

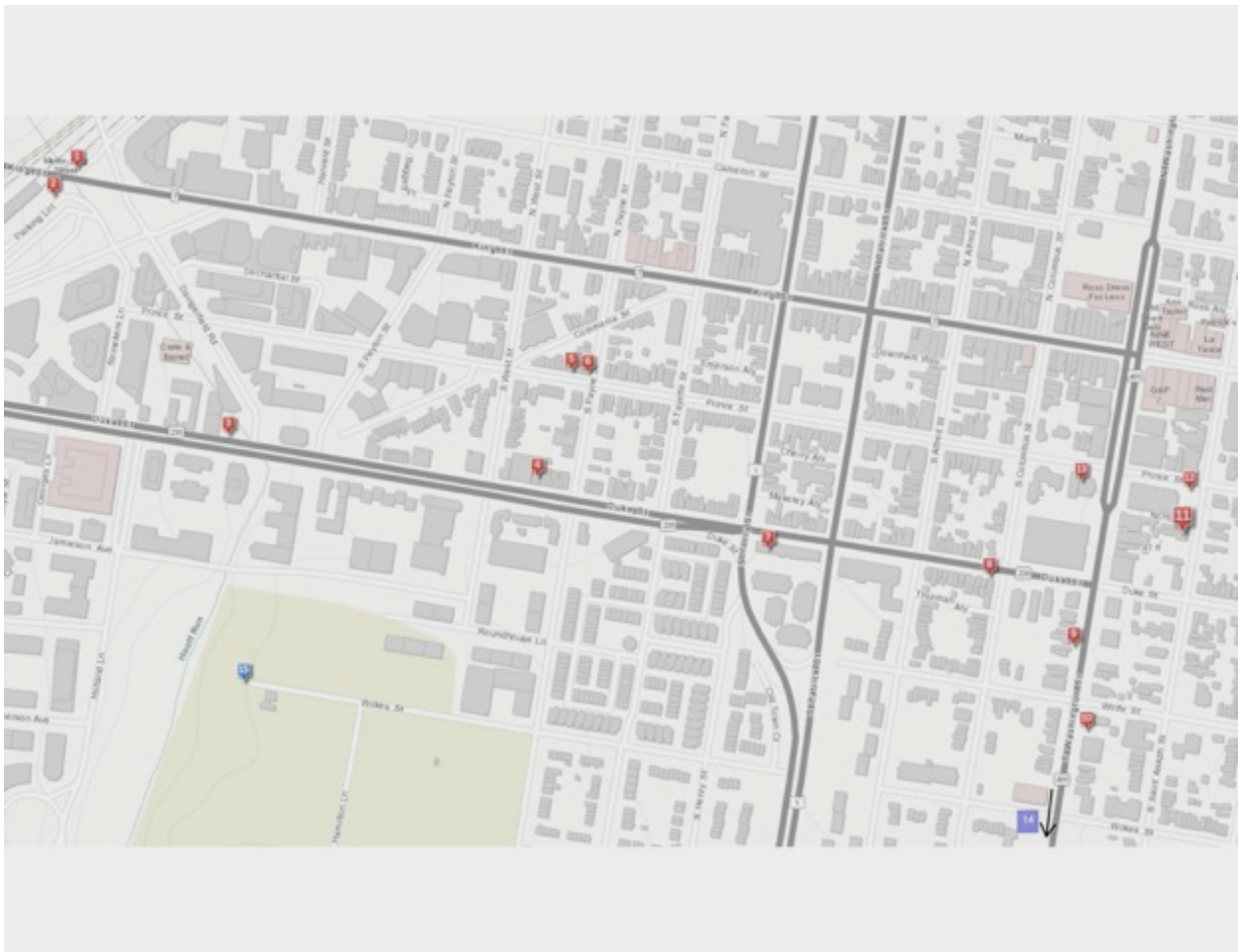
Walk in the Path of Julia Wilbur!

My book *A Civil Life in an Uncivil Time* tells the story of Julia Wilbur (1815-1895), who came from Rochester, NY, to work in Union-occupied Alexandria, VA, during the Civil War. Much of what she did lies within a fairly small area—with many of the buildings still standing or at least with historical markers—which inspired me to create this tour.

If you would like to “take” the tour at home or have Internet access while in Old Town, see it online, created through free version of ArcGIS:

<http://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapTour/index.html?appid=254cae97a3ef4f64994dc540b00df111>. NOTE: old photos are in the public domain; modern photos taken by me.

