GEOGRAPHICAL VERSUS SOCIAL SCALE
IN ALEXANDRIA: A GROWING
ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

by

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Foreword

The <u>Alexandria Archaeology Publications</u> series is composed of papers on various aspects of research conducted under the auspices of Alexandia Archaeology, a division of the Office of Historic Alexandia, City of Alexandria, Virginia. The authors include professional staff members, university students and Alexandia Archaeology volunteers. Editing of the papers has been kept to a minimum. It should be understood that the papers vary in tone and level of technicality, since they were originally directed toward many different audiences.

We are pleased to offer the papers within this series and in so doing are opening our "manuscripts on file" - including professional conference papers, background documentary studies, student course papers, and volunteer research papers - to professionals and public alike.

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As archaeologists coming to the study of the city in the 1970's, we were eager to develop research questions and a direction for inquiry. Our goal was to understand this settlement type and its inhabitants' behavior. For us, understanding meant dividing a very complex whole into parts which we could intellectually grasp. We looked to prehistoric archaeology, social anthropology, history, and geography for approaches. In some cases the questions in these disciplines did not fit the data sources and knowledge accumulated for American cities. In most cases, the issues were allusive to the focus of archaeological inquiry--a circumscribed portion of the city called a site. The national economy, markets, business networks, community, social groups without geographical cohesiveness, voting behavior, voluntary associations--all provided a fascinating background to understanding the city, the urban system, and urban structure. However, they did not have clear application for traditional archaeological study.

We felt most comfortable with models, questions, and methods generated from cultural geography and social history for dissecting the city into physical parts and its residents into socioeconomic groups based upon a few variables which could be seen spatially over time.

This approach gave us the opportunity to proceed in a systematic manner. Yet, we were aware that the ultimate goal was to put the city back together again to yield more vitality than the

parts have independently. As Sam Bass Warner has stated, urban history deals with the "increasing interconnectedness" of organizational units of the city (1972:57). To paraphrase Warner's observations on contemporary urban dwellers, we were overwhelmed by the size and extent of the city; thus, we tended to find a way to cope in which we selected a few close-to-home, controllable units such as homogeneous class residential areas and left many units like social, business, and religious networks unexplored.

For nearly ten years we have pursued the research of Alexandria's past in this geographical mode. We are pleased with the results and their use in comparative studies, a city-wide preservation tracking system, and public education. We have also discovered almost by serendipity another way of approaching our city. This paper summarizes the geographical scale design and its results, and then proceeds to discuss our current thoughts on social scale.

The Alexandria research design is based upon concepts and analytical strategies developed in the field of cultural geography (see Cressey and Stephens 1982:144). Defining the city in terms of a set of increasingly focused analytical units results in association of geographical areas in the city with socioeconomic groups. These levels of analysis begin with the city-site and progress downward to: neighborhood, street-face, lot, household, activity area or zone, archaeological provenience, artifact, and artifact attribute.

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The research design is directed toward investigating hypotheses relating to shifts in residential distance among socioeconomic status groups and variations in their household material assemblages through time (Cressey et al. 1984:1). The research framework was implemented through multi-phase documentary, contemporary, and archaeological investigations. The NEH-funded City Survey project started with an extensive archival study that established the location of residential areas associated with specific socioeconomic groups (Stephens 1981a; 1981b). A contemporary on-site survey assessed availability of lots for archaeological excavation. Individual residential sites were selected for excavation which had the most consistent occupancy by households of the same socioeconomic level (Cressey et al. 1984:1). This entire strategy for research is based on the city being treated as a whole, that is as a city-site.

The concept of "city-site" means that an area of urban settlement is studied in terms of spatial characteristics, as well as socioeconomic organization. In studying the city-site consideration is made of its place within the regional, national, and world economic and political system (Cressey and Stephens 1982). For intra-city research, however, the city-site may be treated as the most comprehensive level of scale.

The idea of core area versus periphery is used to overlay the city-site into the central core where population, wealth and power are concentrated and the surrounding areas. This model connotes a set of relationships that hold the periphery clearly

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subordinate to the core (Cressey et al. 1982).

