

**Virginia Slave Quarter Catalogue, 2021**  
Records from the Department of Historic Resources VCRIS

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This is a compilation of identified slave and servant quarters , kitchen quarters, and kitchens within the files of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR), Richmond, Virginia. Initially, a simpler draft of this work was completed in March 2021 to support the ongoing and thorough documentation of buildings for the Virginia Slave Housing, Inc. project. At that time, it was realized that many additional resources were present but time restraints limited their gleaning from the files.

The directors of the Virginia Slave Housing, Inc. project are Dr. Dennis J. Pogue of the University of Maryland, School of Architecture, Planning & Preservation and Dr. Douglas W. Sanford, Professor emeritus from the Department of Historic Preservation, University of Mary Washington. Both have extensive training and education in historic preservation and archaeology and their combined experience in Virginia exceeds 70 years. Together they have been extensively documenting quarters of enslaved Virginians since 1988. Their historical research for particular properties is extremely thorough. They also conduct detailed observations, make exacting measurements and supplement the documentation of pre-1865 buildings with numerous photographs and other digital documentation. Several opportunities as a volunteer with this group have demonstrated how this catalogue could benefit their research as well as be helpful to others.

The attached spreadsheet lists all of the records for slave and servant quarters, kitchen quarters, and detached kitchens currently inventoried with DHR's Virginia Cultural Resource Information System (VCRIS). This system is the Virginia statewide electronic cultural resources GIS and database. It provides interactive views of information in the DHR Archives related to properties, historic districts, and archaeological sites, and presents evaluative information about the historic significance of resources. Individual survey records have been created by numerous researchers including architects, architectural historians, other historians, archaeologists, historic preservationists, students, property owners, and others simply interested in documenting and preserving Virginia's significant history. With standing buildings it might be only a matter of time before they are lost to the elements, or to vandalism, demolition or natural catastrophe. Therefore, the task of identifying and documenting these resources is important for being able to tell a more complete history of Virginia.

Records of slave quarters among other historical and archaeological findings systematically have been recorded since 1935 following the creation of the federal Historic Sites Act that created the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS). The HABS brought together documentation among the National Park Service, the Library of Congress and the private sector. There are approximately 200 Virginia properties documented by HABS.

This catalogue has benefitted from others' work and inventorying efforts developed, coordinated, and supported by DHR since its establishment in 1967. As the Commonwealth's State Historic Preservation Office, DHR's mission is to foster, encourage, and support the stewardship and use of Virginia's significant architectural, archaeological, and historic resources as valuable assets for the economic, educational, social, and cultural benefit of citizens and communities (cf. [DHR.virginia.gov](http://DHR.virginia.gov)). The agency was created following the enactment of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The agency maintains more than 250,000 records of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture. This is an ongoing process of inventorying historic properties and sites with more than a thousand new entries added each year. Initial documentation recorded the traditional "historic landmarks" such as 18th-century plantation houses or grand public buildings, or churches and courthouses. More recently, survey have begun looking more broadly toward the other components that support the grander properties. As this catalogue clearly shows, some have simply noted the presence of a slave building while having focused their studies on the more elaborate dwellings of the masters. What has become clear is that more detailed descriptions, measurements, and other documentation is sorely needed to better complete those data for these identified slave quarters, kitchen quarters, and kitchens, while also locating additional properties.

This catalogue has been organized according to the VCRIS statewide database. Each County, City and Historic District was assigned a trinomial number beginning with 000, and then as properties were recorded, each was given a separate numerical listing. As new properties are submitted, staff at the DHR review them for completeness and accuracy before the files are added to the database. However, the records are only as good as the information supplied.

Given the need for protecting landowners and significant historic resources, the locations within this catalogue are limited to the locality and assigned inventory numbers. To obtain more specific locations and GIS coordinates, researchers will need to obtain a VCRIS license or coordinate their survey efforts with DHR staff.

This catalogue provided descriptions of resources as submitted with the inventory record. Some surveyors provided greater details. Others of the records also contained photographs, which for this catalogue helped in determining whether certain buildings exhibited characteristics of known slave quarters.

Only standing buildings where the enslaved people lived have been included in this catalogue. Archaeological sites were not included; that should be a future study. The initial review of VCRIS records using its Advanced Search Options included the Resource Types Slave/Servant Quarters and Kitchen, less than 1865. Most of the listings were for 19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings, however some also were dated from the 18<sup>th</sup>-century. Not included in the catalogue were resources that post-dated 1865 unless the primary resource was dated earlier, suggesting the quarter might have been incorrectly dated. Ruins or buildings that were subsequently demolished are included and the entries have been highlighted in orange to separate them from still standing buildings.

This catalogue is comprised of **1,652 entries**. Within that total are 157 resources that either are in ruins or have been demolished. As is plainly visible, further survey work is warranted to better document many of the listings and to determine if subsequent losses have occurred. Within this listing are resources found in 199 localities. Previous compilations had far fewer distributions.

To date, this list is the most complete compilation of slave quarters yet to be obtained from the VCRIS records. The reason being is that in addition to searching for slave/servant quarters it also included kitchens and kitchen quarters. For the purposes of this catalogue, when a pre-1865 kitchen has been recorded, it is logically assumed that it contained a sleeping area for the cook or cook's family. Such a sleeping arrangement could have been simply a bed on the first floor or a dedicated space above within a garret, loft or second story.

As previously noted this catalogue depended upon the surveyors including key words in the resource type as slave/servant quarter or kitchen-quarter. However, this study also reviewed all of the files for buildings that pre-dated 1865, thousands and thousands of records, as many included within their discussions of the resource key words that that for whatever reason were not pulled out as resource type. Nearly 1,000 additional records were assembled in this catalogue that heretofore were not easily seen. It is hoped that future fieldwork will verify these listings and elaborate on everything that the buildings offer. Further, it is hoped that researchers not only will record details of the buildings but also will take photographs of the buildings.

Despite the length of the catalogue (325 spreadsheet pages), sadly it is only a sampling of what likely had been present in Virginia from 1619 until 1865. Some localities, particularly in the eastern portion of Virginia where the earliest plantations existed and which now generally have been moved out of agriculture and into urban development had many other slave-related buildings.

One observation made while plodding through these files was the need to better standardize the level and extent of recordation that is performed when a slave quarter is identified. Photographs are really important to identifying the purpose of outbuildings and dependencies.

Architectural surveyors should be provided with a guide as to what to look for in determining whether an outbuilding had been a slave quarter, kitchen quarter or other type of service building. Academics need to better educate their students so they can more accurately record and document these important historic resources.

Perhaps DHR will consider providing survey grants to individuals, groups, or organizations to better record and document these resources on a countywide basis. As this catalogue has found there remain plenty of resources to more fully document. The work should move forward before more are lost to time, neglect, vandalism or decay.

Recently, many scholars have taken an interest, therefore, this catalogue needs to be widely circulated among researchers and organizations that have an interest and would be willing to help fill in the gaps in the database. The DHR might want to either reformat this work into a publication that could more easily be circulated and enclose some photographs or other documentation of existing slave quarters. However you choose to use this baseline information, it seems certain this work will be a major benefit.