If not, use this guide, and we will be on our way. This tour starts at the King Street Metro as a convenient gathering point. It covers about 1.5 miles (an additional 1.6 miles to visit 2 cemeteries at the end, and 0.5 miles to return to the starting point). The main part of the tour (through stop #13) should take you 60 to 90 minutes. While you walk, take time to enjoy Alexandria’s other historic buildings, shops, gardens, and streets.



1. At meeting point: Introduction: Who was Julia Wilbur?

Julia Wilbur was born in upstate New York, in 1815 into a Quaker family—the 3rd child in a family of 7 girls and 3 boys. The only sibling not to marry, she began teaching school in Rochester in 1844. Rochester was a center for abolition and women’s rights at the time, and Julia became involved in both. In the 1850s, she joined a group called the Rochester Ladies’ Anti-Slavery Society.

In 1862, the Society asked Julia if she would come south to work as a relief agent—which entailed helping African Americans who had escaped slavery and sought refuge in Union-occupied areas, such as Alexandria and Washington. In fact, she assumed she would be working in Washington. When she arrived, armed with letters of introduction but no clear idea of what she would do or where she would live, officers of the Freedmen’s Relief Association asked her to move to Alexandria, where the need was greater. She agreed.



2. At the meeting point: Alexandria overview

Alexandria was founded in 1749 as a port. In 1860, the population consisted of about 10,000 whites and 2,700 blacks—about half of whom were free and half were enslaved.

At first, most white Alexandrians favored remaining with the Union. After Fort Sumter in April 1861, however, the mood changed. Virginia—including Alexandria—voted to secede on May 24, 1861. The Union Army moved into Alexandria and occupied the city for the rest of the War.

This “Bird’s Eye view” by Charles Magnus shows the grid-like concentration of buildings that surrounded the river. Looking east towards the river, the lay-out is similar today. Behind the King Street metro, where the tall Masonic Memorial now stands, were an array of Union forts and encampments.

When Julia Wilbur came to Alexandria in November 1862, she had to figure out how to navigate this landscape—both geographically and socially.



Walk across Diagonal Road, through the courtyard of the office complex, and cross XXX street. You will come to a building, Charles Hooff, Realtor

3. 1701 Duke Street: Joseph Bruin Slave Dealer, Mary and Emily Edmonson sculpture

In Rochester in the 1840s, Julia would have heard about Mary and Emily Edmonson, part of a group who tried to escape slavery on a ship called the *Pearl*. The sisters were taken to New Orleans where they would have been sold into prostitution—thanks to a yellow fever epidemic, they were shipped to Joseph Bruin, a slave dealer who occupied the



building that is now the office of Charles Hooff realtor. Northern abolitionists raised the money to purchase their freedom.

The sisters went to Oberlin College where Mary (old photo, on left) died of TB. Emily remained active in abolitionist circles. Julia Wilbur reported meeting her at least once in the 1850s when Emily was trying to raise money to purchase the freedom of one her brothers.

These individual cases personalized the experiences of slavery for northerners. In fact, Harriett Beecher Stowe said she used their experience of the Edmonsons when she wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the novel that went a long way in moving Northern sentiments against slavery.



Keep walking down Duke Street to the corner of Duke and West streets. You will see a sign on the corner to help orient you to this historic block.

4. 1315 Duke Street: “Slave Pen”/Freedom House

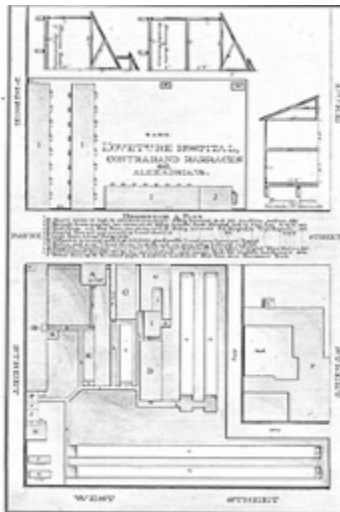
Now the headquarters of the Northern Virginia Urban League (with the Freedom House museum open Monday to Friday), this building during the war displayed the sign “Price, Birch & Co. Dealer in Slaves,” its prewar purpose. It was used as a prison and housing during the war. Here, Julia witnessed and officially protested a “shower bath” punishment, in which men and black women (no white women) were subjected to stripping and repeated dousing with cold water. Although not used to buy and sell people after 1861, it remained a forbidding place.



