild, 2008a, 2008b).

Different factors influenced black commercial development in southern cities. There was not a large influx of European immigrants (Tacuber and Tacuber, 1965) into the south. However, they were often the destination for rural southern blacks during the Great Migration. Ingham (2003) suggests that the shape and size of the business community and the types of businesses found there reflect the origins of the inhabitants. Southern black communities tended to be built on undeveloped land on the outskirts of cities. Small service businesses, and eventually a main business street evolved, with a few "anchor firms" such as banks, department stores, or insurance companies. These anchor businesses gave the community stability.

Arlington County is on the margin between north and south. It is in a culturally "southern" state, yet it lies in close proximity to Washington, D.C. Arlington has a long history of racial segregation. Several factors contributed to that segregation:

- The Virginia Constitution of 1902 allowed cities and towns to define "segregation districts," delineating the boundaries of neighborhoods and providing the number of white and colored persons who could live within those boundaries (Guild, 1969). While this ruling was eventually struck down, it set the tone for black residential segregation.
- Until the U.S. Supreme Court made the practice illegal (1948) with the *Shelley v. Kraemer* decision (Ruble, 2010), white home buyers were often required to sign restrictive covenants, preventing them from selling or renting to blacks.
- Even after the Fair Housing Act of 1968 made it illegal to do so, realtors steered their customers to "appropriate" neighborhoods. While they were not legally restrained from helping a black person buy housing in a "white" area, concern for their professional reputation (and their agency's reputation) stopped many of them from doing so.⁵

This article discusses the constraints on the black community that motivated many residents to open a business and examines the motivation for establishing small, home-based businesses rather than large businesses. It also describes the customer base of the black-owned businesses and explores why most of the businesses provided services, but not goods. We learn where the community obtained goods that were not available in their own neighborhoods, and note the low post-Civil Rights Era survival rate of the businesses as their customers began trading at white-owned businesses once forbidden to them.

⁵Conversation with a retired Arlington real estate agent, July 30, 2011.

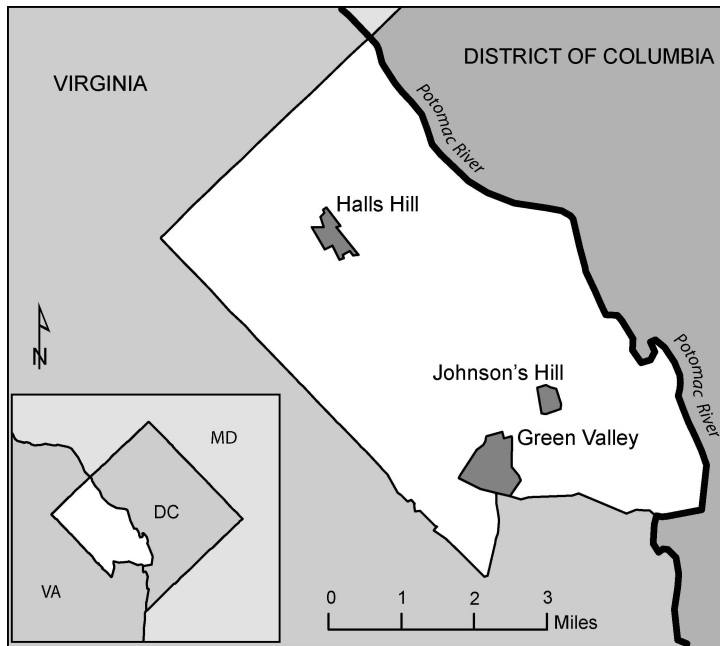


Fig. 1. Arlington County with its three historically black neighborhoods—Halls Hill, Johnson's Hill, and Green Valley. Inset map indicates that Arlington is in Virginia, separated from the District of Columbia by the Potomac River. Map by Nancy Perry, projection NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N.

METHODS

This paper uses data from the 1850 through 2000 decennial censuses. The boundary files and all the historical census data came from the National Historical Geographic Information System internet website at <http://www.nhgis.org>. Arlington County has 38 census tracts. In 1950, 80% of Arlington's blacks lived in only three of those tracts—tract 8 (Halls Hill), tract 31 (Green Valley), and tract 33 (Johnson's Hill)—so those tracts are the focus of the study (Fig. 1).

