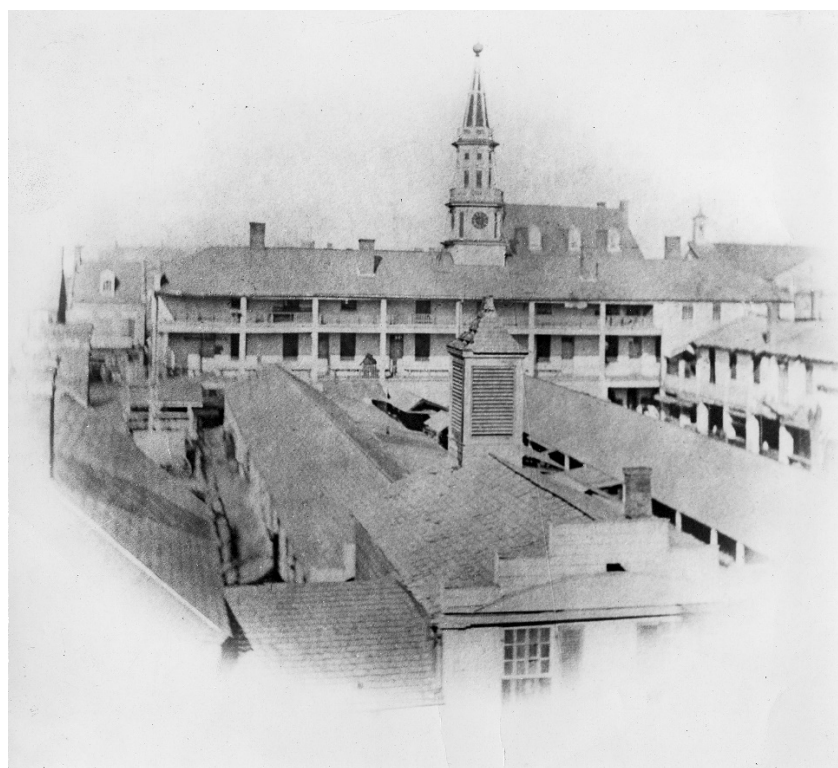


Alexandria City Hall,
Market Square,
and Slavery:
A Documentary Study



Greg A. Beaman, Ph.D.
Alexandria Archaeology Publication Number 149
Office of Historic Alexandria
City of Alexandria, Virginia
June 2026

**Alexandria City Hall and Market Square and Slavery
Documentary Study**

**By
Greg A. Beaman, Ph.D.**



**Alexandria Archaeology Publications
Number #149**

Alexandria Archaeology
Office of Historic Alexandria
City of Alexandria, Virginia
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 6

 Origins and goals of the report..... 6

 Research Questions 8

 A Gazetteer of the Market Block 12

 Alleys 12

 Jurisdiction in Alexandria 17

THE REPORT..... 28

 A Market Town in a Slave Society..... 28

 Sales of Enslaved People 44

 A Site of Public Discipline..... 67

 Gustavus Gibson and His Sons 80

 Selling the Labor of Free People as Punishment for Nonpayment of Taxes 83

 Antislavery and Slavery-Reform Groups in Alexandria..... 85

 Civil War 100

 The End of Slavery and Reconstruction 104

 Legacy of Slavery and a New Era of Racial Terror 106

 Marketers 112

 Sophia Browning Bell..... 118

 William Lyles 119

 Jeremiah H. “Jerry” Frazier 120

 Henry Rowe 124

 The Gray Family 125

 William Hollenger/Hallinger 126

 Women at the Market..... 127

 Lucy Jackson..... 127

 Rachel Harper 129

 Jane Savoy 129

 Rachel Jarboe 131

 Enslaved on the Market Block..... 133

 The Market Block During the Twentieth Century 157

 African Americans and Urban Renewal 161

 A Parcel-by-Parcel Study of the Market Block..... 172

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1 The original four lots of the Market Block, overlaid on top of the satellite imagery. Map by the author..... 9

Figure 2 Map showing the various names of the alleys and open space on the Market Block. Map by the author..... 10

Figure 3 Map showing the parcel numbering system applied by the City of Alexandria. Map by the author.....11

Figure 4 “Eyre Crowe, Slaves Waiting for Sale, Richmond, Virginia” from “Eyre Crowe’s Images of the Slave Trade” Encyclopedia Virginia, <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/slave-trade-eyre-crowes-images-of-the/>, accessed June 25, 2026..... 45

Figure 5 Alexandria Gazette, July 18, 1960. Market Square Vertical File, ALSC. 160

Figure 6 Alexandria Gazette, July 31, 1958..... 168

Figure 7 Evening Star, November 23, 1969..... 171

Figure 8 Map showing the parcel numbering system applied by the City of Alexandria. Map by the author..... 175

Figure 9 "Plot of what is called the Markett Square, runing [sic] from Fairfax to Royal street, thence to the center of the square between Cameron & King streets, with all the houses on said square, their length & breadth & alleys connected with them. This square with the Courthouse & Jail was conveyed Jany 15th,1757 by Jno. Carlyle & Wm. Ramsay, two of the Trustees of the town to Jno. West & Charles Broadwater two justices of the peace for the County of Fairfax, to be used for the purpose of holding the Court &c. &c. for five shillings, on condition that if any time hereafter the holding of the Court should be discontinued, or removed, the said square shall be reverted in the said Carlyle & Ramsay for the use of the Town," MS 019.5, Oversize Plots of the Corporation, ALSC. 178

Figure 10 313-315 King Street, photograph by Russell Jones. The building on the left is Carlin-Hulfish Hardware. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC. 178

Figure 11 313 King Street, photograph by Victor Amato. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC. 178

Figure 12 313-315 King Street, photograph by Rusell Jones. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC. 178

Figure 13 315 King, , photograph by Victor Amato. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC. 178

Figure 14 319 King Street, the Alexandria Gazette building. Alexandria Gazette, January 15, 1912..... 181

Figure 15 311 King Street, Capital City Telephone Company, Alex. J. Wedderburn, Souvenir Virginia Tercentennial of Historic Alexandria, Va., Past and Present (Alexandria, 1907). 182

Figure 16 Alexandria National Bank Building, 325 King Street, corner of N. Royal, from Alex. J. Wedderburn, Souvenir Virginia Tercentennial of Historic Alexandria, Va., Past and Present (Alexandria, 1907). Originally built by Daniel T. Witmer in 1859 and known as The Witmer Building..... 182

Figure 17 110 N. Fairfax Street, photograph by Russell Jones. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC.211

Figure 18 114-116 N. Fairfax Street, photograph by Russell Jones. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC.....211

| | |
|---|-----|
| Figure 19 103-105-107 N. Royal Street, photograph by Russell Jones. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC..... | 211 |
| Figure 20 118 N. Fairfax Street, photograph by Russell Jones. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC. | 211 |
| Figure 21 118 N. Fairfax Street, photograph by Russell Jones. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC. | 211 |
| Figure 22 109-111 N. Royal Street. photograph by Russell Jones. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC..... | 211 |
| Figure 23 Market Alley, South East corner Market Square Alley, photograph by Russell Jones. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC..... | 240 |
| Figure 24 Warehouse, General View, Gazette Alley, photograph by Russell Jones. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC. | 241 |
| Figure 25 Gazette Alley, Warehouse #1, photograph by Russell Jones. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC..... | 241 |
| Figure 26 Gazette Alley, photograph by Russell Jones. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC. | 242 |
| Figure 27 Gazette Alley, Warehouse No. 2, photograph by Russell Jones. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC..... | 242 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|---|----|
| Table 1 Enslaved People Hired Out by Robert Conway, 1818-1819..... | 65 |
| Table 2 Table showing the names of free Black men subject to forced hire by auction at Market Square, August 18, 1860. | 84 |
| Table 3 Growth of the Free Black Population in Several Cities, from Dylan Pritchett, “A Look at the African-American Community through Alexandria’s Eyes, 1780-1810,” 56..... | 88 |

INTRODUCTION

Origins and goals of the report

In 2024, the Office of Historic Alexandria/Alexandria Archaeology received a Commonwealth History Fund grant from the Virginia Museum of History & Culture to research the history of Alexandria's Market Square.

The City Hall and Market Square Block project has two main goals.

“The first goal of this Documentary Study is to develop a historical context for the interpretation of the City Hall and Market Square block, and to identify, as precisely as possible, the owners, occupants, and built elements within the one-block area. These elements include, the Market House; Fairfax County Court House; Jail/Prison with Pillory/Whipping Post, Stocks, and a Necessary House; Town Hall; School House; Fire Companies; Scale House; Watch House; Market Sheds; Fish House; Taverns; Horse Markets; and Alleys. Within the block, chains-of-title will show how the block was carved up over time into smaller divisions and lots. Changes in lot lines and property divisions will be recorded in GIS to visually depict the changes. Brief historical sketches on the landowners and occupants, including white tenants, free blacks, and enslaved people, will be developed.”¹

“The second goal of the study is to develop a narrative about the use of this block as an urban landscape of slavery, through Emancipation and

¹ “City Hall and Market Square Block: Documentary Study,” <http://alexandriava.gov/historic-sites/city-hall-and-market-square-block-documentary-study>, accessed May 18, 2026.

Reconstruction, to the emergence of the Jim Crow era. While the use of this site by the municipal government is fairly-well understood, much less is known about the Courthouse and Market Square as sites associated with the buying and selling of enslaved people. Understanding how the City Hall and Market Square block, as a seat of local government and as an economic focal point, functioned as a space of enslavement and continued racial oppression is an important goal of this project.”²

The project began in May 2025. During the first and second quarters of the year-long project, I studied the existing historical and archaeological work related to Alexandria, its history of slavery, the built environment, and the Market Block. I spent many hours during the first six months of the project reviewing an already-completed chains-of-title for each parcel on the Market Block.³ Using measurements gleaned from each deed in the chains-of-title, I made digital maps to show the changes in each parcel over time. Following review, I composed a set of questions to guide my archival research. During the third quarter, I visited area archives to find primary sources with which to interpret the history. I dedicated the remainder of the project term to planning, outlining, writing, and revising this report. As well, I refined the digital maps and crafted a series of StoryMaps to make the histories of slavery and its legacies on the Market Block more accessible to the general public. You can find the StoryMaps through the website of the Office of Historic Alexandria at <https://www.alexandriava.gov/Historic>.

² “City Hall and Market Square Block: Documentary Study,” <http://alexandriava.gov/historic-sites/city-hall-and-market-square-block-documentary-study>, accessed May 18, 2026.

³ The chains-of-title show the long list of owners on each property, each forming a link in the chain of ownership between 1749 and 1965. E.H.T. Tracerics, Inc. completed the chains-of-title.

Research Questions

What were the Market functions of the site? What other functions did the Market Square serve for the inhabitants of Alexandria?

What is the official role of the town government in slavery?

What does it mean to be a market town in a slave society? What were the racial politics of the Market?

How did the relationships among and between Alexandrians vary according to slave/free status?

Who were the people who worked in these different areas of the market and how did slavery influence their relationships?

What is the relationship between the legacy of slavery and urban renewal?



Figure 1 The original four lots of the Market Block, overlaid on top of the satellite imagery. Map by the author.

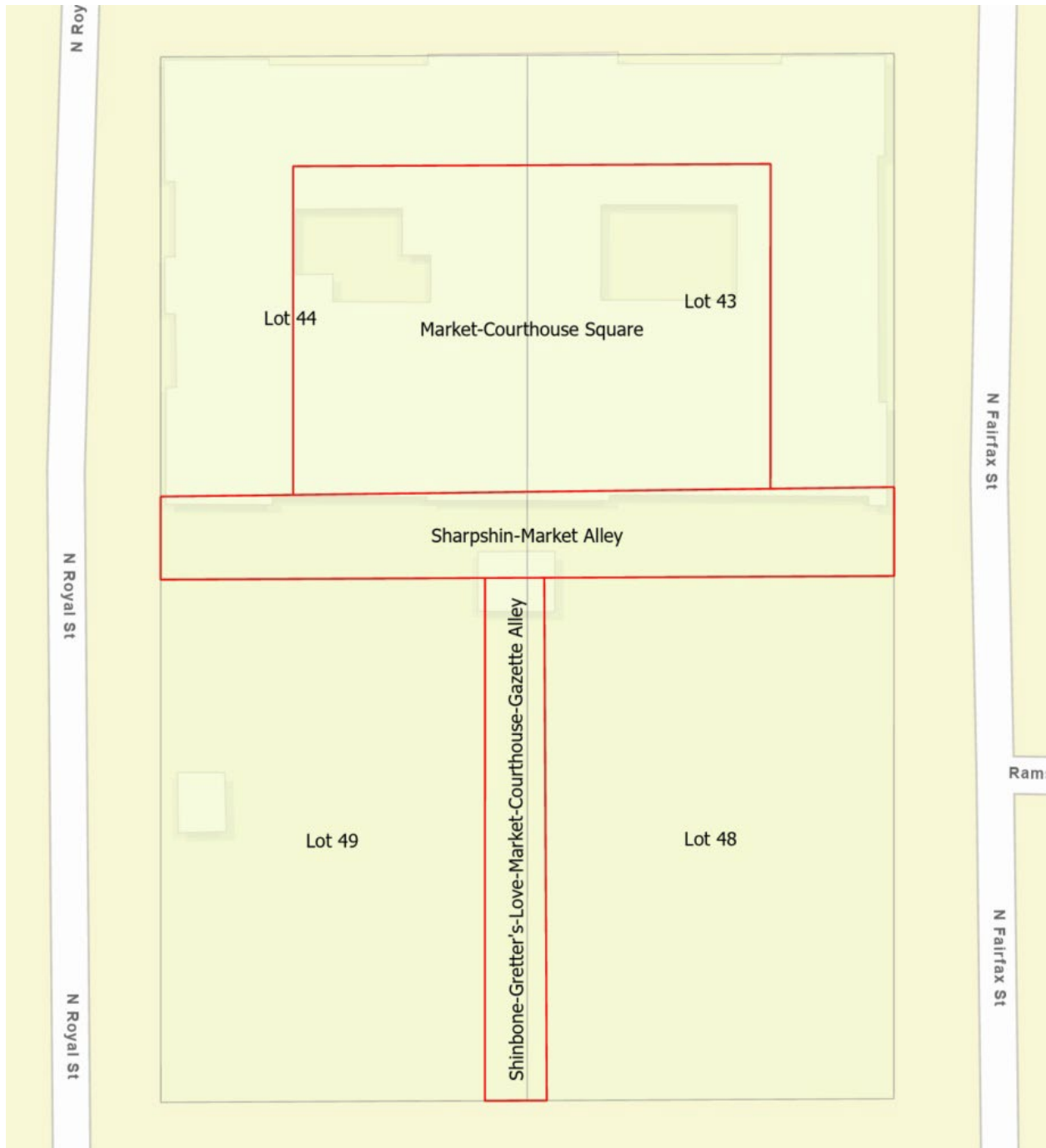


Figure 2 Map showing the various names of the alleys and open space on the Market Block. Map by the author.

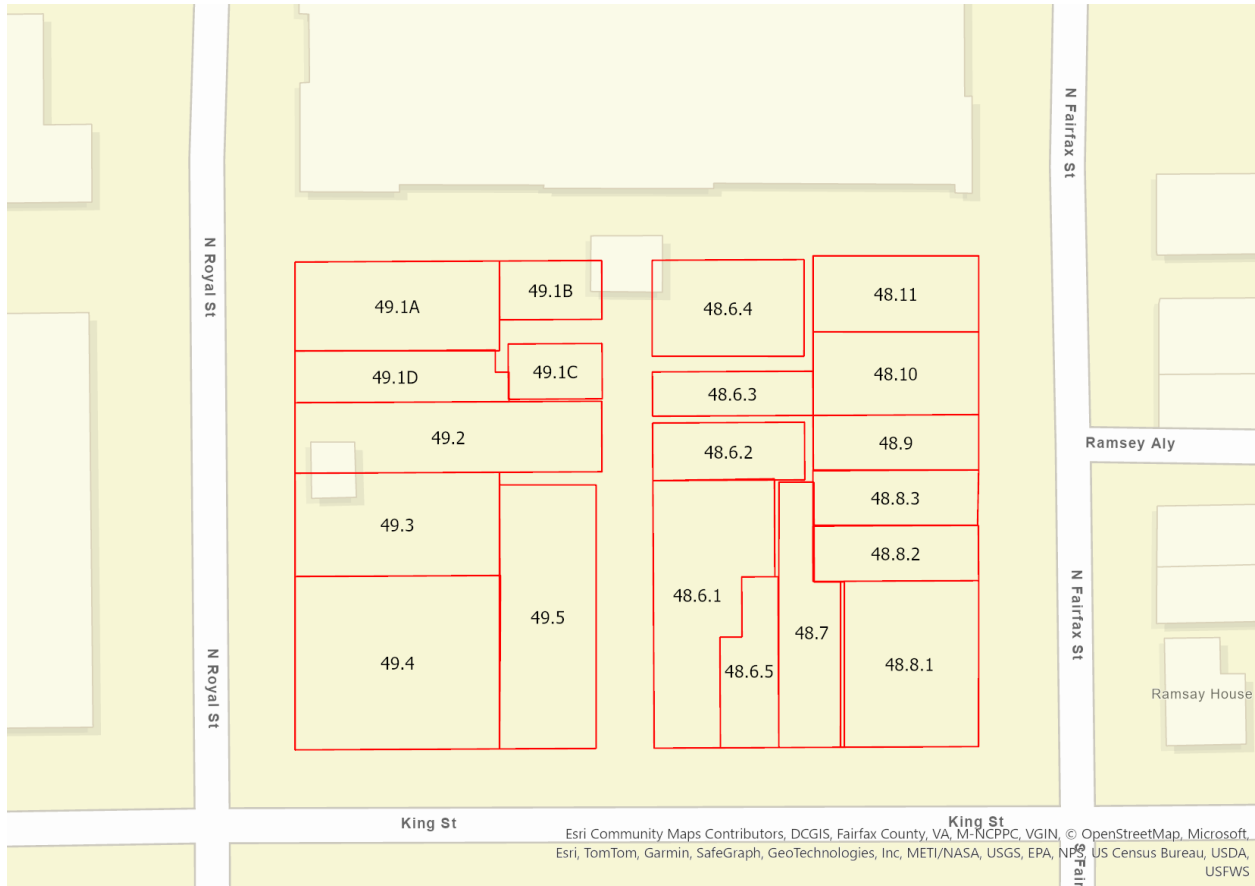


Figure 3 Map showing the parcel numbering system applied by the City of Alexandria. Map by the author.

A Gazetteer of the Market Block

The term “Market Block” refers to the municipal square bounded by Cameron, Royal, King, and Fairfax streets. The first plan of the town divided each square into four lots, each one-half acre. Lots 43, 44, 48, and 49 comprise the Market Block. Lot 43 sits in the northeast corner. Lot 44 occupies the northwest corner. Lot 48 and Lot 49 fill the southeast and southwest corners, respectively. Each lot measured ½ acre, giving the full square an area of two acres. Archaeologist Benjamin Skolnik writes, “The original half acre lots were supposed to measure 176’7” x 123’5” (this number does show up over and over again in the early deed books), which makes the full 2 acre blocks 353’ 2” x 246’ 10”.”⁴ The square itself was known over time as the Market Space, the Market Square, and Courthouse Square.

Alleys

Two alleys bisected the Market Block for most of its existence.⁵ Throughout time, Alexandrians referred to each alley with multiple and overlapping names. The north-south alley divided Lots 48 and 49 but the alley took more land from Lot 49. From the first extant deed stating the beginning point of Parcel 49.5, bounding on King Street and the north-south alley, the easternmost point of the parcel began at a point 109 feet 5 inches east of the corner of King and Royal streets. Thus, 14 feet of the alley came from Lot 49 while only 6 feet came from Lot 48.

In an attempt to provide order and enable understanding for the reader, this report attempts to maintain a regular naming convention for these alleys. The alley that ran north-south

⁴ Email from Benjamin Skolnik to author, May 20, 2025.

⁵ For a broader look at the history of alleys in Alexandria, including historic ones like Shinbone Alley, see Susan Hellman, “Working to Save Alexandria’s Historic Alleys” *Carlyle Connection: The Friends of Carlyle House Newsletter* (Summer 2017): 1-4. https://www.novaparks.com/sites/default/files/Summer_2017_July.pdf, accessed June 2, 2025.

between Lots 48 and 49 from King Street to Lots 43 and 44 had multiple names. During the eighteenth century, Alexandrians called this Courthouse Alley, Gretter's Alley, and Love Alley.

Michael Gretter was an early resident of the north-south alley, his public visibility as Sheriff of Fairfax County helped give the alley his name. Gretter's relationship with Molly Burnett, his next door neighbor, may have made it Love Alley. Burnett and Gretter may have been the reason Alexandrians began using the name Love Alley for the pathway where the two lived next door to one another. The relationship resulted in three children, although Gretter was married to another woman. Those three children – Sarah, Charles Frederick, and George Gobble – all took the surname Gretter and inherited the parcel when Mary Burnett died. A Fairfax County indicted Burnett for “having a base born child” in 1769 after hearing information from the Churchwardens of Fairfax Parish. The Justices found Burnett guilty and ordered her to pay the Churchwardens fifty shillings or five hundred pounds of tobacco as well as court costs.⁶ A short time later, Burnett faced criminal charges of theft after a Grand Jury indicted her “for stealing a petticoat.” Burnett pled “Not Guilty” and won the case when a jury acquitted her of the charge. The jury in the latter case included Market Square residents John Muir and George Gilpin.⁷ While she was still alive, Burnett sublet her house to a Mrs. Chevalier, according to the 1791 Alexandria City Directory.

By the middle to late nineteenth century, the alley came to be known as Shinbone Alley or Market Alley. According to a 1930 Tax Assessment Map, the Fairfax Street frontage of Lot 48 measured 177 feet 6 inches [177'6"]. The Royal Street frontage amounted to 176 feet 4 inches

⁶ Fairfax County Court Minute and Order Books (FfxCMB) 1768:129 and 1768:282, Fairfax County Historic Records Center.

⁷ FfxCMB 1770:315.

[176'4"]. The west side of the Market Alley added up to 172 feet 2 inches [172'2"] while the east side stretched a full 173 feet [173'], plus the width of a narrow, unlabeled passageway between the parcels labeled 12 and 13.

All of Sharpshin Alley came from the publicly-owned Lots 43 and 44. Colonial Alexandrians referred to a coin that someone had cut or shaved as a "sharpshin." So the old story goes, the alley earned its name because these sharpened coins cut holes in the pockets of pedestrians, who then lost the coin in the alley on Market Days. In a 1790 advertisement, Lewis D. Heshuysen offered "a SHARPSHIN reward, over and above the reward allowed by the Act of Assembly" for the capture and return of a man he claimed to enslave, "called Tom."⁸ The earliest known reference to Sharpshin Alley appears in the *Alexandria Advertiser and Commercial Intelligencer* of July 12, 1802. The wigmaker and hairdresser William DeVaughn reported that a thief had broken into his house in Sharpshin Alley and stolen \$176 in silver.⁹ An 1854 real estate advertisement placed by William H. McKnight trumpeted the sale of "a lot of ground at the corner of Sharp-Shin and Market Alleys."¹⁰ This lot had 37 feet front on Sharpshin Alley and 25 feet front on Market Alley. King Street had a total frontage on the Market Block of 246 feet 10 inches [246'10"], which included 109 feet 5 inches [109'5"] of Lot 49, 20 feet of Market Alley, and 118 feet 3 inches [118'3"] on Lot 48. In practice, as the 1930 Tax Assessment map shows, Market Alley consumed 21 feet, Lot 49 had one inch less (109'4"), and Lot 48 took 117 feet 4 inches [117'4"], for a total of 246 feet 8 inches [246'8"].

Place names hold clues to how people used and understood sites in the past. The Market Square, to no one's surprise, was where Alexandrians had a public market. One went to

⁸ *Virginia Gazette and Alexandria Advertiser* [hereafter *VGAA*], September 23, 1790.

⁹ *Alexandria Advertiser and Commercial Intelligencer*, July 12, 1802.

¹⁰ *Alexandria Gazette*, April 7, 1854.

Courthouse Square to find the courthouse. On the Market Block, though, informal names of alleys took hold without, it appears, official designation. While the Town Trustees named the first streets in Alexandria, giving the names official recognition, alleys acquired names through reputation or general use. The toponym “Shinbone Alley” has a variety of meanings and currency far beyond Alexandria. New York City has a Shinbone Alley, a tiny sliver of street in Lower Manhattan.¹¹ So does Wiscasset, Maine and St. George’s, Bermuda.¹² Eartha Kitt starred in a musical titled *Shinbone Alley* written by Joe Darion, Mel Brooks, and George Kleinsinger. The composers based the musical on the *Archy and Mehitabel* columns by Don Marquis in the New York *Evening Sun* beginning in 1916 and collected in volumes through the 1930s.¹³ Archy and Mehitabel occupy an imagined place where a cockroach writes poetry and makes friends with an alley cat blessed with a great voice.

Before the twentieth century, however, Alexandrians would have recognized the name “Shinbone Alley” as a comical reference laden with racism. One of the first minstrel songs performed in the United States caused the first national popularity of the phrase. Minstrelsy as a form of popular entertainment took the country by storm during the 1830s and 1840s. In a typical minstrel show, white performers darkened their faces with burnt cork or boot black and used music, dance, and stereotyped speech patterns to make fun of Black people. These performances

¹¹ “Noho’s wonderfully named Shinbone Alley,” *Ephemeral New York*, <https://ephemeralnewyork.wordpress.com/2010/07/24/nohos-wonderfully-named-shinbone-alley/>, accessed May 12, 2026.

¹² Phil di Vece, “Is it Shinbone, or Shin Bone Alley?” *Wiscasset Newspaper*, <https://www.wiscassetnewspaper.com/article/it-shinbone-or-shin-bone-alley/258476>, accessed May 12, 2026; “Shinbones, Barbers, & Featherbeds: The Secrets of St. George’s Alleys,” <https://www.gotobermuda.com/plan/inspiration/list/shinbones-barbers-featherbeds-the-secrets-of-st-georges-alleys>, accessed May 12, 2026.

¹³ “Shinbone Alley,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shinbone_Alley, accessed May 12, 2026. “Archy and Mehitabel,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archy_and_Mehitabel, accessed May 12, 2026.

established tropes of Black intellectual inferiority in the minds of white audiences and helped cement a white supremacist cultural zeitgeist in the United States. One of the earliest popular songs to come from the minstrel shows was “Long Time Ago,” published in 1833 and sometimes sung under an alternate name as “Shinbone Alley.” Musicologists argue that “Shinbone Alley” “is believed to be a genuine African American tune.”¹⁴ In different versions of the song, the narrator opens by singing, “As I was a gwain down Shinbone Alley / Long time ago!” The rest of the songs tell variations of a story in which one Black man murders another Black man but refuses to explain why.¹⁵

The *Alexandria Gazette* printed an item from the *National Intelligencer* about performances of “Shinbone Alley” in 1843.¹⁶ By this time, Edgar Allan Poe had reimagined the lyrics of the song in his poem “The Haunted Palace” as “Time long ago.” T.O. Mabbott, who edited an edition of Poe’s works, observed, “Poe is said to have been enraged when Henry B. Hirst wrote a parody on ‘The Haunted Palace’ called ‘The Ruined Tavern,’ including the lines ‘Never negro shook a shinbone / In a dance-house half so fair,’ according to a letter from Thomas H. Lane in the New York *Independent* of November 5, 1896...The parody, which describes a fracas that led to a police raid at a Philadelphia tavern frequented by tough Negroes, was printed in *Sartain's Union Magazine* for May 1852, but the offending lines were omitted.”¹⁷ This latter meaning of Shinbone Alley as a rough and tumble location of taverns and nightlife arrived in the

¹⁴ “Pursuing Artistic Freedom – Early Published Music and ‘Jim Crow,’” *Library of Congress*, www.loc.gov/exhibits/african-american-odyssey/slavery-the-peculiar-institution.html#obj23 <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.music/musscd.ody0121>, accessed August 4, 2025.

¹⁵ “Long Time Ago, as Sung by Mr. T. Rice in the Ethiopian Opera,” G. Willing, Baltimore, 1833.

¹⁶ *Alexandria Gazette*, September 2, 1843.

¹⁷ Edgar Allan Poe (ed. T. O. Mabbott), “*The Haunted Palace*,” *The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe, Vol. I: Poems* (1969), 317n12.

sea-shanty musical traditions as the song “Bully in the Alley.” In this tradition, prevalent among Black sailors in the Caribbean and, probably, the Atlantic coast of North America, a group of sailors alight in port to find Shinbone Alley, where they expect to indulge in alcohol and romance. The term “bully” connoted drunkenness in this context, leading to singing of the refrain, “Help me, Bob, I’m bully in the Alley, Bully down in Shinbone Alley.”¹⁸ Shinbone Alley in Alexandria was home to at least two taverns during the nineteenth century and quite likely contributed to the broad cultural circulations of the place name. Arell’s, Rix’s, Skinner’s, the Rainbow, and other taverns occupied buildings on the alley during its long history.

Jurisdiction in Alexandria

The report covers the history of Alexandria from its founding in 1749 until the demolition of the Market Block during the 1960s and the construction of the City Hall and Market Square complex. Throughout that time, the city changed its form of governance numerous times. A Courthouse built in present-day Tyson’s Corner served as the first Fairfax County Courthouse, from the time the legislature created Fairfax County in 1742 from part of what was then Prince William County. Shortly after its establishment in 1749, Alexandria became the seat of Fairfax County. In 1790, the United States Congress decided to include most of Alexandria within the new federal district. In fact, the “Court House in Alexandria” provided the point from which George Washington chose a location for the first boundary stone to mark the edges of the new

¹⁸ “The Black American/Caribbean Roots Of The Shanty ‘Bully In The Alley’ & Explanations For Some Words In That Shanty,” *Pancocojams*, <https://pancocojams.blogspot.com/2022/10/the-black-american-caribbean-roots-of.html>, accessed August 4, 2025; “Shinbone Alley,” *London Sea Shanty Collective*, <https://londonseashantycollective.com/songs/bully-in-the-alley/#:~:text=Audio%20Player,Bully%20down%20in%20Shinbone%20al>, accessed August 4, 2025.

capital. In his proclamation of January 24, 1791, Washington proposed “running four lines of experiment...from the Court House in Alexandria, Virginia, due south west half a mile, and thence a due south East course, till it shall strike Hunting Creek.”¹⁹ George Gilpin, at that moment a resident on the Market Block, and William Hunter, another Alexandria merchant, followed Washington’s instructions for surveying the first line on January 28. The pair, at the head of a larger group of concerned citizens, met at the Courthouse to set the line.²⁰ Between the passage of the Organic Act of 1801, which formally established the District of Columbia, and Retrocession in 1846, Alexandria was the principal city in Alexandria County, District of Columbia. When Alexandrians and Congress approved the retrocession of Alexandria back to Virginia, the town became part of Alexandria County, Virginia. In 1852, the legislature incorporated the City of Alexandria and, in 1920, renamed the outlying portions of the county as Arlington County.²¹

Sources

Over the past year, I have been fortunate to have access to the immense body of research compiled over the decades at Alexandria Archaeology and OHA. Many gigabytes of memory

¹⁹ “Proclamation, 24 January 1791,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-07-02-0153>. Original source: The Papers of George Washington, Presidential Series, vol. 7, 1 December 1790 – 21 March 1791, ed. Jack D. Warren, Jr. (University Press of Virginia, 1998), 278–280.

<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-07-02-0153>, accessed June 12, 2025.

²⁰ George Gilpin to George Washington, January 28, 1791, *The Papers of George Washington Digital Edition* (University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008).

<https://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/GEWN-05-07-02-0165>, accessed June 13, 2025. For an in-depth look at the establishment of the District of Columbia, see “Locating the Federal District” in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, vol. 19, January 1791-March 1791*, edited by Julian P. Boyd and Ruth W. Lester (Princeton University Press, 1974), 3-77.

²¹ Heather K. Cowl, “A History of Roads in Fairfax County, Virginia: 1608-1840” Masters Thesis, American University, 2002. 10-12.

store photographs snapped in archives, journal articles, and e-books. The physical library covers a breadth of subjects, transcriptions of primary sources, compilations of newspaper advertisements, and more. A great deal of the primary source material in this report has been collected by other researchers. My job has been, in many ways, to gather as much of the City Hall/Market Square in one place for further interpretation.

The records of the public functions of the Market Block during the eighteenth century include Fairfax County court records, land records, and deed books, all at the Fairfax County Historic Records Center and/or FamilySearch. The minutes of meetings of the Trustees of the Town of Alexandria are on microfilm at ALSC. A large and well-organized body of archival records for city government resides at ALSC as MS 019, the City of Alexandria Collection. Most early nineteenth century records are here. The Alexandria Archives and Records Center has numerous invaluable late-nineteenth century civic records, such as town histories, building permits, and records related to urban renewal. Newspapers for these eras can be accessed online but not all newspapers are represented for all eras.

The twentieth century is accessible through deed books, available online or in person at 520 King Street. Newspapers have proven a major source of knowledge about individuals, merchants, and public events. Newspapers for all of these eras can be accessed online but not all newspapers are represented for all eras. Sources for market operations during the twentieth century proved few. The records of the Clerk of the Market or Market Master during the first half of the twentieth century do not seem to have survived. Alexandria Archives and Records Center, the city's official repository, does not contain any such records. Alexandria Library Special Collections has two Market Rental Receipt Books showing the last names of individuals who rented Market Stalls during the 1950s. The Market Square Vertical File at ALSC reveals the

invention of Market Square in memory with dozens of newspaper articles from the 1970s and later showing how Alexandrians remembered the era before urban renewal.

The work of many historians and researchers has laid the groundwork for the present study. Penny Morrill's "Alexandria, Virginia's Market Square" constitutes a nearly-definitive history of the built environment of the site. Morrill compiled a timeline of legislative action, the changing built environment, and sourced historic images of the square for her article in the inaugural issue of the *Alexandria Chronicle*, the journal of the Alexandria Historical Society.²² James Munson's 1977 seminar paper on the Market Square connected the marketers of the 1970s to the long history of the site as a center of public life in Alexandria. Thomas Preisser wrote an excellent history of Alexandria during the eighteenth century.²³ More recently, the work of Ted Pulliam has shed light on many aspects of Alexandria's history.²⁴ These works have provided an abundance of reference material that forms the general public knowledge of Alexandria history and the past life of the Market Block to which this report contributes.

The appearance of the Market Block in histories of Alexandria has evolved along with each generation of historians. Already in the immediate post-American Revolution years, Alexandria gained notoriety as the "hometown of George Washington." Washington's death in 1799 exacerbated this tendency toward writing the history of Alexandria into the pages of patriotic scripture. Parson Weems, a notoriously unreliable narrator, told a tale that Washington deserved credit for the flourishing trade in Market Square. Morrill quotes an 1876 reprint of the

²² Penny Morrill, "Alexandria, Virginia's Market Square" *Alexandria Chronicle* 1, no. 1, (Spring, 1993): 1-20.

²³ Thomas M. Preisser, "Eighteenth-Century Alexandria, Virginia: Before the Revolution, 1749-1776," Ph.D. dissertation, College of William and Mary, 1977.

²⁴ Ted Pulliam, *Historic Alexandria: An Illustrated History* (City of Alexandria, Office of Historic Alexandria Virginia, 2011).

story. “Planters...in [Alexandria] having an abundance for hospitality were yet too proud to send garden stuff to market, and left that for the Negroes to turn a penny...

...the supply could never be depended upon, and sometimes failed altogether, so that the rich merchants of Alexandria ‘were often in danger of starvation.’ There were afraid to invite company, for often when the company came the Negroes failed to bring anything to market. When Washington moved to Mt. Vernon, says the Parson, he established a market cart – the first known in the neighborhood; his neighbors followed his example and Alexandria lived on the fat of the land.²⁵

Morrill readily acknowledged the spuriousness of the account, reminding readers that “Weems is the same man who gave us the story of the cherry tree.”²⁶ Yet the anecdote may contain a kernel of truth in its acknowledgement that enslaved marketers controlled the supply of the Alexandria Market Square. The evidence compiled for this report shows clearly that enslaved men and women made outsize contributions to the success of the market for most of its existence.

Beginning late in the nineteenth century, post-Civil War pining for the “old days” in Alexandria prompted sentimental pens to scrawl tributes to the picturesque Market Square. William F. Carne, a local journalist, attorney, and author, published a series of columns in the *Alexandria Gazette*. Between 1860 and 1880, the “Annals of Alexandria” series helped memorialize a “great man” political history of the town.²⁷ Carne’s example guided official

²⁵ Morrill, “Alexandria’s Market Square,” 2.

²⁶ Morrill, “Alexandria’s Market Square,” 2.

²⁷ Cite Carne articles. On Carne’s life and his “Annals,” see T. Michael Miller, ed., *Alexandria’s Forgotten Legacy: The Annals of Wm. F. Carne* (1983).

histories told by the local authorities in celebrations of the “Centennial of Municipal Government” in 1880.²⁸ These histories referred to the Market Block rarely in passing, focusing on the political and social history of the town elite.

Historians from the urban renewal era, like Ethelyn Cox, Eleanore Van Swearingen, and Louis Robert undertook concentrated archival study in an effort to prove the historical significance of the Market Square through the connection of the Arell’s Tavern buildings to the American Revolutionary era. As the Gadsby’s Urban Renewal Project razed historic buildings by the dozen, historic preservationists hoped to use history to avert the demolition of the old Market Square. Cox, Van Swearingen, and Robert were prominent voices in the historic preservation movement, often present at City Council meetings, meetings of the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (A.R.H.A.), and active on the Citizens’ Committee on Urban Renewal.²⁹ When Council action signaled the imminent demolition of the remaining buildings on the Market Block, the Smithsonian Institution sent Richard Muzzrole to perform “rescue archaeology” on the site. Without time or resources to conduct a large-scale dig, Muzzrole worked around construction crews to find whatever artifacts he could.³⁰

Each of these groups largely leave out the history of slavery and its legacies from their understanding of the Market Block. Thankfully, many historians in Alexandria have performed

²⁸ “Celebration of the First Centennial of the Municipal Government of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, March 9, 1880, Published by order of the City Council (Gazette Book and Job Office, 1880).

²⁹ Ethelyn Cox, *Historic Alexandria, Virginia, Street by Street: A Survey of Existing Early Buildings* (1976); Eleanore Van Swearingen, “Richard Arell, His Times, Tavern, and Neighbors” *Arlington Historical Magazine* 3 (1964); Eleanore Van Swearingen, “Closing the Book on Arell’s Tavern” *Arlington Historical Magazine* 7 (1965); For Roberts, see *Alexandria Gazette*, May 12, 1966.

³⁰ On Muzzrole and his work, see *Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), December 29, 1970. For a sampling of the artifacts Muzzrole rescued from the site, see Barbara H. Magid, *Artifacts, Advertisements, and Archaeology* (City of Alexandria, 1985).

excellent research in this field. The prolific T. Michael Miller researched the history of slavery and Market Square.³¹ Donald Sweig’s study of the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the Potomac River remains invaluable. Dylan Pritchett, the famed storyteller of Black life in colonial Virginia, wrote an extensive study of African American history in Alexandria during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Pritchett’s work probes traditional documentary sources for evidence of Black life, giving later researchers a road map of primary sources for further study.³² Elsa S. Rosenthal’s “1790 Names -1970 Faces: A Short History of Alexandria’s Slave and Free Black Community,” offered dozens of leads on members of the free Black community in Alexandria, including many of those connected with Market Square.³³

Historians *of* urban renewal, such as Krystyn Moon and Patricia McCloskey, in contrast to historians *from* the urban renewal era, take race seriously and imbue their interpretations of urban renewal with the perspective of the Black community in Alexandria. Moon also contributes significantly to our understanding of twentieth-century Alexandria by providing a coherent interpretation of the local preservation and housing movements through the lens of race policy and federal intervention.³⁴ Ultimately, this report draws extensively on the work of

³¹ T. Michael Miller, Fax to Jean Federico, Director of OHA, October 16, 2000; Fax to Pamela Cressey, Director of Alexandria Archaeology, October 17, 2000; Email to Cressey, May 27, 2003.

³² Dylan Pritchett, “A Look at the African-American Community through Alexandria’s Eyes, 1780-1810,” *Preserving Alexandria’s Cultural Traditions (PACT) Project* (1993).

³³ Elsa S. Rosenthal, “1790 Names – 1970 Faces: A Short History of Alexandria’s Slave and Free Black Community,” in *Alexandria: A Composite History*, ed. Elizabeth Hambleton and Marian Van Landingham (Alexandria Bicentennial Commission, 1976).

³⁴ Krystyn Moon, *Proximity to Power: Rethinking Race and Place in Alexandria, Virginia* (University of North Carolina Press, 2025); Patricia Ellen McCloskey, “Urban Renewal and Historic Preservation: A Case Study of Alexandria, Virginia, 1945-1980, M.A. thesis, George Washington University, 1999.

previous eras, contextualizing their findings in the context of the history of slavery, emancipation, and battles for equality on Market Square.

A note on language

During the long era of slavery in Virginia, from 1619 until 1865, most people recognized the legal categories of “slave” and “free.” Such legal categories did not and should not define a person. Thus, this report recognizes categories of “enslaved” and “enslaver.” Enslaved people had the choice to either acquiesce in enslavement or resist, in ways large and small, against the threat and promise of physical violence, including punches and kicks, whippings, torture, confinement, and death. The severity of the consequences for resistance prevented greater resistance. In this situation, we can hardly assume that silent cooperation under threat of death made the person a “slave,” as if that one word defined their entire being. Thus, we recognize that someone else forced them into that condition. One person enslaved another person. Best practices in writing the history of slavery call for using language that attributes responsibility for the legal and material conditions of slavery. In addition, we recognize the limited range of choices available to Black people living in and with those conditions.

The evidence from Alexandria’s Market Square, as well as innumerable other examples, proves that enslaved people created and maintained rich lives that extended far beyond the boundaries of enslavement.

We rarely construct similar theoretical webbing around the use of the word “free.” Every person in the eighteenth and nineteenth century United States either basked in their freedom or strove tirelessly to acquire their freedom. As the large scale flight from plantations at approach of

the Union Army would later prove, enslaved people leaped at the chance to become free. The growth of the free Black population between 1780 and 1860 proves the point, as well.

This report uses the terms Black and African American interchangeably. I refer to “Africans” or “people of African descent” when evidence supports it, particularly when writing about individuals during the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century who might have a first- or second-generation connection to Africa. This approach is an attempt to remedy the damage of natal alienation and social death, the loss of knowledge of one’s birth, familial, and cultural origins as a result of enslavement.³⁵

Primary sources from the eras studied here reflect the changing language of race in the United States. I have not seen much evidence of how Black Alexandrians during the eighteenth century referred to themselves as a collective community. By 1831, when 46 free Black residents of Alexandria wrote to the Mayor “that they would unite heart and hand in defending the authorities of the town and community against whatsoever enemy should rise up against them,” the signatories called themselves “free colored inhabitants of the Town of Alexandria.”³⁶ I have not changed spelling or capitalization of any primary or secondary sources but quote them directly.

The term “huckster” has carried complex meanings for centuries. One definition of “huckster” current in Alexandria throughout the nineteenth century defined the person as “a retailer of small goods, in a petty shop or booth, or at a stall; a pedlar [*sic*], a hawker.”³⁷ A

³⁵ Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Harvard University Press, 2018, orig. 1982).

³⁶ *Alexandria Gazette*, October 4, 1831. For a detailed examination of several of the signatories of the letter, see Adam Nubbe, “Select Biographies of the Alexandria Petitioners” Alexandria Archaeology Publications, Number 148, 2026.

³⁷ Oxford English Dictionary, “huckster (n.),” March 2026, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/3766387851>.

competing definition cast the huckster as a negative archetype of a marketer: “As term of reproach: A regrater, an engrosser of corn, etc.; a broker, a middleman.”³⁸ The history of the Alexandria Market shows a clear distinction between these senses of the word. The town authorities rented “huckster’s stalls” next to “vegetable stalls,” “butcher’s stalls,” and “fish benches.” A huckster was an ordinary person, not an archetype. Periodically in the history of the market, authorities prosecuted marketers for regrating and forestalling. The law defined regrating and forestalling as taking place when a marketer bought excessive product from other sources outside of normal markets as a technique for artificially inflating the price of goods. These practices existed separately from the day-to-day, wholly legal and activity of hucksters.

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³⁸ Oxford English Dictionary, “huckster (n.), sense 1.c,” March 2026, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/3766387851>.

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THE REPORT

A Market Town in a Slave Society

The English author Richard Parkinson, who lived in Alexandria between 1798 and 1800, knew the foundation of economic success in Virginia. In reflecting on the relative costs of paying taxes on unproductive land or paying too much to make the lands produce too little, Parkinson lamented, “It is allowed by every experienced man in America, that no man can work a farm at all to get a living upon it but by slaves.” Parkinson regretted the economic logic that supposed “a black man or slave is both clothed and fed at a less expence than a white man.” If Alexandrians and their fellow Americans during the eighteenth century believed such logic, Parkinson suspected that the “black man or slave” felt differently about the balance of the equation. “It shows plainly where the livelihood is got out of that poor soil,” Parkinson wrote, “It is pinched and screwed out of the negro.”³⁹ From its founding, the economy of Alexandria depended on enslaved labor. Whether through tobacco agriculture or production of other crops, the men, women, and children who made up the enslaved population produced the wealth of the town through their labor, toil, and submission. Yet for the all the wealth enslaved Alexandrians created for their enslavers, they built their own wealth by pinching and screwing every opportunity to make an extra dollar towards buying their freedom or that of a loved one. By the nineteenth century, a sizable and increasingly prosperous Black community, both free and enslaved, thrived

³⁹ Richard Parkinson, *A Tour in America, in 1798, 1799, and 1800, Exhibiting Sketches of Society and Manners, And a Particular Account of the American System of Agriculture, with Its Recent Improvements* (London, 1805), 25-28. <http://www.loc.gov/resource/lhbtn.24787>, accessed March 26, 2026.

in Alexandria under conditions of legal subordination. On the unbalanced scales of slavery and freedom, Black Alexandrians responded from the light side by constructing their own spaces within the white-dominated public sphere. The Market Square in Alexandria offered Black Alexandrians a space to exercise a measure of economic liberty that they used to promote generational stability.