Walk to the next left, Payne Street. About half-way up the block, you will see a marker on a private residence, telling you this was the office used for L’Ouverture Hospital. Keep walking to Prince Street and a small jog left up Prince Street to the historical marker at 1702 Prince.

5. 1300 block of Prince Street: L'Ouverture Hospital
6. and Barracks

L'Ouverture Hospital opened in early 1864 for non-white soldiers (mostly U.S. Colored Troops). It stretched over several blocks, with wards, surgical and eating facilities, and the like, as depicted in a map created by the Quartermaster. Julia Wilbur and Harriet Jacobs often visited—including protesting the shower bath treatment to the Asst. Secretary of War in Washington.



The barracks for freedpeople (also called “contrabands”) nearby were in the works when Julia came in late 1862, but she helped move along construction and pushed for more privacy for the residents. Her nemesis in all of this: Rev. Albert Gladwin, Superintendent of Contrabands, more intent on charging rent and mistreating freedpeople than helping them.



Keep walking down Prince Street, take a right on Henry Street to Duke Street.

7. Corner of Henry and Duke Streets: U.S. Military Railroad

The army took advantage of, and greatly expanded, the railroads to bring supplies to the front and wounded soldiers back to Alexandria's hospitals. The military, under Gen. Herman Haupt, built 75 new buildings over a 12-block area here. Hundreds of civilians, white and black, built, maintained, and operated the enterprise. They included Benjamin Kimball, whose family kept a boarding house where Julia lived (stop #8), until he left under a cloud of suspicion for dealing in

black market goods. A special railcar for President Lincoln was built here. It became his funeral car.



Julia came here to take the train out to battlefields or greet soldiers. She left from Washington when she traveled north.



(laborers probably on the corner of Duke and Alfred Streets, according to researcher Tom Schultz)

Continue down Duke to the southeast corner of Duke and Columbus.

8. Corner of Duke and Columbus

This home was owned by Benjamin Hallowell, a noted Quaker educator before the war. As noted above, the Kimballs ran it a boarding house until spring 1863. Julia occupied a “small room above the kitchen.” She often visited with other boarders in the parlor—including women who accompanied their husbands or tended to hospitalized relatives. But she also had to hide much of her dealings, especially when she was exposed to smallpox, for fear of eviction. A rotating cast of characters stayed there until Dr. Charles Page, a Mansion House Surgeon, decided he wanted it for his family.



Head south on Columbus Street to Wolfe Street. Take a left on Wolfe, then a left on Washington.

9. 321-323 South Washington Street: "Corner of Washington & Wolfe"

This duplex was used by Julia Wilbur and Harriet Jacobs as a Clothing Room and it also served as a contraband hospital (north side) and lodgings. The photo, believed to be taken April 14, 1865, shows Harriet Jacobs, teacher Virginia Lawton, and Julia Wilbur on the top step, with Harriet's daughter Louisa right behind.



Walk across Washington Street to the SE corner of Washington and Wolfe.

10. 605 Wolfe Street (fronts to Washington Street): Alexandria Academy

George Washington helped fund the Alexandria Academy. When Julia Wilbur came to Alexandria for the first time in October 1862, one of her first stops was to the “Old Schoolhouse.” She wrote that freedpeople were living in overcrowded, dreadful conditions (including seeing 2 dead children). Soon, most went on to live in the Barracks (stop #6) or smaller quarters around the city.

