

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

Archaeology is part of the City's development process. Carr Companies contracted with archaeologists from Wetland Studies and Solutions, Inc., a Davey company to implement a monitoring plan in accordance with the Alexandria Archaeological Protection Code.

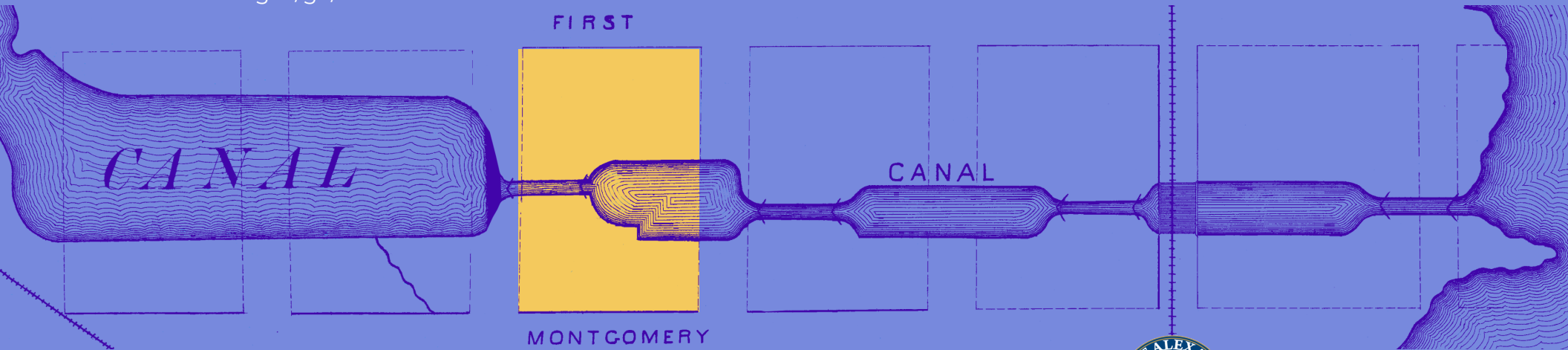
A parking garage will encompass and go below the depth of the canal remnants. Archaeological work is done ahead of this construction so that the information is preserved. More of the canal (Lock No. 3 and Basin 2) is likely preserved under Montgomery Park.

LEARN MORE



- Visit Tidelock Park to see the reconstructed outlet lock
- Follow updates: alexandriava.gov/archaeology
- Visit the Alexandria Archaeology Museum (105 N. Union Street, # 327)
- Tour the African American Waterfront Heritage Trail: alexandriava.gov/go/4273

ALEXANDRIA CANAL AT LOCK #4, 901 N. PITT



THE ALEXANDRIA CANAL

Archaeologists have uncovered the partial remains of Lock No. 4 and the third basin of the Alexandria Canal on the 900 Block of N. Pitt Street.

In the late 18th and early 19th century, canals were seen as the way to open the west to trade and navigation. The Chesapeake & Ohio (C&O) Canal was designed to connect the Potomac to the west, but only made it as far as Cumberland, MD. The Alexandria Canal kept the city in the inland trade loop by connecting to the C&O in Georgetown.

The Alexandria Canal was built largely through the forced labor of enslaved people, as well as paid labor. It was constructed out of timber, cement, and local sandstone.



Alexandria Canal Lift Lock and Pool No. 1 on the Potomac River, ca. 1861-1865. Courtesy of National Archives.

WHAT WAS IT FOR? COMMERCE!



Building materials, fish, salt, and consumer goods like shoes and dishes were shipped west.

Raw goods like coal, grain, stone, and timber were shipped east.

CANAL FACTS

- 7 miles long
- 4 locks & 4 basins within the city limits
- 1 Aqueduct Bridge



Aqueduct Bridge at Georgetown

END OF OPERATION

The Alexandria Canal was expensive to maintain and wasn't as reliable as the railroad. When the Aqueduct Bridge broke in 1886, it was shut down.



Ruins of Alexandria canal lock. J.K. Hillers, 1929.

LATE 1700S

Planning begins to connect the Potomac to the Ohio River.

1831

The C&O Canal opens. Construction starts on the Alexandria Canal.

1843

The Alexandria Canal officially opens, ending at the Turning Basin on the 900 Block of N. St Asaph Street.

1845

The Alexandria Canal is completed, with 4 operating locks connecting the Turning Basin to Alexandria riverfront wharves.

1850

The C&O Canal reaches Cumberland, MD.

1861

The Alexandria Canal ceases operation at the start of the Civil War.

1867

The Alexandria Canal reopens.

1886

The Aqueduct Bridge breaks, cutting the Alexandria Canal off from the C&O Canal. It ceases operation for good.

1979

Archaeologists rediscover Lock No. 1, also called the tide or outlet lock, which can be seen today.

2024 - 2025

Archaeologists uncover remnants of Lock No. 4 & Basin 3.