

OPEN LETTER: To Residents of Nauck

Renaming the Community Green Valley

” Residents of the Nauck Community would like to rename our community “Green Valley. For unknown reasons, the County made a decision to officially change or refer to our community as “Nauck” and drop “Green Valley” many years ago.

The Present Nauck Community

The Nauck Community—bordered by Army-Navy Country Club, Four Mile Run, South Walter Reed Drive and South 16th Road---features African-American roots that predate the Civil War. Records from the 1840s show that free blacks like Levi and Sarah Ann Jones bought land, built homes and sometimes found neighbors by selling portions of their lots.

A surge of growth came with the start of the 20th Century when an influx of former slaves arrived as the federal government shuttered its nearby Freedman’s Village.

Faced with encroaching segregation, Green Valley residents became self-sustaining as entrepreneurs, educators, religious leaders, health workers and other professionals established an array of resilient neighborhood institutions. Several survive to this day.

Green Valley’s Origin

In 1719, John Todd and Evan Thomas received a land grant within the area that is now referred to as the Nauck neighborhood. Robert Alexander later acquired the land. In 1778, Alexander sold his property to John Parke Custis, whereupon the land became part of Custis' Abingdon estate. During the mid-1800s, Gustavus Brown Alexander owned much of the area that became Nauck, which at the time was called Green Valley. It has been stated that it is doubtful that any of the early settlers of Northern Virginia made a more significant and large-scale contribution to the development of Arlington and have received less credit and recognition for it than the Frazier’s of the Green Valley Estate. Anthony Frazier built Green Valley Manor in 1821 on what is now the Army-Navy Club. William Frazier, Jr. acquired from the Alexander family several hundred acres of ground straddling lower Long Branch, a tributary of Four Mile Run. The lands were known as Green Valley, perhaps named for James Green, who lived on the land near the present location of the clubhouse at the Army-Navy Country Club.

Green Valley Manor was cited in the floor of a valley about a hundred yards from Long Branch. The estate included what are now the Oakridge Elementary School, the Gunston Middle School, Shirley Park, and Arna Valley (Avalon), as well as land from Pentagon City and the River House almost to the banks of Four Mile Run.

The Frazier properties were extensively occupied and used by the Union Army throughout the Civil War. In 1924 Green Valley Manor was destroyed by fire, originating from causes that have never been conclusively established. This may be a hint to why the Green Valley name was dropped and Nauck established.

African Americans began to purchase property and settle in the Green Valley area during that period. Among the early African American property owners were Levi and Sarah Ann Jones. In 1844 Levi and Sarah Ann purchased 14 acres of land in eastern Arlington along Four Mile Run with a down payment of \$200 and an additional \$235 to be paid over a period of five years. Throughout the decades before and after the Civil War, the Jones family expanded their farm, sold land to fellow African Americans to help create the Green Valley neighborhood and become community leaders. By the time the Civil War commenced, Jones’ farm consisted of seventeen acres, twelve of which had been cleared for cultivation. Jones’ property eventually became the

southern extension of the Green Valley community. In the early stages of the community's development Jones' home served as a school, a church and a meeting house. Throughout the decades before and after the Civil War, the Jones family expanded their farm, sold land to fellow African Americans to help create the Green Valley neighborhood, and became community leaders. By 1900 this neighborhood in eastern Arlington County became the largest black community in terms of both geography and population. This large population supported both a church and school within the community. The early strength of Green Valley was due, in large part, to the presence of the Jones family who actively sold land to fellow African Americans. After the war ended in 1865, Thornton and Selina Gray, an African American couple that had earlier been slaves at Arlington House, purchased a small piece of property in the area in 1867.

In the 1970s the community started to become heavily referred to by "official Arlington" as Nauck, rather than what it was commonly known as. It then raises the question why was it still commonly referred to as "Green Valley" when it was recorded in Alexandria County in 1885 as "Nauck?" Was the new Arlington County, started in 1920 bound by recordings of Alexandria County? If they were not bound, why did they continue to refer to it as Green Valley for the first 50 years of its existence (1920-1970)? Was it because John D. Nauck was a former Confederate Army soldier and the Green Valley Manor was extensively occupied and used throughout most of the Civil War by the Union Army?

During 1874-1875, ***John D. Nauck, a former Confederate Army soldier who had immigrated from Germany***, purchased parcels of land in South Arlington (some 30 years after Levi and Sarah Ann Jones) and began subdividing it. Prior to that time the area was known as Green Valley. Some articles state he purchased 69 parcels (acres) and others state he purchased 46 parcels (acres). John Nauck held at least one political office in the area, lived on his property and subdivided and sold the remainder. During the post-war period, the area attracted several African American families residing in Freedman's Village and other locations. In 1876, **William Augustus Rowe**, an African American who lived in Freedman's Village and was elected to a number of political positions, was among those who purchased property in the area during that period. Green Valley grew slowly during the late nineteenth century. Again it raises the question, why their names were not considered?

In 1874, a congregation initially organized in Freedman's Village purchased land in the area on which to relocate a building containing an African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, (the Lomax A.M.E. Zion Church). The church's building housed a public school that was later known as the Kemper School. In 1885, the Alexandria County school board built a one-room school nearby. The board constructed a new two-story brick school in 1893 on South Lincoln Street. The Arlington County school board later replaced that building with a larger facility that now contains the Drew Model Elementary School.