Abiding by state statute 010255, Arlington County is not required to retain business license records for longer than three years or the date of the last audit, so no official records remain of black businesses from 1950.⁶ The business license records, had they been available, would not have given a complete picture; blacks applying for business licenses during segregation were frequently turned down. Therefore, they often ran their businesses unlicensed out of their homes (African American Businesses in Arlington, 2005). Thus, no attempt was made to study the business licenses.

Census tracts were selected as the area of enumeration for two reasons. Arlington County was fully tracked by the 1950 census; i.e., 1950 is the first census for which data on a census

⁶Telephone conversation with an employee at the Office of the Commissioner of Revenue, Arlington County, May 18, 2010.

tract basis are available (NHGIS, 2004). The number of tracts and their configuration has not changed since. In Arlington the boundaries around the three black census tracts closely matched the boundaries of the three black neighborhoods. Johnson's Hill was completely black; the tract boundaries exactly matched the neighborhood boundaries. The other two tracts were 78% black; the tracts were slightly larger than the neighborhoods. Another 20% of Arlington's blacks lived in small enclaves outside the three large neighborhoods. Because there is no way to relate the census totals to the enclaves (Arlington census data are not available at a block group level or block level until 1990), the small enclaves were not included in this study.

Table 1 lists the total population; the total black, white, and "other" populations; and the percent of the population that is black, white, or other for each black tract, Arlington County, the State of Virginia, and the United States for the 1950 through 2000 censuses. Virginia, a southern state, has always had a higher percentage of black residents than the United States as a whole (NHGIS, 2004). However, Table 1 shows that the percentage of blacks in Arlington is smaller than the percentage of blacks in the United States in every census, and considerably smaller than the percentage of blacks in the state of Virginia in every census.

This paper discusses only two races—black and white. Table 1 shows that prior to the end of the segregation era in the mid-1960s, Arlington County was home to virtually no other races. As late as the 1980 census, only 2% of the residents of the entire County were of other races. This has changed dramatically, with a figure of 22% residents of other races in the 2000 census.

Prior to the emancipation of black slaves in 1863, the U.S. Census Bureau kept separate counts of free blacks and enslaved blacks. Beginning with the 1870 census all blacks were included in a single total, although the label the Census Bureau used for black statistics changed with the vernacular. Table 2 shows the terms the Census Bureau has used to label total counts of black persons.

The State of Virginia struggled with the definition of race. In 1866 Virginia law stated that "Every person having one-fourth or more Negro blood shall be deemed a colored person ..." (Guild, 1969, p. 33). In 1910, Virginia revised the definition, declaring that "Every person having one-sixteenth or more Negro blood shall be deemed a colored person ..." (Guild, 1969, p. 35). Finally, in 1930 the State made up its mind: "Every person in whom there is ascertainable any Negro blood shall be deemed a colored person ..." (ibid.).

The names and addresses of businesses located within the three black census tracts came from two sources. One source was a cross-referenced telephone book from 1950, the oldest such book available from the Arlington Central Library, which lists telephone numbers both by name and by street address (Hill's, 1950). Using an Arlington County map, a list was made of the names of the streets that ran through the tracts and their address ranges within the tracts. Any business listed in the telephone book on any of those streets within the address ranges was assumed to be black-owned. The cross-referenced telephone books, not to be confused with present-day Yellow Pages, contained every telephone number in the County. Individuals listed their name and, if they chose, their business. For example, Mrs. West—a practical nurse who hired herself out—listed herself as West, Irene (nurse). This gave only a partial listing, as only those businesses that listed themselves in the telephone book were included.