Alexandria was a market town in a slave society. The town hosted the economic, legal, and political center of the region. Public officials and private marketers exercised their rights and duties from Market Square. It drew vendors not just from the town itself but from the rest of the broader Potomac River region in Virginia and Maryland. The Market Square in Alexandria served as the only municipal market in the city while privately owned stores came and went. The public market served all Alexandrians, rich and poor, Black and white, free and enslaved. In 1752, the colonial legislature passed an act to permit Alexandria to hold fairs “for the sale and vending of all manner of cattle, victuals, provisions, goods, wares, and merchandizes.”⁴⁰ When the act expired after two years, the legislature renewed it. The Patriot legislature in October 1779 incorporated the Town of Alexandria and charged the freeholders with electing a mayor and other officials. This act established bi-weekly market days in Alexandria. The act also gave the town government “the power to hold and keep within the said town annually, two market days in every week of the year, the one on Wednesday and the other on Saturday, and from time to time to appoint a clerk of the market, who shall have assize of bread, wine, beer, wood, and other things, and generally do and perform all things belonging to the office of clerk of the market within the said town.”⁴¹

⁴⁰ William Waller Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia*, vol. 6 (Richmond, 1809–23), 286.

⁴¹ Hening, *Statutes at Large*, vol. 10, 172-176.

Enslaved people in Alexandria worked within what Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan termed “the slaves’ economy.”⁴² Alexandria’s early status as a market town made “the slaves’ economy” possible. Through the litany of activities that enslaved people directed towards their own profit and benefit, “slaves challenged their masters’ authority and took control of a larger portion of their lives.”⁴³ Historian Ashley Rose Young argues that public markets were integral to what she calls “the public culture of food...places where public spaces where the movements of vendors and customers created the daily rhythms of urban life [and] otherwise marginalized groups exercised power over public culture.”⁴⁴ The evidence from the Alexandria Market shows just such a system. Enslaved men and women went to the market to earn money and take steps towards freedom. Alexandria connected both sides of the Potomac River watershed to the Chesapeake Bay region and into the surrounding counties of Fairfax, Loudon, Prince William in Virginia and Prince George, and Marlboro in Maryland. During the eighteenth century, enslaved people had commercial and social connections that stretched from town to country and, in some cases, across the Atlantic. The slaves’ economy of Alexandria had an important outlet not just on the Market Square but in the shops and stores of the rest of the Market Block.

In addition to the regular markets and fairs, the square in the Market Block hosted Court Days in each of its changing jurisdictions. Historians debate the significance and meaning of regular court days in colonial Virginia. In his landmark work, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790*, historian Rhys Isaac describes the periodic meetings of county courts as main events

⁴² Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan, “Introduction: Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life,” *Cultivation and Culture; Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas*, ed. Berlin and Morgan (University of Virginia Press, 1993), 3.

⁴³ Berlin and Morgan, “Introduction,” 3.

⁴⁴ Ashley Rose Young, *Nourishing Networks: The Public Culture of Food in New Orleans* (Oxford University Press, 2025), 9.

in the life of colonial communities.⁴⁵ Turk McCleskey and James C. Squire added to Isaac’s general view of court days with statistical analysis to gauge actual court day attendance. Alexandria seems to fit the pattern McCleskey and Squire argued “produced heavy attendance at court day.”⁴⁶ In Fairfax County, court met close to monthly but often did not hold sessions for one or two months at a time before resuming regularity. In 1749-1753, court met for a few days in January, then from March to June, took the summer off, and reconvened for a few days at a time from September and December. For Virginia counties without a town, the holding of court provided the best opportunity for distant neighbors to convene for business and sociality. At its founding in 1742, Fairfax County built a courthouse at a burgeoning crossroads near Tyson’s Corner. The quick growth of Alexandria as a town led to the relocation of the seat of justice in 1752. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Fairfax County Courthouse in Alexandria qualified as “the most publick place in this part of the Country.”⁴⁷

In his discussion of court days, Isaac also noted that the county courthouse “was invariably accompanied by supporting buildings—always at least one ordinary (i.e., tavern), a lockup, and often a store.”⁴⁸ The example of Alexandria supports this rule to the fullest. In addition to the county courthouse, a Town Hall stood at the corner of Fairfax and Cameron streets. The Town Hall gave the Trustees a space to meet but it also served as a meeting place for the general public and as a public school house. Built in 1759, the building stood until the mid-

⁴⁵ Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (University of North Carolina Press, Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1982), 88-94.

⁴⁶ Turk McCleskey and James C. Squire, “Court-day crowds in colonial Virginia” *Historical Methods* 49, no. 2 (2016): 92-100.

⁴⁷ Robert Lewis to George Washington, April 6, 1796, *The Papers of George Washington Digital Edition* (University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008).

<https://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/GEWN-05-20-02-0014>, accessed June 13, 2025.

⁴⁸ Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 88.

nineteenth century. In 1842, the Sun Fire Company moved into the building.⁴⁹ The public square in Alexandria served as home to both civic and county authorities. The first structures on Lots 43 and 44, therefore, served governmental purposes. In 1818 a new Watch House opened on the second floor of the Fish Market at Fairfax Street and the Sharpshin Alley. Though the council ordered the old Watch House demolished at the same time, the building survived until after the 1871 fire. The buildings located on parcels 48.6, 48.11, 49.1A, and 49.1B faced the square, making them the fourth side of its built environment. At the same time the Courthouse moved to Alexandria, Benjamin Sebastian opened a tavern on Lot 49. This would most likely have been the Rainbow Tavern noted as a victim of the 1871 fire.

Courthouse Square became the scene of key local events in the years preceding the American Revolution. Eleanore van Swearingen, in her 1960s articles on Richard Arell and the then-still-standing tavern, tied the importance of the site to the Fairfax Resolves, a set of declarations made by the elite of Fairfax County denouncing British overreach. Van Swearingen summed up the significance, “[George] Washington dined there on July 5, 1774, following a ‘meeting of the Inhabitants.’”⁵⁰ The “great man” history of the 1960s did not even mention who else would have also dined with Washington at Arell’s Tavern that night and especially not the men and women who may have served the meal and drinks. Histories focused on the personalities of the Patriot movement left out, justified, or overlooked the practices of enslavement by the Patriot revolutionaries of Virginia, and especially that of the ordinary tavern keeper Richard Arell.

⁴⁹ Penny Morrill, “Market Square.”

⁵⁰ Van Swearingen, “Richard Arell, His Times, Tavern, and Neighbors” *Arlington Historical Magazine*, 17.

The political rebels at the meeting were very aware of their own histories of enslavement but cast themselves as at risk of enslavement. The Fairfax Resolves expressed the sense of those gathered that Parliament and the King conspired “to reduce Us from a State of Freedom and Happiness, to Slavery and Misery.” Fear induced this group of men to “use every Means which Heaven hath given Us to prevent our becoming...Slaves” to the British government. The signers of the Fairfax Resolves condemned the slave trade and pledged to refuse participation in it after a certain date. One resolve stated “the Opinion of this Meeting, that during our present Difficulties and Distress, no Slaves ought to be imported into any of the British Colonies on this Continent.” Far from a temporary move, however, this group also wanted “to see an entire Stop for ever put to such a wicked cruel and unnatural Trade.”⁵¹ With slave sales happening outside the windows of the Courthouse where they met, these men condemned the Atlantic slave trade that brought them there. In the years and months leading up to the denunciation of the Atlantic slave trade, the Courthouse Square served, time and again, as a way station in the commodity lives of enslaved men, women, and children in Alexandria. The signers of the Fairfax Resolves did not oppose slavery. None of them liberated any enslaved person in the wake of their pronouncement against the slave trade. In fact, the 1778 law that forbade the importation of enslaved people into Virginia had the practical effect of increasing the value of those already in the state, thereby making those men richer.

During the eighteenth century, economic conditions in Northern Virginia went hand in hand with tobacco. In May 1730, the colonial legislature ordered the construction of a tobacco warehouse for public use which Simon Pearson built on ground near what is now Oronoco Street

⁵¹ Fairfax Resolves, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-10-02-0080>, accessed April 7, 2026.

around 1731.⁵² After Pearson sold the real estate to Hugh West late in the 1730s, the site became known as West's Point.⁵³ The Hunting Creek Tobacco Warehouse at West's Point became a new crossroads not just for tobacco merchants but for the people they enslaved, indentured servants, and other small farmers. In 1748, a private act before the General Assembly in Williamsburg allowed "for erecting a town at Hunting-Creek warehouse, in the county of Fairfax."⁵⁴

Alexandria thus owed its origin to the need for an urban administration center in support of the tobacco warehouse. The act named eleven men as trustees to oversee the development of the town, including John Pagan and John Alexander, who would later purchase Lots 48 and 49, respectively, on the Market Block. The legislature charged the trustees with "designing, building, carrying on, and maintaining the said town" but also required them to "set apart such portions of the said land for a market place and public landing."⁵⁵ The trustees chose Lots 43 and 44, fronting Cameron Street between N. Fairfax and N. Royal streets, as the site of the public market place. Immediately, Alexandria drew large crowds from its environs on market days, both enslaved and free marketers and their patrons. Sales of lottery tickets funded the construction of the first Market House in Alexandria in 1751.⁵⁶ In 1752, the General Assembly gave its assent to regular fairs at Alexandria and, in a show of the town's importance as a commercial center, privileged marketers from most legal process before, during, and after these market days.⁵⁷ Thus, from its founding, Alexandria served both the tobacco market and the market for general produce

⁵² Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, vol. 4, 267.

⁵³ Ted Pulliam, "Alexandria's First Wharf" *Studies of the Old Waterfront*, Office of Historic Alexandria/Alexandria Archaeology, 2008. 2.

⁵⁴ Hening, ed., *Statutes at Large*, vol. 6, 214.

⁵⁵ James R. Caton, *Jottings from the Annals of Alexandria: Legislative Chronicles of the City of Alexandria* (Newell-Cole Company, 1933), 7.

⁵⁶ *Virginia Gazette*, May 16, 1751.

⁵⁷ Hening, ed., *Statutes at Large*, vol. 6, 286-287.

and provisions. The market and civic functions of Alexandria brought the entire community together at Market Square.

The tobacco trade began to decline by the mid-eighteenth century, however, and Alexandria felt the effects of changes in the tobacco market. A cycle of boom and bust, price fluctuations, and the resulting financial instability discouraged planters both large and small from maintaining their investments. The soil in the Potomac River basin could not produce high quality tobacco, only an inferior strain known as oronoco.⁵⁸ Soil depletion also impacted production, encouraging many farmers to slowly convert their farms to wheat, corn, and other foodstuffs between the 1740s and the 1780s.⁵⁹ Declining production also prompted westward migration as some planters sought undiminished soils. During the 1750s and 1760s, high prices masked decreased production with prosperity. Tobacco production all but ceased during the Revolutionary War and, although the market recovered, monocrop agriculture never again reached its past profitability. The gentry who established Alexandria wagered on a town with great importance to the tobacco market but got a general market town in the bargain.⁶⁰

Planters transitioned away from strict reliance on tobacco and directed enslaved laborers to grow produce, livestock, and dairy during the early nineteenth century. With a less-taxing demand on their time spent directly serving their enslavers, enslaved people dedicated a greater

⁵⁸ Lorena S. Walsh, *Motives of honor, pleasure, and profit: plantation management in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1607-1763* (Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture and University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 514-518, 649.

⁵⁹ Walsh, *Motives of Honor*, Table 28, 492-493; Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800* (Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture and University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 157-161.

“Tobacco in Colonial Virginia” *Encyclopedia Virginia*, <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/tobacco-in-colonial-virginia>, accessed May 7, 2026.

⁶⁰ Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 157-161. “Tobacco in Colonial Virginia” *Encyclopedia Virginia*, <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/tobacco-in-colonial-virginia>, accessed May 7, 2026.

portion of their time to their own gardens and personal industry. “Market days must have been a welcome time,” Lorena Walsh writes, “affording some slaves a chance to escape the plantation and work without supervision, manage cash, and perhaps find ways to make a little money for themselves.”⁶¹ For the enslaved men and women in and around Alexandria, the diversification of crops created the same opportunities for them to earn money separate from their direct relationships with their masters.

With economic restructuring came new pathways to bring goods into Alexandria from further away, shaping life on Market Square for both free and enslaved Alexandrians. At first, people used the Potomac River and other regional waterways to get goods to market. Richard Parkinson wrote of his visit to the plantation of a man named Grimes, fronting on the Potomac River. “He showed me his garden, the produce of which, he told me, he sold at Alexandria, a distance of thirty miles.”⁶² While the waters of the Potomac offered easy transportation to and from the city, the canals and railroads of the following decades only increased the volume of produce at the Alexandria Market.

In an age of internal improvements, goods came to the Alexandria Market through increasingly diverse pathways. Building on the unrealized schemes of the Ohio Company and revolutionary-era attempts to use the Potomac River for military transport, a group of Virginia and Maryland investors incorporated the Potomac (often spelled Potowmack or Patowmack) Company in 1784 (in Maryland) and 1785 (in Virginia).⁶³ The Potomac Company planned to

⁶¹ Lorena S. Walsh, “Slave Life, Slave Society, and Tobacco Production in the Tidewater Chesapeake, 1620-1820,” in *Cultivation and Culture*, ed. Berlin and Morgan, 191.

⁶² Parkinson, *A Tour in America*, 43-44. <http://www.loc.gov/resource/lhbtn.24787>, accessed March 26, 2026.

⁶³ Douglas R. Littlefield, “The Potomac Company: A Misadventure in Financing an Early American Internal Improvement Project” *Business History* 58 (Winter, 1984): 562-563.

bypass the several falls of the Potomac River with canals on which boats would float, towed by mules, horses, and oxen pulling ropes along the sides of the canal. Eventually, the Potomac Company evolved into the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company, a different company with the same mission.

Beyond its material impact on the goods available at Market Square, the Potomac Company attracted investment and provided employment for several of the free tenants on Lots 48 and 49. James Rumsey, who leased the corner lot at King and Fairfax streets from the Arells in 1772, served as the principal superintendent of the works of the company. William Hartshorne and George Gilpin enjoyed positions on the Board of Directors.

The Potomac Company and C&O Canal Company show the further entanglement of the Market Block with slavery. The directors of both companies believed that the work of digging canals “is best performed by negro slaves.”⁶⁴ Rumsey and Hartshorne had charge of a large force of laborers, as well as the authority to sign labor contracts on behalf of the company. In exchange for a term of labor, the company pledged “twenty pounds, Virginia currency, per ann[um], also clothe them, pay their levies and furnish them with rations...and also a reasonable quantity of spirits when necessary.”⁶⁵ The company “expected the Negroes will be good and able working hands, [who] will come well clothed, or be supplied with what may be deficient.”⁶⁶ Rumsey, Gilpin, and Hartshorne made energetic efforts to profit from the labor of enslaved men and women. The Potomac Company hired thirty-four enslaved people from the Estate of Patrick Ramsay even as an auctioneer cried their sale at Market Square during a 1787 sale, one of the

⁶⁴ “Memorial of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company,” 20th Congress, 2nd session, House of Representatives, January 12, 1829, 3-4. This 1829 memorial quotes an older memorial from the directors of the Potomac Company.

⁶⁵ *Virginia Journal and Alexandria Advertiser* [hereinafter *VJAA*], November 3, 1785.

⁶⁶ *VJAA*, November 3, 1785.

largest in the history of Market Square.⁶⁷ The Potomac Company paid the executors of Ramsay's estate more than £333 to hire at least twelve enslaved men after the sale, according to ledgers kept through the early 1790s.⁶⁸ Unfortunately, the records of an 1810 Chancery case among the Ramsay heirs does not name the individuals hired out to the Potomac Company rather the source erases individual identities replacing it with the name of the capitalist enterprise.

A 1778 law prohibiting the importation of enslaved people into Virginia, voted on and supported by the directors of the companies when they were anti-royal revolutionaries, worried them when they had significant personal investments at stake. The 1778 "Act for preventing the farther importation of Slaves," passed by the General Assembly, provided a pathway to freedom for many.⁶⁹ When Alexandria became part of the District of Columbia, the laws of Virginia remained in force in Alexandria County. The act provided, "That every slave imported into this commonwealth, contrary to the true intent and meaning of this act, shall, upon such importation become free." The "true intent and meaning" gave enslavers leeway to obey the letter of the law while circumventing its stated intent of "preventing further importation." To legally bring an enslaved person into Virginia, the enslaver had to take an oath swearing that they did not intend to sell the enslaved person and that the person had not been imported from Africa since November 1, 1778. All paper records of these oaths went on file in local courthouses, like the one on the Market Block.

⁶⁷ "Statement of William Wilson," Arlington County Chancery Causes: Patrick Ramsay [Junior] vs. William Wilson +c, 1810-049 [hereafter ACCC-LVA, 1810-049]. https://old.lva.virginia.gov/chancery/case_detail.asp?CFN=013-1810-049, accessed May 8, 2026.

⁶⁸ "Ledger," ACCC-LVA, 1810-049. The sale of the Patrick Ramsay estate, as will be discussed in greater detail below, is by far the largest single-day sale of enslaved people at Market Square, .

⁶⁹ Hening, ed., *Statutes at Large*, vol. 9, 471.

The Potomac Company wanted to preempt freedom suits brought by enslaved laborers crossing between jurisdictions. In 1829, officials of the C&O Canal Company wrote to Congress “that they would fair hope it may accord with the wisdom of Congress to enact uniform laws respecting the condition of slaves, on both sides of the river Potomac, within the District of Columbia.”⁷⁰ The men who owned the Potomac Company often shared the concerns raised by the benevolence societies because those concerns came from their peers. For instance, the Alexandria merchant William Hartshorne, a Quaker, was both a director of the company and a member and president of the Alexandria Society for the Relief and Protection of Persons Illegally Held in Bondage.⁷¹

During the nineteenth century, Alexandria looked to investments in canals and railroads to maintain profitability and connect the deep water port to distant commercial geographies. The Alexandria Canal opened in 1843 to connect the city to the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal at Georgetown. Later in the 1850s, the engines of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad trafficked cars into and out of the Virginia interior. Canals and railroads connecting the butchers, hucksters, and farmers of Alexandria’s Market Square to points beyond their previous bounds.

The economic structures that Alexandria operated within rested on a legal structure elaborated over time in the English colony of Virginia. At the moment of Alexandria’s founding, slavery in Virginia had evolved into a repressive system built on inheritance of status and racial duality supported by laws and religious ideology. Virginia neared its peak as a tobacco economy supported by enslaved labor at every level. To maintain economic and social supremacy for white people, colonial authorities in Virginia wrote laws that empowered white Virginians to use

⁷⁰ “Memorial of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company,” 2.

⁷¹ A. Glenn Crothers, “Quaker Merchants and Slavery in Early National Alexandria, Virginia: The Ordeal of William Hartshorne” *Journal of the Early Republic* 25, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 67.

violence and torture as a means of subjecting Black people. Yet, as Anthony S. Parent writes, “The great planters [of Virginia] were anxious because women, small planters, and most important, blacks were not quiescent in their designs” to expand landholdings at the expense of Indians, grow tobacco, and maintain a racial hierarchy by whatever means necessary.⁷² T. Michael Miller catalogs the “restrictive measures” imposed on free Black Alexandrians during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. A special curfew, mandatory registrations, and active discouragement of emigration showed these free men and women what their white co-townspersons thought of them.⁷³ Local officials shaped the laws to ensure that Black Alexandrians would occupy a permanent underclass of laborers forced to dedicate their lives to serving white Alexandrians in some capacity or other.

Yet a spirit of humanity pervaded Alexandria that provided a counterweight to the otherwise unbalanced scale of racial justice. As many writers have noted, the settlement in Alexandria of a large number of Quaker merchants seeded the beginnings of an antislavery current in the town. Even Quaker meetings struggled with the question of slavery. The Alexandria Meeting expelled some of its members for enslaving people and punished others for contributing to the profit of the slave system through hiring practices. On the Market Block, William Hartshorne, George Gilpin, Robert H. Miller, John Janney, well-known antislavery Quakers, lived side-by-side with proslavery neighbors. Whatever the form of its municipal charter at a given point in its history, the government of Alexandria supported the institution of slavery in each of its three branches. The legislative councils passed laws to reinforce the

⁷² Anthony S. Parent, Jr., *Foul Means: The Formation of a Slave Society in Virginia, 1660-1740* (Omohundro Institute of Early American History and University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 265-268.

⁷³ T. Michael Miller, “‘Out of Bondage’: A History of the Alexandria Colonization Society” *Alexandria History* 7 (1987), 15.

authority of enslavers over enslaved people. The executive officers enforced laws upholding enslavement and made affirmative decisions to enable violence against Black Alexandrians at moments both spectacular and mundane. The judges of Alexandria courts handed down decisions that buttressed the principles of white supremacy in local society.

Slavery in Virginia began in 1619, when an English privateer landed at Point Comfort, near Jamestown, with captive Angolans captured from a Spanish ship bound for Mexico. Although the tobacco economy initially depended on white indentured servants from England, Scotland, and Ireland, the arrival into and enslavement of Africans in Virginia gave tobacco planters a new source of labor. A 1660 law passed by the House of Burgesses suggests that white and Black laborers found common cause in resisting their legal subordination. The Burgesses feared the threat to their social and political preeminence, declaring, “[I]n case any English servant shall run away in company with any negroes who are incapable of making satisfaction by addition of time, Bee it enacted that the English so running away in company with them shall serve for the time of the said negroes absence as they are to do for their owne.”⁷⁴ Laws in 1661 and 1672 strengthened the 1660 law.⁷⁵ Free people of European descent continued to assist enslaved people of African descent in Virginia, despite harsh punishments for getting caught. In 1732, the legislature pushed its authority into the religious sphere by forbidding clergy from performing Communion for anyone convicted of aiding an enslaved person to escape. A major change in the law of slavery came in 1662, when the legislature decreed that children would inherit their legal condition from their mother. The principle of *partus sequitur ventrem* [“that

⁷⁴ “Virginia Laws on Slavery and Servitude,” <https://www.virtualjamestown.org/laws1.html>, accessed May 12, 2026.

⁷⁵ “Act Concerning Runaways,” 1661-1662 and “An act for the apprehension and suppression of runaways, negroes and slaves,” 1672. <https://www.virtualjamestown.org/laws1.html>, accessed May 12, 2026.

which is born follows the womb”] meant that the children of an enslaved woman would also be enslaved. Previous to this law, children followed the status of the father, according to English common law.

By the later seventeenth century, resistance to the institution of slavery in Virginia had grown widespread. Entire communities of self-liberated Africans lived in secluded areas near the main European settlements and provisioned themselves, in part, with crops and livestock claimed by the English colonial government. Worse, in the eyes of authorities, women and men with different skin colors and social classes had children together. To discourage European colonists from having relationships and children with people of African descent or Native Americans, the House of Burgesses passed a law in 1691 that punished not just the parents but their offspring.⁷⁶ Class solidarity only went so far between the enslaved people of African descent and the indentured servants of European descent, as the legal marker of race allowed the legislature to punish individuals marked “negro or mulatto” more severely than individuals marked “white.” In 1705, the state legislature established the principle in law that enslaved Black people were not people at all but real estate.⁷⁷ Complaining that the death of enslavers provided an opportunity for the enslaved to seek freedom, the House of Burgesses codified the practice of inheritance of enslaved people. Further, the 1705 act made enslaved people subject to valuation and seizure for payment of lawful debts.

In some instances, the laws provided enslaved people with a pathway to freedom. Black Alexandrians who became free by legal means had an opportunity to lay the groundwork for generational prosperity. The same legal system that enslaved their relatives could also uphold

⁷⁶ “An act for suppressing outlying slaves,” 1691, <https://www.virtualjamestown.org/laws1.html#36>.

⁷⁷ Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, vol. 3, 333-335.

their own claim to freedom. Justice was neither blind nor impartial yet Black Alexandrians had access to power under some circumstances. The law forbade manumissions of enslaved Black people unless he or she left Virginia within six months of becoming free. The Virginia government saw the colony as a place where Black people were welcome only if they submitted entirely to service of white people.

The laws of slavery and freedom in Virginia changed significantly in 1782, when the legislature passed an act enabling enslavers to liberate the people they enslaved through a will or a deed of manumission. Previously, manumissions required a positive act by the General Assembly. After 1782, local courts assumed jurisdiction over manumissions.⁷⁸ The large numbers of Black Virginians who earned their freedom through this method prompted local town councils to compile lists of free Black residents in their jurisdictions. The resulting “Free Negro Registers” constitute the single greatest source for establishing the vital records and genealogies of Black Alexandrians throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The 1846 Retrocession of Alexandria from the District of Columbia to Virginia changed slavery in Alexandria legally and economically. As part of the Federal District, Alexandrians had little control over slavery in their town. The laws of Virginia remained in force when federal authority officially commenced with the Organic Act in 1801 and remained static ever after. As a body of Alexandrians complained in a memorial to Congress begging for retrocession in 1846, “So mongrel and complicated is our present system [of laws]...that we...find it difficult to eviscerate from the chaotic mass the true meaning of the law.”⁷⁹ Alexandrians also hoped

⁷⁸ “Virginia Untold: Deeds of Emancipation and Manumission,” <https://uncommonwealth.lva.virginia.gov/blog/2016/01/27/virginia-untold-deeds-of-emancipation-and-manumission/>, accessed June 26, 2025.

⁷⁹ “Memorial of the committee of the town of Alexandria, for retrocession,” Rep. No. 325, 29th Congress, 1st Session, House of Representatives, February 25, 1846, 6-7.

retrocession would improve their flagging economy. As the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal increased trade to Georgetown, the economic stature of Alexandria declined. Many in Alexandria worried that abolition of slavery would destroy the local economy by depriving it of a profitable sector.⁸⁰

Sales of Enslaved People

On November 16, 1789, “a very large concourse of people both from the Town & Country assembled” in front of the Fairfax County Courthouse in Alexandria to bid on the legal authority to enslave sixty men, women, and children.⁸¹ The auction that day constitutes the largest such public sale of enslaved people known to have taken place on Alexandria’s Market Square. The experiences of the sixty individuals ranged from toil on a tobacco plantation to household labor to navigating the waterways of Virginia, the Chesapeake, and the Atlantic. Together, they suffered through the common fate of a public sale on Alexandria’s Market Square. For most of those whose lives changed against their will, the sale is all we know. However, the surviving archives of eighteenth and nineteenth century Alexandria offer a deeper look at the lives of Amy and Strephon, a woman and man whose choices left marks in the archive where others have been erased.

Amy and Strephon labored in the household of Patrick Ramsay, a Scottish merchant in Virginia. Patrick was baptized in Glasgow on June 20, 1736, the son of Andrew Ramsay, Lord Provost of Glasgow, Scotland, and Sophia Douglas. Prior to 1760, he settled in the vicinity of

⁸⁰ A. Glenn Crothers, “The 1846 Retrocession of Alexandria: Protecting Slavery and the Slave Trade in the District of Columbia” in *In the Shadow of Freedom: The Politics of Slavery in the National Capital*, Perspectives on the History of Congress, 1801-1877 Series (Ohio University Press, 2011).

⁸¹ “Separate Answer of John Potts,” ACCC-LVA, 1810-049.



Figure 4 “Eyre Crowe, Slaves Waiting for Sale, Richmond, Virginia, March 3, 1853,” from Maurie D. McInnis, “Eyre Crowe’s Images of the Slave Trade,” *Encyclopedia Virginia*, <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/slave-trade-eyre-crowes-images-of-the/>, accessed June 25, 2026. Although this painting depicts events in Richmond, a similar scene would have preceded sales at Alexandria’s Market Square.

Petersburg, on the Appomattox River. Ramsay married Elizabeth Poythress, whose ancestors had settled in Virginia as early as 1633, served in the House of Burgesses, and amassed fortunes in real estate and enslaved people.⁸² Patrick and Elizabeth Ramsay had eight children.

During his lifetime, Ramsay profited from Atlantic trade, investing heavily in European luxury goods and wine which he sold to colonial Virginians.⁸³ Eventually, his business enabled him to purchase a tobacco plantation near Petersburg and the enslaved labor force which kept it in operation. During the 1760s and 1770s, Ramsay had a partner, Samuel Gordon, in a store in Blandford, very near Petersburg. The firm of Gordon & Ramsay also owned several enslaved men. In 1771, Ramsay sold “four very likely young Virginia born [men]...the property of [Gordon & Ramsay].”⁸⁴ As trustee in a civil suit, Ramsay facilitated the sale of two men at Brunswick Courthouse.⁸⁵ In January 1775, as the Patriot movement gained momentum, Ramsay advertised “fifteen or twenty valuable Virginia born Negroes, consisting of Men, Women, Boys, and Girls” who he would sell at auction in Blandford.⁸⁶

This 1775 sale probably anticipated the Ramsay’s desire to return to Scotland. In a pair of advertisements placed in the May 6, 1775 *Virginia Gazette*, Ramsay and his partners expressed their hopes that “When the Times admit, [business] will be carried on as usual.”⁸⁷ Ramsay, personally, announced: “As I intend for Britain early in the Summer, those who have any Demands against me will be kind enough to bring them in.”⁸⁸ The Ramsays made it to Glasgow

⁸² “Francis Poythress,” “John Poythress,” and “Peter Poythress,” in *Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography*, vol. 1, ed. Lyon Gardiner Tyler (Lewis Historical Publishing Company), 1915), 308-309.

⁸³ *Virginia Gazette*, June 25, 1767; April 7, 1768; and April 14, 1768.

⁸⁴ *Virginia Gazette*, May 30, 1771.

⁸⁵ *Virginia Gazette*, February 25, 1773.

⁸⁶ *Virginia Gazette*, January 14, 1775.

⁸⁷ *Virginia Gazette*, May 6, 1775.

⁸⁸ *Virginia Gazette*, May 6, 1775.

but, unfortunately for Patrick, he died on May 17, 1777. The news of Lexington and Concord had only reached Virginia very recently – it is possible that Ramsay had already decided for unrelated reasons to go to Glasgow. Perhaps the family intended to only stay in Scotland for a short period and the war made it difficult to return.⁸⁹

Amy watched as the crowd at Market Square offered hard cash for the right to take her away. While we know more about Strephon in the years after the auction, the archive reveals Amy's tortuous path in the years before the sale of Patrick Ramsay's estate. Amy served as a personal servant to Elizabeth Ramsay, while the couple lived in Blandford, Virginia, now called Petersburg. Amy would have taken care of household duties such as cleaning, laundering clothes, and preparing meals. In proceedings during an 1810 Chancery case, one witness referred to Amy as a "cook."⁹⁰ Amy also would have performed the work of caring for the several Ramsay children.

We do not have evidence of Amy's life prior to 1775. When Ramsay took his family to Glasgow in May 1775 to avoid the Revolution, they must have taken Amy with them. After Ramsay died in 1777, Amy remained in the household. If Ramsay had acquired Amy in Scotland, it is highly unlikely she would have gone to America with the family in 1783. Amy would probably have maintained her kinship networks in Scotland rather than discard those ties for an

⁸⁹ It is not clear from available evidence if Patrick Ramsay was a Loyalist fleeing the coming Revolution. After the war, Elizabeth Ramsay took pains to distance herself from any hint of Loyalism. When she petitioned the Virginia court in 1787 to settle Patrick's estate, she identified herself as a "native of Virginia" and wrote, "Some years before the commencement of the late war with Great Britain [she] removed with him and their children to Scotland in Great Britain, and after his death again returned to this commonwealth with the greater part of her family and proposes to spend the rest of her life here." Elizabeth made a claim of her loyalty and disassociated her departure for Scotland from the Revolution to implicitly disavow any connection to Loyalism. November 11, 1787, Petition of Elizabeth Ramsay, Library of Virginia.

⁹⁰ "Statement of William Wilson," ACCC-LVA, 1810-049.

unknown life in Virginia. More likely, she returned to Virginia precisely to maintain kinship networks there.

While in Glasgow, Amy's options expanded, and she must have known as much. In 1778, the Court of Session sitting in Edinburgh, Scotland's highest court at the time, decreed in the case of *Knight v. Wedderburn* that "the state of slavery is not recognised by the laws of [Scotland], and is inconsistent with the principles thereof."⁹¹ By that decision, Amy could expect to easily win a freedom suit. A Glasgow newspaper, the *Caledonian Mercury*, reported, "It must give a very high satisfaction to the inhabitants of this part of the United Kingdom, that the freedom of negroes has obtained its first *general determination* in the Supreme Civil Court of Scotland [emph. orig]."⁹² The 1772 decision in *Somerset v. Stewart* could have given her a claim to freedom in that part of the United Kingdom but *Knight v. Wedderburn* left no doubt that "a slave on entering Scotland became free."⁹³ Whatever the extent of her knowledge, ability, or desire, Amy remained in the Ramsay household.

As soon as peace arrived in 1783, Elizabeth Ramsay made arrangements to bring her children back to Virginia. Patrick and Elizabeth had ten children but only five survived into adulthood. Only the two surviving daughters, Eliza and Sally Douglas, and the youngest son, Patrick, Jr., made the journey from Glasgow to Alexandria in 1783. The other two sons, Andrew and William, remained in Glasgow until later. Sally Douglas Ramsay brought along her husband,

⁹¹ "The Joseph Knight Case," *National Records of Scotland*, <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/learning-and-events/slavery-and-scotland/the-joseph-knight-case/>, accessed February 19, 2026.

⁹² *Caledonian Mercury*, January 17, 1778, quoted in John W. Cairns, "Knight v. Wedderburn," *Oxford African American Studies Center*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780195301731.013.47486>, accessed February 17, 2026.

⁹³ Cairns, "Knight v. Wedderburn."

William Willson, who not only provided financial support to his wife but also helped support the rest of the Ramsay family.

The war disrupted markets on both sides of the Atlantic. As Stephen Mullen writes, frankly, “The American War of Independence ended Glasgow's monopoly of the Virginia tobacco trade.”⁹⁴ The Ramsay plantations in Virginia and the connected business interests in Glasgow suffered while hostilities existed. When the Ramsays finally made their way across the Atlantic, “Mrs. Ramsay soon...found that the estate of her husband had been very unproductive during the years from 1775 to 1783.”⁹⁵ Meanwhile, the enslaved people spread across multiple plantations and in Alexandria had no means of support other than their industry. They received only one set of new clothes during the entire eight years of the American Revolution.⁹⁶

When Elizabeth Ramsay decided to move her large family back to Virginia, Amy traveled from Glasgow to Greenock and boarded the ship *Grange* with them. When the *Grange* sprung a leak, forcing it to sail into Lisbon, Portugal, Amy lived with the family there for several months. In Lisbon, Amy and other enslaved people among the passengers stranded from the *Grange* “went regularly to market.”⁹⁷ Living in Lisbon even for a short time would have given Amy a glimpse of a cosmopolitan Atlantic culture startlingly different than any she would have experienced in Glasgow or Virginia. Lisbon boasted a population of more than 30,000 free and enslaved Africans, descendants of and participants in the ongoing Atlantic slave trade.⁹⁸ Even

⁹⁴ Stephen Mullen, *The Glasgow Sugar Aristocracy: Scotland and Caribbean Slavery, 1775-1838* (University of London Press, 2022), 293. See also T.M. Devine, *The Tobacco Lords*, which shows that Glasgow merchants supported Virginia tobacco trade in the 18th century.

⁹⁵ “Amended Separate Answer of William Wilson,” ACCC-LVA 1810-049.

⁹⁶ “Amended Separate Answer of William Wilson,” ACCC-LVA, 1810-049, 4.

⁹⁷ “Statement of William Wilson,” ACCC-LVA, 1810-049.

⁹⁸ James H. Sweet, “Hidden Histories of African Lisbon” in *The Black Urban Atlantic in the Age of the Slave Trade*, ed. Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, Matt D. Childs, and James Sidbury (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 239.

after destructive earthquake and tsunami of 1755, the city retained elements of Islamic architecture and culture dating to the medieval period. When Amy and the Ramsays landed in the city, the Catholic crown had recently put the finishing touches on a monumental rebuilding project that would have wowed anyone whose worldview was limited to Scotland or the British Atlantic colonies.

When the Ramsays booked another passage on the ship *Neutrality* from Lisbon to Virginia, Amy went, too. The Baltimore-bound ship paused at the southern tip of the Chesapeake Bay so the weary travelers could board a pilot boat into the Appomattox River, where Elizabeth Ramsay's sister lived on a plantation called Broadway Landing. Finally, when Elizabeth Ramsay moved to Alexandria, she took Amy with her.

While in Alexandria, both Amy and Strephon were hired out along with the other Ramsay slaves. Other individuals hired Patt, Sukey, Amy, and others for shorter periods or specific tasks. Amy brought £3.6.8 to the Estate by washing the clothes of Roger Collart, probably for the entire year. Strephon, as mentioned, worked in the Potts household.⁹⁹ Growing more desperate for financial support, Elizabeth Ramsay no longer saw a need to maintain an extensive plantation on the James River, far away from her home in Alexandria. William Wilson had handbills printed up and distributed in and around Alexandria and put advertisements in regional newspapers to promote the sale. “Such was the publicity of it,” Wilson claimed, “that a very large concourse of people from both the Town + Country assembled to purchase.” Finally, in front of an eager public of potential buyers, “The sale was fairly and publicly made on the Court house square” in November and December 1789.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ “Statement of Account of the Estate of Patrick Ramsay,” ACCC-LVA, 1810-049.

¹⁰⁰ “Statement of Account of the Estate of Patrick Ramsay,” ACCC-LVA, 1810-049.

At the 1789 auction, John Potts, Jr. paid £66 for the privilege of owning and controlling Strephon and his labor. Potts was no stranger to Strephon, as Potts was Eliza Ramsay's husband. In addition, Potts paid £78 for Strephon's wife, Nancy, and her three children. From the way the recorder listed Strephon, Nancy, and the children together in the estate inventory, we may safely assume the children belonged to Strephon.¹⁰¹ For a while after the sale, Strephon served the Potts family in a house at the corner of King and Pitt streets in Alexandria, just steps away from Market Square. In fact, Strephon had worked "for several years as a house-servant" in the Potts home, serving meals, running errands, and doing anything else the family required.¹⁰²

At the end of spring 1791, though, Potts accused Strephon of theft. The enslaved man stood trial before the justices of the Fairfax County Court, who found him guilty. As a punishment, the justices ordered Strephon "publicly whipped" at the town whipping post in Market Square.¹⁰³ The sentence did not satisfy John Potts, Jr. After the public infliction of pain and added humiliation, Potts went further to expel Strephon from his family and other social connections in Alexandria.

Potts owned the Keep-Tryst Furnace, just north of Harper's Ferry, now part of West Virginia.¹⁰⁴ At the furnace, enslaved and free laborers processed raw materials into workable metals. The work never stopped, from chopping wood to pouring molten iron to hammering finished pieces into shape. At the furnace, Strephon would have joined several dozen of his enslaved peers laboring to keep John Potts, Jr. solvent. We do not know if Strephon ever arrived

¹⁰¹ Fairfax County Deed T:7-11.

¹⁰² *VGAA* June 23, 1791.

¹⁰³ *VGAA*, June 23, 1791.

¹⁰⁴ On Keep-Trust Furnace, see the John Potts Business Papers, Accession 0031 at the Hagley Library in Wilmington, Delaware. <https://findingaids.hagley.org/repositories/3/resources/2243>, Accessed April 8, 2026.

at the Keep-Tryst Furnace. Instead, surviving sources show, Strephon did everything he could to stay near Alexandria.

On Monday, June 13, 1791, the week after his conviction, Strephon departed Alexandria for the Keep-Tryst Furnace in a wagon hired by Potts. That night, Strephon jumped from the wagon and ran but the waggoner caught up. Angry, no doubt, the waggoner “tied [Strephon’s] hands” together. But not his feet. “Early on Tuesday morning, about 15 miles north of town [in the vicinity of the present-day Wolf Trap Performing Arts Center], on the Leesburg Road [VA-267/VA-7],” Strephon jumped again. The waggoner couldn’t or wouldn’t catch up this time and Strephon disappeared into the woods.¹⁰⁵ Strephon could not have gone straight home, wherever he considered home. Potts suspected Strephon would return to Alexandria.

What did the Market Square mean to Strephon, as someone who has been both sold and punished at the same place? Under the assumption that practically everyone in Alexandria came to the Market Square at one time or other, what association might Strephon have had separately from these two unfortunate instances? Consider what we know about Strephon and what we know about the individuals who worked in the Market. Strephon “lived with [Potts] for several years as a house-servant,” he might have felt apart from the enslaved people coming to Alexandria who lived on distant farms. Working in a domestic capacity put Strephon in contact with the men and women who made up the social world of John Potts, Jr.¹⁰⁶ Described as “light mulatto,” Strephon knew that he probably had a white father.¹⁰⁷ The sense of injustice could not have escaped Strephon as he took flight from the wagon, his hands and feet tied.

¹⁰⁵ *VGAA*, June 23, 1791.

¹⁰⁶ *VGAA*, June 23, 1791.

¹⁰⁷ *VGAA*, June 23, 1791.

What did the Market Square mean to Amy, whose sense of injustice equaled that of Strephon? Legally entitled to freedom in Scotland, Amy nonetheless boarded a ship back to Virginia with the Ramsay family. Why? Did Amy feel bound to return to her own family in America? Did she make a personal calculation that freedom in Glasgow offered her less than slavery in Virginia? Or did the threat of punishment from the Ramsays force her back across the Atlantic?

Amy had a clear-cut legal right to freedom when she lived in Glasgow between 1778 and 1783. Without the law keeping her in slavery, Amy leaned on other justifications to remain within the Ramsay household. We cannot know what Amy thought; historical knowledge of her life suffers the same as countless other enslaved people silenced by the archive. Amy would have had her own family and loved ones in Virginia, relationships she would not have sacrificed lightly. One option available to her would have been to secrete some documentary proof of her freedom in Scotland to use in an American court one day to gain her freedom.

Strephon does not appear in any records after 1791. It is unlikely he disappeared completely, if he had a wife and children in Alexandria, but it would not be surprising given the options available to enslaved people and the decisions we know others made in similar situations. He may have gotten away entirely and lived life elsewhere as a free man. Potts may have ultimately recaptured Strephon, punished him doubly, and followed through with the plan to send him to the Keep Trust Furnace. In the latter event, Strephon probably never saw his family again. Amy, likewise, disappears from the historical record.

The stories of Strephon, Amy, and the Ramsay family connects to later histories of slavery and freedom tied directly to Market Square. Andrew Ramsay, one of the sons of Patrick and Elizabeth, died 1828. But his wife, Catherine Graham, lived until 1844. In fact, Catherine

enslaved several members of the Gibson family – John, George, James, Emily Hampton, William Wilberforce, Sarah Frances, and Daniel. Catherine’s brother, George, enslaved Gustavus Gibson, the father of those children enslaved by Catherine. Catherine manumitted each of these Gibson children between 1838 and 1844, while George Graham manumitted Gustavus in 1824. What is remarkable is that the Town of Alexandria paid Gustavus and his sons to sweep the Market Square and light the lamps. These enslaved people, connected through the families of their enslavers, all had a place-based connection to Market Square.

The litany of toponyms used in advertisements and court documents to inform bidders where to meet for the auctions shows that several spots within the Market Space served as venues for slave sales. During the eighteenth century, “on the Court-house Square,” “on the steps of the Court-House,” or similar phrasing sites the sales at the Fairfax County Court House. Many sales took place “at the Vendue Store,” a moving target that had a residency on Cameron Street, across from the Market in the 300 block during the later eighteenth century. When Alexandria joined the Federal District, judicial sales dispersed to the different offices of court officials and law enforcement officers. “At the Marshal’s Office”¹⁰⁸ and “before the Jail Door” [in Alexandria] become common sites. Still later, “At the Market Square” or, more specifically, “upon the old stand in the Market Square” appear.¹⁰⁹

During the town’s early years, sales of captives recently brought to Virginia via a Middle Passage occurred on the Market Block. Between 1727 and 1769, data shows, twenty-nine ships brought 1,863 enslaved people to the Potomac River region. Another fifty-seven ships brought

¹⁰⁸ *Alexandria Gazette*, December 4, 1826.

¹⁰⁹ *Alexandria Gazette*, October 15, 1828 and February 16, 1859.

nearly 7,000 enslaved people to the Rappahannock River region.¹¹⁰ A 1762 advertisement in the *Maryland Gazette* hints at a large sale of newly arrived Africans in Alexandria. “Just Imported. In the *Royal Charlotte*, Capt. Bartholomew Fabre, a parcel of very healthy Gambia slaves, to be sold very reasonably for bills of exchange or cash. The sale will begin at Alexandria on Monday the 13th instant, and continue till all are sold. John and Thomas Kirkpatrick.”¹¹¹ While the ad does not specify Market Square as the site of the auction, the young town boasted few other possible locations, though the docks are one alternative possibility. Many in Virginia viewed the importation of enslaved people, especially directly from Africa or the Caribbean, as a danger to the community and in need of regulation. A 1767 law taxed enslaved people and, after 1778, the practice of importing enslaved people from Africa became illegal.

Court days served as major public gatherings during the eighteenth century, though their importance to the broader marketing community faded with time. Newspapers during the 1780s and 1790s contain dozens of advertisements for sales on “the 1st day of Court.”¹¹² John Ballendine’s estate chose “Fairfax court day” to auction “seventeen valuable...men, women, boys, and girls, [including] three valuable forgemmen, a sawer, a Collier, a Blacksmith, a carpenter, a miller, and a baker.”¹¹³ When John Carlyle’s partnership with John Dalton ended in 1777, the firm planned a “publick sale in Alexandria, on Monday the 18th of May, being Fairfax court day.” Carlyle parted ways with “six...good smiths,” “a waterman, and pilot in this river and

¹¹⁰ Donald Sweig, “The Importation of African Slaves to the Potomac River, 1732-1772” *William and Mary Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (Oct., 1985): 509.

¹¹¹ *Pen Portraits*, 17; *The Maryland Gazette*, September 9, 1762. For complete lists of trans-Atlantic voyages that carried enslaved people from Africa to the Chesapeake or Potomac River region, see Sweig, “The Importation of African Slaves to the Potomac River, 1732-1772” *William and Mary Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (Oct., 1985): 507-524.

¹¹² See, for instance, several ads in *VGAA*, September 16, 1790;

¹¹³ *Virginia Gazette*, September 13, 1770.

bay,” and a “plantation negro.”¹¹⁴ Sales took place during September Court 1770 and in November 1773, when the auctioneer cried off seventeen “men, women, boys, and girls” enslaved on a plantation near Great Falls.¹¹⁵

The frequency of sales fluctuated, too. More sales and hires took place at Market Square during the early nineteenth century than in other eras. The lack of corresponding documentation in deeds for many known sales suggests that more private sales took place and that the private market faced few regulations. When the colonial legislature passed the 1705 law to convert enslaved people into real estate, a separate clause in that act stipulated, “That no person, selling or alienating any such slave shall be obliged to cause such sale or alienation to be recorded, as is required by law to be done, upon the alienation of other real estate: But that the said sale or alienation may be made in the same manner as might have been done before the making of this act.”¹¹⁶ Although situations regarding inheritance of enslaved people as property often occasioned parties to record their acts with an official deed, most transactions took place privately.

Prior to the 1820s, the slave trade in Alexandria lacked a definite center of gravity. Itinerant traders working alone or in pairs purchased a few enslaved people at a time in deals sealed in hotels, taverns, and private offices. Enslaved people either hired themselves out during the day to increase the profit for traders. They slept in basements, stables, or attics with minimal care. When the traders amassed enough people to secure a suitable profit, they trafficked them, chained, on foot or ship to the Deep South. Soon, a few traders consolidated their operations.

