

# The Ward Historic Jackson Ward Association

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Driving west on Clay Street one block past Adams Street or south on Brook Road from Leigh Street, you come across an oasis in Historic Jackson Ward. The

first thing you see will probably be either the colorful play apparatus on the tot lot or the gazebo in the middle of the plaza area. The park is a centerpiece and stage for many neighborhood activities. Many ask, just who was Abner Clay?

## ABNER CLAY PARK A NEIGHBORHOOD JEWEL



**Abner Clay Park, Jackson Ward Richmond**

Clay Street was not named for him but it could very well have been. According to information provided to the Historic Jackson Ward Association by Mrs. Joyce Clay Dennis, Mr. Clay's daughter who grew up in Jackson Ward, on West Clay Street and now lives on Richmond's North Side in Ginter Park, an article in the now-defunct Richmond Afro-American newspaper described Mr. Clay as "a business and civic leader in Jackson Ward for more than 50 years until his death in 1979." He was born in Richmond on October 3, 1903 to Edward and Bettie Clay. The newspaper reported that he took "...an active role in the development of plans for use of community development block grant funds in the Central Wards area (prior to being known as Jackson Ward, the area was designated as "the Central Wards").

In 1964, Mr. Clay and his wife, Margaret helped organize the Central Improvement Association or CIA (now known as the Historic Jackson Ward Association) and served as presi-

dent for nine years until his death. He retired in 1975 after fifty-four years of service with the Southern Aid Life Insurance Company. He was also an active member of the Crusade for Voters, Historic Jackson Ward Foundation, Central Wards Project Area Committee and the Tehbans Beneficial Club. He was also the church treasurer and a vestry member of the St. Phillip's Episcopal Church.

Margaret Watkins Clay described herself as a "pusher" in a newspaper article published August 3, 1984. She had lived in Central Wards (now Historic Jackson Ward) at the same address on West Clay Street for 46 years. The article stated she wanted to improve her neighborhood. Her method was persistence and her weapon was the telephone. She was told by a friend that "You know, your name rings a bell down at City Hall."

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## S C O O P   T H A T   P O O P

When I moved into this historical area of the city, ten plus years ago, there were very few dogs running around loose, unleashed and disowned. If one was spotted, it was always leashed to a responsible human. Walking along at a steady clip, they sniffed out new discoveries and drooled from aromas swirling through their nostrils as they passed local eateries. And there was the occasional human friend who'd slow up during a daily jog, long enough for a friendly scratch behind the ear. The main goal of these walks was the opportunity for "man's best friend" to "do his/her business" which their owners immediately scooped for later disposal. Everything was copacetic.

Now, an increased number of canine companions can be seen all through the Jackson Ward community. But, now it seems as if a problem which once was an occasional mishap has grown into a menacing aggravation.

There is nothing more disgusting than stepping in a mound of dog excrement, "poop", "doo-doo", "you-know-what", etc. It's left on our sidewalks, alley ways, and in private yards. Then, once the "doing is done", they both move along as if their pet has just laid gold or at least provided a special nutrient for Jackson Ward flora.



Because of Jackson Ward's history and its sacrifices, I have always felt its mere survival, continued existence and viability earned it the right to be treated with dignity and respect. You know, the way in which one would treat their grandparents. Would you let your dog poop on your Nana's patio or sidewalk, in Big Mama's front yard or beside Pop-Pop's car? Then, just hop away like the Easter Bunny? I think not. But, it appears there are quite a few of you who are doing exactly that!

Last spring, during a community "Knock-and-Talk" conducted by the Richmond Police Department; Jackson Ward residents walked varying routes that took us all through the neighborhood. It was great to talk with citizens about safety in the neighborhood as well as encouraging residents to keep their blocks clean. Along the way however, we continued to encounter the nasty, nasty crime of dog poop; scattered all over the sidewalks, etc. At some points, we had to "hop-scotch" into the street to avoid many signs of how some folk have no respect for our community or their neighbors.

There have also been reports of residents who have caught dogs in the act of pooping on their property. These owners have been confronted about allowing their dogs to poop on a person's property and...I could hardly believe this myself but; the dog owner actually talked "trash" to the owner of the property on which the dog has just relieved itself. That's not a good idea especially when there are crazy people in the world and laws on the books that speak clearly about dog excreta. Even if a jurisdiction does not fine you, you still may face a legal penalty for leaving dog poop behind.