TABLE 1. POPULATION TOTALS, 1950–2000^a

Year	Area	Total	Black	White	Other races
1950	Halls Hill	1,613	1,251 (78)	123 (22)	0 (0)
	Green Valley	3,748	2,910 (77)	832 (22)	6 (1)
	Johnson's Hill	1,063	1,063 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)
	Arlington	135,449	6,517 (5)	128,780 (95)	152 (0)
	Virginia	3,318,680	737,125 (22)	2,581,555 (78)	n.a.
	United States	150,697,357	15,042,286 (10)	134,942,024 (89)	713,047 (1)
1960	Halls Hill	1,609	1,358 (84)	250 (16)	1 (0)
	Green Valley	4,522	4,472 (99)	48 (1)	2 (0)
	Johnson's Hill	913	913 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)
	Arlington	163,401	8,590 (5)	154,172 (94)	638 (1)
	Virginia	3,966,949	816,258 (21)	3,142,443 (79)	8,248 (0)
	United States	179,323,167	18,871,831 (10)	158,831,732 (89)	1,619,604 (1)
1970	Halls Hill	1,635	1,373 (84)	248 (15)	14 (1)
	Green Valley	4,691	4,360 (93)	319 (7)	12 (0)
	Johnson's Hill	1,046	1,041 (99)	0 (0)	5 (1)
	Arlington	243,942	14,790 (6)	225,181 (92)	3,971 (2)
	Virginia	4,648,494	865,388 (18)	3,757,478 (81)	25,628 (1)
	United States	203,211,926	22,674,586 (11)	177,656,092 (87)	2,881,248 (2)
1980	Halls Hill	1,360	1,106 (82)	222 (16)	32 (2)
	Green Valley	3,971	3,479 (88)	403 (10)	89 (2)
	Johnson's Hill	948	896 (95)	27 (3)	25 (2)
	Arlington	152,599	14,028 (9)	126,121 (83)	12,450 (8)
	Virginia	5,346,818	1,008,668 (19)	4,229,798 (79)	108,352 (2)
	United States	226,545,805	26,495,025 (12)	188,371,622 (83)	11,679,158 (5)
1990	Halls Hill	1,392	916 (68)	309 (21)	167 (11)
	Green Valley	3,875	3,055 (79)	547 (14)	273 (7)
	Johnson's Hill	1,189	815 (69)	261 (22)	113 (9)
	Arlington	170,936	17,940 (10)	130,873 (77)	22,123 (13)
	Virginia	6,187,358	1,162,994 (19)	4,791,739 (77)	232,625 (4)
	United States	248,709,873	29,986,060 (12)	199,686,070 (80)	19,037,743 (8)
2000	Halls Hill	1,455	660 (45)	490 (34)	305 (21)
	Green Valley	4,150	2,487 (59)	808 (20)	855 (21)
	Johnson's Hill	1,209	754 (63)	319 (26)	136 (11)
	Arlington	189,453	17,856 (9)	130,794 (69)	40,803 (22)
	Virginia	7,078,515	1,384,008 (20)	5,116,929 (72)	577,578 (8)
	United States	281,421,906	34,361,740 (12)	211,353,725 (75)	35,706,441 (13)

^aPercentages of total population are indicated in parentheses; n.a. = data not available.

Source: NHGIS, 2004.

The other source of business names came from interviews with 18 residents (hereafter called “informants”) of the three black tracts. During the interviews the authors’ telephone book lists were discussed, the informants identified businesses on the authors’ lists that

TABLE 2. U.S. CENSUS BUREAU LABELS FOR “BLACK” PERSONS

Census	Label
1850	Nonwhite Free, Nonwhite Slave
1860	Colored Free, Colored Slave
1870–1890	Colored
1900–1970	Negro
1980–1990	Black
2000	Black or African American

Source: NHGIS, 2004.

in fact were not black-owned, and those businesses were removed. Approximately half the businesses on the Halls Hill and Green Valley lists were white-owned businesses on commercially zoned streets on the boundaries of the tracts. Johnson’s Hill has no commercially zoned streets and no white-owned businesses were identified. Most informants remembered every business on the authors’ list and the race of the business owner. Several individuals from each tract were interviewed, and their answers corroborated. Race was important during segregation and the blacks were as aware of it as were the whites. At least one of the informants from each tract came prepared with a list of businesses located in his/her neighborhood during segregation. The informants’ lists were discussed and any businesses that were not also on the authors’ list were added. In this way a master list for each tract was created.