¹¹⁴ *Virginia Gazette*, May 16, 1777.

¹¹⁵ *Virginia Gazette*, September 13, 1770. FfxCMB 1772:60, May 22, 1774, ordering a sale in November. Sale in FfxCMB 1772:147.

¹¹⁶ Hening, ed., *Statutes at Large*, vol. 3, 334.

Austin Woolfolk made Baltimore a significant node in the coastwise slave trade but Isaac Franklin and John Armfield took over his business and established Alexandria as the prime depot for shipping enslaved people from the Atlantic states to the Deep South.¹¹⁷ Franklin and Armfield operated the notorious slave jail at 1315 Duke Street and expanded it from an ordinary residence into a complex dedicated to increasing the profitability of human trafficking. The Franklin and Armfield headquarters is now Freedom House Museum.

The local geography of slavery shifted as a result of the location of the Duke Street slave pen. Coffles from all over the region marched to the edge of town but stopped before entering the city center. Enslaved cargoes and individuals arriving by boat marched into town from the wharves at the foot of Duke Street and did not pass the Market Block with any frequency. By 1861, hardly any commerce traveled down King Street because of its poor condition. “Duke Street is now the principal thoroughfare for travel and transportation,” wrote the *Local News*, “The exceedingly rough condition of King Steet rendering it difficult of passage.”¹¹⁸

The domestic slave trade also included a continuum of practices that involved not just large scale southward and westward forced migrations but also sales between neighbors, across county lines, and in sheriff’s sales, tax sales, and estate sales. Thus, while poor infrastructure pulled the privatized business operations of enslavement away from Market Square, the public enforcement of the trade continued to exert its power from the civic institutions on Lots 43 and

¹¹⁷ This history has been told in multiple works, notably Michael Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1996); Joshua D. Rothman, *The Ledger and the Chain: How Domestic Slave Traders Shaped America* (Basic Books, 2021). As well, local researchers and the OHA/AA have amassed an increasingly substantial body of primary sources related to the Freedom House Museum. I am grateful to Benjamin Skolnik for sharing his knowledge and research into the traffic of enslaved people through Alexandria.

¹¹⁸ *Local News*, October 16, 1861.

44. Although the old Watch House and lock-up remained, the primary instruments of punishment and control disappeared from the open square. The new jail at 401 N. Pitt opened in 1827. The police moved the gallows into an enclosed yard at the new jail at Pitt and St. Asaph streets. The stocks fell out of use as a means of public humiliation by the 1830s. Slavery seemed more public in Alexandria in the first few decades after the Revolution but receded into a private business as sectional tensions inflamed in the nation. At its peak just prior to the Civil War, the slave trade in Alexandria operated at places Catt's Tavern or the jail on Duke Street, now Freedom House Museum. Even in such a spatially dispersed market, the Market Square remained a site of racist subjugation of both free and enslaved Alexandrians. The day-to-day market in human beings receded from public view. Yet the labor of enslaved people remained omnipresent.

Settling debts, whether of the estates at the death of enslavers or in the usual course of business, often instigated sales of enslaved people on Market Square. During the period he enslaved Jacob, William Hunter, Jr. had a stake in the sale of others at the Courthouse in Alexandria. As one of the administrators of the estate of Robert Adam, Hunter facilitated the sale of sixteen enslaved people in June 1790.¹¹⁹ The death of Philip G. Alexander, a descendant of the town's namesakes, occasioned sales to pay debts owed to his estate.¹²⁰ John Luke sold "three likely Virginia born negroes, two of which, are Young women," a sale Luke explained would "satisfy a debt due the estate of Philip Alexander by my father."¹²¹ Luke's father, also John Luke, had been the first husband of Alexander's widow, Elizabeth, who was also Philip's cousin.¹²²

¹¹⁹ *VJAA*, May 27, 1790. William Wilson, who married one of the daughters of Patrick Ramsay, also acted as an administrator of the Robert Adam Estate.

¹²⁰ *Times & District of Columbia Advertiser*, November 22, 1797, December 20, 1797, and January 1, 1798.

¹²¹ *Times & District of Columbia Advertiser*, November 25, 1797.

¹²² Wesley Pippenger, *John Alexander*, 269. Pippenger labels Philip G. Alexander as No. 21442 in his classification of the Alexander family tree.

Robert Alexander sold enslaved people “at the Court-House for ready-money and short credit” who his father, George D. Alexander, had kept in bondage.¹²³ Deputy Marshal Daniel Minor obeyed a court order to sell “all the right, title, and interest of William H. Barron to a negro man named Charles Coffee[, t]aken to satisfy an execution.” The sale took place “at the Coffee House door, in the market square.”¹²⁴ Emily endured the proceedings of a sale “at the Market Square” when Constable George Johnston sold her on Thursday morning, September 14, 1843.¹²⁵

Alfred, Sally, and their children, Martha and Mary, confronted the possibility of family separation when James L. Cox could not meet his financial obligations. Throughout 1844, Cox borrowed larger and larger sums from Samuel R. Adams, pledging the property of George C. Harvey to secure the loans. Near the end of 1844, Cox and Harvey sensed trouble. As Christmas approached that year, Cox worried that he would not have the \$715 he had promised to pay by January 4, 1845 nor the \$209 he should have had by January 21. If Cox could not pay those notes, he had little chance of paying the \$750 he owed by March 25, the \$725 by the beginning of April, neither the \$735 by Independence Day nor the \$745 by autumn. On December 12, 1844 Harvey saw the writing on the wall and put all of his property – real estate, slaves, even household furniture – in a trust controlled by R.P. Andrews. When the day of reckoning arrived, on October 4, 1845, Cox had paid zero dollars of the \$3880.33 he owed to Adams. Harvey, as security, had no choice but to watch his property sold at auction. Alfred, Sally, Martha, and Mary had even fewer good choices.¹²⁶

¹²³ *VJAA*, June 21, 1787.

¹²⁴ *Alexandria Gazette*, May 17, 1821.

¹²⁵ *Alexandria Gazette*, September 14, 1843.

¹²⁶ *Alexandria Gazette*, October 10, 1845. Deed from George C. Harvey to R.P. Andrews, Alexandria Deed Books F3:323-325, December 12, 1844.

Not all the sales of enslaved people at Market Square involved people living in Alexandria. Helen Huie, a widow living in Dumfries, decreed in her will that the executor of her estate should sell “my negro woman called Molly & all the rest and residue of my negroes & slaves.”¹²⁷ Although Huie resided in Prince William County, the courts of that jurisdiction probated her estate, and the sale of her real and personal estate happened in Dumfries, the sales of slaves took place “at the court house in the Town of Alexandria.”¹²⁸ Neither Huie’s will nor known court documents supply the names of any of these enslaved people except for Molly. Dennis, Mary, Washington, and James lived in Albemarle County, enslaved by Robert Sangster, yet suffered the experience of sale in Alexandria.¹²⁹ As a key Atlantic port city, Alexandria attracted people from all over.

The punishment of people who attempted to runaway but were recaptured could include a sale at Market Square. Edmund had a longer journey than most to the auction block in Market Square, if we believe the representations of Deputy Daniel Minor. Before an auction of August 1, 1818, Minor asserted that “Edmund...has acknowledged himself to be a slave, the property Mr. Dismucks of Kentucky.”¹³⁰ The available evidence does not tell if Minor or other officials tried to contact Dismucks. Perhaps the Kentuckian truly existed and perhaps Edmund really had

¹²⁷ Will of Helen G. Huie, July 20, 1815. Prince William County, Virginia Will Book K:456. Family Search, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C9R1-392K-X?cat=koha%3A379047&i=235&lang=en>, accessed March 19, 2026.

¹²⁸ *Alexandria Herald*, October 9 and November 27, 1815. Twenty years after his mother’s death, James Blackburn Huie appeared in New Orleans as both a buyer and purchaser of enslaved people, though likely not the same individuals. See “Sale of Slave from John G. Chalmers to James Huie” before William Christy, Notary Public, Vol. 35, Act 285; “Sale of Slave from James Huie to J. Laurant” before Felix de Armas, Notary Public, Vol. 51, Act 32; and “Sale of Slave from James Huie to F. Cousin” Felix de Armas, Notary Public, Vol. 51, Act 190, New Orleans Notarial Archives.

¹²⁹ *Alexandria Gazette*, December 15, 1825.

¹³⁰ *Alexandria Herald*, July 31, 1818.

escaped from his clutches. Perhaps some other enslaver with cash to spare purchased Edmund but no deed appears in the contemporary books suggesting as much. On November 27, though, the doors of the Fairfax County Jail closed behind “negro Edmond, Committed a Runaway.”¹³¹ Edmond of the Fairfax County record, quite likely the same man advertised in Alexandria, labored to the tune of \$62.80 in the coffers of Fairfax County, hired out to whoever could pay the twenty-five cents per day. Enslaving cost money, though, and the costs added up. Fairfax County spent \$28 “dieting” Edmond until the Court allowed his hire, \$13.25 to the printer for advertising, \$23.62 “for winter & summer cloaths [*sic*] for 13 months, and nearly \$30 on commissions to the various parties who helped maintain him in a state of servitude. When Fairfax County sold Edmond for \$355, it brought their final profit on his confinement to just over \$94.¹³² Like many American cities, Alexandria derived a portion of its revenue from exploiting the labor of prisoners.

The Corporation made it illegal for auctioneers to sell within the Market Square sometime before 1858. The Committee on Public Property convinced the wider council to lift its prohibition on holding auctions in the Market Square on June 22, 1858 after George Taylor asked permission to construct a six-by-twelve-foot stand on Fairfax Street for that purpose.¹³³ Not long afterwards, the Market Square once again became a site for slave sales.

As some civic institutions drifted away from the Market Space, the frequency of slave sales declined. The Alexandria Jail moved from its Fairfax Street location to 401 N. Pitt Street in

¹³¹ Edmond: Runaway Slave Record, Fairfax County, https://rosetta.virginiamemory.com:443/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE2563586, accessed March 20, 2026.

¹³² Edmond: Runaway Slave Record, Fairfax County, https://rosetta.virginiamemory.com:443/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE2563586, accessed March 20, 2026.

¹³³ Council Minute Book 10, 416.

1827. An October 15, 1828 advertisement for a sale “before the jail door” may have taken place at either location.¹³⁴ The County Courthouse moved to Queen Street in 1847, which the city retroceded from the District of Columbia to form Alexandria County in Virginia. A courthouse on the 300 block of N. Columbus Street opened in 1838. When Alexandria City and Alexandria County split in 1870, the county used the Columbus Street courthouse while the city court remained in its chambers in City Hall. Even during the earlier era, the Courthouse served as a landmark for siting sales at other places. Vendue Master Cyrus Copper advertised sales “at the Vendue Store, opposite the Court-House.”¹³⁵ Deputy Marshal Daniel Minor held sales “at the Marshal’s Office in the town of Alexandria.”¹³⁶

A study of freedom suits show that many of the enslaved men and women entitled to their freedom under the 1778 non-importation law recalled the facts of their public sale in Alexandria, sales that took place at the courthouses on Market Square. Jacob, a Maryland-born man enslaved at birth, brought one such suit which he contested in multiple jurisdictions for nearly a decade. When Jacob stood on the auction block in 1794 he “publicly declared” his “right to his Freedom.”¹³⁷ Jacob, who wrote and signed his own petitions to the Court in a neat cursive, laid out the facts of his commodity life. When Samuel Arell purchased the eleven-year-old Jacob from a Maryland man, he brought the child to Alexandria. At that moment, Jacob knew, “by the

¹³⁴ *Alexandria Gazette*, October 15, 1828.

¹³⁵ *VGAA*, June 24, 1784.

¹³⁶ *Alexandria Gazette*, December 4, 1826.

¹³⁷ “Jacob, Freedom Suit,” Corporation Court of Alexandria, January Court 1795. Library of Virginia, Virginia Untold.

https://lva.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01LVA_INST/gao17o/alma9917846022005756, accessed March 19, 2026.

Laws of Virginia he became Free.”¹³⁸ Still, Arell sold Jacob to William Hunter, Jr., also of Fairfax County. When Hunter died, Jacob “was sold at Public Sale in Alexandria by the Sheriff of Fairfax County to satisfy an Execution against...Hunter.”¹³⁹ In a move designed, perhaps, to obfuscate Jacob’s origins and, thus, his claim to freedom, Hunter changed Jacob’s name to Pompey. An enslaver seeking evidence of “Pompey’s” freedom would find none; only Jacob would have such a right.

Stephen Cooke took Jacob away from court but Jacob went unwillingly with his new enslaver. Cooke gained fame as a surgeon in the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War and would become major real estate holder in Alexandria, even owning Jones Point during the early 1800s.¹⁴⁰ Cooke had paid what he considered good money for “Pompey” and did not relinquish him easily. Among the allegations Jacob leveled, “Cooke...with Force and Arms an Assault did make...[and] did falsely imprison for the Space of six months.”¹⁴¹ Even though the Court called Cooke to explain his actions, it does not seem to have issued a decision or opinion. In practice, though, Cooke won, for Jacob reappeared in Court in 1800 making the same claims for his freedom. In the 1800 case, Jacob elaborated on Cooke’s alleged assault, adding “with staves, swords & knives made an assault upon the said plff [plaintiff], and beat, wounded & treated him ill, whereby the said plff was in great danger of losing his life.”¹⁴² The end of the

¹³⁸ “Jacob, Freedom Suit,” 1795. William Hunter, Sr., the father of William Hunter, Jr., had joint investments in real estate and slaves with Richard and David Arell, Samuel Arell’s brother and nephew, respectively. *VJAA*, February 15, 1787.

¹³⁹ “Jacob, Freedom Suit,” 1795. News of Hunter, Jr.’s death appeared in the *VJAA*, November 22, 1792. After Hunter, Jr.’s death, Samuel Arell and P.G. Marsteller advertised his house for rent. *VJAA*, April 19, 1794.

¹⁴⁰ T. Michael Miller, *Artisans and Merchants*, vol. 1, 80. See also *Alexandria Daily Advertiser*, August 26, 1803.

¹⁴¹ “Jacob, Freedom Suit,” 1795.

¹⁴² “Jacob v. Stephen Cooke,” “Freedom Suit, Alexandria Hustings Court, April Court 1800, Library of Virginia, Virginia Untold,

case remains uncertain. Notations on the papers of the 1800 case appear to contradict each other. In July 1801, the Alexandria Court issued “Judgement by Default” yet the next entry states the case was “Removed to Dumfries by certiorari.”¹⁴³

Sarah Triplett advertised the sale of “several” enslaved people “at the Court-House in Alexandria” prior to a January 17, 1791 auction. The advertisement identified the enslaved as part of the estate of her husband, Thomas Triplett.¹⁴⁴ William Herbert and John Potts sold five enslaved people at the Court House in obedience to an order from the High Court of Chancery in May 1796.¹⁴⁵ The estate of John Fitzgerald, one-time Mayor of Alexandria, “exposed to sale in the Market Square of the Town of Alexandria, Several valuable Slaves.”¹⁴⁶ Vendue Master Philip G. Marsteller sold five men on Market Square in March 1801, as well as “several others not particularly described.”¹⁴⁷ Three women came under Marsteller’s hammer the same day.¹⁴⁸

While Sarah Triplett sold the enslaved from her husband’s estate at the Courthouse, she directed that individuals seeking enslaved people “to hire for the ensuing year...shall attend at Mr. Charles Love’s, in Alexandria.”¹⁴⁹ The distinction in Triplett’s ad suggests why few advertisements for hires identify Market Square as the place of hiring – hiring took place elsewhere. For the nineteenth century, at least, an exception seems to prove the rule. A man named Robert Conway placed a detailed ad in 1820. The ad trumpeted that twenty-five enslaved people, “Will be hired, on Saturday, January 1st, 1820 at 12 o’clock, at the Market Square, to the

https://lva.primo.ex.librisgroup.com/permalink/01LVA_INST/gao17o/alma9917846078405756, accessed March 19, 2026.

¹⁴³ “Jacob v. Stephen Cooke,” 1800. A record of the continuation at Dumfries was not located.

¹⁴⁴ *VGAA*, January 13, 1791.

¹⁴⁵ *Columbian Mirror and Alexandria Gazette*, May 5, 1796.

¹⁴⁶ *Columbian Mirror and Alexandria Gazette*, May 3, 1800.

¹⁴⁷ *Times & District of Columbia Advertiser*, March 16 and 17, 1801

¹⁴⁸ *Times & District of Columbia Advertiser*, March 24 and 28, 1801.

¹⁴⁹ *VGAA*, January 13, 1791.

highest bidder.”¹⁵⁰ The previous year, Conway placed an ad to hire out sixteen individuals but did not identify the venue of the hiring as Market Square.¹⁵¹ The names between the two ads, 1818 and 1819, are mostly identical but there are a few exceptions. Conway advertised sixteen enslaved people for hire in his 1818 ads but increased the number to twenty-five in 1819. Only three of the individuals listed in the 1818 ad – Motty, James, and one of the women named Suckey – do not appear in the 1819 ad. Thirteen individuals, Emanuel, Lawson, Robert, Samuel, Daniel, Sarah and her five year old child, Susan, Rebecca and her child, Fanny, and Sarah and her child, appear in the 1819 ad but not the 1818 ad. This leaves thirteen individuals who experienced the hiring process on Market Square during both years, at least – Jacob, Reuben, John, Eliza, Winifred, Fanny, William, Vincent, Griffin, Hiram, Edgar, Sylla/Priscilla, and Suckey.

Table 1 Enslaved People Hired Out by Robert Conway, 1818-1819.

| Enslaved People Hired by Robert Conway | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| 1818 | 1819, at Market Square |
| Jacob | Jacob |
| Reuben | Reuben |
| Motty | Emmanuel |
| John | John |
| Eliza | Eliza |
| Winnifed | Winifred |
| Fanny | Fanny |

¹⁵⁰ *Alexandria Gazette*, December 28, 1819.

¹⁵¹ *Alexandria Gazette*, December 28, 1818.

| | |
|---------|-------------------|
| William | William |
| Vincent | Robert |
| Griffin | Griffin |
| Hiram | Hiram |
| James | Daniel |
| Edgar | Edgar |
| Sylla | Priscilla |
| Suckey | Suckey |
| Suckey | Vincent |
| | Sarah & child |
| | Susan |
| | Lawson |
| | Rebecca and child |
| | Samuel |
| | Sarah |

A search of the deed records in Alexandria has not turned up any further information about these particular individuals. Conway did not take great care to register his enslaved property in the Alexandria deeds (perhaps he did that elsewhere), although financial difficulties led to a series of transactions involving a different group of enslaved people who Conway traded back in forth seeking breathing room for debts owed to the Bank of Alexandria and others.¹⁵² Conway's 1818

¹⁵² ALX V:548, March 2, 1813, Robert Conway and Joshua Yeaton to William Herbert, Jr. Trustee; ALX X:389, April 6, 1815, Margaret Conway release of dower rights; ALX AA:250, July 7, 1814, Robert Conway to William Herbert, Jr..

ad says that several of the people “are now in town” but others “are expected up as soon as the navigation is open.”¹⁵³ Conway may have had a plantation further south in either Maryland or Virginia or north along the Potomac Canal, which suffered from irregular navigation.

A Site of Public Discipline

Alexandria’s status as a market town in a slave society meant that publicly regulated economic activity took place in the same location as publicly regulated legal activity, including public discipline of enslaved and free people. If the public functions of the Market Place provided opportunities for enslaved people, the public nature of the space also made it a site of discipline and routine violence against enslaved people. Still, the Courthouse provided access to justice. Even enslaved people could find some measure of justice in the criminal justice system in spite of their legal status.

Discipline emanated from the courthouses on Market Square, the centers of justice. Construction of the new Fairfax County Courthouse in Alexandria began early in 1752, with the first court day occurring on May 19, 1752 with construction ongoing.¹⁵⁴ On that day, “A proclamation from his honour the Governor, as also a writ to adjourn the Court from the former Courthouse of this County, and to hold please in the Town of Alexandria” went out to officially move legal proceedings to the new Courthouse. During the remainder of the year, the justices would pay Thomas Darries fifty pounds of tobacco “for work at the Courthouse.”¹⁵⁵ Still, by the

¹⁵³ *Alexandria Gazette*, December 28, 1818.

¹⁵⁴ Penny Morrill places this date as May 3, 1752 but cites Fairfax Harrison, *Landmarks of Old Prince William: A Study of Origins in Northern Virginia*. I base my date on the Fairfax County Court Order and Minute Books, 1749:191, which show a break in court records from April 2, 1751 to May 19, 1752.

¹⁵⁵ FfxCMB 1749:252-253, November 22, 1752.

beginning of 1765, the court agreed that the new Courthouse needed repairs.¹⁵⁶ The Trustees built a Jail in 1752, which Penny Morrill and James Munson suggest “was possibly on Cameron Street.” On November 18, 1756, the justices arranged to build a “necessary house” [a public toilet], a new fence, and to level the ground around the Courthouse.¹⁵⁷

City, town, and county authorities inflicted punishment on both free and enslaved people at the Market Square. The Trustees decided within months to add a prison, pillory, and stocks to carry out the rulings of the court. John Carlyle received 1500 pounds of tobacco for making sure someone built the pillory and stocks.¹⁵⁸ In 1783, the town government complained, “A former order of the Court directing Stocks and Pillory not being complied with, it is now ordered that William Ramsay Gent. erect them on the Court House lott.”¹⁵⁹

Perhaps because enslavers already possessed the authority to punish the enslaved without judicial process, punishments of free people predominate in the records of the Fairfax County Court. If the interests of other free people came into the equation, however, enslaved people could appear in court. When Honour Middleton, a white woman, confessed to stealing a bushel of corn, the justices “ordered that the Sheriff take her to the publick whipping post and give her fifteen lashes on the bare back well laid on.”¹⁶⁰ A jury convicted William Greenwood of perjury and sentenced him “to stand in the pillory for the space of fifteen minutes and that he be

¹⁵⁶ FfxCMB 1765:3.

¹⁵⁷ FfxCMB 1756:42.

¹⁵⁸ January 1, 1752, FfxCMB 1749:182: “Ordered that there be erected in the Town of Alexandria in this County a Whipping Post and Stocks, and also a Dunking Stool, for punishing offenders.”

FfxCMB 1749:252-253, November 22, 1752.

¹⁵⁹ FfxCMB 1783:41, August 23, 1783.

¹⁶⁰ FfxCMB 1756:623.

committed to the Goal of this County there to remain one month without bail or mainprise and to pay costs.”¹⁶¹

If an enslaved person stole from a free person or even from another enslaved person, the offended individual or enslaver had the right to receive justice at the hands of the court. When a gentleman from Prince William County complained that the enslaved man, Melford, stole currency from him, the court ordered the Sheriff to punish Melford at both “the publick whipping post and set [him] in the pillory one hour.”¹⁶² Another man, Simon, described as “a mulatto man slave belonging to Marmaduke Beckwith,” stood trial in October 1769. Accused of breaking into a shop, stealing several expensive items, then assaulting another enslaved man and stealing his coat, Simon pled Not Guilty and insisted upon a trial. A jury convicted him. The sentence required the Sheriff to “set the said Simon upon and in the pillory for the space of half an hour and then give him thirty-nine lashes on the bare back at the public whipping post, well laid on.”¹⁶³ The court convicted the enslaved woman Janney of knowingly receiving stolen sugar and flour in 1794. To atone for her crime, the court made Janney “stand one half hour in the pillory and receive 20 lashes on her bare back at the publick whipping post, well laid on.”¹⁶⁴ Joshua Johnston, a man assumed by the court to be a slave, took thirty-nine lashes at the whipping post for allegedly “feloniously entering onboard the schooner *Betty* of Baltimore.”¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ FfxCMB 17.68:167

¹⁶² 1768:58, November 22, 1768.

¹⁶³ FfxCMB, 1768:247, October 24, 1769.

¹⁶⁴ Hustings Court Records of Trials and Criminal Examinations, Book D, 1794-1800, April 6, 1794. “Alexandria, Virginia, United States records,” images, FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QHV-23X9-JTF5?view=explore> : Mar 26, 2026), image 8 of 33; Image Group Number: 008745176.

<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QHV-23X9-JTF5>, accessed March 26, 2026.

¹⁶⁵ Hustings Court Records of Trials and Criminal Examinations, Book D, 1794-1800, November 6, 1799. “Alexandria, Virginia, United States records,” images, FamilySearch

All of the public actions on the Square worked together to reinforce the slave system. The courts supported the smooth functioning of the markets. For instance, courts routinely gave enslavers the power to name and age the people they enslaved. Assigning a legally enforceable age to enslaved people gave enslavers control over the market representations of their chattel, giving them greater leeway in setting prices. In this way, the courts exercise a regulatory power similar to enforcing standardized weights and measures.¹⁶⁶ From the earliest days of the town's history, judges at the Fairfax County Courthouse in Alexandria determined the ages of enslaved people brought in by their enslavers. At September Court in 1751, John King brought Judy, Cate, and Harry to the justices. With the ruling of the court, King could claim twelve years for Judy and eight each for Cate and Harry.¹⁶⁷ The court decreed Cynthia nine years old at the behest of Hanah Fairfax in 1755. Hanah's half-brother, George William Fairfax, took an age of ten years old for Smari, a young girl.¹⁶⁸ Dozens if not hundreds more such examples line the pages of the Fairfax County Court Minute and Order Books.

The sum of these entries in the minute and order books suggest that these attributions of age may have taken place whenever an enslaver acquired newly-imported captives who had survived a trans-Atlantic voyage. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database at www.slavevoyages.org shows 154 ships landed in Virginia between 1742, the first year Fairfax County existed, and 1774, when the *Trident* landed at an unspecified port in the colony. Of the 36,131 people captured in West Africa and forcibly transported to Virginia in that era, only

(<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QHV-23X9-JRJX?view=explore>: Mar 26, 2026), image 27 of 33; Image Group Number: 008745176, accessed March 26, 2026.

¹⁶⁶ "Found in the Archives," Fairfax County Court Historic Records Center, <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/circuit/sites/circuit/files/assets/documents/pdf/hrc/fita/fita-december-2016.pdf>, accessed May 12, 2026.

¹⁶⁷ Court of September 30, 1751, FfxCMB 1749:175.

¹⁶⁸ FfxCMB 1754:427.

29,647 survived the Middle Passage. Judy, Kate, Harry, Cynthia, and Smari thus made up the charter generation of African people whose lives and experiences shaped Alexandria.

Early in the history of the Courthouse in Alexandria, in 1752, two free white men came before the justices on the charge of murdering Mulberry, an enslaved man. The Fairfax County justices sent them to Williamsburg to stand trial, however, perhaps a reflection of the seriousness of the crime or the inadequacy of the facilities in Alexandria for trying such a weighty crime.¹⁶⁹ Murder was a capital crime and Alexandria's early courts carried out the death sentence on Market Square.

Public executions were the most serious form of public discipline for both free and enslaved people. What must have been the most visible and longest lasting instances of public discipline of enslaved people on the Courthouse Lot remains woefully underreported in the colonial archives. An alleged conspiracy of enslaved people to murder an overseer during 1767 resulted in the hanging and beheading of several enslaved men, whose heads local authorities placed atop the chimneys of the Courthouse. News of the events criss-crossed the Atlantic but never appeared in a Virginia paper. Moreover, a search of colonial records from 1767 through the 1780s at the Library of Virginia yielded no fresh evidence.

The earliest mention of the plot comes in the *Pennsylvania Chronicle* of December 28, 1767. "A Gentleman, from Alexandria, in Virginia, informs us," the lines read,

that a Number of negroes, of that Place, had entered into a
Conspiracy to destroy their Overseers, by Poison, in consequence
of which several Persons had lost their Lives – That some of the
Negroes were soon discovered and properly secured - - - four of

¹⁶⁹ FfxCMB 1749:249, November 6, 1752.

whom were convicted and executed about three Weeks ago, after which their Heads were cut off, and fixed upon the Chimnies of the Court-House of Alexandria, and that four more, it was expected, would meet with the same Fate.¹⁷⁰

The same or very similar news items appeared in successive editions of the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, *New York Gazette or the Weekly Post-Boy*, the *Providence Gazette*, as well as the *Boston Gazette* and *Chronicle*. Papers further south, in Georgia, and east, in London, published the same piece.¹⁷¹

Alone among the known, extant, and published accounts of the alleged plot, the *Boston Post Boy* story of February 29, 1768 adds details the others lack. The paper reads, in full:

About two months ago, five Negro fellows, belonging to Col. George Mason, of Fairfax County, were committed to goal, for the murder of French Mason, their Overseer; whom they first knocked on the head with an ax, then bound him, tied a pig of iron about his neck, and sunk him in Patowmack [*sic*] river. His body was found three days after the murder. Four of the said fellows were executed about a month ago for the same, pursuant to their sentence. The other fellow escaped the gallows, by dying about two hours after

¹⁷⁰ *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, December 28, 1767.

¹⁷¹ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, December 31, 1767; *New York Gazette or Weekly Post Boy*, January 4, 1768; *Providence Gazette*, January 16, 1768; *Boston Gazette*, January 18, 1768; *Boston Chronicle*, January 18, 1768; *Georgia Gazette*, March 30, 1768; and *St. James Chronicle*, February 1768. Also, *London Annual Register*, 1768, 69-70.

he was convicted. Their heads are stuck up in different parts of the county.¹⁷²

The first reports of a grand conspiracy typify the paranoia among the colonial ruling class that the system of slavery imperiled the peace of society. Two months later, more details of the case emerged, apparently, from Alexandria.

No official records seem to survive of these events. Why not? Where did they go? In one possibility, the wild rumors of December may have resulted from a deliberate effort to suppress news of the murder for fear of inciting a wider rebellion among the enslaved. Exaggerated accounts emerged in the vacuum of official secrecy. Perhaps royal authorities, in total control of printed matter in Williamsburg, the only town with a press, stifled the news. A second possibility is that the entire story is false. The way eighteenth-century news circulated easily allowed false rumors to find their way into print.

Yet French Mason did die around this time, although an exact date of death cannot yet be established. On March 20, 1768, Ann Mason qualified as executrix of his estate.¹⁷³ Two weeks later, the appraisers took an inventory of the estate and valued it.¹⁷⁴ In December 1769, Ann Mason submitted an account of her management of the estate to the Fairfax County Court.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, a letter from George Washington to John Posey shows that George Mason sought compensation from the colonial treasury around this time “for his executed Negroes.”¹⁷⁶ Mason

¹⁷² *Boston Post-Boy*, February 29, 1768.

¹⁷³ Fairfax County Bond Book, 88.

¹⁷⁴ Inventory of French Mason, Fairfax County Will Book C1:26-27.

¹⁷⁵ Fairfax County Will Book C1:74-75.

¹⁷⁶ George Washington to John Posey, June 11, 1769, *Founders Online*,

<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-08-02-0147>, accessed March 17, 2026.

himself wrote to Washington seeking assistance with the claim from the General Assembly.¹⁷⁷ No specific record of any payments from the General Assembly to Mason survive.¹⁷⁸ Martin Cockburn, another Fairfax County planter close to Mason, reported that he received £350 “on Acc[oun]t of Colo. Mason” on May 16, 1770. Terry K. Dunn, who has written extensively about Mason and slavery, judges that this transaction reimbursed Mason for the enslaved men executed.¹⁷⁹

Terry Buckalew, in a 2009 email to then-Alexandria City Archaeologist Pamela Cressey, argued for a third plausible explanation. Buckalew concluded that George Mason personally oversaw the execution of the accused enslaved men instead of allowing the public court of justice to follow its course. Buckalew wrote, “Mason, probably acting as an avenging judge and not in complete accord with the law regulating Oyer and Terminer courts, ordered the execution and the subsequent display of the bodies.” Buckalew opines, “This would explain the missing court records. Mason had them destroyed.”¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ George Mason to George Washington, October 17, 1769, *Founders Online*, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-08-02-0182>, accessed March 17, 2026.

¹⁷⁸ At the Library of Virginia in Richmond, I searched the Cash Books of the Virginia Treasurer’s Office, 1761-1921, Local Call Number TOI5; Records, 1764-1789, Local Call Number 41008; Miscellaneous Reel 4262, (Robert Alonzo Brock Collection); Fairfax County Circuit Court Records at Library of Virginia; Papers, 1742-1793, Local Call Number Mss4 F1613d; and Fairfax County (Va.) Sheriff Records, 1747-1818. One resource not fully explored at Library of Virginia is *Executive journals of the Council of colonial Virginia v.6 1754-1773*: these records do not appear to be available anywhere else. Even the ones on film appear to be only at LoV.

¹⁷⁹ Terry K. Dunn, *Among His Slaves: George Mason, Slavery at Gunston Hall, and the Idealism of the American Revolution* (Commonwealth Books of Virginia, 2017), 78.

¹⁸⁰ Email communication, Terry Buckalew to Pamela Cressey, September 17, 2009, internal Alexandria Archaeology files. "X:\Archaeology\SHARED\Projects\King St 301 44AX33 44AX94 City Hall Market Block\Historical Documentation\Slavery\Execution of enslaved people - all eras\2009 Email re beheading of enslaved people.pdf".

Dunn puts forth a different view. Dunn acknowledges the extraordinariness of the events and supposes the conventional reaction among the planter class of keeping such matters quiet. Yet even Dunn wonders “how such a frightening situation with not one, but possibly two public executions...could not invoke more written commentary in newspapers or at least in personal correspondence.”¹⁸¹ Indeed, publicly executing and displaying the decapitated heads of condemned criminals, enslaved or not, only would have weakened efforts to deliberately quash news about the alleged crimes.

Why would Mason destroy five years’ worth of records to obliterate a single case?¹⁸² Why would the justices of Fairfax County allow a single one of them to commandeer the courts for a personal vendetta? If, indeed, Mason tried the men extrajudicially, what records would he have even kept? George Mason was not an all-powerful planter who lorded over his peers the way he did over those he enslaved. He was one among many wealthy and powerful men who represented the King’s authority in their corner of the Virginia colony.

Some greater tragedy must have befallen the archival record of the 1767 courts in Fairfax County that caused the loss of all the records between 1763 and 1768. Were the records treasonous to the Crown and thus destroyed? Were these 1760s records purposely destroyed for other reasons? Fairfax County archivists relate, “Our records from 1742 to the Civil War are not complete. Both the Union and Confederate troops either burned loose documents for kindling or cooking, or sent some documents home as souvenirs. Several of our court order books, such as those covering the years 1742 to 1748 and the Revolutionary War period were carried away;

¹⁸¹ Dunn, *Among his Slaves*, 78.

¹⁸² See also Jeff Broadwater, *George Mason: Forgotten Founder* (University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 35.

again, most likely as souvenirs.”¹⁸³ While definitive evidence showing where and when each individual volume disappeared from the Fairfax County archives has not come to light (if it exists at all), the deliberate destruction of records by county officials seems unlikely. Civil War-era soldiers and civilians recognized historical value in the records and acted according to their own interests in that value.

Another, better documented judicial event of the eighteenth century in Alexandria, saw a court acquit an enslaved man for the murder of an overseer. The circumstances of the crime Moses, an enslaved man, was accused of closely match those alleged from the 1767 events. According to testimony described in the *Virginia Gazette and Alexandria Advertiser* newspaper, the overseer, Hezekiah Williams had severely abused Moses in the days leading up to killing.¹⁸⁴ The occasion of the trial gave the usual denizens of the Market Square the chance to be at the center of a major event. The *VGAA* wrote, “In no instance was the Court-House of Fairfax County so crowded [*sic*].”¹⁸⁵ Ezekiel Cooper, a local Methodist minister, wrote in his diary, “The Courthouse was crowded with citizens. When the judgment was given from the bench a general plaudit by a clapping of hands passed through the house.”¹⁸⁶

In editorial comments following a lengthy report of the trial, the paper showed that questions of slavery and humanity stood at the forefront of local events. “In no instance was ever manifested such anxiety on a judicial question...and never was sentence pronounced that gave more general satisfaction.”¹⁸⁷ The paper’s editors put an ethical and religious bent on the

¹⁸³ “History of the Historic Records Center,” <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/circuit/historic-records-center/history>, accessed May 4, 2026.

¹⁸⁴ *VGAA*, January 27, 1791.

¹⁸⁵ *VGAA*, January 27, 1791.

¹⁸⁶ Passages quoted from Cooper’s 1791 diary in Email Memorandum, Michael Miller to Jean Federico, March 22, 2002.

¹⁸⁷ *VGAA*, January 27, 1791.

decision. "Overseers," they wrote, must observe "the propriety of treating the unhappy persons committed to their authority with mildness and humanity." The people who employed the overseers should bow down to the Christian God, the editors hoped, and "establish an era from which to date the universal kindness and tenderness of masters to their unfortunate brethren, 'Knowing that they also have a Master in Heaven.'" Ezekiel Cooper confided, "I apprehend this will be a check on the cruelty of tyrannical masters and overseers who can by degree massacre and murder poor slaves as though they were beasts of burden." Cooper, too, insisted that slavery as a practice offended religion. "If religion was general," Cooper wrote, slavery itself would not exist long."¹⁸⁸

The case inspired public debate, with another group of citizens publishing a denunciation of the acquittal and a different version of events. The denunciation doubled as a warning to any who would give the enslaved a reason to doubt their inferiority and, thus, weaken the system of racial supremacy usually upheld by rulings at the Courthouse. Far from heeding the religious feeling of humility, the rival group justified the killing.

Even if the jury had convicted Moses and sentenced him to death, the execution might have not taken place on the Court House Square at all. When, in 1794, the court convicted Tom of burglary and sentenced him to death, the judge "ordered that the Sergeant have a Gallows erected in the direction of the George Town Road at the extremity limits of the Corporation."¹⁸⁹ Perhaps this case demonstrated common practice.

¹⁸⁸ Email Memorandum, Michael Miller to Jean Federico, March 22, 2002.

¹⁸⁹ Hustings Court Records of Trials and Criminal Examinations, Book D, 1794-1800, February 27, 1797. "Alexandria, Virginia, United States records," images, FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QHV-23X9-JTN6?view=explore> : Mar 26, 2026), image 21 of 33; Image Group Number: 008745176. <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QHV-23X9-JTN6?lang=en>, accessed March 26, 2026.

Mystery surrounds a case in January 1837 of an enslaved man supposedly sentenced to death but who “escaped the punishment. A correspondent in *Gazette* stated the man “was, in April last [April 1836], condemned to death by the City Court...every body knew that he was guilty.” After President Andrew Jackson “suspended [the] execution,” the letter writer wondered if he had also pardoned the man. A search of Andrew Jackson’s papers shows no such pardon or even a record of the suspended sentence. Moreover, there was no April Court in 1836, although there were several days of May Court that year.

A handful of records indicate that public executions took place at venues other than the Market Square. A newspaper account of the 1853 execution of George, convicted of assault, places “the gallows...on the lot of Mr. Andrew Hunter, near town.”¹⁹⁰ Reporting on the death sentence imposed on an enslaved woman in 1858 placed the gallows at the City Jail at the corner of Pitt and St. Asaph streets.¹⁹¹

Labor and the Market Square

After the construction of the complex of public buildings in the Market Square, the town officials needed someone to keep them in order. During the eighteenth century, a gentleman named William Gladdin received 800 pounds of tobacco for sweeping the Market Square. In the 1810s, William Mills took money from the Council for cleaning streets and alleys but he also placed ads to recover enslaved people who had escaped from his grasp. As Abby Schreiber writes, “Though prominent men such as Carlyle and Fleming were responsible for managing infrastructure projects such as this, enslaved workers did much of the skilled and physical

¹⁹⁰ *Alexandria Gazette*, May 26, 1853.

¹⁹¹ *New York Semi-Weekly Tribune*, March 5, 1858.

labor.”¹⁹² Did William Gladdin actually do the sweeping? Did William Mills direct slaves to labor in his stead while collecting the wages?¹⁹³ For infrastructure projects, on the Market Block, the court minute and order books name these prominent men as the ones who build the works. But we need to dig deeper to see who the enslaved people may have been who did the labor. If Carlyle and Fleming – and the other Trustees, for that matter – arranged with specific enslaved men to undertake any of these infrastructure projects, their records do not survive. Alternately, formal arrangements did not take place.

Civic finances and public labor had a symbiotic relationship after the Civil War. The Market served a valuable function for the city coffers. “The Clerk of the Market is one of the most important in the Corporation,” the Mayor explained in his 1876 message, “...and, if well administered, can be productive of great good as an efficient aid in extinguishing the public debt.”¹⁹⁴ The reliance on Market revenues for city income shows in forestalling cases but also in the use of the chain gang to improve city properties, including the market. In the 1880s, chain gang labor helped pay for city salaries and other expenditures.¹⁹⁵ During these years, the positions of Clerk and Janitor of the Market went to white men. Although Black men had responsibility for maintenance of the Market since its inception, they lost that access to wages during Reconstruction. In 1884-85, James W. Simpson was Clerk of the Market. A.H. Brown served as Janitor of the Market, overtaking most of the Gibson family’s duties.

¹⁹² Abby Schreiber, “Alexandria’s Historic Waterfront: A StoryMap,” <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/eddf5e4107ec44a1b0e9527a20b683f0>, accessed January 15, 2026.

¹⁹³ *Alexandria Gazette*, February 6, 1811; *Alexandria Gazette & Daily Advertiser*, October 15, 1817.

¹⁹⁴ ACC# A2003-006 OHA, Locality History Files, Auditor’s Annual Reports, 1876-1923, 1876.

¹⁹⁵ ACC# A2003-006 OHA, Locality History Files, Auditor’s Annual Reports, 1876-1923, 200300602 (1884-1903), 200300603 (1904-1915), and 200300604 (1915-1923).

The same auditor's accounts of city finances, published annually, assessed the value of the Market Building at \$60,000. Including debt and interest, the City of Alexandria claimed \$955,961.20, a sum that included \$567,949.66 "excess city debt over assets." Numbers remained similar for the decades between 1884 and 1923.

Gustavus Gibson and His Sons

Gustavus Gibson cleaned the Market as early as July 1830.¹⁹⁶ That year he began appearing regularly in the Council minutes petitioning for payment in compensation for his services. Some of these records survive in the Employee Pay Records at the Alexandria Library Local History/Special Collections Branch. A characteristic record, dated October 31, 1831, reads, "To Gusty Gibson, To one Qtr. Sallery [Salary] for cleaning Market House & Lighting Lamps \$15.50 / Contract with Supt. Of Police / Chargeable to General Fund."¹⁹⁷ When Gibson died on December 14, 1831, the *Gazette* wrote, "The deceased was a free man of color, and has long been favorably known to the people of Alexandria as an honest and respectable citizen."¹⁹⁸ Gustavus left behind several children, including three sons who inherited their father's occupation. After Gustavus died, either James Gibson or Henry Gibson collected the \$15 per month until 1851.¹⁹⁹ The monthly salary increased to \$17.50 around 1844. In October 1851, the job went to William Arnold, a white man. Even while the Gibson men swept the Square and lit

¹⁹⁶ *Alexandria Gazette*, July 26, 1830, "In Council – July 23, 1830."

¹⁹⁷ City of Alexandria Collection, Employee Pay Records, MS019D, folder 3. Special Collections, Alexandria City Public Library.

¹⁹⁸ *Alexandria Gazette*, December 16, 1831.

¹⁹⁹ Employee Pay Records, MS019D, folders 4-16.

the lamps, others did work in the space, too. John Chance and Robert Taylor took home \$1.50 each for “Cleaning pavement and placing benches &c under sheds, Market Square.”²⁰⁰

Gustavus Gibson was born enslaved around 1756. On October 23, 1824, he bought his freedom from George Graham of Washington, D.C., the one-time Acting Secretary of War under President James Monroe.²⁰¹ Even before his official manumission, Gibson lived away from the Grahams and even appeared in the 1820 U.S. Census as the head of a household of other enslaved men and women. Three males under age 14 (probably Henry, John, and James), one male older than 45 (probably Gustavus), three girls younger than 14 (one perhaps is Emily), and one middle-aged woman between 26 and 45.²⁰²

Gustavus made clear the access to freedom he wished to provide to his children. In fact, the entire family contributed to getting each other to freedom. Gustavus purchased the freedom of his son, John, from Andrew and Catherine Ramsay in 1827.²⁰³ In the manumission of Sarah and Joseph Gibson, their emancipators referenced “the understanding between [them] and Gustavus Gibson, father of said Sarah and Joseph.”²⁰⁴ Catherine Graham Ramsay, George Graham’s sister, sold George Gibson and James Gibson, two other sons of Gustavus, in 1832 and helped free them six years later.²⁰⁵ The same may have been true for Richard Henry Gibson, yet another son of Gustavus, benefitted from a similar arrangement.²⁰⁶ The liberty of Emily Gibson, who later married to become Emily Hampton, depended on George, John, Daniel, and Richard Henry, her brothers. The brothers freed Emily, “our sister,” and “also her children Wm.

²⁰⁰ Employee Pay Records, MS019D, Folder 14, 1848, September 2, 1848.

²⁰¹ Alex. O2:51, October 23, 1824.

²⁰² 1820 U.S. Census, 185.

²⁰³ Alex. Q2:311, November 19, 1827.

²⁰⁴ Alex. D3:162-163.

²⁰⁵ Alex. X2:488 and X2:498, March 3, 1838.

²⁰⁶ Alex. X2:519, March 15, 1838.

Wilberforce, Sarah Frances, and Daniel Gibson.”²⁰⁷ William Wilberforce, a member of the British House of Commons, campaigned for the abolition of the slave trade and helped achieve that end for Britain-flagged vessels in 1807.²⁰⁸ Wilberforce’s public opposition to slavery made him a well-known trans-Atlantic figure. Emily Hampton naming one her enslaved children after one of the heroes of the antislavery movement must go down in history as the act of a woman afraid of no one. One imagines such was the family of Gustavus Gibson and his children, many of whom served the Town of Alexandria for two decades.

More information about the Gibson family comes from burial records and gravestone inscriptions. Gustavus was buried with Basheba Gibson in the Methodist Protestant Cemetery in Alexandria.²⁰⁹ Richard H., George M., and Hester E. Clark, their sister, all lay in the same plot. Though she does not appear in other records, Basheba could well have been the mother who raised the children in this remarkable family.

A compilation of city expenses appended in the back of Council Minute Book 5 shows the budgets from 1821 through 1854, plus a stray 1869 budget. In 1821, the city paid \$226.88 “for repairs to Market house and Sweeping Market Square.” The Corporation paid between \$60 and \$100 per year for “keeping the Market Square in order” during most of the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s. Expenses spiked to \$943 in 1853 with the addition of new market sheds.²¹⁰

In 1850, the Common Council resolved to pay \$100 per year to William Arnold, a white man who owned real estate on the Market Block, for him to sweep the Market Square. In the

²⁰⁷ Alex. D3:197, May 23, 1843.