Below this basic division of the city-site, progressively smaller units of analysis are delineated based on the data produced by the extensive archival survey. This survey compiled information from the City's tax and census records utilizing a random stratified sampling scheme. The data were collected in twenty-year intervals from 1790 - 1910 with the result being a 15% sample for these years (Cressey and Stephens 1982:55-56). In this way, residential areas, or neighborhoods, are defined according to socioeconomic, ethnic, and legal variables. Using the survey results, a set of maps have been produced delineating neighborhoods for 1790, 1810, 1830, 1850, 1870, 1890, and 1910 (see Appendix II, Cressey et al. 1984).

The next level of analysis is the street-face within a residential area. This is defined as one quarter of a city block and includes all households residing along one side, or face, of the block. Interpretation of the data at this level allows street-faces to be categorized as to socioeconomic group affiliation and consistency of this affiliation through time (Cressey and Stephens 1982:53).

The individual lot within a street-face is examined next. A more detailed compilation of data is made to determine the socioeconomic status of all households on the lot for the time period of concern. As at the street-face level of analysis, consistency of socioeconomic status is important. Shifting status affilia-

tion (especially if terms of occupancy last only a few years) make association of artifacts with households known from documentary records difficult, if not impossible (Cressey and Stephens 1982:53).

Within the household lot activity areas, or zones, are delineated. This creates three analytical units: Zone 1 - the area surrounding the house, Zone 2 - the area immediately behind the house, and Zone 3 - the area adjacent to the rear boundary of the lot. The reasoning here is that each of the zones vary according to public visibility, as well as visibility and accessibility of the householders. The assumption is that these differences in location correspond to differences in behavior. For example, refuse disposal activities are expected to occur in Zone 3, at the rear of the lot, while display of status items and activities are expected to take place in Zone 1 in front of the house (Cressey and Stephens 1982:53).

The archaeological provenience, or excavation unit, represents the next level of analysis. Typically in Alexandria this is a 1x1 meter square dug in natural levels to sterile soil. In-ground features encountered during excavation are dug separately and analyzed as a unit within the surrounding context.

At the lower end of the analytical hierarchy is the arti-fact. Considered as part of the total artifact assemblage, this is the scale at which descriptive interpretation is made. The analytical attributes which allow this interpretation to be made

are the most finely focused elements of analysis. These are the individual characteristics of an object, the sum of which determine the artifact's identification.

This system of analysis was designed to better understand historic residential patterns within Alexandria and to provide a means for making comparisons of material culture among nineteenth-century socioeconomic groups. The results are twofold and relate to settlement and material culture patterns. The product of the archival survey is a body of data, including a set of maps showing changing patterns of residence through time, which acts as a reference and a guide for future research.

The maps show that the elite and upper middle class cluster in the core of the city. The core changes its location from the early settlement along the Potomac River bluffs to the Washington Street corridor as the city decreases its port activities and increases its service role. The lower middle class and lower class live in increasingly peripheral positions to the core over time. The most peripheral are free black neighborhoods starting as early as ca.1800. The areas change through time by expansion, contraction, or shifts; yet, the relationship between status and core-periphery position is stable. Within this relationship, distance between rich and poor increases over time. In essence, status separation is seen in the beginnings of the city, but the scale increases through time from street-faces or portions of blocks to entire areas.

The conclusion of the analysis of the archaeological data gathered from 23 sites is that, in general, the similarities in the household materials discarded by the different classes are more striking than the differences. However, certain notable patterns of variation are evident: 1) as status level increases the size and value of houses increase and the evidence of home repairs and renovations is more abundant; 2) the quantity of refuse discarded in yards decreases as the status of the households increases; 3) the composition of ceramic and glass assemblages are very similar across class - no price-related attributes are diagnostic; and 4) there is a significantly higher frequency of pork bones discarded at the lower class black sites. A far wider range of food species is represented in the upper middle class assemblages, with chicken being the most commonly occurring species (Cressey et al. 1984:1-5).