Nonprobability sampling was used to select the informants. The criteria for selection were that they were black, they reached their majority by 1940, and they lived in one of the three black tracts during segregation. The sample selection method used was snowball sampling (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998, p. 76). Snowball sampling involves selecting “individuals on the basis of information obtained from other selected sample members or from other individuals.” The informants included 6 males and 12 females with an average age of 80 years. Sixteen of the informants were born in Arlington, most of them prior to 1930; all of them reached adulthood in Arlington well before Arlington desegregated. The authors met the first sample member at a civic association meeting in one of the black tracts. Over time he introduced the authors to other potential informants. From June 2010 through August 2010 the interviews were conducted and recorded, and later transcribed. At the end of every interview the informant was asked for the names of additional individuals to interview. This method enabled the authors to obtain and meet a good representative sample with approximately the same proportion of sample members from each tract as there are residents in that tract. The four informants from Johnson’s Hill invited the authors to their homes, as did most of the 12 Green Valley informants. Three of the Green Valley informants continue to work and met the authors at their place of business. The six informants from Halls Hill met the authors as a group at a recreation center in Halls Hill.

During the interviews the informants mentally walked the streets of their neighborhood, describing the businesses. Depending on their age, different informants remembered different businesses but all of the informants from a given neighborhood remembered most of the same businesses. There was attrition among the businesses. The informants often

talked about a business, mentioning the business it replaced at that site or the business that replaced it. Arlington County is small (26 square miles); each tract is less than 0.7 square miles. The informants' world was so constrained by segregation, there were so many places that they were *not* allowed to go, but they clearly remembered the places where they *could* go. Some businesses probably were left out, but the authors feel the final list was suitable for our purposes.

In addition to discussing the lists of businesses, the informants discussed their business experiences during segregation, guided by a research instrument.⁷ Table 3 is a list of all the black-owned businesses in the three tracts that surfaced either from the 1950 telephone book or from the interviews with the informants.

FINDINGS

From the time the three tracts were settled (Green Valley in 1844, Halls Hill and Johnson's Hill shortly after the end of the Civil War), the neighborhoods grew in parallel, but also in isolation from one-another. Until the 1940s there was no cross-County bus service. The black-owned Hicks Bus Line ran a bus from Halls Hill to a transfer point in Rosslyn, where passengers caught a bus going into the District. The white-owned Arnold Bus Line ran a bus within walking distance of both Green Valley and Johnson's Hill to the same transfer point in Rosslyn. But no bus line ran between North and South Arlington, with the result that traveling to the District was easier than traveling to another black neighborhood. In 1950 the District had a much larger black population than Arlington. Of the 802,178 residents of the District, 280,803 (35%) were black. That large black population built a commercial infrastructure that blacks from Arlington were welcome to access (Birmingham, 1977; Ruble, 2010). The informants reminisced about trips to the District to buy clothes, go to a restaurant, or attend a performance. Every informant agreed that neither they nor their families ever traveled to one of the other black neighborhoods to shop.

A neighborhood's well-being and stability depends on the behavior of the neighbors (Massey and Denton, 1993). This is particularly true in a segregated neighborhood where poverty is endemic. If one resident chooses to neglect his/her property, indulge in crime, or exhibit other antisocial behavior it can spread to the neighbors. This did not appear to happen in the three tracts. Perhaps the fact that so many of the residents were related to the original inhabitants, the fact that no one could (and therefore no one did) move out, the fact that the tracts were so small that everyone knew everyone else's business, helped the residents to develop a strong sense of community. One Halls Hill informant said "You knew everyone. You knew every single house that was in Halls Hill at that time. You knew every person and they knew you. It was really a tight-knit community."

Perhaps the strongest influence in uniting each neighborhood was the small businesses that sprang up. As Ingham points out (2003, p. 665), "It is a great irony that the evil of Jim Crow, under which black Americans were subject to segregation, humiliation, and persecution, encouraged black capitalism to flourish." He notes that an unintended result of the establishment of the black-owned businesses was the way they helped to unite the black neighborhoods. In Arlington a number of businesses, mostly home-based enterprises,

⁷An Appendix with all questions asked of informants, divided into business owners and all others, is available upon request from the authors.

