

A Monumental Responsibility:
Curating *A Monumental Weight*
at the Fredericksburg Area Museum

Dr. Gaila Sims
Curator of African American History and Special Projects
Fredericksburg Area Museum

The image shows the front cover of the book 'On Juneteenth' by Annette Gordon-Reed. The cover has a light beige, textured background with faint, ghostly outlines of a map of the United States. The title 'ON JUNETEENTH' is printed in a large, bold, red, serif font. Below the title is a small red star, followed by the author's name 'Annette Gordon-Reed' in a black, serif font. At the bottom, it says 'WINNER OF THE PULITZER PRIZE' in a smaller, red, sans-serif font. Two horizontal gold lines separate the title from the author's name and the award information.

ON JUNETEENTH



Annette Gordon-Reed

WINNER OF THE PULITZER PRIZE

“To be sure, the institution of slavery itself circumscribed the actions of enslaved African Americans, but it never destroyed their personhood. They did not become a separate species by the experience of being enslaved. All of the feelings, talents, failings, strengths, and weaknesses—all the states and qualities that exist in human beings—remained in them.”

- Annette Gordon-Reed, *On Juneteenth*, 2021



OLD SLAVE BLOCK, FREDERICKSBURG, VA.

Unknown Creator, "Old Slave Block" Postcard, 1922

NEW ADVERTISEMENTS.

20 NEGROES FOR SALE.

BY virtue of a decree of the Circuit Court of Spotsylvania county, rendered on the— of October, 1861, in the case of White, &c. vs. White, &c; the undersigned, Commissioners, will sell at

PUBLIC AUCTION,

for CASH, in front of the Planter's Hotel, in the town of Fredericksburg, on

Tuesday 18th. day of February. 1862.

**TWENTY LIKELY NEGROES,
MEN. WOMEN
AND CHILDREN.**

WM. S. BARTON,
WM. A. LITTLE,
CHAS HERNDON,
Commissioners.

feb1—ed.

Fredericksburg News, February 1, 1862



George Triplett in September 1903
Image from the Brent Collection, courtesy of Lou Brent



Old Slave Block Used for Sale and Hire of Slaves at Fredericksburg, Va.

6B-H552

Albert Crutchfield Postcard, 1931



Photo courtesy the Jerry Brent Collection



Left: 2016 Protests, Image Courtesy *Free Lance-Star*

Above: Auction Block Cleaning in 2020, Image Courtesy
Dovetail Cultural Resource Group



donfolden @donfolden · Sep 2, 2018

This is an actual Slave Auction Block in **Fredericksburg, Virginia** and I went down today 9/2/18 to lay this wreath for all the families torn apart right at this very location #dcblacktours #BlackTwitter @donlemon @TheJaniceTemple



2 11 29



pixiepixle · Follow

pixiepixle #slaveauctionblock #slavenarrative #americanhistory
493w

pixiepixle Human lives sold and traded here. So sad but we should not forget.
493w Reply

7 likes
MARCH 25, 2013

Add a comment... Post



Meetings with Community Members, September 2022-March 2023

Trade in ved People

ational Slave Trade in 1808, the domestic slave
not lucrative industry. In 1860, Virginia held more
100,000) and sold more people to the Deep South
than any other state.



It had an impact
across the United States,
and the
wealth of Virginia, and
the
and complexity of every level
its supporters and sustained the
lavory.



Community Conversations

Following three years of community dialogue, Fredericksburg City Council
voted to relocate the Auction Block in 2018. COVID slowed its progress
and in 2020, the Block became the focus of several protests in the city of
Fredericksburg.



The original block was the
stone used to weigh and
measure goods and property
for taxation in colonial times.

The original Auction Block was
located on the corner of the
block in the center of the town
of Fredericksburg, Virginia.

The original Auction Block was
located on the corner of the
block in the center of the town
of Fredericksburg, Virginia.



Please touch
→

A Monumental Weight: The Auction Block in Fredericksburg, Virginia

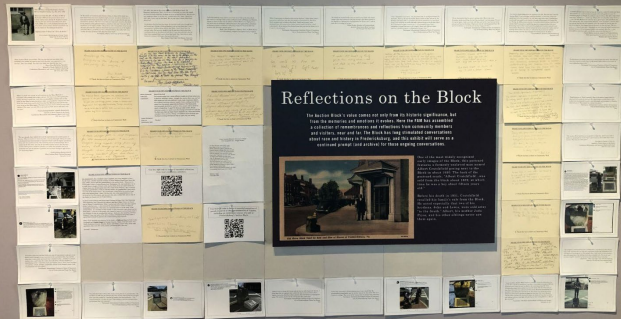


A Monumental Weight: The Auction Block in Fredericksburg, Virginia



*A Monumental Weight Exhibit Opening
November 5, 2022*

Community Wall



Reflections on the Block

The Auction Block's story comes not only from its historic significance, but also from the stories of the people who lived there. The Block has a rich history of community, and we invite you to share your own reflections on the Block's history and the lives of the people who lived there. We encourage you to share your reflections on the Block's history and the lives of the people who lived there.