These are, in a nutshell, the conclusions of a three-year research project. The results presented fully in a final report (see Cressey et al. 1984), are significant, but suggest a pattern of similarity rather than difference when the materials discarded by households of different classes are compared. Results from the Courthouse Site and the Bottoms ceramic study (Shephard 1985) and the Afro-American Neighborhood study (Cressey 1985) reinforce the City Survey's findings.

As we surveyed, dug, and conducted documentary research on seemingly unconnected sites--a school, the Alexandria Canal, an apothecary shop, a free black neighborhood, a King Street mer-

chant neighborhood, a garden in the outskirts of town--an interesting thread emerged. Recurrent relationships between individuals, their businesses, families, and community endeavors became apparent. These relationships were between members of a particular segment of Alexandria society which was organized around a spiritual bond that had many social, economic, political, and material manifestations. This group is the Religious Society of Friends, better known as the Quakers. Frankly, when we started seeing this connection, our knowledge of Quakers was limited to things in our contemporary environment--a local street sign and the jolly Quaker (actually William Penn) on the breakfast cereal box.

The Quaker movement began in 17th-century England with the preaching of George Fox to a group known as Seekers. There is no exact date of founding, since the tenets grew out of Fox's life-long spiritual development. The term "Friends" is taken from the biblical passage in John 15:15 "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth; but I have called you friends". This statement refers to the mutual equality that Friends, or, Children of the Light believed existed among humans. Vigorous humanitarianism and social justice are the hallmarks of the Friends. Persecuted in England, Quakers became a part of the immigrant tide to North American in the 17th century. They were determined to practice what they preached, and formed strong communities in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Jersey, and North Carolina even before William Penn received a grant of land in which his "Holy Experiment" could take place

(Jonas 1971:9-24).

Quakers were involved in the development of Alexandria from its founding in 1749. Adherence to their philosophical tenets of honesty and prosperity in business, promotion of cultural enlightenment, and improvement of health conditions led to the success of Quakers both economically and socially (Coomler 1985; Erickson 1986; Jenkins 1986a; Swain 1984; Terrie 1979).

We have approached the study of Quakers in Alexandria from the specific scale to the general, opposite to the direction of the geographical design. The levels in this social scale are: individual, family, business, institution, voluntary association, community structure, and urban life. Using this social scale we have been able to study the relationships between people, organizations, and units of the community to begin perceiving American urban life. The geographical scale produced an outline of the urbanization process on maps. The social scale has filled in this outline with people, events, activities, needs, and issues which permit us to discuss the quality of urban life. If the former research provided the skeleton, the current direction is supplying both the internal organs and the external expression of the 19th-century city. A case study of one individual and his community networks illustrates this point.

A link to one of Alexandria's most successful Quaker merchants and leading citizens was seen in the fragmentary mark on a sherd from a whiteware plate which originally had read "Manufac-

tured for Rob't H. Miller Alexandria D. C." While the man seemed fascinating from basic research, we did not center our study on his residential lot since he left few artifacts. After excavating many other sites which are related to him, we find his life and activities tell us more about Alexandria than any quantity of artifacts.

Robert H. Miller was born in Alexandria on March 10, 1798. His father, Mordecai, was a silversmith and merchant and came to Alexandria from Chester County, Pennsylvania (Eliza Miller 1926:1). Remembered as a "ruddy complexioned old gentleman with silver white hair" by Robert's oldest son Warwick, Mordecai traded with the West Indies and South America (Warwick Miller 1981:2-3). Rebecca Hartshore Miller, Robert's mother, was a daughter of a prominent Quaker family. Two of Robert's children, Warwick and Eliza, left autobiographical accounts. While the accounts do not offer much insight into Robert's character, he apparently was an avid swimmer in the Potomac River. As Warwick states:

> ...on first day mornings early he went swimming,
> he would take me on his back and swim out in
> the river to my great terror but it was no use
> for me to protest, in that as in most things
> "he was a man of his accord" (1981:3).