TABLE 3. BLACK-OWNED BUSINESSES IN THE THREE TRACTS

Business	Halls Hill	Green Valley	Johnson's Hill	Status
Baby sitter		2	1	Closed
Beer garden			1	Closed
Blacksmith			1	Closed
Bus line	1			Closed
Construction	3	7	7	Closed
Convenience store			2	Closed
Dance band	1			Closed
Dance hall	1			Closed
Dentist	1			Closed
Dry cleaner	1	1		Closed
Beauty school			1	Closed
Fuel (coal, wood, oil)	3			Closed
Funeral home		2		Open
Gas station	1	2		Closed
Grocery	5	1		Closed
Hair care	4	4	5	4 open, 9 closed
Ice	1		1	Closed
Ice cream parlor	1			Closed
Junk dealer		3		Closed
Kindergarten		1		Closed
Lawyer	1	1		Closed
Notary		1		Closed
Nurse	3	8	2	Closed
Pharmacy		1		Open
Physician	2	2		Closed
Pool hall	2	1		Closed
Produce truck	1		1	Closed
Real estate			3	1 open, 2 closed
Record store		1		Closed
Restaurant	1	4	2	Closed
Rooming house	1	1		Closed
Seamstress	4		2	Closed
Shoe repair		1		Closed
Taxi company	2	1		2 open, 1 closed
Trucking	2	1	1	Closed
TV repair	1	1		1 open, 1 closed
Watch repair		1		Closed
Window cleaner	1		1	Closed
Total	44	48	31	

catered to the people living in each enclave. Inspection of Table 3 shows that most of them offered services—few of the residents had the resources to open a retail business.

Locating the business in the home was born both of necessity and of convenience. It was difficult and expensive to buy land and erect a shop to house a business. It was cheaper and easier for the business owner, particularly women with young children, to run the

business from home (Boyd, 2000a). Some of the entrepreneurs were so ambitious that they ran several businesses at one time. One Johnson's Hill informant described a family in her neighborhood that ran a beauty shop out of their living room and a restaurant out of their dining room. The family of one Green Valley informant ran a taxi service, a restaurant, and a beauty shop, and sold heating coal, oil, and ice.

The informants all agreed that no whites ever came into their business establishments. The only exception was offered by the woman who ran a small restaurant in Green Valley. Her restaurant was close to the lot where County snow removal equipment is stored. She explained "We never saw any white people unless they were delivering beer or something. No whites came there to get anything. But the ones who worked for the County—the ones who had to work with snow, men who worked day and night, any color came. We made an agreement with the County that we would serve them breakfast and dinner too."

Food

The only white-owned businesses in Arlington where all the informants mentioned feeling welcome were the grocery stores. No one remembered ever being turned away from a Safeway or an A&P. Still, there were no Safeway or A&P stores in the black tracts; they were all several blocks away. Therefore, small groceries and convenience stores opened in each tract. It was difficult for the small black grocery stores to compete with the Safeway in price or selection. However, they had one advantage—a resident was allowed to purchase groceries on credit. One Johnson's Hill informant explained how the owner of the grocery store in her neighborhood handled her credit customers. "She kept what we called weekly accounts and people would pay her as they got the money. People would come in and want something and she had that book and she would say 'you still owe \$5'." Many of the informants mentioned shopping at the "Jew store," small groceries run by Jewish proprietors. Every tract had a Jewish-owned grocery. Some of the groceries also had small restaurants attached where beer and food were served. Hicks Grocery in Halls Hill, the Middleton Store in Johnson's Hill, and the Green Valley Market are examples of such store/restaurants.

Blacks were unwelcome to eat in white-owned restaurants. Several informants said that if their family went to a restaurant it would be to a black-owned restaurant in the District. Every tract had a few small restaurants, some of these located right in the owner's kitchen. One informant, the operator of the Shady Dale Restaurant in Green Valley, did all the cooking, dishwashing, and shopping herself, buying enough food for a few days at a time. Her biggest sales were Fridays when she did a fish dinner carry-out business for offices at the Pentagon. The Dun Movin' Restaurant in Green Valley was described in a video about early black businesses as being so upscale that blacks from the District traveled to Arlington to eat there (African American Businesses, 2005).