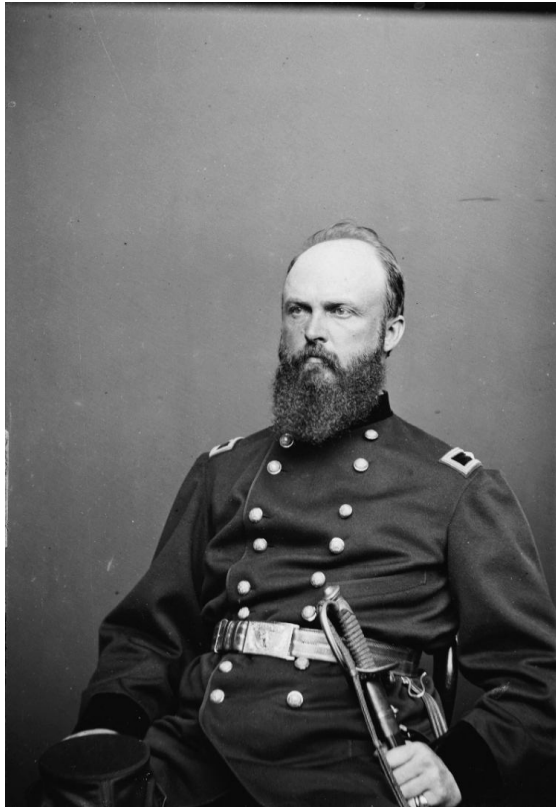


(postcard from early 1900s)

Walk along the front of the building to Wolfe Street, where you will see the Little Theatre of Alexandria. This site was the Quaker Meeting House. Take a left on St. Asaph's to 201-209 St. Asaphs.

11. 201-209 St. Asaph: Home and Headquarters of Military General John Slough

Secretary of War Stanton dispatched hot-headed John Slough to restore order in Alexandria in August 1862. Drunkenness, petty crimes, and prostitution were become widespread. Occupying an office and residence belonging to wealthy resident William McVeigh, Slough did indeed rule with an iron hand. On several occasions, Julia Wilbur and Harriet Jacobs came to Slough's office to appeal to him directly.



Head down St. Asaphs Street to the corner of St. Asaph and Prince.

12. Corner of St. Asaph and Prince: Provost Marshall office

The Provost Marshal, who was in charge of freedmen affairs, dispensing passes for freedom of movement, keeping order and other tasks, used a building one block over on King Street, which just has a modern storefront today. The building on the NW corner gives a better idea of what the office was like. Imagine Julia Wilbur and Harriet Jacobs having to cross this gauntlet of men when they needed to visit the Provost Marshal. The building was used as a bank and insurance company before the war (note the sign) and torn down around 1900.



If you would like, walk down to the waterfront about ½ mile east down Prince Street. If you go one block to the north (King Street), you will pass by the site of the Marshall House Hotel, now the Hotel Monaco, where Elmer Ellsworth and James Jackson were killed.

Or head west 1 block back to Washington Street, and take a left to end of up at the Lyceum.

13. 201 S. Washington Street: Lyceum

The Lyceum had been built by the city leaders as a sort of cultural mecca in 1839. During the War, it was used as one of 32 Union hospitals. Unlike L'Ouverture (stop #5), this one made use of an existing facility. It now houses exhibits, a gift and book store, and restrooms, so stop in. You will also see in front of it a Confederate soldier statue, facing Richmond, erected in 1889.



If you want to walk further, go south on Washington Street (about 0.7 miles) to the Contraband and Freedmen Memorial Cemetery. Or take a walk down to the waterfront (about 0.5 miles east) or just relax! Thanks for your interest. Post photos or comments on social media (#JuliaWilbur, #AlexandriaVA), visit my website (www.paulawhitacre.com), or email me for any follow-up (paulatwhitacre@gmail.com)

#14 1001 S. Washington St., Contraband and Freedmen Memorial Cemetery

In 1864, to accommodate the large number of freedpeople's deaths, a cemetery was built on these grounds. Over time, it was forgotten—an Esso station was even built atop it. Research and archaeological excavations resulted in its rededication in 2015. Genealogist Char McCargo Bah tracked down many descendants of those buried here.



Walk back up Washington Street to Wilkes, and take a left (heading west). Head up several blocks to an area with many cemeteries. Go to the end of the block.

#15 1450 Wilkes Street Soldiers Cemetery (Alexandria National Cemetery)

This general area became the burial grounds of several churches in the 1800s (and is still used by some). The Alexandria National Cemetery at the end of the street predates Arlington National Cemetery. After a successful petition and protest, U.S. Colored Troop patients at L'Ouverture Hospital (stop #5) were interred here with full military honors, instead of buried in unmarked graves at the Contraband & Freedmen's Cemetery (Stop #14).



Thanks for walking along the path of Julia Wilbur! For more information:

Read *A Civil Life in an Uncivil Time: Julia Wilbur's Struggle for Purpose*

Go to my websiteL <http://www.paulawhitacre.com> or Facebook page:
<http://www.facebook.com/ptwhitacre>

Visit any of the museums or other historic places in Old Town Alexandria or go to the Office of Historic Alexandria's website to learn more: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/Historic>