Miller was apparently a resolute man, since Warwick reiterates, "When father made up his mind that we were to do a thing, it had to be done" (1981:15).

Robert's obituary in the <u>Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Ad-</u>

vertiser (March 10, 1874) offers an additional glimpse into this man's life. He was a man of "great intelligence" and of the "highest integrity and honorable feeling," a "sincere friend" with "fine literary taste" reading the "best English prose and poetry". Most important and consistent with Quaker values, Robert was remembered as "public-spirited and active in all that he thought would contribute to the welfare and success of our city".

The Miller family was large. Robert and Anna Janney Miller had eleven children and forty-five grandchildren who "lived to call him blessed" (Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser March 10, 1874). An early house of the Miller's was a small "two story brick house, painted, which is still standing on the south side of [312] Wolfe Street about midway between Fairfax and Royal Streets" (Warwick Miller 1981:1). It was located on a quarter block which originally had belonged to Robert's maternal relatives, the Harthshornes.

Mordecai developed the land into several townhouses, one of which Robert and Anna used after their wedding. Warwick Miller was born there in 1824 and states that old Joe Goat, a black man, lived in a "little hut not far from our house". Our research in the Afro-American neighborhood of Hayti supports the fact that the Millers lived on a block which evolved into the free black area. The family may have actually assisted in creating Hayti, since the Millers rented to slave, mulatto, and black families (McCord 1985). By 1874 at Robert's death, he had sold most of

the houses to black families. The Miller family also had a role in manumission and abolition. Mordecai and Robert both freed slaves and signed a petition presented by the Alexandria Benevolent Society (a Quaker organization) to Congress in 1828 "praying for the gradual abolition of slavery" (Jenkins 1986b). Robert and Anna's household was without slaves, listing in the 1830 census seven whites and one free black. Later, their household help was Irish, with the exception of a "colored laundress" (Eliza Miller 1926:8).

By 1833 the Robert Millers had moved into a two-story frame house at 108-110 South St. Asaph Street (Terrie 1979:38). We excavated this lot as a part of the Courthouse Project and found a surprisingly sophisticated underground feature. A brick and plaster-lined cistern was located at the rear of the Miller house. (There were also four deep wells; but with the exception of one whole pot put ceremoniously at the base of one well, they were filled without trash). A two-part filtration box allowed water to be purified by percolating through layers of gradually smaller materials (from gravel to sand and charcoal). This feature may have been responsible for the good health of the large Miller family (McLoud 1980). It certainly was a forerunner to Miller's involvement in securing a pure water supply for the benefit of the entire community.

A shrewd businessman, Miller became one of the wealthiest individuals in Alexandria (Terrie 1979:39). His dealings extended from the maintenance of his own dry goods store and import

business to the development of major institutions which served the town's economy and welfare (Swain 1984). Miller was a founder in 1852 and President of the Alexandria Water Company, the first community water system. Research by volunteer Philip Erickson (1986) demonstrates that Quakers started the company and were the first to have service. Eliza Miller reports that,

> We had an up-stairs porch at the back of
> the house and this was made into a bath-
> room. The letters written...during this
> summer tell of the pleasure of using the
> "rubber hose"... (1926:5).

When the Millers moved in 1854 to another house (321-323 South Washington Street), Eliza remembers that the house was enlarged, and both gas and water were introduced. She particularly notes that "a laundry with stationary tubs in the -cellar (a great luxery)" was also constructed. Wells were still in use (even though the children had an "awesome feeling in passing nearby" in the cellar), particularly in the "VERY hottest weather when watermelons were lowered by a windlass so they would be eaten cold and delicious, just before going to bed" (Miller 1926:7).

Miller also served on the Board of Directors of the Alexandria Canal, a site which we have investigated for the last eight years. It was designed to provide trade parity with Georgetown's Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. Other Miller involvements included the Mount Vernon Cotton Factory--one of the largest antebellum industries in town; the Alexandria, Loudon, and Hampshire Railroad; and Citizens National Bank (Swain 1984; Terrie 1979).