My good friends at [Richmond Animal Care and Control](#) sent me a copy of their “Animal Code Brochure” and directed me to the following section:

Laws that require dog owners to clean up after their pets—so-called "pooper scooper laws"—have been enacted in a few jurisdictions to help curb the messes dogs might leave behind. Not only do “pooper-scooper” laws help keep an area cleaner, they may also help prevent the spread of fecal diseases. It has been estimated that a single gram of dog feces can contain 23 million fecal coli form bacteria, which are known to cause cramps, diarrhea, intestinal illness, and serious kidney disorders in humans.

**Section 10-86. Animal Excreta or Waste**

***The owner of an animal shall be responsible for the removal of any waste or excreta deposited by such owner’s animal on public and private property***

***Waste or excreta deposited by an animal on public property or the private property of any person other than such animal’s owner shall be collected and removed immediately by such animal’s owner***

***These are excerpts of State law and City Code***

Children, puppies, and kittens are most susceptible to pet-borne illnesses because they have weaker immune systems than adults do. This is a very serious issue because there are residents with young children as well as child care providers in Jackson Ward who don’t want to endanger children by having them play outside and experiencing accidental exposure to dangerous substances...dog feces.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) even estimates that two or three days worth of droppings from a population of about 100 dogs would contribute enough bacteria to temporarily close a bay, and all watershed areas within 20 miles of it, to swimming and shell fishing.

There you have it; the facts, warnings and consequences concerning the pet owner who allows their dogs to relieve him/herself on folks’ grass, inside of their fences [clearly trespassing], on their car wheels, sidewalks and other areas both public and private THEN; just walk away...”Renee?” Not this time!

Smile...Rover! ...you and your owner may be on your neighbor’s surveillance camera!!

- Demmie Murray

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## FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT

Friends and Neighbors:

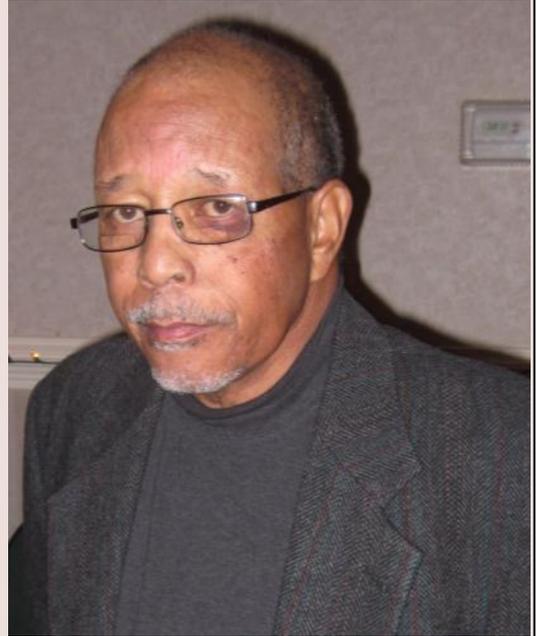
The holiday season has passed and winter is upon us. I hope you have had a great summer and fall and that you were able to tolerate the extreme heat we had to deal with this summer. As we move into the new year, we have tried to continually alert you to events happening in the city and the neighborhood and to have you participate in those events. As I have noted before, unfortunately there are still just a few of us who regularly attend meetings such as the Mayor's Participation and Communications Team (MPACT) where I serve as co-chair for Sector 413, 2nd District Meetings held by Councilman Charles Samuels, and even neighborhood association meetings. All too often, decisions affecting our entire neighborhood are made by 10-15 people. That should not be the case. Please try to attend our meetings although they may not be held at the most convenient time for you. If you would like to see us meet at a more convenient time and place, please let us know by sending an e-mail to us at [historicjacksonwardassociation@gmail.com](mailto:historicjacksonwardassociation@gmail.com) and if there is sufficient interest, we'll see if we can agree on something that meets the majority of residents' wishes.

It was amazing to us that we distributed an e-mail (Internet) survey last year and of the many residents in our e-mail distribution list, only 28 people responded. We may try it again sometime. Remember, both homeowners and renters are eligible to participate in the association's activities. Right now, dues are still only \$10.00 per year for residents and \$20.00 for businesses and community organizations. Dues are due in January for the 2013 calendar year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who helped make last year's National Night Out event at Abner Clay Park another success including our friends at Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church, Ebenezer Baptist Church, the Delta Epsilon Mu Pre-Med Fraternity from VCU, and the Richmond Police Department. Our new sector lieutenant, Donald Davenport, attended most of our planning committee meetings and made sure things we needed were taken care of (street closings, parade escort, etc.). Again, Mayor Dwight Jones chose to launch his motorcade from our event which he has called a model of cooperation for neighborhood events.