²⁰⁸ Paul Lagasse, “Wilberforce, William” in *The Columbia Encyclopedia* (Columbia University Press, 2018). <https://access.infobase.com/article/793355-wilberforce-william?rak=1&aid=103525>, accessed May 5, 2026.

²⁰⁹ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/65828536/richard-h-gibson>, accessed March 13, 2026.

²¹⁰ Council Minute Book 5, Alexandria City, Clerk of the Circuit Court. -

same session, the council “ordered that the unpaved parts of the Market Square be paved with brick.”²¹¹ Still in August 1857, parts of the square remained unpaved, prompting the Council to repeat their order.²¹²

Selling the Labor of Free People as Punishment for Nonpayment of Taxes

The City Council passed legislation in 1858 to enable the punishment of free people of color who did not pay taxes or register their status properly with the authorities.²¹³ This legislation allowed local authorities to force free Blacks into temporary reenslavement for wages that paid off their public debt. In Alexandria, advertisements for these sales mimicked those for actual slave sales. The local sheriff named the individual “to be sold” and auctioned their term of labor to the highest bidder. The free people subject to these suits did not attend the proceedings. The story in the *Alexandria Gazette* the day after the 1860 sale noted, “The new owners must ‘catch’ their property before making use of it.”²¹⁴ In form, these sales amounted to forced hirings. The local ordinance stipulated a minimum price of ten cents per day for hiring these men. In 1860, thirty-four men in the First and Fourth wards owed a collective \$97.50. All but two men owed \$3.00 while one owed \$1.50 and another fifty-cents.²¹⁵ The men named in these lists are likely those who refused to pay the tax on principle or could not pay based on impoverishment, absence, or some other factor.

²¹¹ Common Council Minutes, August 12, 1850.

²¹² Council Minute Book 10, 360, August 11, 1857.

²¹³ *Alexandria Gazette*, February 12, 1858.

²¹⁴ *Alexandria Gazette*, August 21, 1860.

²¹⁵ *Alexandria Gazette*, August 14, 1860.

Table 2 Table showing the names of free Black men subject to forced hire by auction at Market Square, August 18, 1860.

| Name of Taxpayer | Amount of Tax Owed |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| James Blackburn | \$3.00 |
| Daniel Brown | \$3.00 |
| Linny Burke | \$3.00 |
| Thomas Camble | \$3.00 |
| Frances Carter | \$3.00 |
| Jesse Cole | \$3.00 |
| Richard Dogan | \$3.00 |
| Edmond Frazier | \$3.00 |
| Henry Hicks | \$3.00 |
| Henry Lee | \$1.50 |
| William Savoy | \$3.00 |
| John Talbon | \$3.00 |
| Han. Washington | \$3.00 |
| Aldred Addison | \$3.00 |
| Fred. Addison | \$3.00 |
| James Allen | \$3.00 |
| Adolphus Adams | \$3.00 |
| George Beden | \$3.00 |
| Nat. Clarke | \$3.00 |
| Robert Derrick | \$3.00 |
| Wesley Darnell | \$3.00 |
| Daniel Foard | \$3.00 |
| John Jackson | \$3.00 |
| Moses Kitt | \$3.00 |
| William Logan | \$3.00 |
| Silas Madeller | \$3.00 |
| David Middleton | \$3.00 |
| Lewis Madeller | \$3.00 |
| Wilson Soloman | \$0.50 |
| Lewis Syphax | \$3.00 |
| Elias Thompson | \$3.00 |
| John Taylor | \$3.00 |
| Daniel Waters | \$3.00 |
| Charles Ward | \$3.00 |

The city recognized the danger of putting free Black men in the hands of unscrupulous whites who had paid as little as fifty-cents for control over their labor. The Board of Aldermen

and Mayor W.D. Massey included a protection against the incentive to kidnap or attempt to permanently re-enslave individuals through these proceedings. Significantly, the law recognized the legal claim to freedom and the right to consent to some labor arrangements. “Carry[ing] such free negro out of the County or Corporation without his or her consent” resulted in fines between \$20 and \$200. Detaining the individual for longer than owed made the tax collector liable for potential damages. If “the Collector of the Corporation of the District in which such free negro may reside...hired [him] out for a longer time,” the free Black individual “may recover of such officer seventy-five cents for every day.”²¹⁶ These sales forced free Black Alexandrians into a condition resembling slavery. The city filled its coffers, in part, with proceeds from taxes on enslaved people. Freedom brought with it the right to consent to labor arrangements, even for Black men in 1860 Alexandria. This right would be tested in later post-Civil War labor arrangements that bound formerly enslaved people to plantations.

Antislavery and Slavery-Reform Groups in Alexandria

A creamware fragment dug from archaeological site 44AX235 Feature 125 urges consideration of Alexandria from the perspective of the antislavery movement. On the fragment an inscription, taken from the “Athenian Statue of Liberty,” reads, “Liberty is the Right and Happiness of all, for all by Nature are equal and free, and no one can without the utmost injustice become the Slave of his like.”²¹⁷ The sherds once formed part of a larger vessel which depicted a white man and a Black man each holding a liberty pole with a Phrygian cap on top. While evidence shows clearly that most Alexandrians embraced and supported the system of slavery in

²¹⁶ *Alexandria Gazette*, February 12, 1858.

²¹⁷ 44AX235/987, CW TP (7).

the United States, a small number of antislavery activists denounced slavery and its evils during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As the Alexandria Archaeology Museum notes, the vessel represents “a relatively early example of interracial solidarity that anticipates later [nineteenth] century abolitionist ceramics.”²¹⁸ The history of the Market Block sheds light on a few individuals who joined activist movements related to slavery.

For enslaved men, women, and children in Alexandria, the “antislavery movement” must have been akin to daily life. At key moments in the city’s history, however, a broader section of the population coalesced around the idea that enslaved people deserved rights in spite of their legal condition. The movements varied in the strength of their demands from abolition of slavery and full equality between white and Black citizens to modest efforts to improve the conditions in which enslaved people lived. Significantly, antislavery did not necessarily denote immediate or even universal emancipation.

Three eras of activism stand out. The first sustained opposition to slavery arose concurrently with the revolutionary movement for independence during the 1770s. One strand of Patriot ideology held that the British monarchy had forced slavery on the colonists and, it followed, opposition to the slave trade marked an individual as a friend of liberty. In this telling, taxation without representation reduced the white Patriot colonists into slavery themselves. This movement faded from public view but it did not die out altogether.²¹⁹ The same strand of Patriot ideology presented “African Americans [as] untrustworthy and susceptible to the whispers of

²¹⁸ Alexandria Archaeology Museum, March 25, 2026.

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1536360098489787&set=pb.100063474343784.-2207520000&type=3>, accessed May 14, 2026.

²¹⁹ Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Harvard University Press, 2017), 232-246.

tyrants,” that is, “perpetual threats to the safety of the union.”²²⁰ The idea that even free Black Americans threatened national unity re-emerged during the 1820s as part of a national movement that also saw the founding of the American Colonization Society. The ACS won support from major figures, including presidents, senators, and Supreme Court justices. In Virginia, at least, reaction to the Nat Turner Rebellion in 1831 forced antislavery voices into the background. The final push to abolish slavery came during the Civil War, when thousands of enslaved people took advantage of the fog of war, friendly Union military policy, and their own wits to make themselves free.

Before the American Revolution, only “two dozen” enslaved Virginians became free. After the Revolution, “several thousand African Americans...secured their freedom in Virginia.”²²¹ Dylan Pritchett included a handy table in his study of African Americans in Alexandria showing that only Baltimore welcomed more free African Americans between 1790 and 1810.²²² The free Black population of Alexandria grew at a rate five times greater than the city with the third-most growth, Richmond. Moreover, as Pritchett notes, the free Black population began to rival that of the white population.

²²⁰ Robert G. Parkinson, *Common Cause: Creating Race and Nation in the American Revolution* (University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 631.

²²¹ Michael L. Nicholls, “Strangers Setting Among Us: The Sources and Challenge of the Urban Free Black Population of Early Virginia” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 108, no. 2 (2000), 155.

²²² Dylan Pritchett, “A Look at the African-American Community through Alexandria’s Eyes, 1780-1810,” *Preserving Alexandria’s Cultural Traditions (PACT) Project* (1993), 56.

Table 3 Growth of the Free Black Population in Several Cities, from Dylan Pritchett, “A Look at the African-American Community through Alexandria’s Eyes, 1780-1810,” 56.

| CITY | FREE NEGROES | WHITES | SLAVES |
|------------|--------------|--------|--------|
| Baltimore | 1,655.7% | 203.7% | 272.3% |
| Alexandria | 1,507.7 | 127.7 | 174.0 |
| Richmond | 348.7 | 137.9 | 153.4 |
| Petersburg | 251.3 | 92.0 | 71.7 |
| Norfolk | 870.5 | 197.8 | 195.6 |
| Charleston | 151.1 | 43.0 | 51.9 |
| Savannah | 373.2 | 1.4 | 73. |

A different view of Liberty began to take hold after the Revolution. The Rev. Ezekiel Cooper wrote, in 1791, after watching the Fairfax County Court acquit Moses of murdering his overseer: “Liberty justly belongs to all and principles of equity or religion enjoy us to grant it to every man.”²²³ Many Alexandrians remained dissatisfied with the condition in which they found the people whom their neighbors enslaved. Antislavery activism in England and Scotland, spurred on by the resounding legal decisions in *Somerset v. Steward* (1772) and *Knight v.*

²²³ Ezekiel Cooper, quoted in George A. Phoebus, *Beams of Light on Early Methodism in America. Chiefly Drawn from the Diary, Letters, Manuscripts, Documents, and Original Tracts of the Rev. Ezekiel Cooper: Electronic Edition*, 124.
<https://docsouth.unc.edu/church/phoebus/phoebus.html>, accessed February 2, 2026.

Wedderburn (1778), attracted the attention of Americans. The first group in Alexandria organized in 1796. That year, a Boston paper published “Constitution of the Alexandria Society for the Relief and Protection of Persons Illegally Held in Bondage.”²²⁴

The organizers of the Alexandria Society deliberately walked a fine line between advocating for universal freedom and supporting the loss of “property” that abolishing slavery would entail. They contrasted the rights idealized in the Declaration of Independence and guaranteed by the United States Constitution with the “coercive violation of all those privileges in the persons of our African Brethren.”²²⁵ They spoke of living in “the same universal family” and of the “duty...to diffuse the blessings of freedom to every part of the human race.” Yet, carefully, these Alexandrians confirmed the privilege of holding others in bondage. The Society would focus its efforts on “those, who are by law entitled to freedom, but by fraud, or in violation of the laws, are still detained in bondage.” For these ends, the members would only appeal to “means as are within their power, consistent with the laws of their country and the rights of their fellow citizens.”²²⁶

Ships’ manifests recorded for U.S. Customs officials, like those of the *Alexandria* (paid for by John B. Daingerfield), show the influence of antislavery reformers. When Captain Charles W. Turner carried the ten year old enslaved child, Fenton, to New Orleans on behalf of Mountjoy Bayly, the New Orleanian who owned Fenton, the Collector of the District of Alexandria, Joseph Eaches, required Turner and Bayly to “solemnly, sincerely and truly swear” that Fenton “ha[d] not been imported into the United States, since the first day of January 1808; and that under the laws of the United States he is held to service or labour as a slave, and) is not entitled to freedom

²²⁴ *Boston Gazette*, May 16, 1796.

²²⁵ *Boston Gazette*, May 16, 1796.

²²⁶ *Boston Gazette*, May 16, 1796.

under the laws, at a certain time and after a known period of service.”²²⁷ Congress designed the text of the declaration to assuage concerns about the kidnapping of free people in the North to sell in the South as slaves. If captains and enslavers had to swear “solemnly, sincerely and truly” that they *lawfully* enslaved the people on board these ships, that act satisfied government officials.

The Alexandria Society helped enforce the 1778 Virginia law against importing enslaved people into the colony. With independence, the law remained in force in Virginia. When Alexandria entered the District of Columbia, in 1801, the laws of Virginia remained salient in the city. As a result, hundreds of enslaved individuals sued for and won their freedom when they proved that their enslavers had violated the terms of the law. John Janney, who purchased a King Street parcel in Lot 49 from Elizabeth Muir Donaldson during the 1790s, helped organize this early antislavery society in Alexandria from the site. Janney subscribed an April 1797 notice inviting members of the Society to the next meeting.²²⁸ Janney continued to post these notices to gather the members at Archibald MacLean’s school in Alexandria. For five years, notices appeared regularly in the local papers until, after November 1801, they peter out.²²⁹ An uprising of enslaved people in August 1800 around Richmond, Virginia, known as Gabriel’s Rebellion after the enslaved blacksmith executed as its leader, may have discouraged Alexandrians from

²²⁷ "X:\OHAshared\Freedom House\Research\Ships and Shipping\Manifests\Ship Manifests (Record Group 36, NARA)\New Orleans, Louisiana\Alexandria 1841_04_13\31204_188991-00971.jpg"

²²⁸ *Times and District of Columbia Daily Advertiser*, November 27, 1797. “The members of the Alexandria Society for the relief and protection of persons illegally held in bondage, are informed, that agreeably to adjournment, a meeting will be held at Archibald McLean’s Schoolroom, on Wednesday the 29th inst. precisely at half past six o’clock in the evening. The members are requested to be punctual in their attendance.”

²²⁹ *Times and District of Columbia Daily Advertiser*, April 10 and August 24, 1797; February 22, March 6, May 25, August 31, September 8 and 19, 1798; August 24 and 31, 1799; March 1, 1800; *Alexandria Daily Advertiser*, May 8 and 30 and November 26, 1801.

maintaining a public stance in opposition to slavery. With the French and Haitian revolutions simultaneously spreading the ideas of liberty throughout the Atlantic World, the enslaving class worried that any utterance or action against slavery might spark the next revolt.²³⁰

Still, an 1802 Grand Jury submitted grievances to the court that denounced both the ascent of Alexandria as a major slave trade port and kidnapping free Black residents to sell as enslaved. The jury, under foreman John Potts, wrote against “the practice of persons coming from distant parts of the United States, into this district for the purpose of purchasing slaves, where they exhibit to our view a scene of wretchedness and human degradation disgraceful to our characters as citizens of a free government.” Potts and his fellow jurors bemoaned “a traffic fraught with so much misery to a class of beings entitled to our protection by the laws of justice and humanity.”²³¹ The jurors “conceive[d] these grievances to demand legislative redress, especially the practice of making sale of black people, who are to be manumitted at the expiration of a term of years, who are sold & frequently taken to distant parts of this continent, where they have not the power to avail themselves of the liberty they may be entitled to at the expiration of the term.”²³² The political leaders of Alexandria ignored the grievances of this grand jury and continued upholding the legal rights of enslavers as they then stood instead of acting positively to improve the lives of the enslaved.

The Benevolent Society of Alexandria for Improving the Condition of People of Color, formed during the 1820s, had broader aims. The members of the Benevolent Society, like their contemporaries in the Alexandria Society, saw “that slavery is inconsistent with Christianity and

²³⁰ Douglas R. Egerton, *Gabriel's Rebellion: The Virginia Slave Conspiracies of 1800 and 1802* (University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

²³¹ *National Intelligencer and Washington Advertiser* [District of Columbia], January 22, 1802.

²³² *National Intelligencer and Washington Advertiser* [District of Columbia], January 22, 1802.

republicanism” yet took a step further in an attempt to convince enslavers that their practice lost them money. More than an embarrassment to their philosophical ideals, slavery cut into profits, “injurious to the pecuniary interests of the master.” John Janney’s involvement in the first great antislavery movement in Alexandria anticipated his relative Samuel H. Janney’s involvement in the Benevolent Society. With its proximity and easy access to Members of Congress, the Benevolent Society lobbied for laws to protect free people of color and solicited societies in free states to accept donations and to host freed people required to leave Virginia after manumission. In 1828, Janney bragged to the national convention that he and his partners helped pass “a law to prevent free negroes from being sold for the payment of their jail fees when taken up as runaways.”²³³

Though not connected directly to any known residents of the Market Block, a notable event in 1825 demonstrated the lengths some Black Alexandrians would go to oppose slavery. A large group of Black men gathered outside of a “residence of southern traders in negroes” on a Sunday night in July 1825. The only known account of the incident comes from a letter written to the *Richmond Enquirer* by an obviously proslavery correspondent and subsequently reproduced in other papers around the United States. Unfortunately, no known account survives from anyone with direct involvement in the events. The writer, who signed “C.D.,” alleged “abusive epithets were applied abundantly to all who dared to purchase slaves...and the language and gestures of many of the blacks were, in the highest degree, menacing and insulting.”²³⁴ The

²³³ “Letter from the Benevolent Society of Alexandria for Improving the Condition of People of Color to the American Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery and improving the condition of the African race, to be held in Baltimore, on the 3d of the 11th month next,” 59-60. *Hathi Trust*, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uiug.30112033648335>, accessed March 26, 2026.

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²³⁴ *Washington Gazette*, July 28, 1825.

Phenix Gazette eventually commented on the events but downplayed their importance. Reporting that the alleged rioters would face justice in the courts, the *Phenix* wrote, “the whole affair was of so contemptible and unimportant a nature, as regards the peace and safety of the citizens, that we did not think it proper to trouble the public with a history of it.”²³⁵

1828 proved an important year for antislavery on the Market Block. Several real estate owners on the Market Block signed the 1828 *Memorial of Inhabitants of the District of Columbia, praying for the gradual abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia*.²³⁶ Thomas White, Robert L. White, Robert H. Miller, and several members of the Janney family signed the document. Samuel H. Janney also helped lead the Alexandria Colonization Society. A movement to improve the immediate condition of slavery for people of African descent shifted gradually into one to remove them from the country entirely. Founded in 1823, the Alexandria Colonization Society had close relationships with the national organization and the federal officials who sat on its board. Many of these leaders believed that the United States should belong only to white men. While professing a belief in equality, the Colonization Societies blamed white prejudice for the necessity of sending free people of color back to Africa. But, also believing in an ideal of personal liberty, the Colonization Society insisted on the “consistent of the free people of color of the United States.”²³⁷ The first iteration of the local CS did not last long. In only March 1826, the society “had become defunct” and in need of “reviving.”²³⁸

²³⁵ *Phenix Gazette*, July 30, 1825. See also, Joshua D. Rothman, *The Ledger and the Chain*, 108-109 and 406n25.

²³⁶ Memorial of Inhabitants of the District of Columbia, praying for the gradual abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, March 24, 1828. Twenty-third Congress, Second Session, Doc. 140, House of Representatives, February 9, 1835.

²³⁷ *Alexandria Gazette*, December 4, 1823.

²³⁸ *Alexandria Gazette*, March 4, 1826.

The second try stuck for much longer. In 1828, the Alexandria Colonization Society had grown strong enough to require ward-level managers within the larger organization. James Entwistle and William A. Williams managed the Second Ward, home to Market Square. In 1830, Robert Jamieson replaced Williams. Jamieson had once partnered with Joseph Mandeville in the grocery and wholesale business at the corner of King and Fairfax streets. In addition to his advocacy for deporting free Blacks back to Africa, Jamieson later established a baker on Lee Street, where he employed enslaved and free labor. As well, Jamieson also helped manumit some enslaved people, including Jane Turley and her children, Maria Ann, Thomas, John, and George.²³⁹

These three major antislavery societies in Alexandria show that the slave power did not attain omnipotence in the District of Columbia before the Civil War. Despite an overall losing record, the antislavery movement kept its ability to influence national debates on slavery. These debates all had particular saliency in Alexandria, as its legal structure stood separate from the Maryland-descended laws that prevailed on the other side of the Potomac River.

Another John Janney (1798-1872), a nephew of the John Janney who owned the Lot 49 parcel, appears to have renounced the antislavery cause of his relatives. Historian Anne Sarah Rubin has outlined the political trajectory of the younger John Janney. Janney rose in his early political career as an antislavery advocate. In 1831, he contributed to a bill in the General Assembly to abolish slavery in the Commonwealth. He maintained his reputation as a leader of the ACS but, when the Virginia Secession Convention held its final vote, “he renounced a

²³⁹ “The Lee Street Site: The Rise of Industry,” Alexandria Archaeology Museum, <https://www.alexandriava.gov/archaeology/the-lee-street-site-the-rise-of-industry>, accessed May 5, 2026.

lifetime of staunch Unionism at the last minute” to vote in favor of secession.²⁴⁰ Janney framed his vote in terms similar to others of his time who made a similar decision, as one in favor of Virginia rather than against the United States. Janney told a questioner that considered himself “in a word, a Virginian – a citizen of a Commonwealth that had existed as a sovereign organized government for two hundred years before the United States had a name.”²⁴¹ Sent to the convention from Loudon County specifically to advocate for remaining in the Union, Janney did just that until he felt he no longer could.

An incident in 1797 elicited a public response showing that some white Alexandrians felt embarrassment at the harsher realities of slavery. When two enslaved men fell from their canoe in the Potomac River, leading to the drowning death of one of the men, his body “lay on the wharf” for nearly two full days. The editor of the *Times & District of Columbia Advertiser* wrote that such disrespect “[was] surprising...in a town like Alexandria.”²⁴² The next day, “A Friend to Humanity” wrote, “A number of the citizens, known for their vigilance and humanity, were not apprized of the circumstance” but wondered “whether the color of the man or his being a poor slave was the primary cause” of the “inattention to [his] body.”²⁴³ The coroner, too, disclaimed responsibility.²⁴⁴

Indeed, the anti-slavery societies in Alexandria failed in their larger goals. As Samuel H. Janney wrote in his 1828 memo to the national convention, “nothing great or striking has been performed [yet] we believe our labors have been useful to some individual sufferers.” In the

²⁴⁰ Anne Sarah Rubin, “Between Union and Chaos: The Political Life of John Janney” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 102, no. 3 (July, 1994): 381.

²⁴¹ Rubin, “Political Life of John Janney,” 382.

²⁴² *Times & District of Columbia Advertiser*, August 14, 1797. Coincidentally, William Lyles, who owned property on the Market Block, also claimed to own the two men.

²⁴³ *Times & District of Columbia Advertiser*, August 15, 1797.

²⁴⁴ *Times & District of Columbia Advertiser*, August 15, 1797.

wake of Nat Turner's Rebellion, in 1831, and the pervasive belief that Black people wanted to destroy the United States, the ideals of the American Colonization Society won out. Instead of incorporating emancipated people into the body politic, legislators passed restrictive laws designed to expel freed people from Alexandria and the rest of Virginia.

The path of Austen Triplett from slavery to freedom passed through Market Square. Triplett may have helped arrange the September 1843 sale, he actively solicited partners to help secure his freedom. Triplett carried a letter from the congregation of the Methodist Episcopal Church proclaiming him "desirous of purchasing his freedom."²⁴⁵ The April 10, 1843 letter assured potential assistant liberators that Triplett "is an acceptable member of the Methodist Episcopal Church...We recommend him to our friends as a proper individual to receive aid. He is an honest, industrious, and pious man." To assuage the doubts of any potential aide, the letter confirmed Triplett "has received authority from his owner" to seek freedom.²⁴⁶ Triplett's involvement with the Methodist Episcopal Church came at just the moment the organization split over the issue of slavery, as the denomination split into proslavery and antislavery factions in 1844.²⁴⁷

If Triplett did not enjoy legal freedom in 1843, he had certainly assumed some of its characteristics. He appears as the head of a household in the 1830 Census, as "free colored

²⁴⁵ Methodist Episcopal Church, Alexandria (Va.). Letter of recommendation for Austin Triplett to purchase his freedom (with authority from his enslaver) : manuscript unsigned, 1843 April 10., manuscript unsigned, 1843. Houghton Library collection on the North American slave trade, MS Am 1278, (12), Box: 1. Houghton Library. https://hollisarchives.lib.harvard.edu/catalog/hou02075_hou02075c00012, accessed March 25, 2026.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ John Nelson Norwood, *The Schism in the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1844: A Study of Slavery and Ecclesiastical Politics* (The Alfred Press, 1923).

person” between 24 and 36 years old.²⁴⁸ He helped found the Davis Chapel Methodist Church and served as a “leading member.”²⁴⁹ When constable Meade advertised him as “a first rate Biscuit Baker, dining room servant, or cook,” Austen Triplett had been married for more than twenty years to his wife, Betsey Triplett.²⁵⁰ Fully free by 1850, Austin Triplett appeared in the census that year with his wife and mother, both named Elizabeth Triplett.²⁵¹

Thanks to its position within the District of Columbia from 1801 until 1846, Alexandria became a subject of national debate about the institution of slavery and the relationship between liberty, freedom, and enslavement. As a town within the national capital, Alexandria submitted to the ultimate governance of the United States Congress. When Congress allowed the retrocession of Alexandria back into Virginia, most public debate centered on finances, taxes, and representation. Historian A. Glenn Crothers notes, however, that retrocession stemmed primarily from a dispute between antislavery and proslavery politicians. “Protection of slavery and the slave trade,” Crothers writes, “lay at the heart of the [retrocession] campaign, which was led, both locally and in Congress, by men deeply invested in the slave economy and culture of the district and the South.”²⁵²

²⁴⁸ "Washington D.C., United States records," images, FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-9YBH-VL9?view=index>; Jul 24, 2025), images 482-483 of 527; United States. National Archives and Records Administration. Image Group Number: 005155862.

²⁴⁹ James Howard, “History of Roberts Chapel.”

²⁵⁰ *Alexandria Gazette*, September 9, 1843. Emancipation of Betsey Triplett, Alex. Deed Books N2:225.

²⁵¹ "Washington D.C., United States records," images, FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HT-DRD9-7N2?view=index>; Jul 21, 2025), image 256 of 604; United States. National Archives and Records Administration. Image Group Number: 004193082.

²⁵² Crothers, “The 1846 Retrocession of Alexandria,” 168.

The population of free African American people in Alexandria had foremost in their minds the fate of slavery and the plight of their fellow Black townsmen. The popular referendum over removing Alexandria from the District of Columbia brought the political voice of Black Alexandrians directly to the Courthouse Square in 1846. A report from Alexandria published in the *Boston Recorder* several months after the popular referendum on retrocession reported a sad scene. “Two colored men of Alexandria” described how “the poor colored people of this city, who are the poorest of God’s poor” reacted to the vote:

While the citizens of this city and county were voting, God’s humble poor were standing in rows, on either side of the Court House, and, as the votes were announced every quarter of an hour, the suppressed wailings and lamentations of the people of color were constantly ascending to God for help and succor... We have been permitted heretofore to meet in God’s sanctuary...but whether we shall have this privilege when the Virginian laws are extended over us, we know not. We expect that our schools will be broken up, and our privileges, which we have enjoyed for so many years, will all be taken away. The laws of Virginia can hardly be borne by those colored people.²⁵³

In the eyes of these writers, Alexandria, D.C. offered a far safer and tolerable existence than submission to the harsher laws passed by Virginia between 1801 and 1846. Loss of religious practices and access to education awaited them in Virginia.

²⁵³ “Retrocession of Alexandria” *Boston Recorder* 32, no. 1 (January 7, 1847): 2; Crothers, “The 1846 Retrocession of Alexandria,” 166-167.

The return to Virginia almost broke the Black community. The free Black population declined in the next decade, as many long-established families chose to depart rather than suffer what awaited them as Virginians, unwelcome in the Commonwealth because of the color of their skin.²⁵⁴ The flight would be remembered even in 1947, when a reporter for the *Washington Afro-American* wrote in a profile of Alexandria, “When Alexandria was made part of Virginia, many of [the free Black] persons who had bought their freedom, fled to the Midwest to keep from being slaves again.”²⁵⁵

Residents of the Market Block had taken the lead in building that community and would continue to do so after retrocession. Free Black men and women built prosperous communities in Alexandria. One of these neighborhoods, known as Hayti, had a direct connection to the antislavery undercurrent on the Market Block. Robert H. Miller, whose family owned 319 King Street, helped build Hayti, with his father, Mordecai Miller.²⁵⁶ Between Robert and Mordecai Miller, they consolidated ownership of parcels on Wolfe Street between S. Royal and S. Fairfax. The Millers then sold several parcels to free Black buyers on favorable terms, giving people like Ann and Alexander Bryan, Amanda and Alexander Boudin, Mary Waugh, and Edward Evans. Bastions of Black home ownership that lasted into the 1880s.²⁵⁷ Eventually, these tenants purchased the homes from Miller, establishing a base around which other free Black families

²⁵⁴ Crothers, “The 1846 Retrocession of Alexandria,” 167. Crothers puts the decline in population from 15% to 11% of the town between 1850 and 1860.

²⁵⁵ *Washington Afro American*, February 15, 1947. I discuss this article at length in the context of urban renewal later in this report.

²⁵⁶ Wheelock, “Robert H. Miller,” 62-63.

²⁵⁷ T.B. McCord, Jr., “Across the Fence, but a World Apart: The Coleman Site, 1796-1907: An Historical Analysis of the Socioeconomic Changes on the 400 Block Between South Royal and South Fairfax Streets,” *Alexandria Archaeology Publications*, Number 126, 1985. 25-26.

developed a neighborhood. A piece of English whiteware plate pulled from a well at the Coleman Site bears the mark, “Manufactured Rob’t H. Miller Alexandria, D.C.”²⁵⁸

The families of Hayti soon watched as freedom extended to everyone, gradually during the Civil War then all at once with the passage and ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment throughout 1865. At the end of the Civil War, Richard H. Miller retired from the pottery business after ensuring the firm survived the end of the hostilities. Perry Wheelock cites Eliza Miller’s recollection of the Civil War in the china store, “Soldiers wanting Southern souvenirs ‘would go into father’s store and buy any old odd thing and send it home with all sorts of stories as to where it came from and to whom it had belonged, and father got rid of much old and undesirable stock that way. I think he did not buy any new stock during the war, just kept the store open and sold what he could of what he had on hand.’”²⁵⁹ Perhaps the tales these Civil War-era soldiers told their families to accompany purchases from the Miller store involved the well-established free Black neighborhoods growing in numbers as a result of war and Emancipation.

Civil War

Conditions in the city effectively neutered the authority of enslavers shortly after United States troops took control of local government after the failed attempt at secession in May 1861. “Shortly after their arrival,” the Union military seized “the corporation offices in the market square...and hoisted the American flag at the market square and on the custom house.”²⁶⁰ In late October, the Union Club of Alexandria raised a new United States flag “on the flagstaff at the corner of the Market Square” but, after just a week, a violent storm tore the flag into ribbons

²⁵⁸ Wheelock, “Robert H. Miller,” 103-104.

²⁵⁹ Eliza Miller, *Recollections*, 21, cited in Wheelock, “Robert H. Miller,” 81.

²⁶⁰ *Alexandria Gazette*, May 25, 1861.

“and the major portion [was] carried away.”²⁶¹ The Volunteer Relief Association used the Auditor’s Office on Market Square to hold its regular meetings.²⁶² Townspeople on high alert “called out the fire engines [after] the appearance of smoke issuing from a house on Royal street, next to the market square.”²⁶³

Alexandria hosted tens of thousands of strangers into the city during the Civil War. Significantly for this project, the city served as a place of refuge for enslaved people who fled battlefields and plantations for near-freedom in Alexandria. The no-longer enslaved women, men, and children endured sickness, disease, hunger, and starvation. Most arrived in the city with no means of support or a place to stay. Soon, the Union military and U.S. political leaders recognized the need to assist freedpeople in places across the liberated South. As news spread of the refugee crisis, private efforts commenced, as well. A group of New York abolitionists sent Harriet Jacobs, herself a formerly enslaved woman, and Julia Wilbur to help coordinate humanitarian aid in Alexandria. Both Jacobs and Wilbur left extensive diaries and correspondence that shed light on the irregularity of the market. In October 1863, Julia Wilbur wrote, “We did not think a year ago that at this time there would be a dozen people quarrelling over the Contrabands, & almost fighting for places here, but it is so. ... There is so much wrong done to these people. I am told that a whipping post was erected in the Court House yd. in the summer & 3 men were publicly whipped, but Gen. Slough says that last man has been whipped while he is governor.”²⁶⁴ Slough siding with the enslaved signaled a shift in the way authorities used Market Square for public discipline.

²⁶¹ *Local News*, October 26, 1861 and November 2, 1861.

²⁶² *Local News*, November 1, 1861.

²⁶³ *Local News*, December 27, 1861.

²⁶⁴ Julia A. Wilbur to Anna M.C. Barnes, October 2, 1863, *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, vol. 2, 511-512.

Jacobs and Wilbur were part of an active group of humanitarian volunteers and aid workers who headquartered in Alexandria to meet the immense needs of freedpeople gathering in Alexandria, safely behind Union lines. One of these groups, the Relief Association, set up a supply store in a building just across Fairfax Street from Market Square. James A. English, who once partnered with Charles M. Castleman in a business enterprise on the Market Block, had the building before the war.²⁶⁵

Judith White Brockenbrough McGuire wrote a series of well-studied letters relating events in Alexandria in the first days after secession. Many of these mention happenings on the Market Block. “The Confederate flag waves from several points in Alexandria: from the Marshall House, the Market-house, and the several barracks,” she wrote. “The peaceful, quiet old town looks quite warlike.” McGuire, a native Virginian, daughter of a Virginia Supreme Court Justice, married to the founder of the Alexandria Theological Seminary minister, and later memorialist, wrote “I feel sometimes, when walking on King’s street, meeting men in uniform, passing companies of cavalry, hearing martial music, etc., that I must be in a dream.”²⁶⁶ McGuire’s reverie in treason quickly turned frantic. As “fervent secessionists,” McGuire and her husband ran from the United States troops who secured Alexandria on May 24, 1861. McGuire recalled, “When the Federal troops arrived, a man being ordered to take down the secession flag from above the market-house, and run up the ‘stars and stripes,’ got nearly to the flag, missed his foothold, fell, and broke his neck.”²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ *The Local News* (Alexandria, Virginia), November 1, 1861.

²⁶⁶ May 10, 1861, pp. 11-13 Civil War First person accounts:
<https://www.alexandriava.gov/historic-alexandria/first-person-accounts>

²⁶⁷ May 25, from Fairfax Court House, p. 17-19.

The newly christened *Local News*, following the censor of the *Gazette*, reported on a less-eventful flag raising that October. “The United States flag...was raised on the pole at the Market Square, this morning, at 10 o’clock. After the Star Spangled Banner by the Band of the Cameron Light Guard, S. F. Beach addressed the assemblage in a short speech, the flag was then hoisted, and the Band having played Hail Columbia and Yankee Doodle, the assemblage separated.”²⁶⁸ The same day, the *Local News* offered ominous news for the marketers on the Market Square. Even though, “Buyers were quite numerous, and supplies very good considering the times,” the wholesale market pointed to bad times ahead. “Nothing at all doing in a wholesale way in the regular city trade,” a reader would encounter in the same issue. If the City Market, “as usual upon a Saturday...was quite brisk,” the rest of the trade was “confined to the limited retail business necessary to supply the inhabitants of this city and its immediate suburbs.” No cross-river commerce nor non-military trade made its way legally to the city.²⁶⁹

Soon enough, Black Alexandrians put their collective skills as chefs and hucksters to use keeping “the soldiers, in pies, cakes, [and] small beer.” Skills forced on them in slavery continued to serve them well in freedom. Those men and women who rented stalls in the Market Square had competition at the encampments of soldiers sprouting up around town. Transportation increased, too. “Any morning long trains of...wagons may be seen wending their way out to the different roads, to the camps of the Federal Soldiers,” read an item in the *Local News*. Not just those who made foodstuffs but the hostlers, grooms, and hackmen worked, too.

The Market Block offers a peek into the way slavery disintegrated in Alexandria between 1861 and 1865. William P. Quesenberry and Rebecca Paton form an illustrative example. Paton

²⁶⁸ *The Local News* (Alexandria, Virginia), October 26, 1861.

²⁶⁹ *The Local News* (Alexandria, Virginia), October 26, 1861.

inherited a King Street lot just west of Fairfax and a warehouse on Market Alley from her father, John Butcher Paton, when he died in 1820. Paton married Quesenberry in 1847. The couple claimed an elderly man in his 60s and a forty year old woman on the 1850 Slave Schedule. In the 1860 Census, they admitted to hiring a woman in her 20s to one J.S. Knox.

The End of Slavery and Reconstruction

The dissolution of slavery changed the public nature of Market Square. Reconstruction revolutionized the racial politics of Alexandria just as it did across the United States. For the first time in the history of the country, the federal government passed and rigidly enforced laws to establish justice for all of the people within its borders. The Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery and wrote into the Constitution the emergent reality of Emancipation ushered in by the victory of the Union. The Fourteenth Amendment granted citizenship to formerly enslaved people and guaranteed that Congress had wide authority to pass laws enforcing racial equality. Finally, the Fifteenth Amendment gave all men, regardless of “race, color, or previous condition of servitude” the right to vote.²⁷⁰ The legal reforms of Reconstruction sought to erase the stain of slavery and provided a legal basis for racial equality that courts in Alexandria had to follow.

Local courts wrestled with uncertainty due to changes to the legal code forged in wartime but not yet consecrated legislatively. In October 1865, a dispute arose over whether Black men could possess firearms or whether the slavery-era prohibition continued after abolition. The judge in that case stated, “The colored man must be regarded, so far as the right of property and

²⁷⁰ “Milestone Documents,” United States National Archives, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/13th-amendment>, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/14th-amendment>, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/15th-amendment>, accessed May 12, 2026..

freedom of person is concerned, precisely on the same footing with the white citizen, no more, no less.”²⁷¹ In November 1865, according to a Cleveland newspaper, “one of the civil courts [at Alexandria] sentenced a negro to be whipped under the old code [but] General [Christopher C.] Augur promptly annulled the sentence.”²⁷²

The Alexandria City Hall and Market House burned down on the night of May 18-19, 1871. The post-fire recovery process gave Alexandria officials an opportunity to renew civic pride by building a new City Hall and Market House. The town appealed to its past by calling for a replica of the 1817 Market House, complete with a copy of the bell tower said to have been designed by Benjamin Latrobe. Although some residents remembered the sound of the bell less fondly than others, the loudest voices maintained that they needed a bell nonetheless. Enter John Bathurst Daingerfield. John B. Daingerfield came from a wealthy family and grew even wealthier in his adulthood by exploiting enslaved labor.²⁷³ Daingerfield profited from shipping commodities produced by enslaved labor, such as cotton and tobacco. Daingerfield married Rebecca Holmes Fowle and went into business with her father, William Fowle. Fowle supervised the building of the ship *Alexandria*, in 1836, which was captained by Charles W. Turner until Turner's death in 1845. In an 1838 notarial act passed in New Orleans, Turner gave John B. Daingerfield his power of attorney for all business transacted in Louisiana.²⁷⁴ The sales of enslaved people were among the business transactions Daingerfield executed for Turner in New

²⁷¹ *Chicago Tribune*, October 12, 1865.

²⁷² *Cleveland Leader*, November 14, 1865.

²⁷³ Benjamin A. Skolnik, “Alexandria Market House: Origins of the Steeple, Clock, and Bell and the Identity of Their Donor: John Bathurst Daingerfield,” Office of Historic Alexandria, City of Alexandria, Virginia, 2023, 21.

²⁷⁴ “Procuration,” John B. Dangerfield [*sic*] by Charles W. Turner. William Christy, NP, 1838, vol. 32, Act 141, New Orleans Notarial Archives.

Orleans. For instance, an 1843 ship's manifest for the *Alexandria* names forty enslaved men, women, and children whom Turner trafficked to New Orleans.²⁷⁵

The fire of 1871 and the Daingerfield-funded bell show the immediate legacy of slavery in Alexandria. I found no evidence to suggest that Black Alexandrians had a say in the rebuilding and recovery process after the 1871 fire. Alexandria appealed to its recent history as a market town in a slave society by proclaiming the town's commitment to a white supremacist political order, replacing in as many ways as possible the slavery-based political order of before the Civil War. In a resounding dedication of its rejuvenated principles, the town installed the bell paid for by John B. Daingerfield. The town authorities demonstrated that they had little choice but to solicit the financial support of the former enslavers to survive. The enslavement of Black Americans allowed enslavers to amass enormous wealth. While the ravages of the Civil War wiped away some wealth and uncompensated Emancipation reduced their net worth significantly, many former enslavers in Alexandria still had plenty of money.

Legacy of Slavery and a New Era of Racial Terror

While most Alexandrians welcomed the end of the Civil War, those who took the side of the insurgent Confederate states chose not to give up the fight so easily. Former soldiers from each side continued to battle in the streets of Alexandria. Between April and Christmas 1865, newspapers reported on multiple physical altercations the circumstances of which correlated to the issues at stake during the war. On October 7, "Colonel Free, of the 195th Ohio volunteers was attacked...by an ex-rebel soldier." The next day a white man "shot and severely wounded in the

²⁷⁵ Manifest for the Ship *Alexandria*, examined in Alexandria on October 13, 1843 and in New Orleans on November 4, 1843. Ship Manifests, Record Group 36, NARA.

head” a Black man with “no provocation whatever.”²⁷⁶ The *Cleveland Leader* reported on November 14, “Three negroes have been shot by returned rebel soldiers within a month at Alexandria.”²⁷⁷ A duel at the intersection of Royal and Cameron streets took a life when Dr. Thomas C. Maddux shot and mortally wounded the prominent Fauquier County Unionist Henry T. Dixon.²⁷⁸ The killing happened “about two steps from the corner of the Market House,” one witness recalled.²⁷⁹ While Maddux and Dixon had a personal rivalry separate from national politics, Dixon’s well-known vote for Abraham Lincoln in 1860 – the only vote Lincoln garnered in Fauquier County – led most proslavery Southerners to view him with contempt.²⁸⁰

The change in social relations effected by emancipation led to well-documented reaction among a number of Alexandrians closely connected to the Market Block. Well-known market figures played a direct role in racial terror campaigns that beset Alexandria after the Civil War. Gilbert Simpson, Jr., a fish dealer and butter huckster, and Joseph Horseman, a fruit and vegetable vendor, helped instigate a riot on Christmas Day 1865 and were sentenced to six months’ hard labor at a federal penitentiary in Albany, New York.²⁸¹ Gilbert Simpson’s father

²⁷⁶ *Washington Chronicle*, October 9, 1865.

²⁷⁷ *Cleveland Leader*, November 14, 1865.

²⁷⁸ Lily Snodgrass, “‘A Loyal Virginian’: Southern Honor, Unionism, and the Life of Major Henry Thomas Dixon,” <https://naucenter.as.virginia.edu/blog-page/loyal-virginian-southern-honor-unionism-and-life-major-henry-thomas-dixon>, accessed March 18, 2026.

²⁷⁹ *Alexandria Gazette*, November 11, 13, and 14, 1865. The witness was Dr. W.D. Steward.

²⁸⁰ Lily Snodgrass, “‘A Loyal Virginian’: Southern Honor, Unionism, and the Life of Major Henry Thomas Dixon,” <https://naucenter.as.virginia.edu/blog-page/loyal-virginian-southern-honor-unionism-and-life-major-henry-thomas-dixon>, accessed March 18, 2026.

²⁸¹ Joseph Horseman was the son of Elijah Horseman and Elizabeth Edmonds. Elijah Horseman had “exclusive privilege of landing watermelons at the fish wharf” in 1859. *Alexandria Gazette*, July 26, 1859.

rented a building on Market Square and had a grocery at Fairfax Street and Sharpshin Alley.²⁸²
Another major market figure, the fish dealer Charles Javins, was tried but not convicted.²⁸³

The Christmas Day Riots of 1865 showed the fragility of the post-abolition social order. Different groups of Alexandrians, white and Black, celebrated the holiday in their own way. Most Black Southerners celebrated the holiday as free people for the first time in their lives, a day all hoped for but many thought might never come. White Southerners harbored fresh grievances resulting from losses on the battlefield and the homefront exacerbated by financial hardships and, most vividly, the disappearance of social submission by Black Southerners. Lubricated by alcohol and anger, violence erupted in the streets at several points in Alexandria. The anti-Emancipation *Alexandria Gazette* reported, “Much complaint is made at allowing a party of negroes, with drums, guns, and swords &c., to parade the streets, occupying the side walks, and forcing passengers into the gutters, on Christmas Eve and Christmas morning.”²⁸⁴ Meanwhile, a local Alexandria correspondent told the *Norfolk Post* that “A large number of men...chiefly ex-Confederate soldiers...armed with pistols and other weapons...instantly declared war against” any Black man in their path.²⁸⁵

In addition to taking part in the general melee, Simpson and Horseman committed separate assaults that day. Simpson led a brutal attack on Edward (also called Richard) Green and Henry Barrett. Barrett, a Union soldier, told the court that Simpson “struck Green [and] cried out ‘Rally’ when a large crowd came up.” Simpson and the crowd “knocked [Green] down...about twenty times.”²⁸⁶ Horseman and another man tried to kill Robert Alexander (also called Saunders

²⁸² *Alexandria Gazette*, May 13, 1856.

²⁸³ *Alexandria Gazette*, April 7, 1866.

²⁸⁴ *Alexandria Gazette*, December 27, 1865.

²⁸⁵ *Norfolk Post*, December 29, 1865.

²⁸⁶ *Alexandria Gazette*, January 17, 1865.

and Sanders). Alexander/Saunders/Sanders testified that he tried to get away from the crowd of white men before Horseman and another man beat him “insensible.”²⁸⁷ Together, Simpson, Horseman, and John Travis attacked Stephen Hamilton, a Black Union soldier.²⁸⁸ During the trial, Simpson’s friends recalled his behavior on Christmas. “Simpson...was more in liquor than the others,” Thomas J. Simons testified.²⁸⁹ W.H. Smith remembered, “Simpson was crazy drunk.”²⁹⁰ Edgar Fields, a former soldier who served four years for the Confederacy, acknowledged that “Simpson was very drunk.”²⁹¹ Each also maintained Simpson’s innocence.

When military governance of Alexandria ended, the reinstated local authorities made it one of their first acts to reverse the verdicts of the military commission that had tried the rioters. Sentenced to six months’ each for their assaults, Horseman and Simpson left their cells at the former Duke Street Slave Jail on April 6, bound for Albany. On May 22, however, President Andrew Johnson pardoned Simpson, Horseman, and John Travis.²⁹² The last of the men convicted for the Christmas Day assaults returned to Alexandria not long after. As Tiffany Pache points out, “The same month, Alexandria book stores began selling Edward A. Pollard’s *Lost Cause*.”²⁹³ For some white Alexandrians, Pollard’s pro-Southern history of the Civil War coincided with the lesson that one could get away with racist violence.

Gilbert Simpson, Jr., for his part, continued in business as a marketer and relished his role as an enforcer of order. Following a disagreement about a watermelon purchase, Simpson used

²⁸⁷ *Alexandria Gazette*, January 17, 1865.

²⁸⁸ Tiffany Pache, “White Terror Rose on Christmas Day in Alexandria,” *Alexandria Community Remembrance Project Newsletter*, December 2021.

²⁸⁹ *Alexandria Gazette*, February 1, 1865.

²⁹⁰ *Alexandria Gazette*, February 1, 1865.

²⁹¹ *Alexandria Gazette*, February 2, 1865.