While the Nauck community's origins predate the Civil War and John D. Nauck, African American families like the Jones family formed a seed for the future, the community's growth, particularly the first half—of the twentieth century was fed by migration. In particular, Green Valley became a station on a migration that traces to the end of the Civil War and the establishment of Freedman's Village in Arlington following the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863.

From its earliest days and throughout most—and particularly the first half—of the twentieth century, Green Valley and other African American communities were largely excluded from full participation in mainstream American political and social life and commerce. As a result, communities had to "do for themselves." They made their own institutions, and they did their

best to provide services for themselves and their neighbors. They also made their own fun. Community churches facilitated many of these activities.

However, the 1902 Virginia Constitution, which established racial segregation throughout the state and restricted the rights of African Americans, stopped the neighborhood's expansion. African American property owners continued to subdivide their lands to accommodate more people, but Nauck's boundaries largely remained unchanged.

During World War II, the federal government constructed Paul Lawrence Dunbar Homes, an 11 acres segregated barracks-style wartime emergency low-income housing community for African Americans in Green Valley. The government built this affordable housing project on a parcel of land at Kemper Road and Shirlington Road that Levi Jones and his family had once owned. Meanwhile, construction of The Pentagon and its surrounding roads during the war destroyed several older African American communities. Some of those communities' displaced residents relocated to Green Valley, thus stimulating the neighborhood's development and increasing its African American population. By 1952, few blocks in Green Valley were still vacant. Others were built nearly to capacity. The neighborhood continued to develop during the remainder of the 20th century along the lines established many years earlier. In 2013, the Arlington County Board designated the Green Valley Pharmacy in Nauck as a local historic district. Not only did many of the businesses carry the surname Green Valley, e.g., Green Valley Carryout, Green Valley Blacksox, Green Valley Park, etc., but it was identified as that by most areas of the DMV until its present identification as Nauck. Additionally, the busses and street cars before them ran from their terminus in Rosslyn to its terminus in Green Valley, only extending to Shirlington after its extension of Seminary Road.

Rational for Change to Include the Name Green Valley

William Frazier, Jr. acquired from the Alexander family several hundred acres of ground straddling lower Long Branch, a tributary of Four Mile Run. The lands were known as Green Valley, perhaps named for James Green, who lived on the land near the present location of the clubhouse at the Army-Navy Country Club. From that time, then a part of Alexandria County, through the establishment of Arlington County until circa 1970 the area was referred to and known as Green Valley. In the 1970s the three areas where most of its African American population was residing, underwent a name change, i.e., Green Valley became Nauck, Halls Hill became High View Park and Johnson Hill became Arlington View without the knowledge of the residents as to why. It was under the name of Green Valley that its pioneers surviving Jim Crow Laws, black codes, lacking financial backing, becoming economically independent, educating themselves and their children, fighting for freedom' and remembering from whence they came, served as an inspiration to all to celebrate and continue sharing past and present, ordinary Green Valley resident's accomplishments. It is this memory we seek to memorialize of the important work of what those residents of Green Valley achieved and the legacy they leave for future generations.

Taking a page from the following "It's time to talk about the names of our schools and what they mean and why they matter," Barbara Kanninen, School Board Chair, said at an August 2017 meeting, "It is also time to talk about our communities and the values these names reflect and the messages we are sending, not only to our children, but to our future residents." Residents of the Nauck Community would like to rename their community "Green Valley/Nauck, (although we prefer the name Nauck excluded," as it was so named and still referred to before for unknown reasons, the County made a decision to officially change or refer to it as the Nauck community and drop "Green Valley,"

Although the Jones family purchased and starting selling parcels of their land, some 30 years before John D. Nauck, raises the question, “if the name of the area was referred to as Green Valley from its inception in the 1700s to the 1970s,” why was the name “Nauck” selected and not one of the early African American residents who contributed to its growth, i.e., Jones, Gray or Rowe”? We find no record or evidence linking Nauck to efforts to improve the quality of life for its residents.

Unlike today’s process utilized by the Arlington Civic Federation in allowing its Civic Associations to select the name of the area and its Association, the Green Valley residents were not afforded that opportunity. Today, we are asking for that opportunity by requesting our community once again become the Green Valley/Nauck community in keeping with its rich history. In today’s time for the community to be named after John D. Nauck, a former Confederate Army soldier and developer who was not known to have made any other contribution to the improvement of the quality of life or values of the residents of Green Valley is not the message we want to send to our children or future residents. Look at many of the local, national and international contributions that were made by the residents under the banner of Green Valley and to let that name slip into nothingness would be a travesty to their memory.

Borrowing further from the schools direction, supporters of the renaming — “Nauck” to include its original name “Green Valley”—argued that it is inappropriate for the diverse community to venerate a person who fought to preserve slavery and whose memory evokes painful reminders of laws that segregated and excluded African Americans from public life.

Written by Dr. Alfred O. Taylor, Jr.

Please let us know what you think of changing our name back to Green Valley.

Submitted by Portia A. Clark, President of Nauck Civic Association

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