We have been fortunate that Councilman Samuels was able to get funding in the city budget that will allow us to begin to move forward on the renovation and redesign of Abner Clay Park. A contractor has been hired to convert the existing concept plan adopted by the neighborhood into construction documents for bidding and once they are kicked off by the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities (DPRCF), they will, as part of the process, be in touch with us to re-confirm the various aspects of the concept plan before going too far "down the pike" in creating construction drawings. Again, it will be important to have your input and we will try to keep you posted as the process moves forward.

Finally, unfortunately, we have had an uptick in crime lately including one homicide. The association has contributed to the reward fund established by the family to help find the perpetrators of this horrible crime. We are fortunate that we have representatives from both the Richmond Police Department and the VCU Police Department at each of our meetings to keep us informed about crime and enforcement in our neighborhood. Please be vigilant and don't hesitate to call the police if you see anything suspicious. You can call the non-emergency number (804-646-5100) or, of course, 911 if you feel there is an emergency. Be safe!



- Charles Finley, President

## SPRING CLEANING 2013

As we are into winter thinking of the possibility of snowfall and cozy fires, it may seem strange to be reading about a Spring Clean Up Day here in our community, but with the new way we schedule these bi-annual events, it makes it easy for all of us to plan ahead.

Our next Clean Up Day will be held in the spring of **2013 on Saturday, April 20th**. And, we will have one every 3rd Saturday of each October and April for many years to come. So, you can mark the new calendars you get for Christmas with April 20th and October 19th for next year, and you'll be ready.

Our Clean Up Days are a great way to keep our neighborhood clean, but on top of the main reason for their existence, it's an even better way to get to know your neighbors or to keep in touch with those you don't see often enough due to the everyday hustle and bustle of life. We begin with breakfast in Abner Clay Park at 8:00 am, and this is a wonderful time of good food and great camaraderie. Then, we move out to the sidewalks, streets and alleys to pick up trash. We provide everything you need (gloves, picker-uppers, water, bags), so all you need to do is bring yourself. Everything is over by about 11:30 am, so you have the rest of your Saturday to do as you please. I personally love to take a walk through Jackson Ward afterwards just to revel in the beauty of our efforts.

If you'd like to see photos of past Clean Up Days here in Jackson Ward, visit our website at [www.hjwa.org](http://www.hjwa.org), and click on Photos. Or click on HJWA News/Events to see slideshows of our most recent Clean Up Days.

Hope to see lots of new faces at our Clean Up in the Spring right along with those who have already made this a biannual tradition!

- Vicki Mollenauer



**Jackson Ward Cleanup Crew 2012**



**Ms. Adrienne Goolsby, CEO RRHA**

Adrienne Goolsby, the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) graciously accepted the invitation from the Historic Jackson Ward Association (HJWA) to attend its November 2012 membership meeting. The Jackson Ward residents have always had an acute interest in the development decisions that could affect Jackson Ward proper. It was often the case that opportunities to be included in these plans were not offered and in some cases, Jackson Ward property owners were not made aware of some of the plans RRHA may have relative to its properties in Jackson Ward.

Due to the holiday schedule and Ms. Goolsby's December 2012 calendar, we were unable to schedule a face-to-face with her. However, she did accept a set of questions for her that she responded to as follows:

**How did your experience with the Chicago Public Housing Authority prepare you for your current position as CEO at RRHA?**

At the Chicago Public Housing Authority (CHA), I helped orchestrate and build strategic partnerships between CHA and public and private entities. This entailed engaging our business community and having them invest in our transformation process. Through this public/private partnership, CHA leveraged an additional \$1.7 billion in investments. By doing this, we were able to redevelop our public housing communities in major ways. The redevelopment included a transformation of our communities from traditional public housing into integrated, mixed-income, mixed-use neighborhoods that foster an environment of opportunity and prosperity for our community members.

As CEO of RRHA, I am continuing along a similar path of public/private partnership building and investment to transform our public housing in the great City of Richmond, Va. We can't do it alone. The business community plays an essential role in the transformation process.

**What is the one thing that you know for sure when working with and for public housing residents and their families?**

I am an entrepreneur, engineer, public servant, but most importantly, I am a mother. Being a mother is the most important role I play. And as a mother, we want the best for our children. Providing a safe, healthy, and quality environment in which our children can grow and learn is of paramount importance to any mother, or parent, no matter where they live. This desire to create the best community for our children and families is a desire that is shared by both me and the community members served by RRHA. That is why creating better, more vibrant communities in which our youth can live, grow, and thrive is a priority for me.