²⁹² *Alexandria Gazette*, May 23, 1866.

²⁹³ Pache, “White Terror Rose on Christmas Day in Alexandria.”

force to stop a man allegedly “carrying off the wrong melon,” leading to a scuffle that nearly lost Simpson his finger.²⁹⁴ Later, Simpson tried his hand at professional law enforcement but resigned in ignominy after he could not shake an accusation of “improper conduct.”²⁹⁵

When freed people took seriously the promises of freedom, they experienced significant backlash. William N. Brown owned the property at 313 King Street and one of the Shinbone Alley warehouses beginning in 1853. Committed to the cause of slavery, Brown engaged in illicit fundraising in Alexandria aiding families of rebel soldiers and supplying weapons.²⁹⁶ Arrested for his participation in the scheme, Brown could only watch as he lost his grip on the people he claimed as slaves. On April 24, 1866, police arrested one of those men, unfortunately not named in newspaper accounts, for an offense that seems to have related to his civil rights. According to the *Gazette*, the man “boasted that the Civil Rights Bill gave him the largest liberty, and ‘he [would] be damned if wouldn’t use it.’” The man continued, if the *Gazette* account is true, denounced “damn rebel sons of bitches” and claimed his right to patronize any “damn white son of a bitch’s restaurant” he chose. Revealing the attitude of the local newspaper at this time of high tension, the *Gazette* told its readers the man was “formerly a slave of Mr. Wm. N. Brown.”²⁹⁷

Racist violence in Alexandria continued after 1866. White Alexandrians, buoyed by a belief in racial superiority and backed by the legal establishment, formed mobs to murder their Black neighbors. In recent years, the City of Alexandria has recognized Joseph McCoy and Benjamin Thomas with historical markers representing the culmination of decades of research.

²⁹⁴ *Alexandria Gazette*, September 2, 1868.

²⁹⁵ *Alexandria Gazette*, January 6, 1871.

²⁹⁶ *Alexandria Gazette*, March 6, 1862.

²⁹⁷ *Alexandria Gazette*, April 25, 1866.

McCoy and Thomas both sat in the Jail on Fairfax Street, at this point little more than a holding cell. In 1897, the mob that kidnapped, tortured, and murdered Joseph McCoy took him from the Police Station on Fairfax Street. In the process, the people caused significant damage to the building. When the police showed themselves willing to protect McCoy from the mob, several individual rioters “commenced to batter in the windows and door with axes, sledges, crowbars, picks, and every conceivable tool.” The morning after, “Carpenters were put to work...repairing the damage done the station house by the mob in gaining an entrance.”²⁹⁸ The rioters of 1899 kidnapped Benjamin Thomas from the jail on N. St. Asaph Street and dragged him down King Street, in front of lots 48 and 49. Once past, the self-designated hangmen finished their work on the southwest corner of King and Fairfax while the complicit crowd shuffled past the barbershop of Herbert P. Tancil at 305 King, a Black barber who catered to both Black and white clients.²⁹⁹

Newspaper coverage of these tragedies notes the resistance from many members of the public to mob violence. The *Evening Star*, in arguing, “Nothing could have prevented” the lynching of Joseph McCoy, also noted, “several cool heads made the attempt.”³⁰⁰ In 1899, a significant number of Black Alexandrians gathered together near the Police Station to protect Benjamin Thomas from a white mob. After Mayor George Simpson convinced the white mob not to riot, he arrested and prosecuted fourteen Black citizens for “disorderly conduct, carrying concealed weapons, and inciting a riot.”³⁰¹ Freeman Murray, at the beginning of what would be a four-decade career in the federal government, wrote, “August 7th [1899] a boy Ben Thomas was

²⁹⁸ *Washington Evening Star*, April 23, 1897.

²⁹⁹ Char McCargo Bah, “The Other Alexandria: Herbert P. Tancil – The Mayors’ Colored Barber,” <https://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2018/feb/26/other-alexandria-herbert-p-tancil-mayors-colored-b/>, accessed March 24, 2026.

³⁰⁰ *Washington Evening Star*, April 23, 1897.

³⁰¹ *Washington Evening Star*, August 8, 1899.

arrested here for attempted assault. The evidence was very meagre—the little girl saying he pulled up her clothes. The next night he was lynched brutally dragged etc. It has been a fearful shock to the city [and] the colored people particularly. Many whites deplore it. There has been a great deal of lynching & whitecapping in the South this Summer.”³⁰² No white citizens faced charges for any part in the lynching of Benjamin Thomas on the next night. The system of justice exercised in Alexandria, by design, bound but did not protect Black people while it protected but did not bind white people. The night after the Thomas lynching, George Simpson, the mayor, watched as “citizens in squads patrolled the principal streets and congregated on the public corners,” ready to reignite the violence at will.³⁰³

Marketers

On September 22, 1846, the butcher William R. Beers delivered a petition signed by a number of his fellow meat cutters in the Alexandria Market asking for a city ordinance to prohibit the renting of butcher’s stalls to Black people. Councilperson F.L. Smith heard the butchers’ plea and proposed legislation on the spot. “Resolved,” Smith’s ordinance read, “that the Clerk of the Market be, & he is hereby, instructed not to rent (after the expiration of existing contracts) one or more of the Stalls occupied by butchers in the Market House to any slave or free negro.”³⁰⁴ The council voted 8 to 4 to reject the proposal, much to the relief of the free and

³⁰² Citation: Diary, April 5, 1899-October 27, 1899, F. H. M. Murray Papers; Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

³⁰³ *Washington Evening Star*, August 10, 1899.

³⁰⁴ Council Minute Book 5, 1845-1853, Alexandria (Independent City), Virginia, FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QHV-V36N-494F-Z?view=fullText>, accessed May 4, 2026), image 515 of 650; Alexandria (Virginia). City Council. Image Group Number: 008737556.

enslaved butchers who paid the same money to rent their stalls as did Beers and the white butchers. The 1846 vote affirmed the right of free and enslaved Black Alexandrians to rent stalls in the Market on the same basis as white Alexandrians. Moreover, that Beers and the other butchers submitted the petition in the first place suggests that Black butchers occupied a significant place in the Market House. Hundreds of enslaved individuals and families passed through the Market Square. Hundreds more free Blacks, the descendants of those families, worked as marketers. These are the stories of a small number of enslaved people on the City Hall/Market Square block during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.

In British Atlantic port cities during the eighteenth century, as Sheryllyne Haggerty has shown, free and enslaved women navigated gendered circumstances to participate actively and profitably in marketing activities. In Philadelphia, white women occupied a space “as the marginal hucksters and higglers” whereas, in Charleston, South Carolina and Kingston, Jamaica, “the market place was the preserve of black and coloured women, slave and free.”³⁰⁵ While enslaved people supplied much of the Market during the eighteenth century, by the nineteenth century, the conditions of the Alexandria Market aligns more with the Philadelphia example.

The Alexandria Market offered a chance at freedom for enslaved people both through the accumulation of money to purchase it legally or by taking advantages of the mobility required for commerce to function. Lucy, a young woman enslaved in Prince George’s County, Maryland, “was sent to the Alexandria market and has not since returned,” according to her enslaver, Joseph I. Florence.³⁰⁶ As Shauna J. Sweeney wrote, “Enslaved women who chose to run *away* from

³⁰⁵ Sheryllyne Haggerty, “‘Miss Fan can tun her han!’ Female traders in eighteenth-century British-American Atlantic port cities” *Atlantic Studies* 6, no. 1, 37.

doi:[10.1080/14788810802696279](https://doi.org/10.1080/14788810802696279), accessed March 26, 2026.

³⁰⁶ *Alexandria Gazette*, November 25, 1809.

slavery often ran *toward* the internal marketing system. This marketing marronage constituted a distinct form of enslaved resistance bound up with Black women's unique ability to carve out a modicum of economic independence within the heart of slavery."³⁰⁷ For these women, marketing brought financial security that underpinned intergenerational transfer of wealth that multiplied with freedom.

Enslaved people had a right to market their goods in the Alexandria Market. From failed attempts to bar enslaved and free Black people from occupying market stalls during the 1840s, we can deduce that the practice had hitherto met little controversy. After all, from a philosophical standpoint, the market required a level playing field to work well. Even as the backlash to Emancipation fed the fires of violence against Black Alexandrians, many found economic liberty in the Market. Enslaved people had a right to market their goods in the Alexandria Market. From failed attempts to bar enslaved and free Black people from occupying market stalls during the 1840s, we can deduce that the practice had hitherto met little controversy. After all, from a philosophical standpoint, the market required a level playing field to work well. Even as the backlash to Emancipation fed the fires of violence against Black Alexandrians, many found economic liberty in the Market. In Alexandria and on the Market Square, the town government recognized the importance of "the slaves' economy" to the market life of the town. At no point during the city's history did I locate a market ordinance that forbid Black people from marketing. To the contrary, the town councils made positive statements affirming the right of both free and enslaved Black people to occupy market stalls on the same terms as white people. With Emancipation, a handful of marketers maintained their positions in the Market. The records of

³⁰⁷ Shauna J. Sweeney, "Market Marronage: Fugitive Women and the Internal Marketing System in Jamaica, 1781–1834" *The William and Mary Quarterly* 76, no. 2 (April 2019), 198.

stall renters from before and after Emancipation show continuity on the Market Square. The generation of families and individual marketers who survived the Civil War and continued their activities into the 1870s gradually died out by the 1880s and 1890s. In their place, a smaller number of companies took a greater market share. Advertisements for the market suggest a trend towards consolidation, as dealers in fish, vegetables, fruit, and meat opened operations not just in Alexandria but also in the several markets of the District of Columbia and Georgetown.

I found no evidence that the Town, Corporation, or City of Alexandria owned enslaved people at any time in its history. Although this research cast a wide net, it is not nor was it intended to be a comprehensive study of the City of Alexandria and its relationship to slavery. It is a step toward a full history of slavery in Alexandria. Much work remains for both myself and other historians, archaeologists, genealogists, archivists, and other researchers to find more evidence, remember more individuals, and contextualize the era of Alexandria history from its establishment until the abolition of slavery. That work is never ending.

Free and enslaved Black women, as well as free white women worked in the Alexandria Market. Historians have identified a handful of individuals who worked in the Market while enslaved. Lettie Weaver “made hominy to sell in Market Square on Saturdays.”³⁰⁸ Born in 1799, Weaver lived on Royal Street, near the Market. Mary Cole and Nick Carter both made a living as bakers.³⁰⁹ Because later lists of rent-paying marketers do not include any women labeled as butchers, we can safely assume that men dominated that trade for the earlier period, as well. While such an assumption does not remove the possibility of one or more women working as a

³⁰⁸ Rosenthal, *Slaves & Free Blacks* from *Composite History*, “1790 Names – 1970 Faces,” 87.

³⁰⁹ Rosenthal, “1790 Names – 1970 Faces,” 87.

butcher at any given moment, abundant evidence shows women dominating other occupations within the market.

While records of marketers in the eighteenth century have not survived, those from the middle and later nineteenth century show women present in the market but not dominant. Carolyn Zola notes a reason for the lack of sources for Black women food sellers. “These provisioners, sometimes referred to as hucksters or market women,” Zola writes, “come into view only briefly, when white observers waxed poetic about their melodious cries, critics brooded about their provisions, or the law became entangled with their lives.”³¹⁰

Surviving lists of marketers from both just before and just after the Civil War and Emancipation give us a prized glimpse into how the Alexandria Market changed with the abolition of slavery. Surviving city records include lists of marketers from both 1856 and 1857. For the post-war years, the *Alexandria Gazette* published the names of marketers, an uncommon detail when past reports noted only that the Clerk of the Market intended to rent the stalls on a certain day. Common between the pre- and post-Emancipation lists is the predominance of white marketers. Still, many African Americans, particularly women, rented stalls for themselves. Lucy Jackson, for example, rented a Huckster’s Stall in 1856 and 1857 to help support her husband, Ignatius, and two children, Mary and Lorenzo.³¹¹

The names of marketers paying rent for stalls survives for 1856, 1857, 1867, 1868, and 1870, offering unprecedented insight into the changes wrought by Civil War and the abolition of slavery. The publication of the 1867 list observed, “Sixty-three of the eighty-six stands in the

³¹⁰ Carolyn Zola, “Bowl By Bowl: Black Women, Food Selling, and Survival in the Antebellum North” *Journal of Social History* (Winter, 2026), advance online publication: 2. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jsh/shag022>, accessed May 8, 2026.

³¹¹ 1850 Census.

[Market] square were rented, for the most part to those who had occupied them during the previous year, and at rates varying [*sic*] but slightly.”³¹² If the immediate post-Civil War years pictured stability in a Market just three-quarters full, the change from 1857 to 1867 illustrates the stark dislocation of the ensuing decade. Only ten names that appeared on the 1857 list of marketers remained on the 1867 list.

The lists from the 1850s reflect a change in the method of renting out market stalls around that time. A 1786 ordinance required renting stalls to “the highest bidders,” as well as setting aside the entire old Market House and three stalls in the new Market House “for the use of the country market people in general.”³¹³ When the Corporation considered building a new structure for the market gardeners, one of them argued for “a new and more liberal policy on the part of the Clerk of the Market or the Corporation itself.”³¹⁴ The anonymous “Market Gardener” related, “Heretofore, there has been no competition, and individuals have kept their stands for years to the exclusion of others equally willing to pay for the best locations and deserving of patronage in the supply of the market with early and choice vegetables.”³¹⁵ In the view of the writer, the system as it stood encouraged “monopolies” and deprived the “fair and equal chance” of occupying a space in the market.³¹⁶ During the 1830s and 1840s, the renting of the stands was announced ahead of the auction, but not the list of people who leased the stands. The prevailing method of dispensing stalls in the 1840s departed from earlier practice. The failure of city

³¹² *Alexandria Gazette*, May 6, 1867.

³¹³ *VJAA*, March 23, 1786.

³¹⁴ *Alexandria Gazette*, June 26, 1848.

³¹⁵ *Alexandria Gazette*, June 26, 1848.

³¹⁶ *Alexandria Gazette*, June 26, 1848.

authorities to hold auctions for the stalls violated the law. A January 22, 1847 ordinance required the Clerk of the Market to hold annual auctions and set minimum prices for annual rents.³¹⁷

Sophia Browning Bell

One of the most publicly known stories of enslaved people working towards freedom in the Alexandria Market is that of Sophia Browning Bell.³¹⁸ Bell sold vegetables in Alexandria every week until she earned enough money to purchase the freedom of her husband, George Bell, in 1801. A few years later, George Bell bought Sophia's freedom. While historians have pieced together evidence regarding Sophia Browning Bell's life, efforts thus far have not provided any direct connection to the Alexandria Market nor the record of her manumission. The lack of corroborating documentary evidence for the life of Sophia Browning Bell demonstrates how easily women of African descent endured erasure within the system of racial slavery.

The broad strokes of Sophia Browning Bell's connection to the Alexandria Market emerge in an 1871 Special Report published by the Commissioner of Education for the District of Columbia based on Congressional testimony from June 1868.³¹⁹ She married George Bell, who was one of three men credited with establishing the first school for Black students in the District in 1807. According to testimony, Sophia "had a market garden and used to attend the Alexandria market every market day...in this manner she saved four hundred dollars without the

³¹⁷ Council Minute Book 5, 73, January 22, 1847.

³¹⁸ <https://www.alethiatanner.com>, Site authored and research done by Susan Cook, who is a descendant of Alethia Tanner and, consequently, Sophia Browning Bell. Also, Email from John G. Sharp to the author, October 25 and 28, 2025.

³¹⁹ *Special report of the commissioner of education on the condition and improvement of public schools in the District of Columbia: submitted to the Senate June, 1868, and to the House, with additions, June 13, 1870* (Government Printing Office, 1871,) 196-197. HathiTrust, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044028319382>, accessed March 9, 2026.

knowledge of her owner [which she] intrusted [*sic*] to a Methodist preacher, who bought [George Bell's] freedom with it" in 1801.³²⁰ The report continues, "Shortly afterwards, while [Sophia] was dangerously sick, her freedom was bought for five pounds Maryland currency by [George Bell]." A detailed examination of the deeds and manumission records of the District of Columbia and Maryland, where Sophia Browning Bell's enslaver, Rachel Belt Pratt, lived, failed to locate the record of Sophia Bell's freedom. Other researchers have located other records related to the family, including George Bell's manumission and the freedom papers for Sophia's sister, Alethia Tanner. Neither primary nor secondary sources state whether or not Sophia Bell continued coming to the Alexandria Market after she became free.

William Lyles

If Sophia Browning Bell's work at the Alexandria Market paid dividends in the educational system of Washington, the diligence and dedication of William Lyles in the Market has left a significant mark on the educational system in Alexandria. William Lyles won a reputation as a cook selling prepared foods at the Market, appearing as stall renter in the 1870 list, when he paid \$12 for Stall No. 53.³²¹ Born around 1795, Lyles bought his freedom from Samuel Carson in 1824.³²² William's son, Richard H. Lyles, opened the Primary School on Princess Street between Pitt and St. Asaph in 1863. Richard H. Lyles also served as pastor of the Roberts Chapel Methodist Church (now Roberts Memorial Methodist Church). William Lyles

³²⁰ *Special Report*, 196.

³²¹ *Alexandria Gazette*, May 7, 1870.

³²² November 29, 1824 Samuel Carson frees William Lyle(s), witnessed by Edmund Jennings Lee, recorded in Alex. O-2:170.

<https://www.freedmenscemetery.org/resources/documents/manumissions.shtml>, accessed March 9, 2026. William Lyles registered in subsequent years, as well.

was also the grandfather of Rozier D. Lyles, namesake of the Lyles-Crouch School, founded in 1919. Both schools served the Black community of Alexandria.³²³

Richard Lyles registered in the *Free Negro Records* as one of the sons of Hannah Smith Lyles, first in 1846 when Richard was twelve years old. Both testified to their free birth.³²⁴ Although William Lyles was free already in 1824, the registers do not list him as Richard's father. At William's death, on Christmas Day in 1873, the *Alexandria Gazette* referred to him as "the father of one of the Aldermen from the 4th Ward," Richard H. Lyles.³²⁵ As well, in his will, William Lyles divided his estate equally between seven children but named only one – Richard H. Lyles.³²⁶ The best evidence connecting William Lyles to Hannah Smith Lyles are side-by-side entries in the 1858 *Alexandria Free Negro Registers* for W. Lyles, aged 60, and Hannah Lyles, aged 56.³²⁷ No marriage record has yet come to light. However, William married Felicia Taylor of Fairfax County on June 28, 1866. Lyles also named Felicia as a beneficiary in his will. In the marriage record, the fifty-year-old Taylor reported that she did not know her parents, likely recalling the trauma of family separation during slavery. William, however, stated he had been born in Washington and identified his parents as Patrick and Rachel Lyles.

Jeremiah H. "Jerry" Frazier

³²³ <https://www.alexandriava.gov/cultural-history/Black-education-in-alexandria-part-1>, accessed March 10, 2026.

³²⁴ 1846-10-22, Vol. 2, Registration No. 192; 1846-10-22, Vol. 2, Registration No. 193; 7 Oct. – 6 Dec. 1853, Vol. 3, Registration No. 252; and 4 August 1856, Vol. 3, Registration No. 478.

³²⁵ *Alexandria Gazette*, December 26, 1873.

³²⁶ Alex. WB1:100-101, December 3, 1873.

³²⁷ Register of Free Negroes in the County of Alexandria 1858, 1858 (1138014_0005_0001). Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative Digital Collection, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va.

The life and career of Jeremiah H. “Jerry” Frazier marks him as one of the several figures of major significance in the history of the Alexandria Market.³²⁸ Frazier rented space in the Market as early as February 1857 and appears on the lists of the 1870s, as well. Frazier kept extensive gardens in the vicinity of his home at the corner of S. Washington and Franklin streets. The abundance of the gardens attracted “Night Thieves” in July 1859. The *Gazette* relates, “On Sunday night, some white men entered the garden of Jerry Frazier...On hearing of it, the gardener with some friends proceeded to the garden when an assault was made upon them by the men who were at the gate.” Startled, the thieves attacked Frazier and his neighbors, leaving one man “severely cut about the head by some heavy missile.” Unfortunately for Frazier and justice, “the depredators fled before being recognized.”³²⁹ A fire arose in a stable on Frazier’s property in August 1872. “The fire department was promptly on the ground,” the *Gazette* reveals, “and rendered efficient service in preventing the spread of the flames.”³³⁰

Outside of the Market, Frazier earned money later in life through selling his services as an expert pruner of vines. He placed advertisements in the newspaper referring to himself as “The Professional Gardener...prepared to trim grape vines, now being the proper time.”³³¹ An ad in February 1891, subscribed “Jere. H. Frazier, Professional Gardener,” informed readers, “Now is the proper time to trim your grape vines and I am prepared to do work of that kind on order. I can be found at my residence 622 south Washington street.”³³² In his obituary, the *Gazette*

³²⁸ The Frazier family does not appear in Scott Casper’s volume on the enslaved families of Mount Vernon. There is an apparent Frazier descendant who posts on Reddit at <https://www.reddit.com/user/BronyAtheist97/>.

³²⁹ *Alexandria Gazette*, July 26, 1859.

³³⁰ *Alexandria Gazette*, August 10, 1872.

³³¹ *Alexandria Gazette*, February 2, 1889.

³³² *Alexandria Gazette*, February 12, 1891.

recognized Frazier as a “vine dresser and gardener.”³³³ Frequent practice pruning vines or other gardening work may have been the cause of “a small scar on his right hand near the thumb, and a scar or mark caused by a cut near his right eye,” details included in one of Frazier’s registrations with the white authorities. Such records also give Frazier a height of 5 feet 2½ inches tall” and a “dark complexion.”³³⁴

Some of Frazier’s family connections come to light in surviving records. Although entries in the *Free Negro Records* attest that Frazier “was born free,” none mention the name of his mother or father. The first entry, dated June 25, 1842, states Frazier’s age at the time as twenty-four years old, suggesting probable birth date in 1817 or 1818. The 1850 Census differs slightly, citing Frazier’s age as thirty-five years old, meaning a likely birthdate of 1815. The 1870 Census muddies the water further when it attributes fifty years to Frazier. Frazier’s 1897 will names his wife and children but not his parents. Perhaps Frazier was born into the family of eight people, both free and enslaved, enumerated in the 1810 Census of Alexandria headed by Elizabeth Frazier, listed as a washerwoman.³³⁵

One plausible candidate for Frazier’s father is Edward “Ned” Frazier, manumitted by John Augustine Washington on August 23, 1817. The manumission record described the elder Frazier as “of small size, late one of the gard[e]ners in the garden at Mount Vernon.”³³⁶ William Yeates witnessed the manumission of Edward “Ned” Frazier and also filed an affidavit in 1842 attesting that Jeremiah H. Frazer “was born free.”³³⁷ William Yeates owned Yeates’s Garden “at

³³³ *Alexandria Gazette*, April 26, 1897.

³³⁴ *FNR* v.2:25 June 25, 1842. Frazier also listed in *FNR* v.3:174 August 3, 1847.

³³⁵ Alexandria, Virginia Census Records, 1799-1830, Family Search, <https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/film/008151595?cat=koha%3A666759&i=103&lang=en>

³³⁶ Fairfax County Deeds F2:429.

³³⁷ *FNR* v.2:25 June 25, 1842

the south part of the town” and helped supply “peaches, pears, apples, grapes, strawberries, and raspberries, shrubbery, etc.” to the city. Yeates advertised the place as “an Ornamental Fruit and Market Garden.”³³⁸ Jerry Frazier lived nearby. No doubt the produce from Yeates’s Garden and the vicinity supplied many a stand in the Alexandria Market. Yeates was also the son of William Yeates.³³⁹

The Frazier family lived in the vicinity of the cemeteries on the south side of town. Jerry Frazer served as the sexton of one of the cemeteries, as well, the Presbyterian Cemetery.³⁴⁰ The infant child of Lucy Frazier buried near the Freedmen’s Cemetery on Washington Street on July 23, 1866 could be related. On duty as a sexton one night in 1881, Frazier helped thwart graverobbers from carrying off the body of his recently deceased daughter, Sarah Jane Simms, in the nearby cemetery.³⁴¹ Afterwards, the *Alexandria Gazette* reported that Frazier stated “it was far from [his] mind...that there lived a man with a heart so hard to as to wish anything but peace to the inhabitants of the ‘silent city’ under his care.” The main witness to the graverobbing was a white man named Emmanuel Webb, who told police the suspects were “supposed to be white.” Despite Webb’s information, the police “arrested Thomas Vaughn, Bob Carpenter, Charles Gaskins, and Reuben Massey, black men who worked in the cemeteries as grave diggers. The cases have not yet been located, if they survive at all. When Jeremiah H. Frazier died in May 1897, he owned real estate on South Washington, at present day 622, the site of the Suburban Drive-In.³⁴² Today as in the nineteenth century, the Roberts Memorial United Methodist Church anchored the block.

³³⁸ *Alexandria Gazette*, October 29, 1849.

³³⁹ *Alexandria Gazette*, December 8, 1826.

³⁴⁰ *Alexandria Gazette*, January 27, 129.881.

³⁴¹ *Alexandria Gazette*, January 27, 1881.

³⁴² *Alexandria Gazette*, May 17. Will probated in Corporation Court – Will Book 2, p. 206.

Jeremiah Frazier's obituary demonstrates the paradox Black Alexandrians faced in their relationships with white Alexandrians, especially those who depended on widespread public goodwill for success in business. The visibility Black marketers commanded gave the white Alexandrians who published the newspapers the opportunity to use them as examples of "good" or "acceptable" behavior and social comportment. These newspapermen rarely missed an opportunity to describe men like Henry Rowe and Jeremiah Frazier in such terms. When Rowe died in 1875, the *Gazette* called him "one of the few colored men who had sense enough to see through the designs of the Radicals at an early day and to act accordingly."³⁴³ Frazier's death in 1897 occasioned a paternalistic obituary typical of those published for African Americans during the Jim Crow era, noting he "always enjoyed the confidence of his white acquaintances and was a true type of the ante bellum colored man."³⁴⁴ Such public statements demonstrate that African Americans achieving prosperity in Alexandria did not negate white supremacy.

Henry Rowe

Henry Rowe's death shows a profound and tragic intersection of the built environment of Market Square with one of the African American marketers who lived in the long shadow of slavery as well as in the sun of freedom. Marketers found it difficult to open and close the doors on the New Market House because the double doors were "often coming together with a rush."

³⁴³ *Alexandria Gazette*, February 17, 1875. "SUDDEN DEATH. – Henry Rowe, a well known colored man, who kept a huckster's stall in the market, died suddenly last night. He was an old resident of the city, was highly respected, and was one of the few colored men who had sense enough to see through the designs of the Radicals at an early day and to act accordingly."

³⁴⁴ *Alexandria Gazette*, April 26, 1897. "Death of a Colored Resident – Jerry Frazier, an old and much respected colored resident, died at his home in this city last night. The deceased for a number of years was sexton of the Presbyterian Cemetery. He also was a vine dresser and gardener. Jerry always enjoyed the confidence of his white acquaintances, and was a true type of the ante bellum colored man."

The velocity of the closing doors “often...endanger[ed] the fingers of those working them.” Henry Rowe lost his fingers to the doors and, ultimately, his life. On the morning of February 6, 1875, “Rowe...had some of his fingers cut of by [the doors]” and “died suddenly” shortly thereafter.³⁴⁵

Not even Rowe’s unfortunate demise inspired the City Council to fix the doors. Even though the doors “had been a subject of complain ever since the erection of the new Market Building,” it took until 1885 for the Council to make an adjustment. The complaints of 1885 revealed “that during cold weather, it takes a considerable portion of their time during market hours to shut the present doors.”³⁴⁶ Though he remained nameless in the press, described only as “a colored man, a huckster,” the surviving marketers remembered Henry Rowe who “had his fingers taken entirely off in attempting to close” the doors.”³⁴⁷ Finally, in December 1885, the City Council approved an expenditure of \$325 to replace the old doors with new ones.³⁴⁸

The Gray Family

The Gray family established a multi-generational foothold in the Alexandria Market as butchers and vegetable sellers.³⁴⁹ Rosenthal mentions “William Gray and his sons, butchers.”³⁵⁰ Indeed, the 1876-1877 Chataigne’s Directory show William Gray at Stall 14 in the Market House.³⁵¹ Later in his life, William Gray married Amanda Boudin, whose family had purchased

³⁴⁵ “Dangerous Doors,” *Alexandria Gazette*, February 6, 1875; “Sudden Death,” *Alexandria Gazette*, February 17, 1875.

³⁴⁶ *Alexandria Gazette*, October 29, 1885.

³⁴⁷ *Alexandria Gazette*, October 29, 1885.

³⁴⁸ *Alexandria Gazette*, December 9, 1885.

³⁴⁹ McCord, Jr., “Across the Fence, but a World Apart,” 47.

³⁵⁰ Rosenthal, “1790 Names – 1970 Faces,” 87.

³⁵¹ 1876-1877 *Chataigne’s Directory*.

real estate in Hayti from the Robert H. Miller family. The 1870 Census shows Alfred Gray, who listed his occupation as “gardener” and claimed \$200 worth of personal estate. The prosperity William Gray established through the Market set up his descendants for long-term success for the broader community of Black Alexandria, too. At his death in 1891, the Washington *Critic & Record* newspaper described William Gray as “the well-known colored butcher...the wealthiest negro in Virginia and in the South, his estate amounting to upwards of \$100,000 in value,” an amount that constituted extreme wealth at the time.³⁵² William Gray’s daughter, Sarah A. Gray, served as the principal of the Hallowell School and is the namesake of Parker-Gray School and the eponymous neighborhood.³⁵³

William Hollenger/Hallinger

One huckster at the Alexandria Market, William Hollenger, was one of many charged with forestalling in the years after the Civil War. The earliest market regulations in Alexandria forbade the practice of “forestalling.” Forestalling, when an individual purchased goods from the other marketers before Market days, undercut the economic equality necessary for the market to work well. William Hallinger, a Black huckster, faced charges “for buying provisions to sell again during market hours, [and] was discharged upon the payment of fine and costs.”³⁵⁴ Hallinger/Hollinger also was acquitted in an 1869 forestalling case.³⁵⁵ A brief perusal of cases in the decade after the Civil War suggests that the authorities charged both white and Black marketers with forestalling, with mixed results.

³⁵² *The Critic & Record* (Washington, D.C.), May 12, 1891.

³⁵³ Char Baugh, “Sarah A. Gray,” *The Other Alexandria*.

<https://theotheralexandria.com/tag/sarah-a-gray/>, accessed May 6, 2026.

³⁵⁴ *Alexandria Gazette*, August 21, 1866.

³⁵⁵ *Alexandria Gazette*, September 10, 1869.

The end of the Civil War left Alexandria in debt, a sum they hoped to pay down through tax revenues and, especially, the revenues from the City Market. The forestalling cases of the late 1860s and early 1870s do not form part of the racist backlash against Black freedom. A brief perusal of cases in the decade after the Civil War suggests that the authorities charged both white and Black marketers with forestalling, with mixed results. The city struggled to recover but, by the U.S. bicentennial year of 1876, the Mayor reported that a Clerk of the Market collected “*the entire income* [emphasis in original] of the market which has accrued during his administration – a circumstance unprecedented in its history.”³⁵⁶

Women at the Market

A few of the women paying market rents in the 1850s have left traces in the archive. The available sources to interpret the lives of Rachel Harper, Rachel Jarboe, Jane Savoy, Lucy Jackson, and others reveal drastically different social and economic backgrounds among African Americans in Alexandria, the District of Columbia, and Fairfax County during the nineteenth century. Their lives had in common the legacy of slavery during the era of its abolition.

Lucy Jackson

Lucy Jackson worked as a huckster at the Alexandria Market on the 1856 and 1857 lists. The prevalence of these common names makes it difficult to identify this specific Lucy Jackson in other records. One likely individual is the Lucy Jackson listed as married to Ignatius Jackson in the 1850 and 1860 censuses. Ignatius, also known as “Nace,” did not pay his Capitation Tax in

³⁵⁶ ACC2003-006 OHA, Locality History Files, Auditor’s Annual Reports, 1876-1923, 1876.

1859 and faced seizure and sale of his labor on the Market Square.³⁵⁷ Lucy and Nace registered the birth of their son, Nathaniel on December 4, 1858.³⁵⁸ On the same day in October 1877, both “Mace” Jackson and Lucy Jackson stood trial in the local court. The case against “Mace” Jackson, “for assaulting Henry Blackburn...was dismissed on payment of costs.” Lucy Jackson “[was] fined and discharged.”³⁵⁹ Ignatius registered his freedom in 1858.³⁶⁰

Another Lucy Jackson lived in Alexandria, married to Henry Jones, according to a death certificate dated March 28, 1866 that identifies as “colored” a fifty-nine year old woman named Lucy Jackson as the deceased.³⁶¹ Jones may have died in 1895.³⁶² The *Alexandria Gazette* on the case of Lucy Jackson before the D.C. Emancipation Commission.³⁶³ A March 1863 item in the *Washington Chronicle* refers to “a contraband woman...Lucy, wife of Herod Jackson.”³⁶⁴ A two

³⁵⁷ “A list of Free Negroes in the County of Alexandria returned delinquent for the non-payment of Capitation Tax for the year 1859 by Charles M. Castleman, Deputy Sheriff for James Sangster, Sheriff of said County,”

<https://www.freedmenscemetery.org/resources/documents/1859taxes.shtml>, accessed March 10, 2026.

³⁵⁸ Register of Births, 1853 - 1865, Alexandria County, Virginia, "Alexandria County, Virginia, United States records," images, FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QHN-G3YN-TCMZ?view=explore> : Mar 10, 2026), image 39 of 53; The Library of Virginia (Richmond, Virginia).

Image Group Number: 107833274.s

³⁵⁹ *Alexandria Gazette*, October 22, 1877.

³⁶⁰ Register of Free Negroes in the County of Alexandria 1858, 1858 (1138014_0005_0001). Virginia Untold: The African American Narrative Digital Collection, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va.

³⁶¹ "Virginia, Deaths and Burials, 1853-1912", *FamilySearch*

(<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:X51J-5BV> : 29 January 2020), Lucy Jackson, 1866.

³⁶² Death registers: Wise County, 1857-1896 -- Westmoreland County, 1853-1896 -- Alexandria City, 1869-1896 -- Charlottesville City 1871-1896 -- Fredericksburg City, 1853-1894 -- Danville City, 1854-1894. <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HT-DT5Q-T1F?i=422&lang=en>. Part of Death registers, 1853-1906 (Virginia), <https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/catalog/koha:780106?availability=Family%20History%20Library>.

³⁶³ *Alexandria Gazette*, December 3, 1862.

³⁶⁴ *Washington Chronicle*, March 14, 1863.

year old girl named Lucy Jackson was buried in the Freedmen's Cemetery a few months after the end of the Civil War.³⁶⁵ The Book of Records does not indicate her parents. The records of these several individuals named Lucy Jackson reflect the impoverishment of the region during and after the Civil War.

Rachel Harper

Rachel Harper made a name for herself in Alexandria as a cook. When Harper passed away in November 1889, the racially patronizing *Alexandria Gazette* called her "a well-known colored woman." The paper attributed Harper's reputation to the years she "kept a cookshop in the Market House."³⁶⁶ The 1860 Census lists Harper's occupation as "huckster" while the next enumeration, in 1870, clarified that she worked as a "cook in the market."³⁶⁷ The 1880 Census lists sixty year old Rachel Harper as a "domestic servant" boarding in the household of Stanton Miller, a thirty-seven year old "R.R. [railroad] laborer." Miller's mother, Jena, fifteen years older than Harper, helped out by "keeping house." Harper and the Millers lived in a tenement house on Duke Street with five other households, Black and white.³⁶⁸

Jane Savoy

Jane Savoy first appears in the 1850 Census, already a free woman, in the household of her parents William and Mary Savoy. Jane had two sisters, Laura and Mary. An elderly Black woman, eighty-three year old Betsey Coates, lived with the Savoy family, as did Mary Diggs, a

³⁶⁵ Book of Records: "JACKSON, Lucy, 30 JUL 1865, 2y, cor. Fairfax & Franklin Sts"

³⁶⁶ *Alexandria Gazette*, November 25, 1889.

³⁶⁷ 1860 Census and 1870 Census.

³⁶⁸ 1880 Census.

fifty-seven year old identified as a having mixed-race parentage.³⁶⁹ The postmaster included Jane E. Savoy in lists of mail remaining at the post office near the end of 1856.³⁷⁰ Jane Savoy reports giving birth to a child, listed as free and female in a July 10, 1858 entry in the birth records but named neither the child nor the father.³⁷¹ The middle initial “E” stood for Elizabeth, as suggested by research by the Friends of Freedmen’s Cemetery. Mary Savoy married John “Jack” Baker and, as Mary C. Baker, reported to the Freedmen’s Bureau and the Freedmen’s Bank that she had a mother named Polly Savoy and a sister called Jane Elizabeth Berry.³⁷² Jane Elizabeth Berry is most likely Jane Savoy.

If Jane Elizabeth Savoy married a man named Berry, an alleged dispute between James Berry and Elizabeth Berry led to their appearance before the Mayor to settle it. Elizabeth Berry reported to police that her husband, James Berry, “whipped” her. In the trial, the *Gazette* reported, Elizabeth “pawned some cotton cloth that [James] had just bought for whiskey.” The Mayor dismissed her complaint and forced her to pay the costs.³⁷³

³⁶⁹ 1850 Census.

³⁷⁰ *Alexandria Gazette*, December 16, 1856.

³⁷¹ Commonwealth of Virginia, Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, Roll 3, page 36-37, Register of Births, 1853-1865, Alexandria County, Virginia. “Alexandria County, Virginia, United States records,” images, FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QHN-T3YN-T44Y?view=explore> : Jun 3, 2026), image 42 of 53; The Library of Virginia (Richmond, Virginia). Image Group Number: 107833274.

³⁷² National Archives and Records Administration, Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, Entry 3870, Alexandria Office, Labor Contracts, September 1865-March 1867, RG105E3870; National Archives and Records Administration, Microform Publication, Records of the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, Registers of Signatures of Depositors in Branches of the Freedman's Savings and Trust Company, 1865-1874, M816. Research compiled at <https://www.freedmenscemetery.org/resources/documents/personaldata.pdf>, accessed March 11, 2026.

³⁷³ *Alexandria Gazette*, August 22, 1868.

In 1865, Mary Savoy paid taxes on two houses and lot in Royal Street valued at a combined \$1300, as well as a clock.³⁷⁴ A sixty-three year old Polly Savoy died on January 17, 1885 at 901 S Street SW in Washington, buried in Harmony Cemetery.³⁷⁵ This Polly Savoy's age at death nearly matches the age of Jane's sister and suggests that she took the same nickname, "Polly," that her mother did.

Rachel Jarboe

Rachel Jarboe was born in 1800 in Virginia. Available evidence suggests she was free in 1851, the year the *Alexandria Gazette* reports that the City issued her a Dog License.³⁷⁶ Already in 1860, Jarboe appears as the matriarch of a large family. Andrew, Joseph, Hanna, Mary, and Edia lived under her roof.³⁷⁷ The women in the immediate family stayed together throughout the war and the beginning of Reconstruction. We find Rachel Jarboe in the 1870 Census listed as a seventy year old Black woman in a household with the Hodge family.³⁷⁸ The Hodges were Hannah, Rachel's daughter, and Solomon. The seventeen year old Mary E. Johnson listed in 1870 is likely Mary Jarboe, the eight year old of 1860. Edia, two years old in 1860 and twelve years old in 1870, also appears to have taken the Hodge surname in the latter census. The census enumerator in 1880 found Rachel Jarboe still with Hannah Hodge and Edia Hodge. James Jarboe

³⁷⁴ <https://www.freedmenscemetery.org/resources/documents/1865taxes.shtml>, accessed March 1, 2026.

³⁷⁵ "District of Columbia, Deaths, 1874-1961" Entry for Polly Savoy, January 17, 1885. *FamilySearch*, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:F7Y9-6X9>, accessed March 11, 2026.

³⁷⁶ *Alexandria Gazette*, July 3, 1851.

³⁷⁷ 1860 Census. Andrew laborer 19/M/B; Joseph laborer 17/M/B; Hanna 26/F/B; Mary 8/F/B; Edie 3/F/B.

³⁷⁸ 1870 Census, Solomon Hodge (37/M/B Drayman, VA); Hannah Hodge (33/F/B works out, VA); Mary E. Johnson (17/F/B works out, VA); Edith Hodge (12/F/B at school, VA)

has also returned to the family, who all lived on Limerick Alley on D Street SW in Washington. An 1875 Boyd's Business Directory lists Rachel Jarboe as the widow of Andrew, though no marriage record has emerged. Rachel and Andrew named one of their sons Andrew, as well. In 1865, one of these Andrew Jarboes paid taxes in the First Ward of Alexandria.³⁷⁹ Rachel Jarboe was a contemporary of the famed Alexandria potter, David Jarbour (also spelled Jarboe and Jarbo). The two may have been related but no documentary evidence has yet come to light to prove a connection. David Jarbour may have been a brother of Andrew Jarboe, Rachel's husband.³⁸⁰ David Jarbour and his wife, Rebecca Dover, had a daughter named Rachel who was probably born between 1819 and 1831.³⁸¹

These enslaved and free African Americans claimed histories that we do not know. We know the history that their owners forced on them, their commodity lives. But only in a handful of cases do we have their own histories. The names of these men and women ring through the history of the Market Square. Their histories made the Market Square such an important place. Free Black women had power and authority over their own property at the Market. They charged the same prices for the same quality of produce as everyone else. They were on equal footing when things went well in the broader society. But when things in the broader society of Alexandria did not go well – after Nat Turner, for instance – white Alexandrians turned the law against free Black people. Outside the Market Place, women like Jarboe and Savoy, and Sophia

³⁷⁹ <http://www.freedmenscemetery.org/resources/documents/1865taxes.shtml>, accessed March 11, 2026.

³⁸⁰ For more details on the life and pottery of David Jarbour, see Angelika R. Kuettner, "'...my friend David Jarboe...' The Unfinished Portrait of an Alexandria Potter" *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts* 41 (2020). <https://www.mesdajournal.org/2020/my-friend-david-jarboe-the-unfinished-portrait-of-an-alexandria-potter/>, accessed May 6, 2026.

³⁸¹ Adam Nubbe, "Select Biographies of the Alexandria Petitioners" Alexandria Archaeology Publications, Number 148, 2026. 11.

Browning Bell, lost the protections of the open economy of the Market and were subjected to the harsher racial strictures of society and politics.

Enslaved on the Market Block

In addition to the women and men who worked in the Market Place, more than one hundred enslaved people lived and worked on the Market Block. The following accounts tell stories of the men, women, and children enslaved by the owners of real estate on the Market Block. The men and women who owned real estate on the Market Block enslaved hundreds of people over the course of their property ownership. While evidence does not always allow us to claim with surety that one or another enslaved person lived or worked on the Market Block, their connections to the site prompt a deeper examination of their lives. Much of the evidence – deeds, wills, auctions, “runaway” advertisements – tends to illuminate little more than the life of the enslaved person as a commodity. In other cases, though, extraordinary histories of perseverance and kinship shine through.

Cab reportedly found and returned to his enslaver, Richard Arell, a bolt of osnaburgs, a low-quality fabric often used to provide clothing for enslaved people.³⁸² Cab may have been one of the men advertised by the administrators of his estate, along with a woman and her child listed as “a House Wench and a Male Child.”³⁸³ According to the rolls of the 1787 Personal Property Tax, Arell paid an assessment for ten enslaved people.³⁸⁴ The same year, drowning took the life a man held in bondage by Arell and “a seventeen year old gentleman” named Nicholas Nichols.³⁸⁵

³⁸² *VJAA*, December 9, 1784.

³⁸³ *CMAG*, March 12, 1796.

³⁸⁴ Pritchett, 14 – and 1787 Personal Property Tax records.

³⁸⁵ Pritchett, 23-24.

Why did Arell co-own a slave with a 17 year old? Did he use the same technique as he did for real estate, where he required not only payment for the lot but also a perpetual ground rent? When Arell's executors sold his estate, the advertisement listed "Two Negro Men, a House Wench, and a Male Child."³⁸⁶

Joseph Mandeville, who owned the corner lot at King and Fairfax, spent his life participating actively in the slave trade. Although the earliest evidence yet discovered regarding his own slaveholding dates to 1796, Joseph's family enslaved people as early as 1790. In September of that year, John Mandeville, Joseph's brother, stated in the *Alexandria Gazette* that "he wants to hire a NEGRO BOY [emphasis in original], from 12 to 16 years of age."³⁸⁷ Mandeville made a deal with his neighbor on the Market Block, William Hartshorne, to sell Ben. Owned in partnership between Mandeville and Robert Jamieson, Ben hoped that Hartshorne would make good on a promise inserted into the deed "that he should be a free-man...at the expiration of the term of six years."³⁸⁸

We know of several people enslaved by Joseph Mandeville only because they ran away from him, prompting him to post advertisements for their recapture and return. Tom Cole and Willoughby left the Mandevilles on Christmas Eve. Joseph, together with his brothers Robert and James, offered a \$100 reward for Tom Cole and Willoughby who were "supposed to have gone off together with forged papers."³⁸⁹ This December 1813 advertisement also suggests that the Mandeville men placed the enslaved people in their respective households in close contact, as well. Joseph claimed Tom Cole whereas Robert and James Mandeville asserted their ownership

³⁸⁶ *CMAG*, March 22, 1796.

³⁸⁷ *AGAA*, September 16, 1790.

³⁸⁸ Fairfax County Deed Books Y:326, January 19, 1796.

³⁸⁹ *AGC&P*, December 28, 1813.

over Willoughby. Tom “plays a little on the fife and German flute,” the Mandevilles told their audience. The timing of the ad indicates that Tom Cole and Willoughby might have gone to visit family for the holiday or sought out a new hiring arrangement with the approaching new year.

On New Year’s Day 1796, Joseph informed the public that he had not seen “Jenny, commonly called Fanny” since December 11.³⁹⁰ The archive of slavery oftentimes leaves little room for the voices of the enslaved. Jenny/Fanny has thus left few traces of her own in the archive yet the extant sources make it possible to deduce some details about her life filtered through the voice of Mandeville, her enslaver. Jenny/Fanny had lived in Alexandria a few years, at least. John Watts and W. Burd, both Alexandrians, had both held her in bondage prior to her enslavement by Mandeville. These advertisements almost universally included crude physical descriptions of the enslaved person in question; the ad for Jenny/Fanny does, too. Mandeville described her as “aged 17 years and about 5 feet 2 inches high, very black, speaks full and thick.”³⁹¹

John, described as thirteen years old when he ran away, may have helped Joseph Mandeville in his grocery store. Mandeville repeatedly advertises for his desire to purchase an enslaved child in this age range, suggesting he wanted a particular type of laborer for a particular reason. When John ran away from Mandeville, it reasons that his advertisements sought to replace their labor in the store. Indeed, Joseph Mandeville appended a message conveying his “wish to purchase a negro boy, from 10 to 15 years of age” to the same advertisement offering a reward for the recapture of Tom Cole.³⁹² The ad ran through January and February 1814 but, on March 3, Mandeville changed his approach. Instead of an enslaved child, Mandeville

³⁹⁰ *CMAG*, January 30, 1796.