Housing

Because of the dearth of housing there was a big demand for the services of construction craftsmen and builders. White builders were unwilling to build individual homes for blacks. The son of a black building contractor from Green Valley explained "When blacks needed a house built they could only hire a black contractor so there was plenty of business.

There was never a lack of need for housing.” The construction trades were represented in every tract, including bricklayers, plasterers, plumbers, electricians, and general building contractors. Craftsmen worked directly out of their homes. Until integration, white builders refused to hire blacks, so most black craftsmen worked for black builders. Without competition from the white builders, the black builders had ample work—if they could find land to build on and get financing.

Finding vacant land was problematic. The three tracts were limited in size and land outside the boundaries of the three tracts was simply not for sale to blacks. Each informant, when asked to describe the black/white boundaries of his/her neighborhood, could list the streets beyond which no black could live (and within which no white would live).

When lots did go on sale, the problem was arranging the financing. Neither the builders nor prospective homeowners could borrow money from an Arlington bank. The son of the Green Valley building contractor explained “[He] couldn’t go in an Arlington bank to borrow money. He could go to the District to get money but not for a loan to build in Virginia. Banks were chartered in the area in which you lived so you couldn’t go to [the District] to get money to build in Arlington.” Often, according to the informants, the seller lent the money to the buyer, or the buyer found another person who would make a personal loan to him to buy the land and/or house. An informant who experienced such a sale in Green Valley said “If I had lots to sell I sold it to someone black, so we made an agreement with each other. Then we had to go to the Court House and register the sale.” One businessman who needed a loan to build a repair shop in Green Valley told of befriending a white man who eventually offered to lend him the money for his new shop, as long as he promised never to mention where he got the money. The Green Valley building contractor’s son discussed the secret to his father’s success. His father made friends with a white man who was a partner in a white mortgage and real estate company. This man funded the father’s construction projects and held the mortgages on the buildings once they were sold.

Transportation

Until the 1940s Halls Hill was physically isolated from both the other black enclaves and from the District. This isolation inspired two Halls Hill entrepreneurs to create taxi companies. Crown Cab is still in existence. The black-owned Hicks Bus Line took residents of Halls Hill to the transfer point in Rosslyn. This enabled the inhabitants of Halls Hill to reach jobs, shopping, and school in the District. Green Valley also has a taxi company, Friendly Cab, started in 1943. The owner’s son explained about his father “Well, he had the restaurant. I guess people would come in the restaurant and talk about needing a ride here or there and he decided he could open the business for them.” All the Friendly Cab drivers were black, many of them off-duty black firemen.

Personal Services

Skilled and unskilled personal services were available in every tract. Many of these businesses were home based, such as the 2 window cleaners, the 6 seamstresses, and the 13 home health care nurses. The watch, TV, and shoe repairmen operated out of small shops (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Blacks who needed their shoes repaired took them to Mr. Walker. His store was the only shoe repair shop in Arlington that served blacks. © Lloyd Wolf/Arlington Photographic Documentary Project. Reproduced with permission.

Each tract had several black-owned beauty shops and barber shops, most of them run out of the basement of the barber or beautician's home. One Johnson's Hill informant, emphasizing that these were professional hair care shops that just happened to be in the operator's basement, reminisced "They wore white uniforms. And when customers came, they rang the bell."

One of the informants was the daughter of the founder of the Friendly Beauty School in Green Valley (Fig. 3). By the time her mother retired she trained over 300 students. There was no lack of work for them once they graduated.

Professional Services

The literature (Bates et al., 2007) describes the plight of professional blacks, who could only hope to work in black areas with black clients. Such was the case in segregated Arlington. During the entire period of the study there were four doctors available to the residents of the three tracts, two practicing in Halls Hill and two in Green Valley. There were two lawyers, a single dentist, and a single pharmacist serving the entire Arlington black community during the lifetime of the informants. The two funeral homes in Green Valley are still in operation (Fig. 4), but the two private schools have both closed. In addition to the beauty school, a kindergarten operated in Johnson's Hill, started when the owner was unable to enroll her child in a white-owned kindergarten.