**What do you see as the most serious need of public housing residents?**

Our public housing needs are multidimensional. As a result, we are committed to addressing these needs in a way that will create healthy and sustainable communities via multifaceted approaches. We are obligated to think outside of the proverbial box to ensure that we reach the various and diverse needs of our community members. Earlier I mentioned public and private partnership building as one of my chief successes in Chicago. Well, through public/private partnership building here in Richmond, my goal is to create a more holistic approach and solution to our local public housing conundrum. In that way, we are ensuring that the housing, the people, and the neighborhood are all touched and impacted in a tremendous way. To make this happen, RRHA collaborates closely with our partners to identify the needs and determine the best approaches to fulfilling those critical needs. Our partners include the City of Richmond, Richmond Public Schools, City councilpersons, leaders in the affordable housing industry, business, faith, and other community leaders, and of course, RRHA community members. Our goal is to improve quality of life not only by enhancing the bricks and mortar but through the actual uplifting of the lives of the people we serve. This includes a focus on educational attainment, workforce development, family self-sufficiency, youth programs and mentoring, and more.

**In what ways do you feel the community of Jackson Ward and the decision-makers at RRHA can work together for the good of both entities; in light of the differing needs and concerns of both?**

I believe the Jackson Ward community and RRHA have very similar goals, and that includes creating a vibrant community! We have already started the process of working together and brainstorming how we can strategically collaborate to create a burgeoning area that will successfully integrate RRHA communities into the larger Jackson Ward neighborhood. Our goal is to help inject vitality back into this community and increase its economic development potential, which, in turn, enhances the quality of our communities and the livelihood of our community members.

**In light of the future projects on the horizon for RRHA, what are your thoughts on and means by which the Jackson Ward community can be a part of decisions that affect their property and living environment?**

I am excited about what the future holds for RRHA and all of the communities that we will impact moving forward. Jackson Ward community members, and all community members, are always welcomed and encouraged to be an active part of the dialogue and share their vision for the future of their community. This has always been the case and is even more so now. Our intent is to provide openness, transparency and collaboration as we work to revitalize our communities, together. Everyone's voice is an integral part of the redevelopment process. I encourage persons to become and remain a part of the conversation surrounding redevelopment and revitalization by attending scheduled community meetings, staying connected via our Facebook and Twitter social media communications, emailing us at [info@rrha.com](mailto:info@rrha.com), or calling us at 780.4936 with any questions or comments. This effort is bigger than one agency, as the African proverb states, it is going to take a village. We encourage everyone to join the village and work together for the uplifting of our families, communities and City.



*Dear Jackson Ward Neighbors,*

*I wish to thank you all for the opportunity to continue serving on the Richmond School Board. I appreciate the vote of confidence given through the recent election process. I intend to affirm your confidence by again rolling up my sleeves and taking on the tough issues facing our schools. I will continue to focus on making our schools perform more efficiently and effectively, to help our students obtain skills they need to succeed.*

*One of our most immediate items of action will be the budget for the 2013-14 school year. The superintendent will present a draft budget to the Board in mid-January and we are again expecting to have major shortfalls. I plan to hold a budget town hall meeting in February to get input from the district on the proposed budget cuts we will be facing. I will be sure to keep you updated about upcoming meetings and events via email. In the meantime, please call me at 804-852-4427 or email me at [kimbgray@gmail.com](mailto:kimbgray@gmail.com) if you have any questions or concerns.*

*All the best!*

*Kim Gray*

**ABNER CLAY PARK  
A NEIGHBORHOOD JEWEL  
CONTINUED**

According to the article, Mrs. Clay was honored by the YWCA as one of the outstanding women of the year. Under the guidance of Mr. and Mrs. Clay, the neighborhood association wrangled street lights and street cleaning from the City, lobbied against wine and beer licenses being granted to neighborhood grocery stores, had the sidewalks repaired and three vacant houses demolished among other projects. According to the article, "Because of the efforts of Mrs. Clay and her husband, Central Wards became one of the first community revitalization neighborhoods in the city under the Community Development Block Grant program." At the time of the article, approximately \$1 million had been spent on the neighborhood since 1975.

At the time of his passing, Mr. Clay was survived by his wife, who was then president of the CIA and two daughters, Mrs. Joyce Clay Dennis and Mrs. Margaret Edwina Clay Crews and his sister Mrs. Edwina Clay Hall.

The park was dedicated on June 29, 1980 and the tot lot was constructed in 1981. More information, copies of newspaper articles and photos of the original tot lot can be found on the Historic Jackson Ward web site at [www.hjwa.org](http://www.hjwa.org).

*- Charles Finley, President*

*The* Historic Jackson Ward Association

**Association Meetings**

**Every 3rd Tuesday at 6pm  
Club 533  
3rd Street and Jackson Street  
Richmond VA**

**P.O. Box 26137  
Richmond, VA 23260  
(804) 644-4305**

**[www.HJWA.org](http://www.HJWA.org)**