³⁹¹ *CMAG*, January 30, 1796.

³⁹² *AGC&P*, December 28, 1813.

“wanted...any young man of good character, used to [the grocery] business.”³⁹³ While advertising for Peter, Mandeville included his wish to “hire or give a liberal price for a male servant of color, used to housework, of 14 to 15 years of age.”³⁹⁴

Joseph Mandeville appeared frequently seeking to purchase enslaved children but his business partner, Daniel Cawood, joined forces with those who sought to improve the living conditions of the enslaved and free Blacks in Alexandria. As a member of the Benevolent Society of Alexandria for Ameliorating and Improving the Condition of People of Color, Cawood would have assisted people of African descent in holding enslavers and hirers to the strict terms of their terms of service and employment contracts.³⁹⁵ Antislavery activists had long decried the common practice of enslavers of selling enslaved people near the end of their term of service, a practice which reset the term and made it nearly impossible for some individuals to gain their freedom. The Society Cawood joined lamented, “Persons, whose term of servitude is limited and nearly expired, are frequently sold to [slave] traders; others, who are already free, are sometimes kidnapped and carried away before they can be rescued.”³⁹⁶ While Cawood’s particular involvement in the society beyond his membership is uncertain, the organization ceased its activities in the wake of the Nat Turner Uprising in 1831.

Not all of the people Mandeville enslaved worked directly in his service. Sally Dyson “absconded from the service of Doctor Vowell” in October 1817, an escape for which Mandeville placed an ad. Dyson left with her four-year-old daughter, Harriet Ann.³⁹⁷ In his last

³⁹³ *AG*, March 3, 1814.

³⁹⁴ *Alexandria Herald*, July 2, 1817.

³⁹⁵ "X:\OHAshared\Freedom House\Research\Anti-Slavery in Alexandria\Benevolent Society of Alexandria for Ameliorating and Improving the Condition of People of Color\Autobiography of Benjamin Hallowell, p. 109.pdf"

³⁹⁶ *Phenix Gazette*, June 22, 1827.

³⁹⁷ *AG & DA*, October 20, 1817.

will, Joseph Mandeville identified an enslaved woman in his possession as Sarah Dyson, whom he described as “advanced in life.”³⁹⁸ The 1817 advertisement attributed to Sally Dyson an age of thirty years; fifty years old when Mandeville included her in his will, the burdens of a lifetime in slavery had aged her. While the immediate consequences of their flight from Mandeville remain unknown, the Dyson women eventually became free. We have not located a record of Sally Dyson’s emancipation. Sally survived the Civil War, however, and lived at least eleven years as a free woman in Washington.³⁹⁹ With an estimated birth date of 1787, Sally Dyson had lived almost ninety years, although her death certificate attributed to her “about 80” years.

Sally Dyson’s commodity life comes into focus through Mandeville’s ad. As Mandeville understood, she belonged to Tabitha Jackson in Nanjemoy, Maryland before Jackson’s death brought Sally into the house of Eleanor Jackson. Mandeville qualified his account, leaving the likelihood that Sally Dayson had a different history. Moreover, Sally allegedly had “friends” in Nanjemoy on another plantation. A Deed of Gift from Chesterfield County dated February 3, 1800 gives an enslaved “girl named Sally, daughter of Nanny” to Elizabeth Dyson.⁴⁰⁰ Harriet Ann Dyson became free in 1829, with the assistance of James P. Coleman.⁴⁰¹ She claimed her freedom at the age of seventeen. Harriet Ann Dyson’s entry in the *Alexandria Free Negro Registers* describes her appearance and the circumstances of her manumission: “Harriet Ann

³⁹⁸ Will Books, vol. 4, fol. 143-146, June 3, 1837, “Joseph Mandeville,” <https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/catalog/279393>.

³⁹⁹ Certificate of Death, Sally Dyson, Board of Health District of Columbia, No. 9518/9520, October 24, 1876.

⁴⁰⁰ “Sally: Deed, 1800, Chesterfield County,” *Virginia Untold*, https://lva.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01LVA_INST/gao17o/alma9917933219705756

⁴⁰¹ *Alexandria, Virginia Free Negro Registers*, “Alexandria County, Virginia, United States records,” images, FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C373-TSMC-N?view=fullText> : Mar 11, 2026), image 343 of 752; Image Group Number: 008572306

Dyson is about 17 years old, 5 feet 2 1/4 inches tall, and of a dark complexion. She was emancipated by James P. Coleman.”⁴⁰²

Both Sally and Harriet Dyson moved to Washington during or shortly after the Civil War. In Washington City directories of the 1870s, Harriet lives on Durr’s Alley, between 10th and 11th streets, near Blagden Alley NW and the DC Convention Center today. Harriet, for her part, worked as a laundress and washerwoman. Harriet Dyson purchased real estate in Washington in partnership with Melinda Greigsby in the Pleasant Plains neighborhood.⁴⁰³ Four years later, Dyson sold her interest in the parcel.⁴⁰⁴ Today, a Whole Foods Market occupies the site, across the street from Howard University dormitories.

Harriet Ann Dyson died March 20, 1883 at her house No. 1 Durr’s/Derr/Dyer Alley in NW D.C. She was buried in Mt. Pleasant Cemetery (now Walter Pierce Park) by Lemuel Williams on March 22. The Walter Pierce Park burial records show both a Harriet Anne and a Harriet M. Dyson. Harriet Anne died at birth but Harriet M. matches the death certificate and the address of the woman in question. The details list her as a single woman who died of heart disease after living for thirty years in Washington; both of her parents were from Virginia. The same records give Sally Dyson a death date of October 24, 1876, at the age of 80. She was a widow and “invalid for years.” Born in Maryland, lived in DC for 15 years, died of “old age; senile debility,” and lived at Durr’s Alley.

The Dysons have a connection to the Market Block separate from Joseph Mandeville. Tristram Garner, a free Black man, remembered them in his 1866 will with a small cash bequest.

⁴⁰² *Free Negro Registers*, I: 272, May 6, 1829. For the Deed, see Alexandria Deed Books R2:126.

⁴⁰³ Harriet Dyson et al, deed from I.B. Wright, October 24, 1872. Liber 707, fol. 474, Washington, D.C. Deeds.

⁴⁰⁴ Harriet Dyson, Deed to Sarah Ann Songer, October 11, 1876. Liber 831 fol. 465, Washington, D.C. Deeds.

We do not know definitively why Garner included the Dysons in his will.⁴⁰⁵ Harriet Dyson's work as a washerwoman may have brought her into contact with Garner, however, when they all lived in close proximity to the Market Block. Garner placed an advertisement in the September 23, 1837 *Gazette* seeking patronage at his "clothing cellar on Fairfax street, near the corner of King," where he established himself as a scourer of clothes.⁴⁰⁶ It is likely Dyson and Garner met as *habitués* of the Market Block. Perhaps they even worked side by side washing clothes.

Samuel B. Larmour and John Adam manumitted Garner on December 11, 1821.⁴⁰⁷

Larmour spent many years as a business partner of Joseph Mandeville. If Larmour and Adam owned Garner since January 9, 1821, this makes 1821 a likely year that Garner and Sally Dyson became acquainted. The relationship between Larmour and Mandeville might help explain the connection between the Dysons and Tristram H. Garner. Larmour enslaved Garner while Mandeville enslaved the Dysons. Larmour and Mandeville were business partners between ca. 1815 and at least 1837. Garner signed an 1831 petition with 45 other "free colored inhabitants" of Alexandria who swore "that they would promptly give public information of any plot, design, or conspiracy, that might come to their knowledge, to disturb the peace and jeopard the safety of the community."⁴⁰⁸

John Muir, who owned Lot 49 from 1765 until 1791, moved between Annapolis and Alexandria during the Revolution but returned to Alexandria shortly after its conclusion. All

⁴⁰⁵ Will of Tristram H. Garner, Washington, D.C., Orphans Court, 1866-159, May 24, 1865.

⁴⁰⁶ *Alexandria Gazette*, September 23, 1837.

⁴⁰⁷ Timothy J. Dennee, "Slave Manumissions in Alexandria Land Records, 1790-1863," *The Friends of Freedmen's Cemetery*, 2004, <http://www.freedmenscemetery.org/resources/documents/manumissions.shtml>, accessed May 20, 2026. Cited in Nubbe, "Select Biographies of the Alexandria Petitioners," 8.

⁴⁰⁸ *Alexandria Gazette*, October 4, 1831. Nubbe, "Select Biographies of the Alexandria Petitioners."

during those years, Muir held people in bondage. We can glean something of Muir as an enslaver from the following advertisement he inserted in the March 24, 1785 *Virginia Journal & Alexandria Advertiser*:

The Subscriber has for sale a young negro woman, about fifteen years of age who was raised in his house. – She is active, healthy, likely, and remarkably sensible, uncommon pains have been taken to instruct her, and indeed few can excel her when she pleases; but the perverseness of her temper and the connections she has formed induce him to part with her. – Credit will be given if required.⁴⁰⁹

Following the logic of slave mastery, Muir could not comprehend why the woman would not obey him. In the eyes of an enslaver, the enslaved owed obedience in exchange for “uncommon pains,” or, in fact, no pains at all. The enslaved woman described in the 1785 ad may have been Winney Brown. A November 18, 1803 runaway ad for a man called Bob identified his mother as “Winney Brown, formerly the slave of Mr. John Muir, late of this town.”⁴¹⁰

The several members of the Butcher family owned slaves but only, it seems, to effect their emancipation. In 1821, Jonathan Butcher, who occupied the parcel in Lot 48 originally purchased by his uncle, emancipated Joseph Fitzgerald. The only identifying information on Fitzgerald included in the Deed of Emancipation is the general information that he was “of sound mind and body, and not over the age of forty five years.”⁴¹¹ In the May Term of the 1836 Circuit

⁴⁰⁹ *VJAA*, March 24, 1785.

⁴¹⁰ *VJAA*, March 24, 1785.

⁴¹¹ Fitzgerald, Joseph, Deed of Emancipation, Arlington County 1821. Library of Virginia. Recorded in Alexandria County Deed Books L2:79.

Court for the District of Columbia, Butcher made a promise to emancipate seventeen-year old Esther Gibson when she turned twenty-one.⁴¹²

James Paton, a partner in the firm of Butcher & Paton, took the side of the enslaver. Paton assisted James Kenedy by paying a \$500 security for Kenedy when Rose and her children accused Kenedy of assault and battery. Rose told the court that Kenedy “with swords, staves, knives, and sticks made an assault on [her] and then and there beat, wounded, and ill-treated [her] whereof [she] was in great danger of losing her life.” After two such assaults, Kenedy “put her in prison, without any reasonable cause.” Rose called Sarah Easton, perhaps a neighbor or confidant, as a witness to Kenedy’s crimes and the court ordered Kenedy to pay the \$500 security to ensure his compliance with the judgement.⁴¹³

George Gilpin does not appear to have owned enslaved people. However, George Gilpin came from Elkton, Maryland, and had a brother named Thomas.⁴¹⁴ A Thomas Gilpin, in conjunction with William Gilpin, brought a cargo of ten enslaved people to the South Potomac customs post in 1749.⁴¹⁵

Michael Gretter had extensive connections to the system of slavery not just as an enslaver but as a jailor and colonial official. Charles, a twenty-year-old man enslaved by John Jacobs but “taken up as a runaway, fell into Gretter’s hands in August 1771. The next month, Charles and

⁴¹² Alexandria County Deed Books W2:99.

⁴¹³ “Rose, et al,” Freedom Suits, Arlington County, 1801.

⁴¹⁴ “George Gilpin (1740-1813)” *WikiTree*, <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Gilpin-602>, accessed May 6, 2026. “Thomas Gilpin,” *FindaGrave*, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/189727976/thomas-gilpin>, accessed May 6, 2026.

⁴¹⁵ T. Michael Miller, “Slave Traders Operating in Alexandria, DC Virginia Washington DC,” XX. *Slave Voyages* ID 104086 (Intra-American). For more on Gilpin’s biography, see Silvio A. Bedini, “History Corner: George Gilpin of Alexandria, Virginia, Parts 1 and 2” in *Professional Surveyor Magazine*, Jan./Feb. 1998.

Boatswain, who also claimed to belong to Jacobs, met a similar fate.⁴¹⁶ Gretter's notices in these newspapers may suggest how recently arrived Africans resisted their enslavement from the outset, as well as the difficulty officials like Gretter had in containing such resistance when it took unintelligible forms. Both Charles and Boatswain, Gretter claimed "[spoke] bad English."⁴¹⁷ The language barrier probably extended to the man known as Boatswain being given a name to indicate his skill or job. Gretter later complained that even though "Tom" and "Dick" had been "taken up some time past and brought to Fairfax County jail...[they] speak very little English." The men's inability or refusal to speak the language of their captors left Gretter to assume "as well as can be understood...their master's name is John Davison, living on Goose creek."⁴¹⁸ Among the several prisoners who escaped from the Fairfax County Jail on Gretter's watch in March 1785 included "Negro Tom, a runaway from Loudon gaol."⁴¹⁹

Michael Gretter won a suit involving £4.13.3 and an enslaved person, whom the court ordered sold.⁴²⁰ Tax assessments from the 1780s consistently show Gretter as an enslaver, though these records do not identify any of the enslaved people assessed to his ownership.⁴²¹ The Personal Property Tax Assessments of 1787 show four people of African descent in Gretter's household without naming their status or gender.⁴²² Three "blacks above 16" and one "black

⁴¹⁶ *Virginia Gazette*, August 1, 1771, <https://www.freedmenscemetery.org/resources/documents/1768vagazette.shtml>, accessed October 21, 2025.

⁴¹⁷ *Virginia Gazette*, September 5, 1771, <https://www.freedmenscemetery.org/resources/documents/1768vagazette.shtml>, accessed October 21, 2025.

⁴¹⁸ *Virginia Gazette*, April 25, 1777.

⁴¹⁹ *Virginia Gazette*, April 21, 1785.

⁴²⁰ Fairfax County Court Minute Books 1763:86, March 21, 1764. Fairfax County Historic Records Center.

⁴²¹ Personal Property Tax Assessments of 1782, 1783, 1785, and 1786.

⁴²² Personal Property Tax Assessments of 1787.

under 16” lived on the Gretter property in Market Alley, then still known as Gretter’s Alley. Gretter hired Jim, a man enslaved by Thomas Patterson and, later, Susannah Patterson. The deed from Thomas to Susannah Patterson records the sale of diverse property, including “one negro man called Jim now in the possession of Michael Gretter of Alexandria.”⁴²³ Gretter’s job as a jailor also required him to confine alleged and convicted criminals, as well as debtors and indentured servants.⁴²⁴

The residents of the Market Block participated in the same enslaved labor system as everyone else. As such, many of them hired enslaved people for terms of labor. The laws against importing enslaved people into the District of Columbia often came into play with these hires. At February Court 1802, Patty hoped her past residency on the Market Block might win her freedom. Patty, a woman enslaved by Edward Edelin, a Marylander, called a number of witnesses who knew her while she lived with Henry Lyles and, later, John Allison on parcels in Lot 48. Dennis Ramsay told the court he had known Patty in 1783 and 1784 while she lived on the Market Block. A Mrs. Talbutt, John Sutton, the widow of John Allison – all testified that they knew Patty during the 1780s in Alexandria.⁴²⁵

Brothers William and Henry Lyles had extensive interests in slavery. Right around the time that Henry Lyles bought out his brother’s interest in the Market Block property, Moses escaped from him. Henry Lyles warned the readers of the *Maryland Journal* that Moses “has a small turn for music [and] plays indifferently on the fiddle.” Moses had accompanied Lyles “to

⁴²³ Thomas Patterson to Susannah Patterson, Fairfax County Deed Book 17, fol. 317-318, August 4, 1786. See also “An Alexandrian Family” *Found in the Archives* 56 (Oct., 2019), Fairfax County Historic Records Center.

⁴²⁴ *Virginia Gazette*, September 16, 1790.

⁴²⁵ Pritchett, p. 252: “Arlington County Virginia [Alexandria] Orders 1802, 1 Feb 02 p. 163.”

the Carolinas as a servant” and “had been generally used to cooking and waiting in a house.”⁴²⁶ William offered a \$1000 reward for a woman he called Judith Gray and her daughter, Anne, in a 1779 advertisement.⁴²⁷ Lyles stated that Joseph Norman alias John Selvy, “who pretends to keep the aforesaid Judith for his wife.”⁴²⁸

In addition to his property on the Market Block, William Lyles owned sprawling plantations at Broad Creek, about mid-way between National Harbor and Fort Washington in the present day, and one on the south side of Piscataway Creek, just across the Potomac River from Mount Vernon. Lyles depended on enslaved laborers to work in the fields and workshops for his sole profit. William sold the real estate and the enslaved laborers on it over the course his tenure on the Market Block.⁴²⁹

William Lyles evidently planned a move to the city for some time prior to partnering with his brother in the Fairfax Street parcel. The sale of enslaved people helped him secure his portion of the principal. Six months before investing in the Market Block property, William Lyles sold his enslaved property at auction and arranged to rent the two plantations. Lyles offered “twenty-five likely young country-born Negroes, consisting of men, women, and children.” To stoke the price higher, he assured bidders the enslaved “[were] sold for no fault, and that they are equal to any negroes in the state.” Anticipating a broader shift in Virginia’s economy away from tobacco agriculture into reproducing enslaved people for sale to the U.S. South, perhaps, Lyles specified “several likely young breeding women, well acquainted with cooking and all kind of house work.” Enslaved women’s labor and reproductive labor was the foundation of the enslaver’s

⁴²⁶ *Maryland Journal*, September 12, 1783. Lyles bought out his brother’s interest on December 16, 1783.

⁴²⁷ *VJAA*, December 28, 1779.

⁴²⁸ *VJAA*, December 28, 1779.

⁴²⁹ *Maryland Journal*, October 23, 1781.

investment. The improvements on the real estate consisted of a “well-fixed distillery, calculated for either brewing or distilling, with several fine stills and a large iron boiler.”⁴³⁰ Two years later, he advertised the entire Piscataway tract for final sale.⁴³¹ Home from Yorktown in 1781, Lyles sold slaves and leased land to raise hard money. The Revolution over in 1783, Lyles downsized into a townhouse on the Market Block.

During this time, William Lyles served on the Common Council for Alexandria. One of his duties was to help manage the building of a new Market House on Market Square. Along with Oliver Price, Richard Conway, and Peter Wise, Lyles enforced the dimensions that the Council “unanimously determined” and handed the plans over “to the lowest bidder.”⁴³² Price owned real estate on the Market Block. Richard Conway is one of the few individuals to advertise slave hiring at Market Square.

William Lyles’s town house might have been the one described by in a June 21, 1787 “To be let” square inserted in the *Virginia Journal & Alexandria Advertiser*. The two-story house “lately occupied by Col. William Lyles...[had] four rooms below and four above with fire-places in each, a good garret and cellar under the whole, a good kitchen and meat house, an excellent garden and grass-yard paved in.”⁴³³ Bridget Kirk placed the ad in the summer of 1787. This could be the house William Lyles lived in on Fairfax Street. Although William sold his share to Henry in 1784, that doesn’t mean he stopped living there. It’s possible that Henry and William built two houses, one each on their thirty-foot front or, equally likely, one each on the twenty-foot fronts that appear later in the deed history.

⁴³⁰ *VJAA*, October 23, 1781.

⁴³¹ *VJAA*, September 4, 1783.

⁴³² *VJAA*, June 16, 1785.

⁴³³ *VJAA*, June 21, 1787.

By 1791, William Lyles once again claimed residence at the Broad Creek plantation, from where an enslaved woman named Luce fled from bondage. Luce endured great pain because Lyles enslaved her. Sometime before Luce reached twenty-five years, she suffered burns across her hands and arms. The trauma of her physical injuries remained hidden from Lyles or Luce chose not to reveal it to him. Lyles had an economic incentive to choose to not see or overtly advertise that pain because he still called her “remarkably well-looking...stout and active.” Curiously, Lyles also described Luce as “an artful, insinuating woman.” Significantly, Luce “affects to be of the Methodist religion, and it is probably may be harboured by some of her own colour of that persuasion.”⁴³⁴

John Wise, owner of the corner of King and Fairfax from 1792 until 1813, emancipated Crandrass, described as “the wife of London Payne.”⁴³⁵ The 1787 Personal Property Tax records attributed to him eleven enslaved people. Wise’s estate records at least eight enslaved men and women. In November 1806, Wise controlled Peggy, Dick, Kitty, Harriet, Benjamin, Lewis, Jesse, and Betsey through his wife’s dowry. Wise sold Betty and Lewis to his daughter in October 1810.⁴³⁶

Mordecai Lewis and William Hartshorne had business relationships beyond their real estate deals. During the 1790s, when they traded ownership of Parcel 48.6.1, the duo had some involvement in the slave trade. In 1794, Lewis & Company sued the estate of John Armistead in Fredericksburg Circuit Court over “slaves purchased from William Hartshorne & Co. in Alexandria.”⁴³⁷ Hartshorne had purchased Robin, Peggy, Ivory, and Sally from the Armistead

⁴³⁴ *VJAA*, June 13, 1791.

⁴³⁵ Alex Book A:146, June 9, 1801.

⁴³⁶ T:299 – Wardell, *Extracts vol. 1*, p. 219.

⁴³⁷ https://fredericksburgcircuitcourtarchive.lyrasistechonology.org/repositories/2/archival_objects/9499, accessed August 22, 2025..

Estate, meaning that these may have been the same enslaved people. The relationship of William Hartshorne and slavery has been closely examined by A. Glenn Crothers in his article, “Quaker Merchants and Slavery in Early National Alexandria, Virginia: The Ordeal of William Hartshorne.” Crothers refers to Hartshorne as a “nonslaveholder.”⁴³⁸

William Hartshorne purchased enslaved people but the evidence suggests his purchases often led directly to manumission. Still, in these instances, Hartshorne extracted a term of labor from the men and women he purchased. Daniel, Simon, Peggy, Robin, and Ben each received their freedom after serving Hartshorne for a number of years. Daniel labored for seven years until Hartshorne recouped the £80 investment. As Hartshorne attested in the deed, he “did not propose or intend to detain [Daniel] in servitude for a longer term than seven years.”⁴³⁹ Simon endured four years servitude until Hartshorne took back the £40 purchase price with Simon’s sweat and blood.⁴⁴⁰ Robin, Peggy, Ivory, and Sally acquired their freedom after serving Hartshorne. Hartshorne explained, “Immediately after the said negroes were struck off to me, I gave a written promise...that [they] should be emancipated and sett [*sic*] sett free” according to varying terms.⁴⁴¹ Hartshorne allowed Robin and Peggy their freedom after seven years of service each. Ivory, just under four years old at the time of purchase, could expect freedom when he turned twenty-one. Sally, only nine months old when Hartshorne made her subject to his whims, grew up with the same expectation of freedom when she turned twenty-one.

⁴³⁸ A. Glenn Crothers, “Quaker Merchants and Slavery in Early National Alexandria, Virginia: The Ordeal of William Hartshorne” *Journal of the Early Republic* 25, no. 1 (Spring, 2005): 47-77.

⁴³⁹ FDB T:203-205, February 24, 1791.

⁴⁴⁰ FDB T:457-458, June 29, 1791.

⁴⁴¹ FDB T:458-459, July 13, 1791.

The federal circuit court in Alexandria called Charles McKnight as a witness in the freedom suit of Nathaniel Holmes. Alexandria police arrested Holmes, alleging him a “runaway slave.” Holmes did not have freedom papers, an unfortunate reality he explained as the result of “a disagreement with his...Captain as to the amount of wages due.” As Holmes told it, the ship left port with his belongings still aboard. The record of the proceedings ends with McKnight’s subpoena, leaving untold both what he knew about Holmes, his fate, and what McKnight knew about it.⁴⁴²

Richard Wood, who owned Parcel 48.9 on Fairfax Street with his wife, Catherine, hoped his association with enslaved people would stay secret. Around 1825, Richard Wood appears to have fled from Alexandria without making arrangements to care for his wife and children. Catherine Wood remained on Fairfax Street, raising her children, and renting out the barbershop to a succession of tenants for the next decade, at least. Richard Wood, for his part, shuffled south to Charleston, South Carolina. Although Wood “carried on the business of a Hair Dresser from some years” on Queen Street in Charleston. He stayed out of most of the newspapers both as an advertiser and a subject of gossip. As a man known publicly to have abandoned his wife and children, whatever the private discussions with Catherine, Wood probably liked his low profile. The easily decipherable alias he adopted – R.W. Carroll – suggests he did not want to remain wholly anonymous. As R.W. Carroll, Wood “had been repeatedly detected and prosecuted” but never convicted in court.⁴⁴³ Wood was in Charleston as early as September, 1826, when he sold hundreds of items of furniture, bedding, kitchen and other household items, clothes, and barbering supplies to Elizabeth Mills for \$400.⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴² Nathaniel Holmes, 1841 Freedom Suit,” *Virginia Untold*.

⁴⁴³ *Charleston Courier*, August 22, 1835.

⁴⁴⁴ Charleston South Carolina, Bills of Sale, No. 5D, 1825-1827,

Sometime before August 1835, Charlestonians noticed R.W. Carroll and investigated his background. By August 21, the editors of the *Charleston Southern Patriot* announced that the investigation into “Carroll’s” background and occupation in that city had reached a climax in “the operation of Lynch’s Law.”⁴⁴⁵ Known outwardly as a barber, the townspeople contended Wood had “connexion with Slaves, as a receiver of stolen goods, particularly the article of Cotton.”⁴⁴⁶ Wood allegedly helped fence seventy bales of cotton every season, an amount on par with a small planter.⁴⁴⁷ Pilfering several dozen bales of cotton from the docks was bad enough but Wood also stood accused of encouraging slaves to steal other valuables from the households of their owners and hirers.

Such lowly dealings “rendered [Wood] for a long period obnoxious to the citizens.”⁴⁴⁸ In a majorly proslavery city like Charleston, in 1835 at one of the zeniths of proslavery political power in the United States, “the citizens” of Charleston took justice in the hands of a mob. Early on August 21, a group of men forced themselves into Wood’s shop “without the least disturbance.”⁴⁴⁹ Wood threatened “certain death would be the doom of the first who made the attempt” to capture him but stood defenseless when taken. Although the *Patriot* claimed “the whole proceeding was conducted with the utmost quietness and order” under the close supervision of “several respectable citizens lending the countenance of their presence to the measure,” the punishment inflicted could not have happened without the usual howls and jeers of

⁴⁴⁵ *Charleston Southern Patriot*, August 21, 1835.

⁴⁴⁶ *Charleston Southern Patriot*, August 21, 1835.

⁴⁴⁷ The 1840 U.S. Census shows approximately 61.7 million pounds of cotton produced in South Carolina that year. With an average weight of 300-400 pounds, seventy bales of cotton amounted to almost 25,000 pounds. *Compendium of the Sixth Census*, 1840.

<https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1840/1840v3/1840c-13.pdf>, accessed May 6, 2026.

⁴⁴⁸ *Charleston Southern Patriot*, August 21, 1835.

⁴⁴⁹ *Charleston Courier*, August 22, 1835.

what must have accompanied “the operation of Lynch’s Law.” The mob broke into his house in the morning and someone lashed his back twenty times. The mob ripped off his bloody shirt, poured hot tar over his head, and gave him “a *coat of* COTTON not FEATHERS...from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet, so that he presented a rather ludicrous aspect [emphasis in original].”⁴⁵⁰ A few days after Wood finally left town, the Charleston Sheriff called “all persons who may have lost, at any time, silver spoons, fine linen, and other articles of value [to] go and examine the trunks” he had confiscated from Wood.

While surviving deeds in the Alexandria-area courts suggest Wood did not enslave anyone here, he transacted business as an enslaver in Charleston. The Charleston authorities did not let Wood out of jail until he had unraveled as many of his legitimate obligations as possible. On August 27, 1835, probably from a jail cell, Wood signed paperwork that relinquished his trusteeship in the enslaved man Peter.⁴⁵¹ Elizabeth Mills, most likely the same woman who gave Wood \$400 for the furniture and barbering supplies in 1826, sold Peter to Alfred Y. Walker. Wood owned at least one other slave in Charleston, a man called Norwood in the register of sales.⁴⁵²

In a sign at how extensively Charlestonians investigated R.W. Carroll’s background, the sheriff Catherine Wood stood to benefit from the sale of “the balance of articles unclaimed.”⁴⁵³ The alleged extent of Wood’s criminality in Charleston leads to curiosity about the cause of his departure from Alexandria. Did he flee from Fairfax Street after someone in Alexandria

⁴⁵⁰ *Charleston Southern Patriot*, August 21, 1835.

⁴⁵¹ Elizabeth Mills to Alfred Y. Walker, Sale of Peter. Bill of sales of Negro slaves, 1799-1872, Charleston District, South Carolina, Vol. 5O 1829-1832, fol. 761.

⁴⁵² Bernard E. Bee to R.W. Carroll, Sale of Norwood. December 7, 1832, recorded May 13, 1833. Bill of sales of Negro slaves, 1799-1872, Charleston District, South Carolina, Vol. 5K 1829-1832, fol. 238.

⁴⁵³ *Charleston Courier*, August 22, 1835.

discovered similar dealings here? To what extent did those in business in and around the Market Square in Alexandria engage in illicit markets? What opportunities did residents of the houses bounding the Market and near enough to the docks have for smuggling or trafficking stolen goods?

The real estate records show that, despite Catherine Woods's claim of an "unexpected absence," Richard Wood had an escape in mind at least two weeks before her advertisement. Richard made an arrangement with a trustee, Robert S. Blacklock, to hold the Fairfax Street property in trust. The deed conveying the trust stated Wood was "desirous of securing some provision for the future support and maintenance of his wife, Kitty Wood, and children."⁴⁵⁴ The language of the deed of trust suggests Catherine was pregnant. While the deed does not name the children, Richard emphasized his "natural love and affection" for "both those [children] now in being and those to be hereafter born."⁴⁵⁵

An Incomplete List of names of enslaved and free African Americans connected to the Market Block, including family connections, when known, and names of enslavers in parentheses

APPENDIX A

1. Jacob (sold at Court House to satisfy debt against William Hunter but claims freedom based on importation into Virginia)
2. Nathaniel Holmes (1841 Freedom suit)

⁴⁵⁴ Alex. Deed Book O2:277-279, April 14, 1825.

⁴⁵⁵ Alex. Deed Book O2:277-279, April 14, 1825.

3. Sandy (arrested and tried for attempted robbery of Paton & Butcher warehouse; shot at by Joseph Mandeville)
4. Tom (Benjamin Cawood)
5. Letty (Peter Sherron)
6. Liddy (Peter Sherron)
7. Winney Brown (John Muir)
8. Milly Weston, a pauper (John Muir)
9. Cab (Richard Arell)
10. Crandrass (John Wise), wife of London Payne
11. Betty (John Wise) (possibly same as Betsey)
12. Lewis (John Wise)
13. Peggy (John Wise)
14. Dick (John Wise)
15. Kitty (John Wise)
16. Harriet (John Wise)
17. Jesse (John Wise)
18. Betsey (John Wise)
19. Sally Dyson and her daughter Harriet Ann (Joseph Mandeville)
20. Peter (Joseph Mandeville)
21. John (Joseph Mandeville)
22. Tom Cole (Joseph Mandeville)
23. Jerry (Joseph Mandeville)
24. Willoughby (Joseph Mandeville)

25. Jenny aka Fanny (Joseph Mandeville)
26. Tristram H. Garner, prior to his emancipation
27. Esther Gibson, emancipated by Jonathan Butcher
28. Joseph Fitzgerald, emancipated by Jonathan Butcher
29. Kitty Smith, born free according to affidavit of Phebe Butcher
30. Moses, (ran away from Henry Lyles)
31. Bob, to be returned to William Hartshorne & Robert Donaldson (husband of Elizabeth Muir Donaldson)
32. Billie, to be returned to William Hartshorne & Robert Donaldson (husband of Elizabeth Muir Donaldson)
33. Jacob (Robert Conway)
34. Reuben (Robert Conway)
35. John (Robert Conway)
36. Eliza (Robert Conway)
37. Winnifred (Robert Conway)
38. Fanny (Robert Conway)
39. William (Robert Conway)
40. Vincent (Robert Conway)
41. Griffin (Robert Conway)
42. Hiram (Robert Conway)
43. Edgar (Robert Conway)
44. Sylla/Priscilla (Robert Conway)
45. Suckey (Robert Conway)

46. Motty (Robert Conway)
47. James (Robert Conway)
48. Emanuel (Robert Conway)
49. Lawson (Robert Conway)
50. Robert (Robert Conway)
51. Samuel (Robert Conway)
52. Daniel (Robert Conway)
53. Sarah and her five year old child (Robert Conway)
54. Susan (Robert Conway)
55. Rebecca and her child (Robert Conway)
56. Fanny (Robert Conway)
57. Sarah and her child (Robert Conway)
58. Sam and his wife, Jug and grandchild Sam (Patrick Ramsay)
59. Tom and his wife, Ussey, and four children, Phillis, Tab, Peter, and Sukey (Patrick Ramsay)
60. Cain (Patrick Ramsay)
61. Joe (Patrick Ramsay)
62. Dick (Patrick Ramsay)
63. Big Tom (Patrick Ramsay)
64. Moses (Patrick Ramsay)
65. Rachel (Patrick Ramsay)
66. Strephon & Nancy with her children, Lewis, Hannah, and Nancy, mulattoes (Patrick Ramsay)

67. Herbert (Patrick Ramsay)
68. John (Patrick Ramsay)
69. Charles (Patrick Ramsay)
70. Billy (Patrick Ramsay)
71. Amy (Patrick Ramsay)
72. Amy a mulatto (Patrick Ramsay)
73. Jane Savoy (free woman of color who pays market rent)
74. Rachel Jarboe (free woman of color who pays market rent)
75. Lucy Jackson (free woman of color who pays market rent)
76. Sophia Browning Bell (works Alexandria market and buys husband's freedom, enslaved by DC and Prince George's County resident Rachel Belt Pratt)
77. Austin Triplet
78. Alfred (George C. Harvey)
79. Sally (George C. Harvey)
80. Martha (George C. Harvey)
81. Mary (George C. Harvey)
82. Dennis (Robert Sangster)
83. Mary (Robert Sangster)
84. Washington (Robert Sangster)
85. James (Robert Sangster)
86. Alexander West (1813-1815 tax rolls: "Colored Man" on Fairfax Street, between the Alley and King)
87. "five negro slaves" (against executors of Flemming Potterjon)

88. "several valuable slaves belonging to the estate of Col. John Fitzgerald"
89. "one negro man about 30 years of age"; "two young me under 20 years of age"; "one negro man about 28 years of age"; "one boy about 14 years of age"; "several others not particularly described" (listed in advertisement for "Public Sale," *Alexandria Advertiser*, March 16, 1801)
90. Charles Coffee, "taken to satisfy an execution in favor of Riggs and Gaither," *Alexandria Gazette*, May 17, 1821.
91. Bob (ordered returned to Hartshorne & Donaldson in 1792)
92. Billie (ordered returned to Hartshorne & Donaldson in 1792)
93. Gustavus Gibson (paid to clean market and city offices, freed in 1824)
94. Henry Gibson (son of Gustavus Gibson)
95. James Gibson (son of Gustavus Gibson)
96. George (Benjamin Sebastian, Sr.)
97. Cesar (Benjamin Sebastian, Sr.)
98. Easther and child, Cary (Benjamin Sebastian, Sr.)
99. Nan and child Savory (Benjamin Sebastian, Sr.)
100. Daphne (Benjamin Sebastian, Sr.)
101. William Henry Ward (died June 23, 1864 at old 13 Royal Street. Buried in Freedmen's Cemetery)
102. Infant Cox (died March 27, 1866 at old 13 Royal Street. Buried in Freedmen's Cemetery)
103. Rosa Ann Pollard (died October 23, 1868 at old 13 Royal Street. Buried in Freedmen's Cemetery)

104. "A Man" (Helen G. Huie)
105. "A woman and her two youngest children" (Helen G. Huie)
106. "Two or three girls" (Helen G. Huie)
107. "A Boy" (Helen G. Huie)
108. Luther Quade "an indented apprentice...of dark complexion" under Thomas Burrage
109. Individuals sold by Charles M. Castleman as Deputy Sheriff, either their labor or their lives.
110. Enslaved people owned by William Lyles on his plantations in Maryland.
111. Many other owners on the square had plantation lands outside of town where they likely enslaved one or more people.

The Market Block During the Twentieth Century

An interpretation of the Market Block in the twentieth century relies on understanding how the disappearance of legal slavery changed the way Black and white Alexandrians related to one another and to the town government. The Reconstruction era in Alexandria, as in the rest of the United States, showed the possibilities of a democracy in which Black people were finally allowed to take part in their governance. As the gains of Reconstruction disappeared before an onslaught of "Redemption," the legacy of slavery continued to determine the legal and material conditions of life for Black Alexandrians.

During the early twentieth century, the Alexandria Market declined. More brick and mortar grocery stores in the neighborhoods drew customers away from the Market.. During the

1880s and 1890s, a handful of companies began to dominate the public markets in both Alexandria and Washington, D.C. The first decades of the twentieth century saw continued prosperity in the Market. Eventually, the Market no longer had the capacity to satisfy the conglomerates and the small farmer. By the 1930s, the Clerk of the Market stopped opening during the week and resorted to weekend hours only. Ultimately, suburbanization decreased the number of potential patrons.

Benjamin L. Hayman, who was born in 1906 at 118 N. Royal Street and grew up at the same location, remembered the Market Square fondly while also offering a glimpse into one of the less attractive features of the market. “In the market itself were grocery stores and meat markets...Farmers would come on the weekends with all their groceries...the place was jammed.”⁴⁵⁶ The people who came to the market, however, “were overrun with flies,” Hayman remembered. The infestation redounded to Hayman’s benefit, incredibly. “City Council decided that they were gonna have a contest, who can kill the most flies will have [their] picture taken. So my brother [Ruben Hayman] and I both knew all the people in the market and they all said they would kill flies for me. We had flies by the gallons.”⁴⁵⁷

Ben Hayman’s son, James “Jimmy” Hayman notes, “After the 1930s, [the Market] was a Saturday business and maybe some Sundays business but it was not a type of thing like a little earlier. As times moved on and grocery stores played the major role on where you bought your groceries, the open-air markets kind of died away.”⁴⁵⁸ Another interviewee confirms Jimmy

⁴⁵⁶ Anne Horowitz, Interview with Ben Hayman and Jimmy Hayman, February 24, 2001, *Alexandria Legacies Project*.

⁴⁵⁷ Anne Horowitz, Interview with Ben Hayman and Jimmy Hayman, February 24, 2001, *Alexandria Legacies Project*.

⁴⁵⁸ Anne Horowitz, Interview with Ben Hayman and Jimmy Hayman, February 24, 2001, *Alexandria Legacies Project*.

Hayman's recollection of the weekday market ceasing during the 1930s. Dorothy Joan Roland, born in 1932 and raised in the 200 block of Queen Street, never remembered any markets except Saturdays and Sundays. In Roland's view, Chauncey's Meat Market, at the corner of Market Alley and Royal Street, signified the shift to fixed stores replacing the formal Market. Rowland: "On the south side of City Hall, on Royal Street, there was Chauncey's grocery store. I remember that the floor was always covered with sawdust. I don't ever remember seeing a floor in there except that it was covered with sawdust. And they were very, very busy there...It was a very big grocery store. They would deliver for you, and they knew all their customers by name, just an old-fashioned store."⁴⁵⁹

A pair of Market Rental Receipt books survive in the Alexandria Library Special Collections that show the payment of market stall rents for 1955, 1956, and 1957.⁴⁶⁰ The Market Rental Receipts do not list race of the renter. Someone with the surname Quander rented a market stall throughout the period covered by the Market Receipts. Census records for 1950 suggest that everyone in Fairfax County or Alexandria with the surname Quander was Black. None of these members of the Quander family listed their occupation as marketer but, as we know, the Market was only two days per week in the 1950s. Saturday and Sunday markets took away five other days of retail opportunity for marketers and would have forced them to have secondary occupations during the week. Significantly, the Alexandria Market does not appear to have been legally segregated at any time. A photograph from 1960, when other public places in

⁴⁵⁹ Frimmel Smith, Interview with Dorothy Joan Roland, November 30, 2006, *Alexandria Legacies Project*.

⁴⁶⁰ Market Rental Receipt Books, 1955-1956, Alexandria City Records, Collector of Rents MS019KKK, fol. 3. ALSC.

Alexandria had a color line, both Black and white patrons and vendors occupied the temporary Market House at 113 N. Royal.⁴⁶¹



Figure 5 *Alexandria Gazette*, July 18, 1960. Market Square Vertical File, ALSC.

Ongoing planning processes for urban renewal piqued public awareness of the history of Market Square. Editorials related a conventional history of the square. In racially segregated Alexandria of the 1950s, these popular yarns left out the history of enslaved and free Black marketers who underpinned the success of the market during the eighteenth and nineteenth century. “Famous old Market Square, where George Washington recruited and drilled his Provincial troops,” boasted the *Gazette* of December 23, 1957 publicizing the annual Christmas Market. The City Council finally voted to expand City Hall and eliminate the open courtyard known as Market Square in 1960. July 4th, 1960 marked the final Independence Day celebration

⁴⁶¹ *Alexandria Gazette*, July 18, 1960.

in the Alexandria Market Square, as workers demolished the Farmer's Market shed in preparation for City Hall expansion.⁴⁶² During construction, the city provided space for marketers to set up their stalls at 113 N. Royal Street.⁴⁶³ By 1962, with its future in limbo as urban renewal planning progressed, Market Square elicited commentary for its barrenness. Part of the trouble stemmed from the just-completed expansion of City Hall. An addition to the building filled the formerly open Market Square and "confined [it] to a stall under the arches on the south side of the building." On the eve of Thanksgiving 1962, "The farmer's market, once a symbol of plenty and of holiday enthusiasm...was reduced to a small table of autumn flowers."⁴⁶⁴ The end of construction saw a brief revival of the Market in Market Alley and in the open arches on City Hall.⁴⁶⁵

African Americans and Urban Renewal

When the historic built environment of Market Square disappeared between 1960 and 1965, a long African American history associated with the space had long since faded away. Yet, while there is a wealth of material in Alexandria archives related to Black life and the impacts of urban renewal, archival sources relevant to a study of the Market Block that surfaced during this research proved scant. Oral histories provided a primary source base, although Black Alexandrians represented in the oral history collections mentioned the Market Block less frequently than white interviewees, focusing instead on more specific civil rights issues or the

⁴⁶² *Alexandria Gazette*, July 5, 1960.

⁴⁶³ *Alexandria Gazette*, July 18, 1960.

⁴⁶⁴ John A. Reichmann, "On Thanksgiving Eve, Yet! No Turkeys, Ducks, Geese, Pies, at Passing Old Farmers' Market," *Alexandria Gazette*, November 22, 1962. ALSC-MSVF.

⁴⁶⁵ Paul A. Heymont, "Saturday Morning Market in Alexandria Traces Colorful Beginning to 1752," *Alexandria Gazette*, September 12, 1964. ALSC-MSVF.

pervasiveness of segregation and discrimination. For instance, prominent local leader Melvin Miller spent decades in Alexandria waging legal fights for Black civil rights as an attorney but does not mention the Market Block or any issues specific to Market Square during his oral history interview. I did not find any evidence that the Alexandria Market was legally segregated. Generally speaking, however, Courtney Brooks, a Black community organizer and activist, recalled, “There wasn’t that many Black-owned business. You couldn’t eat this place or that place or you had to go to a window and eat, you know, you get served certain places and you couldn’t go in this door.”⁴⁶⁶

Some moments revealed by white interviewees offer insight into relationships between white and Black Alexandrians and segregation. Jimmy Barry remembers strict racial integration in public places. In the context of his social relationships with African American people, however, Barry relates that he only encountered them when he went to the Alexandria *Gazette* office to pick up newspapers to deliver on his daily paper route. “When I carried the *Gazette* we used to go down... I used to work for the guy who was route manager. We get to pick the newspaper up from the presses on King Street. Where City Hall is, that’s where the place was. There were Black boys who came in there. They had the routes all down town. They got their paper, they went on their way and that was it.”⁴⁶⁷

Eighty years after the end of slavery, Alexandria had settled into a racial dynamic characteristic of many other Southern cities in which authorities and white elite limited access to power and public space for Black citizens through legal segregation. In an extensive 1947 article

⁴⁶⁶ Jim Mackay and Audrey Davis, Interview with Courtney Brooks, November 15, 1996, *Alexandria Legacies Project*.

⁴⁶⁷ Jennifer Landy and Chris Gagné, Interview with June and Jimmy Barry, May 14, 2010, *Alexandria Legacies Project*.

in the *Washington Afro American*, journalist Ollie Stewart described Alexandria as a “paradox on [the] racial issue.” As Stewart wrote, “Here instances are very rare in which a man has been convicted of a crime because his skin was black...For at least 10 years, in circuit and corporation courts, Alexandria has had colored person on grand and petit juries.” Yet, “On the opposite side of the ledger, this, too, is Alexandria,” Stewart explained, “Here you find no colored policemen, no firemen, no city councilmen, no member of the school board and no mail carriers. The last colored mail carrier (about 30 years ago) was Lawrence Arnold.” Banks welcomed Black customers yet restaurants remained strictly segregated. The 1939 Library Sit-In helped achieve incremental steps towards equality yet the power of racism to convince the ruling class to oppress citizens based on skin color persisted.⁴⁶⁸

The absence of African Americans in public positions did not reflect the labor conditions of the private sector. “Professionals flourish” in Alexandria, Stewart contended. Many Black Alexandrians held government jobs “but the men and women in [professional] positions seem to do themselves proud in a town of this size. Alexandria has 5 physicians, 2 dentists, 9 lawyers, 3 undertakers, two drug stores and 30-odd school teachers.” “Hundreds of men” worked at both the Fruit Growers Express and Mutual Ice Company in the rail yards. Electricians, carpenters, and other laborers had a role in building many of the suburbs sprouting up in Alexandria and Fairfax County. “Washing, cleaning house, chauffeuring and waiting on tables” gave countless others steady employment. All classes of Black Alexandria sought to “bring in the income that buys property and rears families.”⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁸ *Washington Afro American*, February 15, 1947.

⁴⁶⁹ *Washington Afro American*, February 15, 1947.