Fig. 3. Mamie Brown's Friendly Beauty School graduated more than 300 students, who went on to own and operate beauty shops of their own. Photo courtesy of Aaronita Brown.

IMPACT OF DESEGREGATION ON THE BLACK-OWNED BUSINESSES

The strong sense of community that developed during segregation survived integration. Almost every informant still lives in the same neighborhood where he/she grew up. When discussing their neighborhoods they remember virtually every address, every business, and every family. They were amused by the authors' suggestion that once the Fair Housing Act was passed blacks would move out of their tract into the white neighborhoods. A Halls Hill informant explained "Those [black] people who moved into the white areas of Arlington were people who came from out of state. People who moved out of Halls Hill moved to another state. They didn't move to other parts of Arlington."

Half of the informants continued to operate their businesses for several years following integration. All but 13 of the original owners of the 123 businesses listed in Table 3 have died. Of those who survive, only two continue to work in their business—the owner of the



Fig. 4. Black-owned mortuaries were guaranteed to have customers because blacks were unwelcome in white-owned mortuaries. The Chinn family opened their funeral home in 1946. It is still in operation. © Lloyd Wolf/Arlington Photographic Documentary Project. Reproduced with permission.

pharmacy and the owner of a TV repair shop. Most of the businesses (100) died with their original owner. A few (19) continued to operate for at least a limited period, some run by relatives of the original owner, the others sold to outsiders. Of those, 9 are still in operation. These include the funeral homes, 2 taxi companies, 4 barber/beauty shops, and 1 real estate agency. Only the businesses that required a large initial investment (a building, a fleet of taxis) survived integration.

None of the home-based businesses is still open. An informant from Halls Hill explained what happened to the home-based businesses in her neighborhood.

Over time they disappeared, but they certainly didn't just immediately go away. Even when Arlington integrated there wasn't this overwhelming "please come in" attitude. On our part there wasn't this "I want to run over there because now I can" attitude. So it took a while for those two pieces to merge because people here still had this sense of community and all these years they had been contained in Halls Hill. It took awhile for people to branch out.

While the black residents began patronizing white businesses, the white community in Arlington, much as the white community in other recently desegregated areas (Bates, 1997) did not, in return, patronize the black businesses. This may have hastened the decline of the black stores.

The informants gave various explanations for why the businesses finally closed. One successful Green Valley builder's children carried on their father's business for a time, but decided it was not to their liking. The son extolled the father's work ethic and explained "I didn't have that tenacity that my father did."

In several cases, business owners sent their children to college. The owner of the Green Valley TV repair shop explained "My kids are on a different level than I am in terms of education. [My youngest son] is very, very good at what he does. He has four or five people who work for him."

Still, some of the business owners hope to hand their businesses down eventually to their children. Asked what would happen to his Green Valley taxi company when he is no longer able to run it, the owner said "I have a son and a nephew. They might want to take it over. I have to have it in shape to hand over to them."

Each of the neighborhoods reflects the changes brought by desegregation. Halls Hill is a neighborhood in transition. In the 50 years of the study, the population not only became less black, but it declined by 134 residents. Because of its easy access to the District, Halls Hill has become attractive to buyers and developers of every race. While many of the original frame homes remain, interspersed between them are large, expensive new single-family houses. Lining the one commercially zoned street running through Halls Hill are new fast food restaurants and other commercial establishments. Green Valley is also in transition. Since 1950 the population has been reduced by 335 residents and become considerably less black. In 1950 there were only two residents who were neither white nor black. In the 2000 census 648 non-black residents lived in the tract, most of them Hispanic (Straight, 2004). As with Halls Hill, Green Valley is experiencing a wave of construction. A swath of land north of Four Mile Run was totally razed and a large development of townhouses and single-family homes is under construction. Many of the buildings that formerly held small businesses sit vacant. Between 1950 and 2000 the proportion of blacks in Johnson's Hill dropped from 100% to 63%. Johnson's Hill, like the other tracts, lost residents after desegregation—39 more people lived in Johnson's Hill in 1950 than in 2000. Johnson's Hill does not appear to be in transition. The houses are well kept, but little construction is in evidence. None of the streets in Johnson's Hill are commercially zoned and no new businesses have been built.