ent of this hotel, is a
so feet in diameter. It
said, for the sale and
d to stand on this block
was "cried out" by the
e publicly hired out for
red out at the highest
that calls back more

of Fredericksburg
1908

"All right, let's take on the corner of Charles and William Street—the Knoxanna Apartments. When I lived there—I remember my aunt who raised me—from a small child then—forbade me to sit on that block ever. And she was very emphatic about it. At that time, I didn't know why. Later, I found out why. And—I never sat on that block. But, do you want to know what I later found out?

I understand that during those days, the tourists would come through town and would say, let's get a little pichanniny to sit on that block and it was representative of slaves being sold on that block. I don't know how it is marked today. But we were taught it was the old slave block where they would put slaves on the block and sell them. I later learned that's why my Aunt Lena insisted that I never sit on that block. Now, that was my most distinctive memory of living in that particular area."

- Mrs. Gladys Poles Todd, Oral History Interview
March 6, 1998

"In Fredericksburg, many slaves were hired out or sold on the slave block, also used as a carriage block, at the northwest corner of William and Charles Streets, in front of what was the Planter's Hotel. Blacks were displayed on this block and an auctioneer called attention to their good points, sometimes producing a doctor's certificate or allowing prospective buyers to feel their muscles and otherwise examine them."

- Ruth Coder Fitzgerald, A Different Story: A Black History of Fredericksburg, Stafford, and Spotsylvania, Virginia
1979

"When I was young
and we didn't
block represents p
auctioned there. I
understand it. If
I want it to be en

THE BLOCK

SHARE YOUR OWN REFLECTIONS ON THE BLOCK

To see our own black history, the *Some Times* *Monet*, with this name at the top by the reflection on the wall in the museum is the most powerful testimony of how far we have come as a people in Fredericksburg, Virginia. Far from the respect and recognition this new question is testimony to the growth of the entire Fredericksburg community & to the resilience & grace of the Black Community in particular. Yes, we have come this far by FAITH & we feel by *HOPE* the present has brought us.

Check this box to share on Community Wall

Onward, *Prayer Book* *Prayer Book*

FEBRUARY, 2023

SHARE YOUR OWN REFLECTIONS ON THE BLOCK

The thoughts expressed on the Community Wall "Reflections on the Block" are an important part of our community's history.

Check this box to share on Community Wall

SHARE YOU

I don't
they
the
form
d ct

THE BLOCK

SHARE YOUR OWN REFLECTIONS ON THE BLOCK

Name (optional): Gianni Marshall
Reflection submission: This museum gave me a whole different insight on African Americans in general. Walking in today, I thought the auction block was cool but after being told the story behind it, really made me grow to hate it. As an African American woman myself, it hurts reading some of the notes from the panels, especially the History of the Block panel. Hearing people be SOLD to work for other people and be slaved to death is disgusting. I'm glad the block got taken down. African American people are worth more than being auctioned!! It's sad that the block was kept up longer than it needed to be. There were family members who's parents, siblings, and children were standing upon the block so being reminded of that for years was just wrong.

Check this box to share on Community Wall:

SHARE YOUR OWN REFLECTIONS ON THE BLOCK

A shaded thousand souls passed over this stone, their inconsolable grief captioned in one reticence of profanity.
- Benjamin Franklin, *Amos* *Amos*, 2:22
"with malice towards none, charity for all with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right."
Let us strive on to finish the work we are in
- Abraham Lincoln

Check this box to share on Community Wall

A Monumental Weight: The Auction Block in Fredericksburg, Virginia



Left: *Black Businesses and Entrepreneurship in Fredericksburg, 1787-Present* Walking Tour, February 2023, Image Courtesy *The Free Lance-Star*

Right: Mayor Greenlaw and Vice-Mayor Frye at the Auction Block Corner, October 2020, Image Courtesy City of Fredericksburg



Left: Fredericksburg's Auction Block, 2019, Image Courtesy City of Fredericksburg



Right: Green Hill Plantation Auction Block, Date Unknown, Image Courtesy Library of Congress

A Monumental Responsibility:
Curating *A Monumental Weight*
at the Fredericksburg Area Museum

Dr. Gaila Sims
Curator of African American History and Special Projects
Fredericksburg Area Museum