The 1947 article highlighted what would become the most serious issue for African Americans in Alexandria over the next decades. The widespread availability, affordability, and cleanliness of housing occupied the greatest share of public debates about urban renewal in Alexandria from at least the 1940s on. Stewart found “People...living in renovated homes here that were barracks for soldiers during the Civil War.” Even though “members of both races live in the same block – next door or across the street – without friction,” white Alexandrians enjoyed much easier access to public housing in the city. Despite the opening of a significant number of highly desirable units in 1941 and 1945 (“the Alexandria projects are as attractive as any this writer has seen,” Stewart wrote), supply dwindled for Black Alexandrians.

As the years passed, local concern about housing increased as Alexandrians watched urban renewal play out in Washington. In the Washington urban renewal projects, the number of housing units for “negro housing” dwindled. Developers demolished old homes deemed “substandard” and built fewer “modern” units in their place.⁴⁷⁰ When the Alexandria city government proposed the Mudtown/Seminary Hill redevelopment, the writing seemed to be on the wall for the same outcome on the Virginia side of the Potomac.⁴⁷¹ Compounding the problem, as those unable to find adequate housing pointed out repeatedly, Black residents across the National Capital Region who had come to expect discrimination in the private housing market had only public housing to rely on.⁴⁷² Urban renewal constricted their housing choices even further.⁴⁷³

⁴⁷⁰ *Washington Afro American*, December 18, 1954; April 4, 1959.

⁴⁷¹ *Washington Afro American*, October 22 and November 26, 1960; January 21, 1961.

⁴⁷² *Washington Afro American*, December 5, 1959.

⁴⁷³ *Washington Afro American*, July 2, 1960.

In available media, the voices of Black Alexandrians are not heard in the context of redevelopment of the Market Block. The City Hall renovation of 1960-1961 inspired complaints, opposition, and resignation from hucksters, farmers, and other marketers/market people. But these opposing voices did not express a sense of racial politics. Racial politics changed dramatically between 1947 and the 1960s, though. In Alexandria, journalist Leonard S. Brown's columns, "Around Alexandria" reflect these changes. In August 26, 1961 "About Alexandria," Brown launched into a tirade against Mayor Frank E. Mann. Brown recounted a visit by representatives from the Congress for Racial Equality [CORE] to Mann's potato chip factory to investigate unfair labor practices. Brown castigated the religious leaders in Alexandria for their alleged failure to assist voter registration drives and "job equality."⁴⁷⁴ The same edition of the *Washington Afro American* reported on efforts by the NAACP to insist on equal housing opportunity for Black Alexandrians.⁴⁷⁵ Brown called out urban renewal in Alexandria, continuing his focus on the housing issue. "Slum clearance, public housing Urban Renewal ('urban removal'), road widening, highway construction, park construction, warehouse building, industrial and commercial ventures all come to the colored ghetto," he pointed out. Brown summoned statistics to prove his case, too. In a city of 91,023 people according to the 1960 U.S. Census, Brown noted, "10,353 are colored...yet colored Alexandrians have scarcely seen the construction of a little over 100 dwellings by private buildings." Lynnwood Campbell remembered that urban renewal signaled the displacement of Black residents. "When they started this talk about 'Old Town,' the Blacks were moved out, or sold their houses for nothing and [the]

⁴⁷⁴ *Washington Afro American*, August 26, 1961.

⁴⁷⁵ *Washington Afro American*, August 26, 1961.

‘Old Town’ theme took on...many of those families can’t come back. They can’t afford to live here.”⁴⁷⁶

The Gadsby Urban Renewal Project exacerbated these issues. Historian Krystyn Moon notes that three-quarters of displaced residents in the Gadsby Project area needed replacement housing. Of the 1,248 public housing units available in 1962, the city only opened 486 units to Black Alexandrians.⁴⁷⁷ While more than 40% of the units reserved for white Alexandrians changed tenants each year, only about 10% of the units dedicated to Black renters turned over on a yearly basis.⁴⁷⁸ In some ways, Ollie Stewart’s article shows Alexandria from a Washingtonian’s point of view. Moon has attested to the near-impossibility of interpreting twentieth-century Alexandria history without considering the enormous impact of its proximity to Washington. The relationships Alexandrians developed because of their integration into the greater National Capital Region have long histories. When Alexandria and federal officials cooperated over the Gadsby Urban Renewal project, Black Washingtonians were in the middle of similar processes.

On Market Square, these debates took a different form. Phase I had its own characteristics, and the Market Square aspect of Phase I had a different history than the Tavern Square aspect of Phase I. Public participation aspect of the Market Square ‘urban renewal’ focused mainly on architectural elements like the color and size of the bricks, the dormers, the cast iron façade of Hulfish Hardware, the flounder tavern building, the tout ensemble of the Old and Historic District. These were very different concerns than obtaining and securing standard housing for one’s family.

⁴⁷⁶ Molly Kerr, Interview with Lynnwood Campbell, March 10, 2011. *Alexandria Legacies-Living Legends Project*.

⁴⁷⁷ *Washington Afro American*, September 15, 1962.

⁴⁷⁸ Krystyn Moon, *Proximity to Power: Rethinking Race and Place in Alexandria, Virginia*, 76-77.

Yet the history of slavery, emancipation, and the broken promises of Reconstruction continued to cast shadows across the Gadsby Urban Renewal Project. For many years, the Retail Merchants Association of Alexandria (RMAA) hosted an “Alexandria Days” promotional event to stimulate shopping in Old Town. In 1958, with legal segregation of stores and public places firmly enforced, the RMAA printed six million dollars of Confederate ten-dollar bills, the much debated “Dixie” note, for patrons to spend in area stores. The stunt came complete with a delivery of the paper currency by armored car directly from Richmond.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁹ *Alexandria Gazette*, July 10, 1958. *Providence Journal*, July 25, 1958. See also "X:\OHAshared\Oral History Center\Oral History Archive\Oral History Archive File Back-Up\01_Oral Histories\2001\OR2001.01.01_Hayman_Ben\OR2001.01.01.26_Hayman_Ben_Album_Research.pdf".



CONFEDERATE MONEY HAS COME BACK! — Six million dollars in Confederate currency is delivered by a Brinks armored truck to Marshall J. Beverley, vice president of First & Citizens National Bank, for use during "Alexandria Days" when local merchants will give the Dixie dollars as premiums to be "spent" at auctions for valuable prizes. The bills are in \$10 denominations. Left to right are Jack Eiseman, Brink's guard; Benjamin L. Hayman, chairman of the "Days" finance committee; Stephen [unclear], co-chairman of the promotion committee of the Retail Merchants Association of the event; Mr. Beverley; and Robert Simmons, guard. Photo by Don Mac Afer

Figure 6 Alexandria Gazette, July 31, 1958.

The *Evening Star* of February 14, 1962 quotes Louis Robert, "One hundred years ago, the Federal Government beat the South and they called it 'reconstruction.' Now they are getting ready to do it again, only they call it 'urban renewal.'"⁴⁸⁰ Robert was a prominent preservationist whose historical research into the history of the Market Square reminded the City Council that the original bargain over public ownership of Lots 43 and 44 depended on its perpetual use as a public market or else the property reverted to the Alexander family who sold it in 1749.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁸⁰ *Evening Star*, February 14, 1962.

⁴⁸¹ For Robert locating the deed, see *Alexandria Gazette*, May 12, 1966.

Robert's grasp of history weakened when it came to urban renewal. Robert echoed the public sentiment of white public officials and other Alexandrians toward the rebellious government of the southern states during the Civil War.

The same newspaper piece quoted Mrs. Charles B. Moore, who lived in the 200 block of Prince Street, saying, "I think urban renewal is un-American...I think it is very socialistic and in the old days I don't think it would have stood up in the Supreme Court."⁴⁸² Robert likened the redevelopment of historic real estate using federal dollars to the immediate post-Civil War years when U.S. government officials exerted political control over local affairs. The control exerted by the federal government in Reconstruction hardly compared to federal support of urban renewal. Constitutional amendments that abolished slavery, granted citizenship to all persons born in the United States, and gave voting rights to Black men as well as white men led to local legal reforms designed to enforce those amendments. Many white Alexandrians opposed these local legal reforms with political activism and a campaign of racial violence. Alexandria's City Council requested the federal funds. The federal government did not force them on the city.

So intertwined were Confederate memory and urban renewal that the minutes of City Council meetings on the latter frequently include gestures towards the former. With City Hall expansion underway in 1961, the Council surprised many when it announced a last-minute change order for arcades in the façade of the new addition to accommodate marketers. At the same meeting, "Council, which refused to go along on building a monument to the First Battle of Manassas, the first great Confederate victory in the War Between the States,...voted to underwrite the purchase of a valued painting of Gen. Robert E. Lee." In a clear statement of who in Alexandria the Council chose to value with its expenditure of tax dollars, the elected

⁴⁸² *Evening Star*, February 14, 1962.

representatives dedicated \$6000 to the Sons of Confederate Veterans. With twisted logic, the Council approved the money so the organization would “buy the...portrait...and present it to the city.”⁴⁸³ Still, when the city did not fly the Confederate flag during Fourth of July festivities or Alexandria Days events in 1965, some Alexandrians were “shocked, upset, angry, and indignant.”⁴⁸⁴ After complaints, City Manager Frank Mann assured the complainers that “the flags were not displayed because they were tattered and the supply was short.”⁴⁸⁵ Although other citizens wrote to Mann discouraging “the flag of traitors and secessionists,” the City Manager defended his decision to “retain a little of the charm and color of the city’s history.”⁴⁸⁶

Ironically, despite the invocation of the racial and political divides of the Civil War and Reconstruction, opposition to urban renewal made unwitting and unwilling allies of Black Alexandrians and historic preservationists. As seen in the reporting of the *Washington Afro-American* newspaper, Black Washingtonians opposed the efforts to redevelop the residential portions of Northwest Washington, where descendants of freedpeople established communities during the Civil War and Reconstruction as slavery disintegrated in the national capital. When the same “urban renewal” efforts crossed the Potomac River into Alexandria, Black Alexandrians already knew the playbook. After the re-opening of Market Square in 1967, Alexandrians used the site for political protest. Civil rights activists used the redeveloped site to continue protests against the legacy of slavery and the omnipresent Confederate nostalgia. Near the end of 1969, one group dragged the Confederate flag through the streets to Market Square, where they “ripped [it] into more than a dozen pieces.”⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸³ *Alexandria Gazette*, March 1, 1961.

⁴⁸⁴ *Washington Post*, August 27, 1965.

⁴⁸⁵ *Washington Post*, August 27, 1965.

⁴⁸⁶ *Washington Post*, August 27, 1965.

⁴⁸⁷ *Evening Star*, November 23, 1969.



—Star Photographer Owen Duvall

Figure 7 Evening Star, November 23, 1969.

A Parcel-by-Parcel Study of the Market Block

By the time of urban renewal, land use on the Market Block was a mix of retail establishments, restaurants, offices, and apartments. Fairfax Street features offices on ground floors with residential units above. Though bounded by office buildings at each corner of the Market Block, King Street also contained a hardware store, a china shop, and a cigar store. On Royal Street, restaurants and retail took up the most space. While many offices may have had business with City Hall, the Market Block's proximity to the seat of government did not have an overwhelming influence on the use of land on the block.

Using a series of photographs taken by Russell Jones in 1959 as a beginning into a parcel-by-parcel study situates the reader at a point closest to the present in the history of Market Square, when Alexandrians worried that urban renewal would threaten public housing, the historical integrity of Old Town, and the political independence of the city from federal influence. The histories of each parcel presented here place the preservation movement, the fair housing movement, and the larger civil rights movement in its Alexandria context. The reasons advocates gave for saving some historic buildings but not others, the justifications for redevelopment in some areas but not others, and the rhetoric used in each movement shows Alexandrians confronting the legacy of slavery, abolition, racial terror, and Jim Crow segregation.

By showing the buildings that were torn down, this report seeks to capture what contemporaries experienced in loss of the Market Block built environment. Through this process, the parcel-by-parcel study uncovers the history of each building and its occupants through time. In the 1960s, every building had a stable address and we can trace the histories of the address.

Then, we bridge back to before the updated street numbers and show how the fewer lots became newer lots.

The Historic Alexandria Foundation undertook its own historic building inventory beginning in 1959. The HAF hired Worth Bailey as a consultant on the project. Bailey identified 103-107 and 109 N. Royal as the only two historically significant edifices on the Royal Street front of the Market Block. He estimated the date of construction of 103-107 only as “19th c.” but added “early 19th c.” for 109. The buildings singled out on Fairfax Street included 114-116 and 118, both early-nineteenth century brick structures. Only two buildings on King Street – the Hulfish Hardware building with its cast iron façade at 315 and the three-story brick building connected to the Alexandria National Bank building at 319 – merited inclusion. Added to these six buildings, three structures on Gazette Alley and one on Market Square Alley founded out the list of historically significant buildings according to the HAF.

Writing a parcel-by-parcel study of Lots 48 and 49 has its difficulties. The changing parcel lines over time, greater degrees of subdivision, and shared alleyways make drawing precise lines that cross time fraught with error. Clues to the past ownership of the real estate parcels on the Market Block lay in the property descriptions themselves. The description of the second of five Hulfish parcels reminds readers “said property [was] a portion of the real estate of which the late William P. Quisenbury died seized and possessed.”⁴⁸⁸ The fifth parcel recalls a purchase by John W. Massie in 1840, as well as “the line of Quisenbury, formerly Patton’s.” The history of these parcels told in the deeds recovers their ownership back to the first sales of Alexandria town lots.

⁴⁸⁸ Book 597 page 642

The popularity of photography and the advent of insurance maps in the late-nineteenth century makes recreating the built environment much easier beginning around 1874. The Hopkins Map, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, and several aerial photographs make it much easier to recognize and interpret the historic built environment of the Market Square.

When urban renewal finally arrived at the Market Block, the City of Alexandria purchased properties labeled 100-120 (even) N. Fairfax, 301-329 (odd) King Street, 101-119 (odd) N. Royal, and the several properties fronting on the alleys then named Shinbone and Sharpshin. Lot 48 had twelve parcels in 1965. On Lot 49, the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA) purchased eight separate parcels.

The state of the block at the time of urban renewal in 1964-1965 informs the parcel numbering system used in this report. The numbering begins with Parcel 49.1A, formerly 115-117 N. Royal Street, at the corner of Sharpshin Alley and Royal Street in Lot 49. A connected parcel at the corner of Market Alley and Sharpshin Alley is 49.1B. Just south of 49.1B on Market Alley is 49.1C. The building at 113 N. Royal Street equals Parcel 49.1D.

Moving south on Royal Street, 109-111 N. Royal is Parcel 49.2. Parcel 49.3 covers 103-105-107 N. Royal Street. The corner of N. Royal and King streets becomes Parcel 49.4, encompassing 101 N. Royal, 325-327 King Street, and 319-321-323 King Street. The divergent histories and house numbers of Parcel 49.4 required a further division into Parcel 49.4.1, 49.4.2, and 49.4.3. The ground containing 317 King Street becomes Parcel 49.5.

On Lot 48, the parcel numbering resumes at the eastern corner of Market Alley and King Street with Parcel 48.6.1, equivalent to 315 King Street and a warehouse building in the rear, facing the alley. Since one entity owned several adjacent parcels, the numbering continued north

on Market Alley with Parcel 48.6.2 and Parcel 48.6.3. The corner of Market Alley and Sharpshin Alley turned into Parcel 48.6.4. Returning to King Street, 313 King Street became Parcel 48.6.5.

The parcel numbers then follow King Street to Fairfax Street and thence north on Fairfax Street to Sharpshin Alley. Parcel 48.7 covered 309-311 King Street. The corner of King and Fairfax streets becomes Parcel 48.8.1, covering not only 301-307 King Street but also 100-102-104 N. Fairfax Street. 106 N. Fairfax Street took on Parcel 48.8.2 while Parcel 48.8.3 consumed 108 N. Fairfax Street. Parcel 48.9 was once 110 N. Fairfax. Parcel 48.10 was 114-116 N. Fairfax. Finally, 118 N. Fairfax, at the corner of Sharpshin Alley, became Parcel 48.11.

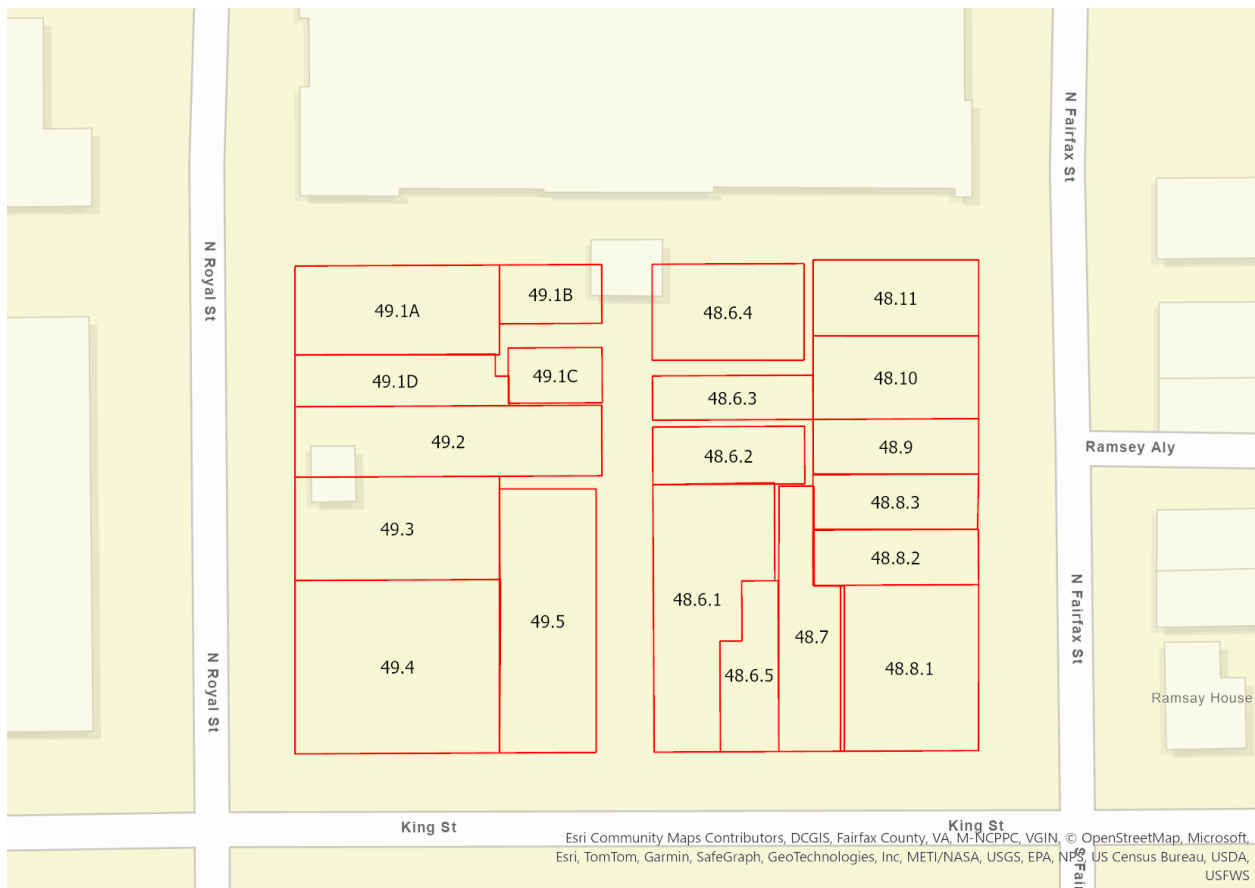


Figure 8 Map showing the parcel numbering system applied by the City of Alexandria. Map by the author.

| Parcel Number | Street Address on 1941 Sanborn |
|----------------------|--|
| 49.1A | 115-117 North Royal Street |
| 49.1B | G Shinbone Alley and Sharpshin Alley, unnumbered |
| 49.1C | Shinbone Alley, unnumbered |
| 49.1D | 113 North Royal Street |
| 49.2 | 109-11 North Royal Street |
| 49.3 | 103-105-107 North Royal Street |
| 49.4.1 | 325-327-329 King Street and 101 North Royal Street |
| 49.4.2 | 323 King Street |
| 49.4.3 | 321 King Street |
| 49.5 | 317-319 King Street |

| Parcel Number | Street Address on 1941 Sanborn |
|----------------------|--|
| 48.6.1 | 315 King Street; A1 and F1 Shinbone Alley |
| 48.6.2 | B1 Shinbone Alley |
| 48.6.3 | C1 Shinbone Alley |
| 48.6.4 | D1 and E1 Shinbone Alley |
| 48.6.5 | 313 King Street |
| 48.7 | 309-311 King Street |
| 48.8.1 | 301-303-305-307 King Street; 100-102-104 North Fairfax Street |
| 48.8.2 | 106 North Fairfax Street |
| 48.8.3 | 108 North Fairfax Street |
| 48.9 | 110-112 North Fairfax Street |
| 48.10 | 114-116 North Fairfax Street |
| 48.11 | 118-120 North Fairfax Street |

This research located a previously uncited/unstudied plat map of Market Square in the City of Alexandria Collection in Special Collections at the Alexandria Public Library. The map is undated but appears to illustrate the buildings on the square in approximately 1850. The “Old Market” dominated the area, its front on Cameron Street measuring 177 feet, six inches with a width of twenty-five feet. The Old Market had three main spaces, two for marketing and a smaller Scale Room at the end of the building closest to Fairfax Street. Abutting the Old Market

was the Old Council Chambers, which measured thirty-five feet on Cameron and twenty feet on Fairfax, at the corner of those two streets. On the Royal Street end of the Old Market, a passageway nine feet wide separated it from the “New Markett [*sic*].” The New Market narrowed from twenty-five feet to twenty-four feet in the 150 feet that stretched between the corner of Royal Street and the Alley. The New Market opened to the square, alley, and sidewalks via two vestibules about twenty-five feet square, and had a 100 feet long enclosed space where the bulk of the business transpired. An Engine House occupied about half of the “Alley owned by the Corporation” that measured twenty-six feet, seven inches. This was very likely the Friendship Fire Engine House. On the Fairfax Street side of the square, stood another unnamed Engine House, as did the Hydraulion Engine House. One reached the Fish Market by crossing an eleven feet, six inch passage from the Hydraulion Engine House. An ordinance required that the Old Market be kept for the use of the country marketers, while butchers and others moved into the New Market.

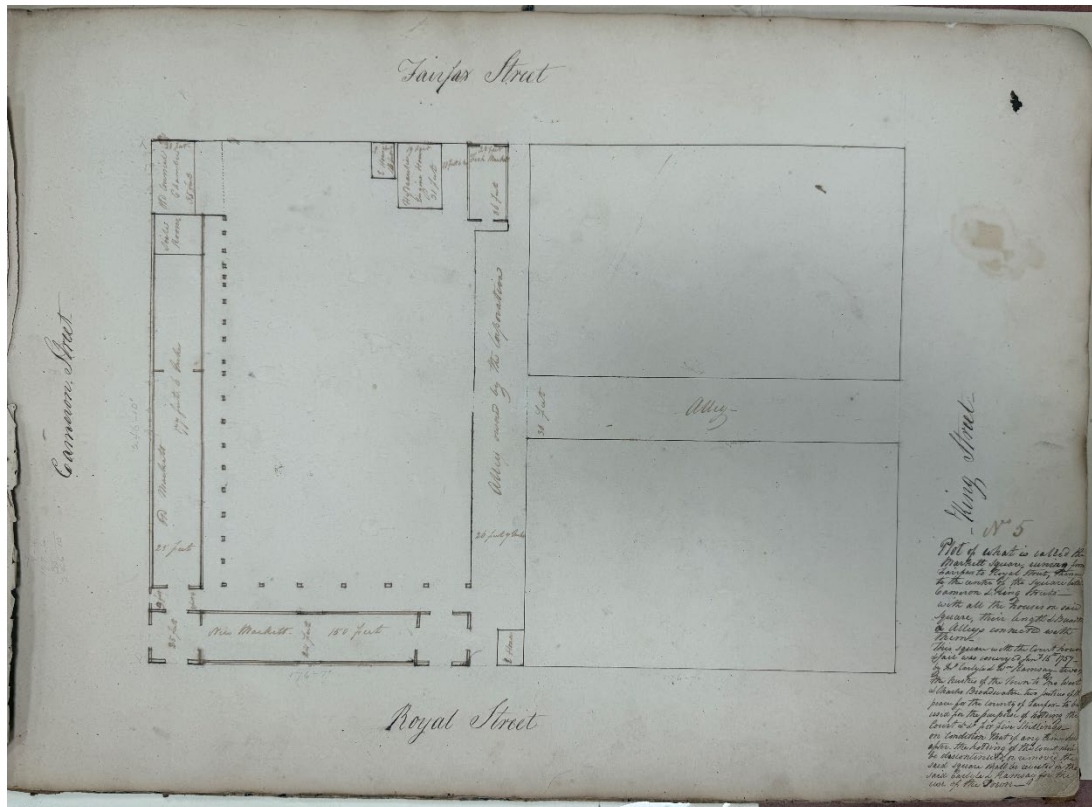


Figure 9 "Plot of what is called the Market Square, running [sic] from Fairfax to Royal street, thence to the center of the square between Cameron & King streets, with all the houses on said square, their length & breadth & alleys connected with them. This square with the Courthouse & Jail was conveyed Jan 15th, 1757 by Jno. Carlyle & Wm. Ramsay, two of the Trustees of the town to Jno. West & Charles Broadwater two justices of the peace for the County of Fairfax, to be used for the purpose of holding the Court &c. &c. for five shillings, on condition that if any time hereafter the holding of the Court should be discontinued, or removed, the said square shall be reverted in the said Carlyle & Ramsay for the use of the Town," MS 019.5, Oversize Plots of the Corporation, ALSC.

Figures on Following Pages:

Figure 10 313-315 King Street, photograph by Russell Jones. The building on the left is Carlin-Hulfish Hardware. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC.

Figure 11 313 King Street, photograph by Victor Amato. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC.

Figure 12 313-315 King Street, photograph by Russell Jones. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC.

Figure 13 315 King, , photograph by Victor Amato. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC.



Figure 8

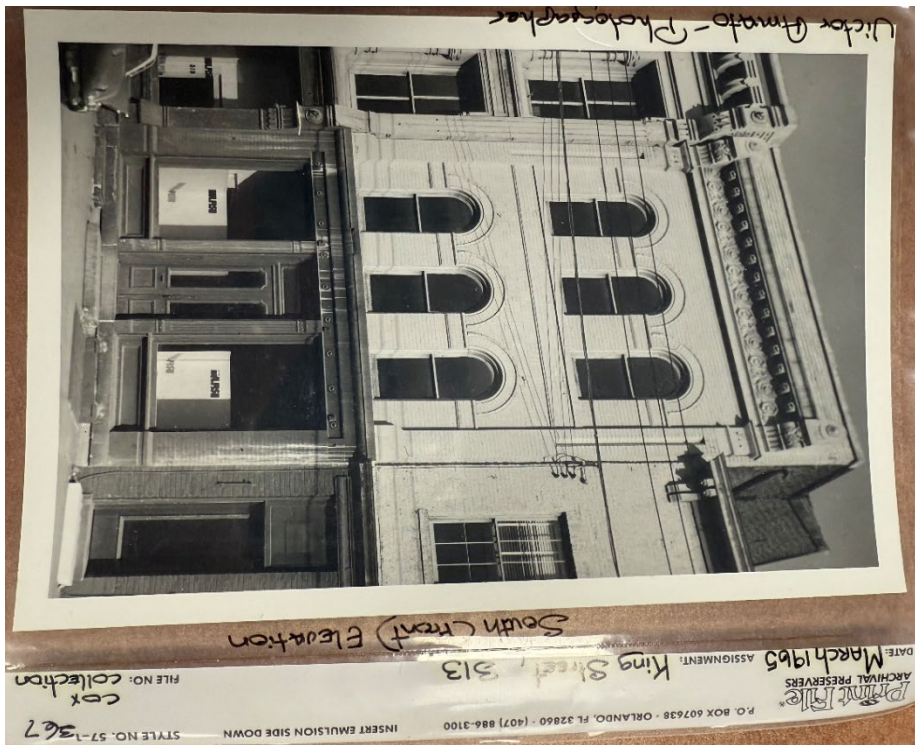


Figure 9



Figure 10

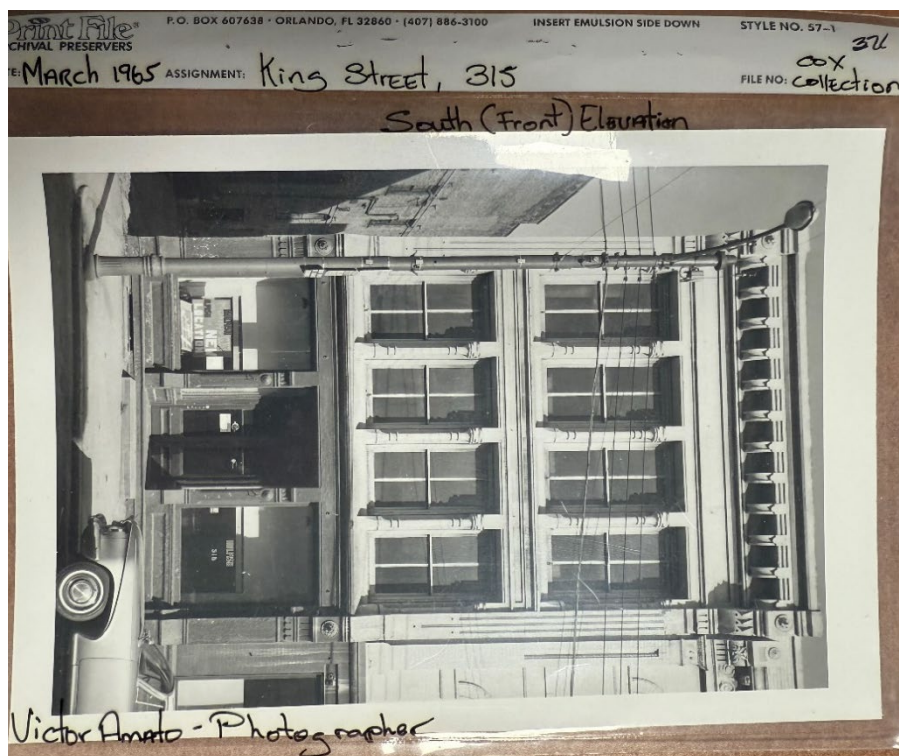


Figure 11



Figure 14 319 King Street, the *Alexandria Gazette* building. *Alexandria Gazette*, January 15, 1912.



Figure 15 311 King Street, Capital City Telephone Company, Alex. J. Wedderburn, *Souvenir Virginia Tercentennial of Historic Alexandria, Va., Past and Present* (Alexandria, 1907).



Figure 16 Alexandria National Bank Building, 325 King Street, corner of N. Royal, from Alex. J. Wedderburn, *Souvenir Virginia Tercentennial of Historic Alexandria, Va., Past and Present* (Alexandria, 1907). Originally built by Daniel T. Witmer in 1859 and known as The Witmer Building.

A Parcel-by-Parcel Study of Lot 48

During the eighteenth century the four corners of Lot 48 had different characteristics. Richard Arrell judged the corner facing the Market Square to be the most attractive, likely for a number of reasons. The corner of Shinbone Alley and Sharpshin Alley, facing the Market Square, served as a tavern, inn, and restaurant for nearly all of its years. As it faced the primary public square, it attracted customers on Market Days, Court Days, and any other day the general public had cause to cross the space. Arrell had access to political leaders and ordinary marketers, the free and enslaved working classes, and travelers. Though we know neither why James Rumsey bought the corner of King and Fairfax nor to what purpose he dedicated the parcel, his successor, Joseph Mandeville, made it into a grocery. The corner of Shinbone Alley and King Street became a hardware store for practically the entirety of its existence. In the middle of the block, the corner of Sharpshin Alley and Fairfax Street boasted a residence for most of its lifespan. Its immediate proximity to the jail might have discouraged commerce.

John Pagan constructed the first building on the Market Block shortly after his purchase, on what would become Parcel 48.7. William Carne's nineteenth-century history of the town states, "John Pagan has facing King Street, some fifty feet from the corner, a house like [William] Ramsay's, but of smaller dimensions..."⁴⁸⁹ Pagan may also have constructed a warehouse on Lot 48. A court order from the judges of the Fairfax County Court required Thomas Darus, John Summers, and Jonathan Ray to inspect "a warehouse built by William Munday for the said John Pagan and report upon oath the sufficiency and value of said work."⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁹ T. Michael Miller, *Alexandria's Forgotten Legacy: The Annals of Wm. F. Carne* (Alexandria Library, 1984), 159, quoted in Miller, *Pen Portraits*, 8.

⁴⁹⁰ Fairfax County Court Minute Books 1749:174, September 27, 1751. Fairfax County Historic Records Center.

Though the deed has been lost, Pagan sold Lot 48 to Benjamin Sebastian, Sr. around 1754.⁴⁹¹ Sebastian held licenses to operate a tavern in Alexandria during these years. Jacob Pshaw received a license in January 1756 “to keep an ordinary on Mr. Sebastian’s Lot in Alexandria.”⁴⁹² From 1759 until he sold the lots in 1765, the court granted Sebastian himself the licenses.⁴⁹³ Benjamin Sebastian, Sr. owned both lots 48 and 49 from 1754 until 1765. It may have been during this era that Alexandrians turned the boundary line between the two lots into Courthouse Alley.

A number of records illuminate the slaveholding of the Sebastians, although surviving sources do not indicate if the family’s slaves lived and/or worked in the city or at their plantation near the old Fairfax County Courthouse. When Benjamin Sebastian, Sr. died in 1772, the inventory of his estate listed seven enslaved people: an elderly man named Cesar, a woman Easter and her child Cary, a woman Nan and her child Savory, a young lady called Daphne, and a woman named Darrica [or Barrica].⁴⁹⁴ The inventory also named the indentured servants Jane Morrison, Michael Hooper, Joseph White, and Sarah Mallard.⁴⁹⁵

Sebastian sold his interest in Lot 48 to Richard Arell sometime in 1765.⁴⁹⁶ The deed for this sale from Sebastian to Arell has been lost but the Fairfax County Court noted two related matters which suggest a 1765 date. The 1765 Court Minute Book includes an entry declaring “Benjⁿ. Sebastian & Priscilla his wife, she being first privately examined and thereto consenting,

⁴⁹¹ Fairfax Count Deed Book C:395, ca. 1754.

⁴⁹² Fairfax County Court Order Book 1754:450, January 22, 1756.

⁴⁹³ FCCOB 1756:398, July 19, 1759; FCCOB 1756:514, September 16, 1760; FCCOB 1756:669, November 18, 1761; FCCOB 1756:802, February 15, 1763.

⁴⁹⁴ Fairfax County Will Book C1:130, will of Benjamin Sebastian.

⁴⁹⁵ Fairfax County Will Book C1:130, will of Benjamin Sebastian.

⁴⁹⁶ FDB F:326 missing.

acknowledged a Deed of Feoffment to Richard Arell.”⁴⁹⁷ A similar entry later in the same volume adds that the Deed of Feoffment came “with the Livery of Seizin.”⁴⁹⁸ Richard Arell continued the tavern business started by Sebastian on Lot 48.

Arell kept himself busy as a tavern keeper on the corner of the Market Square and Market Alley. He received licenses to “keep an ordinary” for several years running into the 1770s. The proximity of Arell’s Tavern to the Court House made his establishment an easy choice to sequester members of the jury for cases that carried on from day to day. In the case of *Aminidab Seekright v. John Doe and Richard Roe* in 1766, the court ordered the jury “by consent of the parties...to adjourn to the house of Richard Arrell [*sic*] and be entertained at the expense of both parties...until they agree on a verdict.”⁴⁹⁹

Several sources shed limited light on Richard Arell’s other activities during the late-eighteenth century. Arell’s name appears often in the minutes and orders of the Fairfax County Court. The summary nature of these entries, however, has left us in the dark on many important details. Daniel Jennings accused Arell of an unknown offense in a 1768 case that led the judges to empanel a jury. After Jennings and Arell aired their cases, the jury rebuked both parties. Arell “did not assume upon himself in manner and form as [he] in pleading hath alleged,” the jury announced. Jennings, for his part, should “take nothing by his bill but for his false clamour be in mercy.”⁵⁰⁰ Arell collected the costs of his defense. The instigation of the proceedings – that is, the incident of which Jennings clamoured falsely – does not appear in the surviving court

⁴⁹⁷ FCCMB 1765:24.

⁴⁹⁸ FCCMB 1765:72.

⁴⁹⁹ Fairfax County Land Records of Long Standing, 195/239.

⁵⁰⁰ FCCMB 1768:274.

records.⁵⁰¹ A 1783 accusation by James Kirk against Arell and John Snider proved too serious for the Fairfax County justices, who sent the cause to the General Court.⁵⁰²

Richard Arell subdivided Lot 48 for the first time in 1771, diversifying his considerable real estate and commercial holdings by leasing several smaller parcels within the half-acre lot. Arell helped pioneer the practice of leasing in Alexandria. In urban Alexandria, historian Thomas M. Preisser argues, “the practice of renting land locally did not begin until about 1770.”⁵⁰³ Indeed, Preisser continues, “Arell and [John Alexander] together controlled 78% of the town rental business.”⁵⁰⁴ Although Arell eventually profited significantly by leasing instead of selling his real estate, his first attempt as a landlord ended inauspiciously.

The merchants Robert Hall and John Jones leased Parcel 48.7 in April 1771.⁵⁰⁵ Unfortunately for Hall and Jones, they proved unable to pay the rent and Arell re-entered the property in the spring of 1772. In all likelihood, Hall and Jones occupied the same house constructed by John Pagan ca. 1750 or, at least, a house on the same site. The description of Pagan’s house placed it “some fifty feet from the corner” of Fairfax and King streets. Multiple deeds from the 1770s measure parcels from a point “beginning on Kings Street at the west end of the house in which Messrs. Hall and Jones, Merchants, live.”⁵⁰⁶ Digital mapping of these parcels shows a nearly perfect overlap between these two described sites [see map]. On May 21, 1772, Hall and Jones swore to their account books, indicating an ongoing civil suit possibly related to

⁵⁰¹ FCCMB 1768:274.

⁵⁰² FCCMB 1783:190.

⁵⁰³ Thomas M. Preisser, “Eighteenth Century Alexandria, Virginia, Before the Revolution, 1749-1776” College of William and Mary, Ph.D. dissertation, 1977, 198.

⁵⁰⁴ Thomas M. Preisser, “Eighteenth Century Alexandria, Virginia, Before the Revolution, 1749-1776” College of William and Mary, Ph.D. dissertation, 1977, 198.

⁵⁰⁵ Recited in Arell to Gilpin, FDB K:7-10.

⁵⁰⁶ Arell to Gilpin, FDB K:7-10.

insolvency.⁵⁰⁷ The week prior, however, Richard Arell leased the same property to George Gilpin in exchange for an annual rent of \$40 in silver.⁵⁰⁸

A year later, Gilpin negotiated for a larger portion of the lot, extending his parcel significantly along the alley that now connected King Street to the Courthouse and Market Square.⁵⁰⁹ In addition to the roughly 60' by 30' lot fronting King Street, Gilpin acquired a lot in the rear that stretched behind the adjoining parcel, owned by John Butcher, to front on the Courthouse Alley. Gilpin sold the entire parcel to William Hartshorne around 1780.⁵¹⁰

By the end of 1773, Arell had disposed of the entire Fairfax Street frontage in the following manner:

| DATE | PARTIES | LOCATION |
|------------|--|----------------------|
| 1771-09-24 | Richard Arell to William McCleery & John Allison | 60' front on Fairfax |
| 1772-04-29 | Arell to James Rumsey | 60' front on Fairfax |
| 1773-06-16 | Arell to Angel Hart Couter | 60' front on Fairfax |
| 1773-12-17 | Arell to William Allison | 27'7" on Fairfax |

Arell himself continued in residency on Lot 48 until early in 1777, when he advertised for rent “the house that he formerly kept as a publick one.”⁵¹¹ He described the house as one with “situation and conveniences...so well known, that I need not here insert them; but, in a few words, it has every convenience that is necessary to carry on publick house keeping in an

⁵⁰⁷ FCCOB 1772:49.

⁵⁰⁸ Arell to Gilpin, FDB K:7-10 May 14, 1772.

⁵⁰⁹ Arell to Gilpin, FDB L:217-220, August 27, 1773.

⁵¹⁰ FDB L:217-220

⁵¹¹ *Virginia Gazette* July 4, 1777.

extensive manner.”⁵¹² Arell also kept in his warehouse on the property “1000 barrels of superfine and common flour.”⁵¹³ Arell rented this tavern property to John Rich on August 15, 1778.⁵¹⁴ Arell appeared in court in 1788 to challenge the tax valuation of his King Street property.⁵¹⁵

118-120 N. Fairfax Street (Parcel 48.11)

The bulldozers took down a three-and-a-half-story brick apartment building at 118-120 N. Fairfax Street. Martin H. and Grace B. Ristig owned the building when the ARHA purchased it for urban renewal, in 1965.⁵¹⁶ The Ristigs acquired it from John and Carolyn Weir on April 22, 1952.⁵¹⁷ On December 30, 1946, the Weirs purchased it from Edna M. Taylor.⁵¹⁸

A photograph of the building from 1959 gives entrée into the history of the building in that year. In 1959, the ground floor contained the offices of Arthur P. Gottwald, a lawyer, and the Hopkins Realty Company. Other attorneys had offices in the building throughout the years, including W. Hobart Little (1950). A chiropodist, Edna C. Taylor, saw patients in the space during the 1930s and 1940s. Above, a rotating cast of tenants occupied five apartments for most of the twentieth century.

The brick building dated to the middle of the nineteenth century, predated by a one-story wooden frame house.⁵¹⁹ It already appears on the 1885 Sanborn Map but did not take its final

⁵¹² *Virginia Gazette* July 4, 1777.

⁵¹³ *Virginia Gazette* July 4, 1777.

⁵¹⁴ FDB N:441 missing; part of this deed appears in Fairfax Minute Book 1756-1763, part 2, back p. 3

⁵¹⁵ Fairfax County Court Minute Books 1788:90.

⁵¹⁶ Alex. 618:324-325, January 29, 1965.

⁵¹⁷ Alex. 337:9-11, April 22, 1952.

⁵¹⁸ Alex. 237:461-462, December 30, 1946.

⁵¹⁹ “One wooden house...to the north,” cited in Mutual Assurance Policy Number 178, Series 40A, AA Ref. No. 89.

form around 1921. While the 1921 Sanborn Map shows the courtyard space fronting the alley still open, property owner Ester Virginia Price took out a loan for \$1200 in September of that year from the Alexandria Building and Loan Association. Presumably, Price used the money to fill in the courtyard with the two-story brick building indicated on later Sanborn maps.⁵²⁰

Edna C. Taylor purchased the property in 1925 and, a decade later carried out extensive renovations, as documented in several building permits and by detailed construction plans.⁵²¹ At the time of its demolition, it had a newer brick façade, as the Russell Jones photograph from 1959 shows that there is not a row of bricks turned in the façade, only the side wall.

Prior to the new street number system, 118-120 N. Fairfax had the number 16 N. Fairfax. The Gilbert Simpson family occupied the building from about 1848 until 1876.⁵²² Gilbert Simpson, Jr. played an infamous role in the 1865 Christmas Day riot. Simpson continued to live in infamy. In May 1872, “A vicious dog, belonging to Mr. Gilbert Simpson, Jr., after attacking and biting two children in the alley near the Market Square,...was shot and killed by Mr. John Fornshill, the father of one [of] the children he had bitten.”⁵²³

During the eighteenth century, a series of merchants and craftspeople occupied this Fairfax Street lot with its second face on Market Square. The joiner William Allison had a shop and probably lived in the same building between 1773 and 1780. Allison sold the property to Alexander Pearce in 1780.⁵²⁴ Pearce sold to William Hunter in 1782.⁵²⁵ Hunter sold to the

⁵²⁰ Alex. 72:606-607, September 17, 1921.

⁵²¹ Alex. 84:548-549, December 10, 1925. Building Permits, Alexandria Archives and Records Center.

⁵²² Alex. K3:16-17, May 27, 1848 and Alex. 6:102, November 27, 1876.

⁵²³ *Alexandria Gazette*, June 1, 1872.

⁵²⁴ FDBN:73 missing; FDBQ:74.

⁵²⁵ FDBN:73 missing; FDBQ:74. Hunter had a role in the freedom suits filed by Jacob, alias Pompey in 1795.

merchant John Bryce in 1784.⁵²⁶ John and Robert, John's son with Hannah Bryce appear to have remained on the property until 1811, when the descendants of Richard Arell re-entered the property for nonpayment of rent.⁵²⁷

114-116 N. Fairfax (Parcel 48.10)

The complex of buildings on this parcel changed significantly over time. Angel Hart Couter, a butcher, rented this property from Richard Arell in 1773 and likely built the square wooden house on the lot.⁵²⁸ Like Couter, the next few tenants on Parcel 48.10 stayed only a short time and left a shallow imprint in the archive. Couter sold to Christian Longmarch (also spelled Langmarch), who willed the property to Oliver Price, in 1783.⁵²⁹

Oliver Price held stake in both the public and private development of the Market Block. A member of the Town Council, Price helped develop plans for the 1785 Market House. Price served as Clerk of the Council from at 1784 until 1797, a period that aligns quite closely to his tenancy on Fairfax Street.

A 1799 Mutual Assurance policy indicates a wooden frame house, twenty-five feet square, on the front of the block and occupied by Thomas White.⁵³⁰ In 1803, White caused the construction of a “two-story brick dwelling house, with a wooden roof” and a “brick smokehouse.”⁵³¹ The house measured twenty-six feet in depth by sixteen feet facing on Fairfax

⁵²⁶ FDB Q:74-77.

⁵²⁷ Alex. U:349-50.

⁵²⁸ FDB L:229-232, June 16, 1773.

⁵²⁹ FDBN:319 missing; Alex. G:416-21; Fairfax County Will Books D:413, December 16, 1783, Will of Christian Langmarch.

⁵³⁰ Mutual Assurance Policy Number 178, Series 40B, AA Ref. No. 90.

⁵³¹ Mutual Assurance Policy Number 2041, Series 40A, AA Ref. No. 89.

Street. In 1805, White replaced the original wooden house fronting directly on Fairfax Street with another frame building, also twenty-six feet by sixteen feet.⁵³²

White's children inherited his property after he died, in 1819. His funeral took place here on Fairfax Street.⁵³³ Thomas White's wife, Elizabeth, paid for constructing the three-story brick store with a slate roof in 1823. The new brick building was twenty-seven feet by twenty-four feet.⁵³⁴ The property stayed in the White family until 1899. The three-story brick building stood at 114-116 N. Fairfax Street until the ARHA demolished it in 1965.