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Miller and other Quakers, such as his close friend Benjamin Hallowell, contributed to the cultural climate of Alexandria as well as the charity of those less fortunate. While Hallowell established the Lyceum, free schools, and the Benevolent Society, Miller lectured often at the Lyceum and served as a trustee of the Female Orphan Asylum. Service to the community extended even further in Miller's case. He was elected many times to the town council and was chosen to negotiate with the federal troops on behalf of the citizens when Alexandria was occupied during the Civil War (Terrie 1979:39).

The obligation of charity was consistent with Quaker concern for corporate responsibility, group discipline, and mutual aid. As Fredrick Tolles has discussed, these elements are functions of the Quaker concept of community--all were brothers and children of the One Father of Lights (1963:64). While some tenets of the faith promoted economic individualism and the accumulation of wealth, they were balanced with a sense of egalitarianism and social concern (1963:80). This concern has been manifested in more recent history by the American Friends Service Committee as well as public stands on pacifism and women's suffrage (Jonas 1971; Bacon 1986). This sense of corporate community has also manifested itself in the structure and material expression of 19th-century urban life in Alexandria--the schools; industry; aid societies; banks; residential amenities; black freedom, education, home ownership and neighborhood development; literature; railroads, canals, and turnpikes. Quakers acted upon their faith and vision to play central roles in the 19th-century urban trans-

formation of Alexandria. Benjamin Hallowell expresses this faith in his 1884 autobiography:

> A community cannot be considered enlightened,
> while it contains an ignorant or degraded class.

Using a singular, geographical research approach we would have been unaware of the Miller and Quaker contributions to the development of Alexandria. The Miller, Hallowell, and Stabler families and businesses would have been left as interesting report footnotes or as unconnected names on incorporation papers, town council minutes, manumissions, and advertisements. Traditional archaeological methods and socioeconomic class systems would have also left this group unexplored, since 1) Quakers do not live in a physically cohesive residential unit and 2) they do not fit into one socioeconomic status group. That is, Quaker behavior is inconsistent with the assumptions we used to create classes. For example, to be placed in the elite class a head of household must demonstrate the following in tax and census records: home ownership, rank 1 home assessment value, and rank 1 occupational status (Stephens 1981a, 1981b).

Data collected from 1810 in Alexandria document the specific Quaker portrait (Anderberg 1986). Quakers appear to live in moderately priced homes. Fifty-two percent live in homes assessed in the 6th-8th tax decile, compared to the city as a whole with 27 percent (Cressey, et al. 1984, Appendix I:4). Almost 60 percent rent, rather than own their place of residence. Yet, Quakers have very high occupational status rankings. There are four times (70 percent) more Quakers listed as merchants (a Rank

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1 status) than in the general population. No Quakers have occupations below Rank 3 (artisan) status. Thus, Alexandria Quakers span the full range of home tax values (1-10), but are exclusively at the top of the occupational rankings (1-3 out of 7).

For the wealthiest Quaker merchants to appear as elite in the Alexandria status hierarchy, their entire real estate assessment must be taken into account. When we were constricted by geographical boundaries, like homogeneous residential areas, this total assessed value figure was not used. Perhaps due to their values of personal frugality and business prosperity, wealthy Alexandria Quakers generally did not put capital into their homes. Their funds were used to own many pieces of real estate, buy shares in new enterprises, engage in world trade, support the Friends Society, and help others. In fact to be in good standing with the Meeting, proper money management and lack of debt was necessary (Frost 1973; Tolles 1963). This portrait is similar to the 18th-century Philadelphia Quakers. They appear in all economic levels, but have a fewer percentage of their members in the lowest ranks than the total population while having more in the wealthiest rank (Frost 1973:205).

This research has been an unpredictable side effect of our Alexandria study which has taken on its own integrity. It has opened new archival sources, like the water company records, which were unknown or unused by others studying the City. It has offered us a wider, and yet more intimate, perspective of the emerging city.

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