CONCLUSION

The objective of this paper was to explore the forces that influenced the development of Arlington's black-owned businesses during segregation. Arlington is a southern city in a southern state. Its black neighborhoods displayed some of the characteristics of a typical black settlement in a southern city as described by Ingham (2003) (small businesses selling services) but did not display others (a main black shopping street, anchored by one or more large businesses). Most of the businesses offered services rather than goods. The profusion of service businesses and the paucity of retail businesses reflect the general poverty of the neighborhoods, and possibly the inability of shopkeepers to get business loans at white-owned Arlington banks. Survivalist entrepreneurs offered services such as hair care, tailoring, babysitting, or window washing—businesses that required very little investment to get started. To minimize the expense of running such a business, the owners often located the business in their homes. Eighty percent of Arlington's black-owned businesses were home-based.

Although northern cities had black inhabitants even before the Great Migration, the black settlements in northern cities described in the literature review were largely occupied by rural blacks who fled to the cities, settling in neighborhoods close to the city center originally occupied by whites, swelling the numbers of residents until the neighborhoods became densely populated ghettos. Although Arlington also had a share of rural migrants during the Great Migration, they were not moving into an area originally occupied by whites. Blacks had always lived on this land, first as slaves when the land was still being farmed, then as owners of lots purchased from their former masters. So the new migrants were moving into old, established, cohesive black communities. Another difference from the northern model is the spatial pattern of the black communities. Blacks in northern cities tended to cluster in large settlements, most of the businesses being located along a few streets. Although Arlington's black community was large enough (6,500 blacks in 1950) to support a proper business district, the residents were dispersed in three small neighborhoods and a few even smaller enclaves. Each neighborhood grew individually when a specific farm was subdivided and sold.

Public transportation (bus) connected the neighborhoods to the District, but did not connect them to each other. Because the individual neighborhoods were so small (the largest had only 3,000 residents in 1950), and because the lack of public transportation meant that the only customers of a business were residents of that neighborhood, no business had a sufficiently large customer base to enjoy anything more than a marginal existence. The black community survived these trying conditions because of their proximity to the District, where a much larger black population had built an extensive business infrastructure that welcomed black Arlington customers.

We conclude that in its business development, black Arlington straddled north and south. Its business community had some of the characteristics of a southern black settlement and some of the characteristics of a northern one. The biggest influence on the development of the business community was Arlington's unique geography. Because the black community grew as three neighborhoods and several small enclaves, and because there was no public transportation connecting the neighborhoods and enclaves until the early 1940s, the business community never thrived. Traveling from the neighborhoods and enclaves to the District was easier than traveling between the neighborhoods and enclaves.

Because the District offered so many attractive shopping and entertainment options, there was little incentive for the blacks to build an extensive business infrastructure of their own. Only those things that were not worth the effort of a bus trip to the District were obtained in one of the small businesses in a resident's neighborhood. Everything else was purchased in the District.

Once Arlington integrated, the white-owned stores enticed black customers away from the black-owned businesses. A few of the larger businesses, having invested in a building, a fleet of taxis, or expensive equipment, are still clinging to existence. The customer base of the small home-based businesses grew too small to survive and they all gradually disappeared. This chapter in the history of the community came to an end.

FUTURE STUDY

The current study describes the black-owned businesses in the three black census tracts during segregation. The paper does not address the period after the civil rights era. The authors intend to follow the families of the original entrepreneurs, to learn what, if any influence their parents' experience running a business had on the children's career choices.

The current study briefly mentions the residential patterns of the black community. Using a number of indices of segregation, the authors will examine the black residential patterns in Arlington and compare that to the patterns seen in cities with an equivalent history, an equivalent size, or an equivalent geography.

Proximity to the District of Columbia also impacted the working lives of many blacks who were not entrepreneurs. Many of the informants, or members of their families, worked for the Federal government, usually in Civil Service jobs, as the Civil Service was integrated from the time it was created in 1883 (Krislow, 1967). The authors will explore how availability of government jobs impacted the lives of black families in Arlington.

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