Thomas White used part of his Fairfax Street property for his blacksmith shop. Surviving records that White used white indentured servants to help in his shop but no evidence has been found of his connection to slave ownership. White publicly accused a house servant, Betty Washers, of stealing "several articles and some valuable clothing" from him.⁵³⁵ Another servant, John Hughes, took off without saying goodbye the same year.⁵³⁶

Thomas White left a lasting legacy in the built environment of the Market Block, possibly causing the construction of at least one of the warehouse structures on Market Alley. As well, he owned multiple parcels throughout Alexandria.⁵³⁷ One of the parcels lay at the corner of Market Space and Market Alley, the "Arell's Tavern" site.

The 1876 Chataigne's Directory shows the Cook & Company firm selling produce, fish, and oysters at old 14 N. Fairfax. A mattress maker, John W. Harrison, and a driver, Thomas Posey, made their home in the residential structures on the parcel.

⁵³² Mutual Assurance Policy Number 2041, Series 40H, AA Ref. No. 91.

⁵³³ *Alexandria Gazette*, November 17, 1819.

⁵³⁴ Mutual Assurance Policy Number 5003/11075, Series 40E, AA Ref. No. 592; Mutual Assurance Policy Number 1611/5003, Series 40D, AA Ref. No. 93.

⁵³⁵ *Alexandria Advertiser*, June 8, 1798.

⁵³⁶ *Times & District Columbia Advertiser*, March 12, 1798.

⁵³⁷ See Alex. P2:393-396.

110-112 N. Fairfax Street (Parcel 48.9)

A two-story brick building with an attic housed the Richmarr Construction Company from 1958 until the ARHA purchased it for urban renewal in 1965.⁵³⁸ John Clarkson occupied 110 N. Fairfax as a residence and offices in 1920.⁵³⁹ Later in the decade, the George Washington Stone Corp. rented the premises for office space.⁵⁴⁰ Private detective and bondsman Jesse A. Thomas kept his office at 110 N. Fairfax beginning in 1930.⁵⁴¹ Vacancy plagued the unit during the 1930s but, in 1940 The Gift House opened its doors to customers.⁵⁴²

Ellis H. Geiselman, a former officer in the U.S. Navy, made his home at 110 N. Fairfax from the end of World War II, until vacancy returned in 1948.⁵⁴³ Geiselman became famous as the executive officer of the USS *Arizona* when the Japanese military destroyed the ship at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Geiselman survived the attack thanks to a timely shore leave the morning of the attack and went on to lead the USS *Detroit* during the remainder of World War II.⁵⁴⁴ Geiselman and his wife, Marian Wheatman, lived at 110 N. Fairfax while Ellis continued his military service in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations.

The Geiselmans entertained with informal diplomacy when they hosted visitors from Denmark touring the area in 1947. The *Washington Times-Herald* referred approvingly to the

⁵³⁸ Alex. 467:498-499, April 9, 1958 and Alex. 621:411-413, March 16, 1965.

⁵³⁹ 1920 Hill's City Directory.

⁵⁴⁰ 1924 Hill's City Directory.

⁵⁴¹ 1930 Hill's City Directory.

⁵⁴² 1940 City Directory.

⁵⁴³ 1950 City Directory. *Congressional Record – Senate*, 1918:9713.

⁵⁴⁴ *USS Arizona Memorial Administrative History*, Review Draft 1.0, prepared by Spencer Architects, 2004. <https://npshistory.com/publications/perl/adhi-2004.pdf>, accessed March 30, 2026.

Geiselmans as “those fine old Navy gourmets and hospitable hosts.”⁵⁴⁵ The couple earned plaudits for the outdoor cooking of an “enormous steak which was the piece de resistance of the dinner” they hosted in October 1947. “Gus,” as the paper called Capt. Geiselman, “perform[ed] the gastronomic miracle of broiling a steak to perfection, then serving it piping hot, together will all the tasty accompaniments.”⁵⁴⁶ After Ellis Geiselman retired from the Navy, the pair left Alexandria.

The ownership of the building the Geiselmans rented was in a state of serious flux during the post-World War II years. The Navy couple probably paid rent to the heirs of Myrtle Graves when they first moved into 110 N. Fairfax in 1945.⁵⁴⁷ The Graves heirs sold to Henora Nalls, Catherine E. Traeger, and Elizabeth Colgan Duncan on April 17, 1946.⁵⁴⁸ These three women then sold to Henry P. Thomas on August 3, 1946 but, after just over a year, Esther and George L. Quinn, Jr. bought the property.⁵⁴⁹ The Quinns sold quickly, too, discarding the real estate in favor of Margaretta and Charles L. Arnold in October 1948.⁵⁵⁰ Four other owners and three other banks had an interest in the property for the next several years until John H. and Elizabeth All Martinsen came into possession of it in April 1953.⁵⁵¹ The Martinsens sold to Richmarr Construction in 1958.⁵⁵²

110 N. Fairfax did not appear on the nineteenth century nor the early twentieth-century Sanborns, only 112 N. Fairfax. Labeled simply as a “dwelling” in 1885 and 1891, the use

⁵⁴⁵ *Times-Herald*, November 19, 1947.

⁵⁴⁶ *Times-Herald*, October 6, 1947.

⁵⁴⁷ *Alex.* 227:37-42, April 17, 1946.

⁵⁴⁸ *Alex.* 227:37-42, April 17, 1946.

⁵⁴⁹ *Alex.* 252:105-06, September 8, 1947.

⁵⁵⁰ *Alex.* 272:413-14, October 22, 1948.

⁵⁵¹ *Alex.* 354:464-65, April 2, 1953.

⁵⁵² *Alex.* 467:498-99, April 9, 1958.

changed to “Office” in 1896. The use remained commercial for later maps, except 1921. The 1920 Hill’s City Directory confirms the residential use that year.

These tenants continued the practice of subdivision of Lot 48. Arell started the process by dividing the Fairfax Street frontage of the lot into three portions, two 60’ fronts and one front of 57’7”. McCleery and Allison then divided their 60’ into two 30’ parcels. Tobias Zimmerman rented 30’ originally but only sold/subleased 20’ when he conveyed to David Jackson on May 17, 1784. The Arells might have retained the remaining ten feet of Zimmerman’s parcel. Adam Goose sold the full thirty feet of his parcel to William Lyles and Henry Lyles on April 26, 1782. The next year, the heirs of William Lyles sold their full share – 30’ – to Henry. But, when the Heirs of Henry Lyles sold to John Norwood in 1807, the southerly boundary of the lot had moved northward by 10’. The original 60’ frontage had been converted from two 30’ frontages into three 20’ frontages. Thus, in 1813, the 177’7” frontage of Fairfax Street had been subdivided into the following parcels:

| |
|--|
| ■ 60ft – Joseph Mandeville |
| ■ 20ft – John Patton beginning 60ft from King |
| ■ 20ft – John Norwood beginning 80ft from King |
| ■ 20ft – John Norwood beginning 100ft from King |
| ■ 30ft – Thomas White beginning 120ft from King |
| ■ 27ft 7in – William Reynolds, corner of East/West Alley & Fairfax |

Perhaps the lease to Hall and Jones still seemed like a good business proposition in September 1771, when Arell leased an additional portion of Lot 48, facing Fairfax Street, to William McCleery and John Allison. McCleery and Allison rented Parcel 48.9, measuring 60’ by

60', for \$40 in Spanish milled silver.⁵⁵³ Direct evidence does not tie any building activity to McCleery and Allison during their era of tenure. The pair held on to their lease for a little more than four years, until January 22, 1776.

With the Revolutionary War underway, McCleery and Allison closed their business interests and dedicated their energies to military service. Both men became colonels in the Continental Army.⁵⁵⁴ Allison took charge of the Potomac Navy, part of the fleet organized by the Virginia Conventions as the Virginia State Navy, and personally led the Company of Marines attached to the ship *American Congress*.⁵⁵⁵ Allison's residency on the Market Block at the same time he organizes the naval forces adds to the history of the Revolutionary Era on the Market Block beyond the traditional Fairfax Resolves story.⁵⁵⁶ The war interrupted McCleery's and Allison's business in Alexandria but it did not end it entirely. Parcel 48.9 continued in commerce despite the war, as well. On January 22, 1776, McCleery and Allison subleased the northern half of their parcel to Adam Goose, a house carpenter, and the southern half to Tobias Zimmerman, a blacksmith.⁵⁵⁷

The house carpenter Adam Goose (also rendered Gantz in later sources) may have contributed to the construction of the wooden house that apparently stood on the northern half of Parcel 48.9. The leases granted by Richard Arell do not include such a provision but it reasons

⁵⁵³ Richard and Eleanor Arell to William McCleery and John Allison, FDB J:315 missing; FDB M:192-95, 195-97, September 24, 1771.

⁵⁵⁴ On McCleery, see <https://founders.archives.gov/?q=mccleery&s=1111311111&sa=&r=1&sr=>. On Allison, see <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/04-01-02-0226>.

⁵⁵⁵ *VJAA*, May 21, 1776. Dean C. Allard, "The Potomac Navy of 1776" *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 84, no. 4 (Oct., 1976):416.

⁵⁵⁶ John D. Sinks, "The Life and Times of Surgeon George Hunter," https://www.fairfaxresolvessar.org/content/ffx_patriotic_patriotgravemarking/george_hunter.html, accessed February 2, 2026.

⁵⁵⁷ McCleery and Allison to Goose, FDB M:195-198; McCleery and Allison to Zimmerman, FDB M:192-195, both January 22, 1776.

that tenants had to have some means of earning income from their leased property in order to pay the rent. Requiring tenants to build houses that the landowner kept at the end of the lease was a common practice. When John Alexander divided his property on the outskirts of Alexandria during the 1770s, he required tenants to construct houses within two years of their occupancy or face eviction, a provision also included in the town charter and required of all the initial purchasers of town lots.⁵⁵⁸ Still, someone caused the construction of the several wooden houses on Fairfax Street indicated in Mutual Assurance policies from the 1790s and early 1800s. The policies show that every parcel on Fairfax Street contained a wooden house [see MAP].

During the 1820s and 1830s, Catherine Wood continued to manage the barber shop her husband, Richard, had abandoned on Parcel 48.9. Catherine augmented her family's income selling lamp oil ("winter strained sperm oil"), at least during the first winter without her husband's income, in 1825. For more permanent support, Catherine Wood wrote an appeal to "a generous public" in a May 2, 1825 classified ad. Pleading for continued patronage of the barbershop in "the unexpected absence of her husband," Wood stressed a desire "to provide for her helpless infant family." With Richard and his income gone away, Wood professed she was "anxious to discharge [her] duty to the best of her power, and to preserve their little property from going to decay." The first barber to move into the shop on Fairfax Street was Clement Breast, Jr., one of Richard's past apprentices, stayed for three years. Breast offered shaves, haircuts, and other services six days a week, staying open late on Saturday night to satisfy customers he might otherwise lose on account of his "conscientious scruples of working on the

⁵⁵⁸ Preisser, "Eighteenth Century Alexandria," 201. The requirement to build was not rigidly enforced. The Trustees extended the time allotted before building on more than one occasion. Nor was the law rigidly obeyed, especially given that some lots remained partially inundated.

sabbath.” Not long after Breast announced he would open his own shop further up Fairfax Street, in 1828, Catherine Wood hired Thomas Bird. Bird stayed until 1834.

The several tenants in the barbershop of Catherine Wood belong to a longer history of barbershops on Parcel 48.8 and 48.9, and others on the Market Block. When Thomas Burrage neared the end of his life, in 1883, the *Alexandria Gazette* revealed a local history of barbering at this location on Fairfax Street stretching back to the 1760s.

AN ANCIENT BARBER. – Mr. Thomas Burrage, the oldest barber in the United States, is lying ill at his home, on Fairfax Street, near the Market. He has been engaged as a barber in the shop at the head of Fayette Alley for sixty-nine years, succeeding Wm. Wood, whose shop was established there in 1762. Wood was the successor of one Martin, or Martini, who was the valet of Gen. Braddock, and was left behind after the defeat in the Fort Du Quesne expedition.⁵⁵⁹

While some measure of legend certainly pervades the account, the *Gazette* nonetheless pointed to a fact well-known by locals – you could get a good haircut on Fairfax Street.

Thomas Burrage owned at least one enslaved woman, listed as seventeen years old in the 1850 Slave Schedule of the United States Census.⁵⁶⁰ Burrage purchased the Fairfax Street lots from Arivuel D. Smith on April 26, 1847. Smith was a trustee of the several children of Catherine and Richard Wood and inherited all of their mother’s property after her death earlier in 1847. Burrage solicited business with a card in the March 30, 1843 *Gazette*, letting the public

⁵⁵⁹ *Alexandria Gazette*, June 23, 1883.

⁵⁶⁰ Family Search: <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HY-6X37-BLM?view=explore&action=view&lang=en&groupId=M9X2-3BN>.

know “he has removed his HAIR-CUTTING and SHAVING OFFICE one door south of his old stand on Fairfax Street.”⁵⁶¹ Since Catherine Wood owned both properties, Burrage must have rented the space from Catherine Wood before her passing. Hannah Burrage died on September 16, 1880 from “dropsy” at the age of 75.

Parcel 48.8.3/48.9 remained the property of descendants of the Burrage family until 1902, when the City of Alexandria seized it from Thomas Burrage’s granddaughter, Margaret E. Clarkson, for \$58.12 worth of delinquent taxes, a paltry sum even then.⁵⁶² Both state and city taxes went unpaid for several years beginning in the 1890s. Prior inheritance disputes complicated the tax sale and delayed its enforcement for several years. Not long after his 1847 purchase, Thomas Burrage put his Fairfax Street property in trust for his children.⁵⁶³ Already in 1878, the future heirs wrangled over their fair share of 108 N. Fairfax Street. The 1847 Trust gave each child 1/6 of the estate subject to the “use and enjoyment” of their mother, Hannah Burrage. When Georgiana Burrage, one of Hannah’s and Thomas’s daughters, died, her 1/6 share reverted to her father “as it came from his side of the family.”⁵⁶⁴ When Thomas Burrage ultimately died, in 1883, the laws of inheritance split the 1/6 into five equal 1/30 to distribute to each surviving child. In 1878, the three oldest children wanted to divide the estate but the guardians of the youngest children, still minors, initially refused his consent. During the course of proceedings in the Chancery Court, the family settled the dispute.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶¹ *Alexandria Gazette*, March 30, 1843.

⁵⁶² Alex. Deed Book 49:15, January 18, 1902.

⁵⁶³ Alex. Deed Book M3:78-80, Thomas Burrage to Francis L. Smith, Samuel Lunt, and George W.D. Ramsay. Trustees, December 7, 1850.

⁵⁶⁴ *Burrage v. Burrage*, Chancery, ACCC-LVA 1904-049.

⁵⁶⁵ *Burrage v. Brown*, Chancery. ACCC-LVA 1878-043.

Thomas Brocchus and Rachel, his wife, lived in a house facing Market Alley from 1803 until 1809. Thomas Brocchus apprenticed to the tailor John Harper in September 1785 and continued in the trade for many years.⁵⁶⁶ During his tenancy on Market Alley, Brocchus took his own apprentices. One young man, Alexander Lucas, made multiple efforts to escape from Brocchus and tried to make his way to the western wildernesses of Kentucky.⁵⁶⁷ Brocchus placed an ad asking his neighbors for help locating Lucas, using language that echoes ads seeking enslaved people who had freed themselves. Brocchus described Lucas's height, mannerisms, and clothing, promised to pay a reward for his capture, and cautioned "masters of Vessels and others from harbouring him at their peril." Significantly, Brocchus described Lucas as "of dark complexion."⁵⁶⁸

106-108 N. Fairfax Street (Parcels 48.8.2 and 48.8.3)

The Historic Alexandria Foundation and the broader preservation movement cared little for the building at 106-108 N. Fairfax when urban renewal threatened its more historic neighbors. No photograph of the building from the era appears to survive. Shown as vacant space in the 1941 Sanborn map, corrections showing the building first appear in the 1959 publication. Fortunately, the City of Alexandria Archives and Special Collections retains construction plans for the Backus Office Building in its Building Permits Collection.

The permits and plans from 1946 show a building styled on the exterior to blend in with its historic surroundings. A single row of bricks faced a three-story cinder block structure on the front, main portion of the building. An extended rear having only two stories, extended to the

⁵⁶⁶ FfxCMB 1783:170, September 22, 1785.

⁵⁶⁷ *Alexandria Expositor*, November 11, 1805.

⁵⁶⁸ *Alexandria Expositor*, November 11, 1805.

west. The front section had a basement but the basement stopped just before the rear wall of the upper story. The front façade had three doors, suggesting three separate interior units although the floor plans do not survive along with the other construction blueprints.⁵⁶⁹

Construction may have taken nearly a year, as listings do not appear for 106-108 N. Fairfax after construction of the Backus Office Building until 1949. In 1950, the State Unemployment Compensation Commission rented office space in 106 for its Employment Services Division. Next door at 108, the law firm Clarke, Richard, Backus, & Moncure had its offices. While Robinson Moncure was a partner in the firm, he did not have an ownership stake in the real estate.⁵⁷⁰

The Backus Office Building replaced two separate buildings that stood on Parcels 48.8.3 and 48.8.3 before their destruction around 1920. A 1919 aerial view of Market Square shows the two nineteenth century buildings still standing.⁵⁷¹

Known as 10 N. Fairfax under the old street numbering system, the house to the north (108 N. Fairfax) served as a residence to Thomas Burrage, the barber, until his death in 1885.⁵⁷² The Burrage family left a deep impression on the archive. Burrage kept his barbershop in the building at 106 N. Fairfax and constructed the three-story brick house at 108 N. Fairfax in 1869.⁵⁷³ Burrage worked for a time as policeman for the city until quitting that profession to

⁵⁶⁹ 106-108 N. Fairfax Building Permits, Alexandria Archives and Special Collections.

⁵⁷⁰ See Alex. 230:249-50, July 2, 1946; Alex. 245:291-93, May 26, 1947; and Alex. 606:212-14, August 5, 1964.

⁵⁷¹ These two buildings, appear on the 1912 Sanborn labeled 102 and 104. Causing confusion, however, the 1921 Sanborn labels the two buildings, respectively “104 (102)” and “108 (104).” The 1902 map, furthermore, has another parenthetical label for “104 (106)” but 102 is just 102.

⁵⁷² 1876 Chataigne’s Directory.

⁵⁷³ *Alexandria Gazette*, July 15 and September 24, 1869.

become a full-time barber in 1845.⁵⁷⁴ He participated in local and national politics as a Whig.⁵⁷⁵ The children of Thomas and Hannah Burrage also took on the barbering trade. John T. Burrage opened a shop on Union Street in 1866 and also sold his own line of hair dye from his father's Fairfax Street shop.⁵⁷⁶ Walter Burrage, a grandson, lived at 303 King Street during the 1920s, keeping the family connected to the Market Block.

The *Gazette* noted in 1852 that the Burrage shop “ha[d] been further improved by the introduction of Mount Cameron Water, and splendid Marble Stand and basins, with Shower Bath attached, to aid in the operation of shampooing.”⁵⁷⁷

At the time of his death, the *Alexandria Gazette* called Thomas Burrage “the oldest barber in the United States.” To justify such an extraordinary claim, the *Gazette* summoned a historical narrative connected the Fairfax Street barbershop to the days when Edward Braddock commanded British forces in the city during the French and Indian War. Burrage, according to the article, had worked “as a barber in the shop at the head of Fayette alley for sixty-nine years, succeeding Wm. Wood, whose shop was established there in 1762.” The barber Wood, so the article tells, “was the successor of one Martin, or Martini, who was the valet of Gen. Braddock and was left behind after the defeat in the Fort Du Quesne expedition.”⁵⁷⁸

This historical concoction seems rooted in misunderstandings. First, the reference to a barber named Wood may have intended Richard Wood, who left Catherine Wood, his wife, in charge of the shop when he embarked on his fraudulent schemes in Charleston. Second, Edward Braddock's body-servant did, in fact, remain in Alexandria after the failed campaign of 1755. His

⁵⁷⁴ *Alexandria Gazette*, October 11, 1845.

⁵⁷⁵ *Alexandria Gazette*, February 17, 1854.

⁵⁷⁶ *Alexandria Gazette*, March 16 1866 and November 21, 1872.

⁵⁷⁷ *Alexandria Gazette*, September 3, 1852.

⁵⁷⁸ *Alexandria Gazette*, June 23, 1883.

name was Thomas Bishop, however, and he did not open a barbershop on Fairfax Street but became a personal servant and, later, an overseer for George Washington at Mount Vernon.⁵⁷⁹ Third, a site called Martin's Plantation served as a camp for Braddock and his troops on the march to Fort DuQuesne in 1755.⁵⁸⁰ It is possible that Thomas Burrage's contemporaries in 1883 confused these several stories into one enormous legend.

Yet the legend does appear rooted in actual history. Richard Wood bought a quantity of barbering goods from a man called John Scotti in 1816.⁵⁸¹ Just before selling his goods, however, Scotti had advertised as having arrived from Philadelphia, and Richard Wood already occupied the Fairfax Street shop in 1816.⁵⁸²

301 King Street (Parcel 48.8.1)

Before urban renewal reduced the entire north 300-block of King Street into a single address – 301 King Street, City Hall – 301 King designated the north-west corner of King and Fairfax streets.

Like its neighbor at 106-108 N. Fairfax, the cinder block structure on the corner of King and Fairfax had little to offer historic preservationists in the 1960s. Built between 1921 and 1941, based on Sanborn maps, the building featured a basement and two stories split into commercial and residential units. The Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company leased the first floor and basement of the building in 1946, from Ida Rose Ezrine and her husband,

⁵⁷⁹ “Thomas Bishop,” <https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/thomas-bishop>, accessed March 31, 2026.

⁵⁸⁰ “Martin's Plantation” Historical Marker, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=177600>, accessed March 31, 2026.

⁵⁸¹ *Alexandria Gazette*, February 29, 1816.

⁵⁸² John Norwood to Richard Wood, Alex. Z:238-241, December 5, 1815.

Benjamin B. Ezrine. The lease indicated that the company would also rent “a 4000 square foot addition soon to be constructed.”⁵⁸³ The building “soon to be constructed” was the Backus Office Building behind 301 King, facing Fairfax Street.⁵⁸⁴ A 1907 photograph shows that the nineteenth-century building on this parcel looked similar to its twentieth-century replacement.⁵⁸⁵

Ida (Rose) Ezrine owned the property in her own right within her marriage to Benjamin B. Ezrine.⁵⁸⁶ Still, Benjamin Ezrine’s name appears on the deeds of trust carried out to ensure prompt payment of the promissory notes securing the building.⁵⁸⁷ In 1936, the couple paid off the loans for 301-303 King Street and 102-104-106 N. Fairfax Street while continuing to make payments on the note for 108 N. Fairfax Street.⁵⁸⁸

301 King Street, one of the busiest intersections in Alexandria during the 1910s and 1920s, served as home to Herbert P. Tancil and Sons Barbers. The Tancil family had a long history of barbering in Alexandria. Herbert P. Tancil I was born in Georgia in 1853, perhaps enslaved, but lived with Isaac Newton “Ike” Tancil in Alexandria by 1870.⁵⁸⁹ Tancil I became a barber at age 19, in 1872, and brought his son, Herbert P. Tancil II, into the business. The second generation advertised to Alexandrians with a strong reputation in the racially-divided city.

⁵⁸³ Maurice D. Rosenberg to Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company of Virginia, Alex. 230:3-6, June 22, 1946.

⁵⁸⁴ For other leases to the C&PTC, see also Alex. 258:35-37, December 31, 1947 and Alex. 276:490-92, January 22, 1949.

⁵⁸⁵ "X:\Archaeology\SHARED\Projects\King St 301 44AX33 44AX94 City Hall Market Block\Writing Q4\Parcel by Parcel\Photographs\King\1907 Capital City telephone, 311 King.png"

⁵⁸⁶ Alex. 72:343-344, June 6, 1921.

⁵⁸⁷ Alex. 72:344-345, June 6, 1921 and Alex. 132-1-2, November 5, 1936.

⁵⁸⁸ Alex. 132-1-2, November 5, 1936.

⁵⁸⁹ Char McCargo Bah, “The Other Alexandria: Herbert P. Tancil – The Mayors’ Colored Barber,” <https://www.connectionnewspapers.com/news/2018/feb/26/other-alexandria-herbert-p-tancil-mayors-colored-b/>, accessed March 31, 2026.

Known as “the Mayor’s Colored Barber,” Herbert P. Tancil I “was the barber to ten Mayors.”⁵⁹⁰

At least as early as 1897, the Tancil men, father and son, had a shop at 305 King Street, in the building on Parcel 48.8.1. Tancil I died in 1908 but his son remained in the barbering business many more years at 301 King Street.⁵⁹¹

Arell conveyed the prized corner lot at King and Fairfax Streets to James Rumsey on April 29, 1772.⁵⁹² Later in life, James Rumsey invented the steamboat and served as a superintendent on the Potomac Company.⁵⁹³ The deed from Arell to Rumsey helps place the inventor in Alexandria in his early life, a period largely unstudied by other historians. In 1772, Rumsey, who claimed residency in Loudon County, promised to pay Arell \$50 yearly rent on the parcel. We might consider that this James Rumsey could be a different man. But the connection to the Potomac Company offers a vein of similarity to other inhabitants and private investors on the block. Rumsey bought the corner lot well before he joined the company, in 1785. At that time, he lived as an innkeeper in Bath, Virginia and helped construct a house for George Washington, the retired general who led Continental forces during the revolt of the thirteen

⁵⁹⁰ Char McCargo-Bah, “Herbert Pike Tancil – The Mayors’ Colored Barber,” <https://theotheralexandria.com/2018/02/22/herbert-pike-tancil-the-mayors-colored-barber/>, accessed March 31, 2026.

⁵⁹¹ *Alexandria Gazette*, December 4, 1897.

⁵⁹² Richard and Eleanor Arell to James Rumsey, FDB K:11-14, April 29, 1772.

⁵⁹³ Neil Longley, “Rumsey, James (1743-1792)” in *The Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of the American Enlightenment*, edited by Mark Spencer. <https://access.infobase.com/article/2716110-rumsey-james-1743-1792?rak=1&aid=103525>, accessed February 3, 2026. Rumsey tested his steamboat in 1787. Robert Fulton, widely regarded today as the “inventor of the steamboat,” improved on Rumsey’s design but not until 1803, in Paris. Fulton and Rumsey met in London in 1793 and “they were on terms of intimacy,” one contemporary noted. Jack L. Shagena, *Who Really Invented the Steamboat? Fulton’s Clermont Coup* (Humanity Books, 2004,) 124-169, 282, quoted passage at 159. *Internet Archive*, https://archive.org/details/whoreallyinvente0000shag_y4j1/, accessed May 14, 2026.

British American colonies in North America. Unfortunately, attempts to locate other sources on James Rumsey during the 1770s proved unsuccessful.

James Rumsey transferred the property to Jesse Hollingsworth on July 23, 1779.⁵⁹⁴ At the same time, Richard and Eleanor Arell released Hollingsworth from the annual rent, suggesting that he had paid the purchase price. Hollingsworth handed the keys to John Wise on December 8, 1794.⁵⁹⁵ Wise operated mostly as a landlord. John Wise owned the corner for nearly two decades before it changed hands to Joseph Mandeville on January 16, 1813. Mandeville had occupied the property for some years prior. As early as the spring of 1807, Mandeville advertised whiskey in barrels, cheese, cotton, oils, tobacco, candles, chocolate, wrapping paper, and tea for sale in his store at the “corner of King and Fairfax-streets.”⁵⁹⁶

309-311 King Street (Parcel 48.7)

A 1907 photograph shows 309-311 King Street as a two-story brick building with Gothic windows, the home of the Capital City Telephone Company. The leading preservationists did not display any concern about the loss of this building. Citizens did not rally to its defense or seek to save any of its architectural elements. In addition to the 1907 photograph, city directories from the 1920s forward show that Western Union, another communications company, rented the building. In 1939, city directories show that the Worth Hulfish & Sons expanded its hardware store into the 309-311 King, adjacent to its older headquarters at 313-315 King. Hulfish & Sons remained in both buildings until urban renewal in 1965.

⁵⁹⁴ Information derived from a “memo” annexed to the deed of John and Elizabeth Wise to Joseph Mandeville, Alexandria Deed Books W:459-463, January 16, 1813.

⁵⁹⁵ Information derived from a “memo” annexed to the deed of John and Elizabeth Wise to Joseph Mandeville, Alexandria Deed Books W:459-463, January 16, 1813.

⁵⁹⁶ *Alexandria Daily Advertiser*, June 17, 1807.

The title history of 309-311 King/Parcel 48.7 is eventful. The partners in Paton & Butcher acquired the parcel from Richard Arell in 1810.⁵⁹⁷ One of their heirs, Rebecca Paton, and her husband, William Quesenberry, acquired it in 1850.⁵⁹⁸ The heir of the Quesenberry's, Edith Quisenberry, leased the property to Western Union by 1902 and, in 1936, sold it to William W. Hulfish.⁵⁹⁹ After the Western Union lease expired, Hulfish evicted them in favor of his own concern.

John Butcher acquired property on Market Alley from Samuel Murray and Thomas Brocchus.⁶⁰⁰ In July of 1810, the Paton and Butcher families consolidated their ownership of parcels on Lot 48. When John Butcher died, he left his shares of the two properties at King Street and Market Alley to his nephew Jonathan Butcher and John Butcher Paton.

313 King Street (Parcel 48.6.5)

Another Hulfish property, 313 King Street/Parcel 48.6.5, fell to the wrecking ball in 1965. Hulfish acquired this parcel from the heirs of his mentor, James F. Carlin, in 1920, though the building's incorporation into the hardware store complex anchored at 315 King dated much earlier.⁶⁰¹ Sometime around 1902, the Sanborn maps indicate that a doorway connected 313 and 315. These maps label 313 "Offices" in 1902 but, in 1921, the first floor boasted a printing press and "Hardware Storage" on the second and third floors. Most prior maps place offices in 313 but the earliest depiction, in 1885, shows a furniture store. Organizations such as the Capital Syndicate Company, the Mount Vernon Fire Insurance Company, and the Washington Real

⁵⁹⁷ Alex. T:244-247, July 28, 1810 and Alex. L3:407-410, June 13, 1850.

⁵⁹⁸ Alex. T:244-247, July 28, 1810 and Alex. L3:407-410, June 13, 1850.

⁵⁹⁹ Alex. 128:21-22, May 12, 1936 and Alex. 72:279-81, May 12, 1921.

⁶⁰⁰ John Butcher Will, WB1:120-122.

⁶⁰¹ Alex. 71:241, September 14, 1920.

Estate Company kept headquarters at 313 King during the 1890s.⁶⁰² A photograph in the Historic Alexandria Foundation Collection shows a three story brick building with what appears to be a cast-iron façade on its first floor. Advertisement for house paints hangs in the window.⁶⁰³

315 King Street (Parcel 48.6.1)

The Hulfish family, through the combined holdings of Paul B. Hulfish and Worth Hulfish and Sons owned six parcels on the square, more than any other property owner. These six parcels comprised just over half of the original Lot 48. Acquired in pieces between 1911 and 1926, the Hulfish properties included several of the oldest buildings in Alexandria. Worth Hulfish had a long history on the square before becoming an owner of property, as partner in the James F. Carlin and Sons hardware store. Hulfish became a partner in the firm in 1895 and, in 1919 put his own name on the company.⁶⁰⁴ James F. Carlin first purchased the property at the corner of King Street and Market Alley in 1867 to house the wholesale hardware store he founded in 1844.⁶⁰⁵ Carlin built the building and put a cast iron façade on it but the Paton and Butcher families built the corner as a hardware store.⁶⁰⁶

315 King Street loomed large in public concern about the fate of the architectural heritage of the Market Block after urban renewal. The Board of Architectural Review took special note of “the cast iron façade of the building recently occupied by Hulfish Hardware at 315 King

⁶⁰² *Alexandria Gazette*, September 29, 1893; February 19 and May 17, 1894.

⁶⁰³ Russell Jones Photograph, “313-315 King” in HAF Collection, ALSC.

⁶⁰⁴ *Alexandria Gazette*, September 10, 1930.

⁶⁰⁵ BKS X3:555-58, February 20, 1867.

⁶⁰⁶ The Paton and Butcher company ledgers, day books, and other records survive in the Library of Virginia, Richmond. See Arlington County Business Records (ACBR), Paton & Butcher, Letter Book, 1811-1825, barcode 1100105; ACBR, Irwin et al. v. McKnight et al, Exhibit, Day Book, 1815-1818, barcode 1100099.

Street.”⁶⁰⁷ As Patricia Ellen McCloskey notes in her history of urban renewal, “The front was carefully removed, stored in a warehouse, and disappeared.”⁶⁰⁸ The case remains a Market Square mystery: Where is the iron façade of the Hulfish Hardware building? The HAF inventory says the façade had a legend, reading “Variety Iron Works, Baltimore, Maryland.”⁶⁰⁹ Before construction of the brick building and iron façade, the parcel contained “Paton and Butcher’s one story wooden store house.”⁶¹⁰

The warehouse in the rear of this parcel, facing Shinbone/Gazette Alley, dates to the same period as the main building. The HABS “Warehouse Area Survey, Gazette & Market Square Alleys” documentation has a photograph of the warehouse. From the 1885 Sanborn, we see this building had one-and-a-half stories, a fact confirmed by the photographic evidence. In the HABS photograph, a wench protrudes from the roof the warehouse over an open window frame. On the ground level, doors and windows have been bricked in. T

B1-C1 Shinbone Alley (Parcels 48.6.2 and 48.6.3)

A warehouse stood on parcel 48.6.2 for most of its existence as real estate. HABS documentation shows a three story, four bay brick warehouse. The windows have shutters and doors on both sides appear opened. The first structure on the property was probably a frame house and was probably occupied by Michael Gretter. Gretter’s heirs sold the property to Thomas White in 1810.⁶¹¹ White, with his hands full of other real estate on the block, soon

⁶⁰⁷ BAR Minutes, April 14, 1965. AARC.

⁶⁰⁸ “Urban Renewal and Historic Preservation: A Case Study of Alexandria, Virginia, 1945-1980,” Masters Thesis, George Washington University, 1999. 116, caption of Figure 19.

⁶⁰⁹ 315 King: Historic Alexandria Foundation Collection, MS070, fol. 8, Urban Renewal 1961-1965, ALSC.

⁶¹⁰ Mutual Assurance Policy 1937, MA 4957, Series 233C, AARN 156, March 10, 1823.

⁶¹¹ Alex. U:129-133, September 13, 1810.

transferred his ownership to Paton and Butcher on April 13, 1811.⁶¹² Paton and Butcher probably built the warehouse on this parcel as part of their wholesale hardware business sometime thereafter. The 1847 Tax Assessment designated a “house and lot” on Robert L. White’s Sharpshin Alley property.⁶¹³ From available sources, it appears that these warehouses remained storage areas for hardware items until 1965.

On Parcel 48.6.3, two buildings appear joined. On the south side of the parcel, a three-story flounder-style brick building leans against a two story brick building with a sliding garage door. The flounder has shutters on its windows but not the garage. Early Sanborns show a kitchen on the northern half but, by 1921 the kitchen gives way to “Auto.,” an automobile garage. The flounder functions as a hardware warehouse from at least 1885.

In the years after the American Revolution, residents on the Lot 48 side of the Alley included Molly Burnett, Michael Gretter, Richard Arell, and John Butcher. John Butcher, the latter, rented the King Street corner of the alley on August 27, 1773. Gretter rented from Richard Arell at least as early as 1783 but had a much longer history as a denizen of the Market Block through his employment as a Fairfax County Sheriff and Jailor. Arell let one parcel to Mary Burnett at the same time he signed the lease to Michael Gretter. In addition to his position as a Jailor, Gretter also took out licenses to run an ordinary from the 1750s through the 1770s. With multiple real estate interests in Alexandria, Michael Gretter likely lived separately from his ordinary.

In 1810 and 1811, Thomas White acquired the ground rent on much of the property fronting on the alley from the heirs of Michael Gretter and continued renting the parcels out to

⁶¹² Alex. T:362-365, April 13, 1811.

⁶¹³ 1847 Land Book, 72.

tenants. White paid \$125 for the prized corner in 1811 compared to the annual rent of \$100 in silver John Ricks promised to pay in 1778. White bought two lots facing Fairfax Street around the same time, giving him a large stake in Lot 48.⁶¹⁴ In 1817, White bought another Fairfax Street parcel, 48.10.⁶¹⁵

Members of the Paton and Butcher allied families bought the alley-bounding parcel that faced King Street, known as 48.6.2. The early establishment of the Paton-Butcher Hardware Store on parcel 48.6.2 marked the beginning of a succession of prosperous hardware stores at his location.

D1-E1 Shinbone Alley (Parcel 48.6.4)

This parcel is the famous “Arell’s Tavern” site, much talked about as a direct connection to 1760s and 1770s but, after requisite months of archival research, to date merely to 1811. Historic in its own right without recourse to patriotic scripture, the brick flounder building with its corner entrance facing Market Square and Shinbone Alley rose on the ashes of its predecessor following a fire in 1810.⁶¹⁶ A second, identical flounder stood to the south of the 1811 building, leaning slightly to the west in HABS photographs of the 1950s.

Taverns were the main private institution fronting the Square on Courthouse Alley, with establishments on either side of the entrance to Market Alley towards King Street, as well as along the Market towards Royal Street. The houses facing on the Market towards Fairfax Street seem to have remained private residences or other shops during the eighteenth century. With the

⁶¹⁴ Deeds BKS_T:449-54, U:90-92, U:129-133

⁶¹⁵ BKS C2:524-28

⁶¹⁶ Eleanore Van Swearingen, “Closing the Book on Arell’s Tavern” *Arlington Historical Magazine* 7 (1965), 55-58.

new Courthouse opening for business in May 1752, taverns quickly sprang up nearby. Already in November 1752, the King's Arms Tavern, probably owned and operated by Benjamin Sebastian, stood on Lot 49.

The research Eleanore van Swearingen published during the 1960s on Arell's property on Lot 48 stands the test of time for accuracy.⁶¹⁷ The pressures of current events and the failure of preservationists to "save" Arell's Tavern diminished its contemporary relevance in 1964 but its value today has only increased. Eleanore van Swearingen writes, "Arell's Tavern ceased to exist from unknown causes in 1810-1811."⁶¹⁸ While a close investigation of newspapers and government records has not uncovered the cause of the building's demise, we know the property changed hands in 1811.

Figures on Following Pages:

Figure 17 110 N. Fairfax Street, photograph by Russell Jones. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC.

Figure 18 114-116 N. Fairfax Street, photograph by Russell Jones. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC.

Figure 19 103-105-107 N. Royal Street, photograph by Russell Jones. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC.

Figure 20 118 N. Fairfax Street, photograph by Russell Jones. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC.

Figure 21 118 N. Fairfax Street, photograph by Russell Jones. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC.

Figure 22 109-111 N. Royal Street. photograph by Russell Jones. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC.

⁶¹⁷ Eleanore Van Swearingen, "Richard Arell, His Times, Tavern, and Neighbors" *Arlington Historical Magazine* 3 (1964), 17.

⁶¹⁸ Van Swearingen, "Closing the Book on Arell's Tavern," 55.



Figure 15



Figure 16

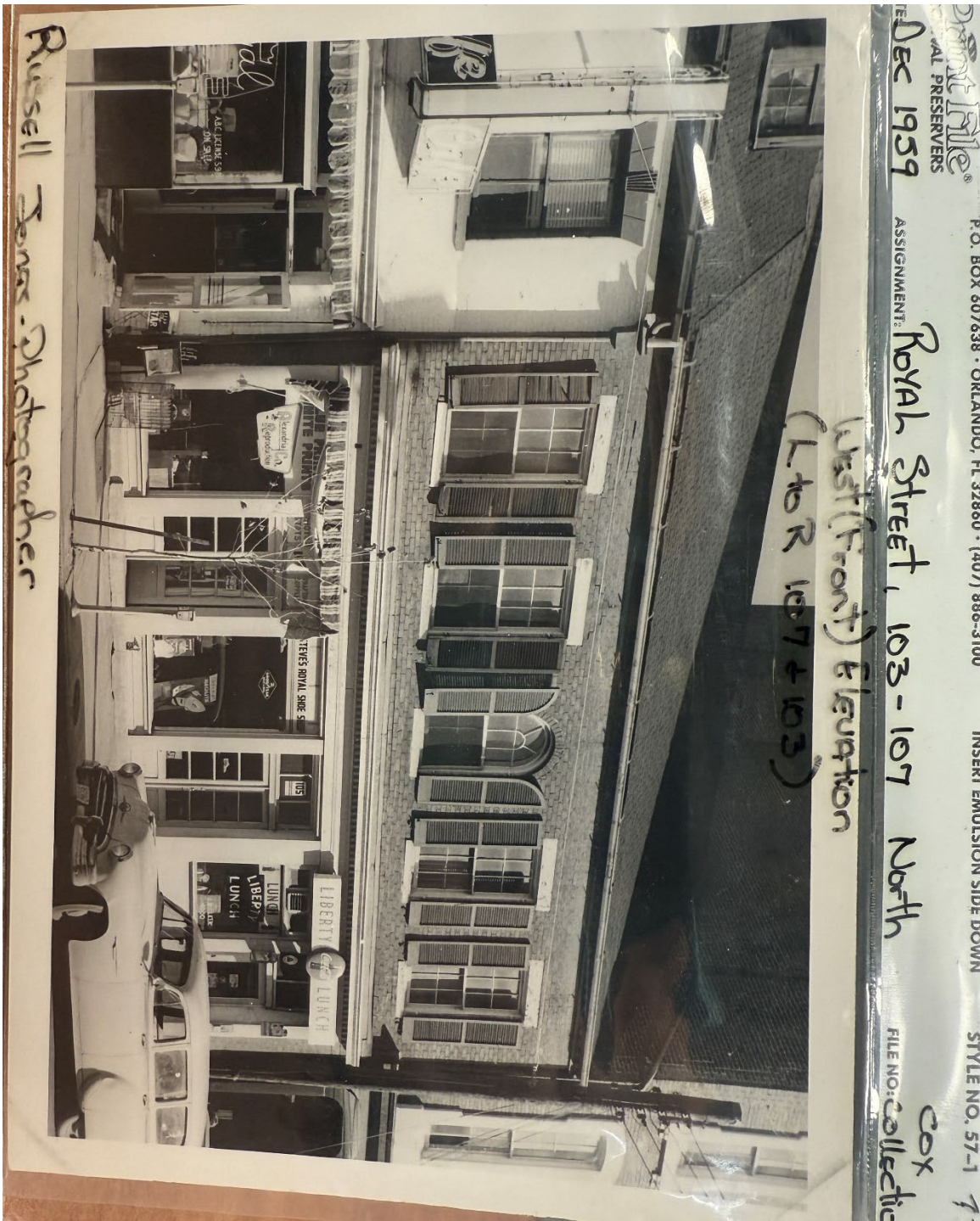


Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19

Parcel-by-Parcel Study of Lot 49

John Alexander acquired Lot 49 during the initial sale of Town Lots for £16.2.6.⁶¹⁹ The sale of the lot three and a half years later to Benjamin Sebastian, Sr. for the same price suggests Alexander did not improve the lot in a meaningful way. The deed of January 26, 1753, when Sebastian bought the property, described Lot 49 as “joyning [*sic*] to the Market Place...beginning at a locust stake standing and cornering between Kings street and Royal street.”⁶²⁰ Another locust stake stood on the boundary line between Lot 49 and its eastern neighbor, Lot 48. The deed further describes Lot 48 as “bought by Mr. John Pagan,” indicating that Pagan still owned Lot 48 in 1753, shedding some light on the timing of the Pagan’s sale to Sebastian. If Sebastian already owned Lot 48 at the time he purchased Lot 49, the deed would have stated as much. Although Lot 49 did not undergo a full subdivision until the 1790s, Benjamin Sebastian Sr. and Jr. partitioned the property in 1765. Sebastian, Sr. gave Lot 49 to his son, Benjamin Sebastian, Jr., but retained “a piece of ground fifty feet one way and forty two feet another way.”⁶²¹ The deed fails to indicate precisely where within Lot 49 Sebastian, Sr. persisted. At any rate, the ill-defined partition ended when John Muir purchased the full lot on February 22, 1768.⁶²²

The documentary record for Lot 49 remains obscured for much of the period of John Muir’s ownership. Indeed, “John Muir” is a common name and the numerous instances the name appears in records may be misleading. In 1777 and 1778, the *Maryland Journal* identifies Muir

⁶¹⁹ Trustees to John Alexander, FDB B:498-99, September 20, 1749.

⁶²⁰ John and Susanna Alexander to Benjamin Sebastian, FDB C:626-28, January 26, 1753.

⁶²¹ Information derived from a recitation in a deed from Elizabeth (Muir) Donaldson to William McKnight and Charles McKnight, FDB H:13-16, September 24, 1796.

⁶²² Information derived from a recitation in a deed from Elizabeth (Muir) Donaldson to William McKnight and Charles McKnight, FDB H:13-16, September 24, 1796.

as a merchant of Annapolis.⁶²³ Yet, in a deposition taken in Prince William County in 1755, a fifty-seven year old Muir testified that he “settled in Alexandria in 1755.”⁶²⁴ John Muir who owned Lot 49 is Captain John Muir (1731-1791). Muir was born in Scotland and continued to travel between Alexandria, Europe, and the Caribbean as a captain of the ship *Friends* and an ordinary passenger. For many years during the 1760s, Muir worked as a tobacco merchant in Alexandria for the firm of Dixon & Littledale.⁶²⁵ In both Alexandria and Annapolis, Muir advertised as a merchant, even earning the position of Commissary of Stores in Annapolis.⁶²⁶ If Muir moved between Annapolis and Alexandria before the Revolution, he returned to Alexandria permanently by 1778. That year, the Patriots in the Virginia House of Delegates granted Elizabeth Muir, John’s sister, permission to reside in Virginia, signifying a recent move.

John Muir never married or had children, although he enslaved many people in his household during his years on the Market Block. All during those years, Muir held people in bondage. Perhaps one can glean something of Muir as an enslaver from the following advertisement he inserted in the March 24, 1785 *Virginia Journal & Alexandria Advertiser*:

The Subscriber has for sale a young negro woman, about fifteen years of age who was raised in his house. – She is active, healthy, likely, and remarkably sensible, uncommon pains have been taken to instruct her, and indeed few can excel her when she

⁶²³ *Maryland Journal*, September 23, 1777 and September 29, 1778.

⁶²⁴ *Prince William County, Virginia, Land Causes, 1789-1793*, cited in Miller, *Pen Portraits*, 12.

⁶²⁵ Harry Piper Letterbooks, 1767-1775 (Manuscripts Department, Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville: microfilm). See also Robert Polk Thomson, "The Merchant in Virginia, 1700-1775" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1955). Thomas M. Preisser, The 'Precarious Trade' of a Virginia Tobacco Merchant: Harry Piper of Alexandria, 1749-1776" *Alexandria History* 1 (1978).

⁶²⁶ *Maryland Journal*, September 23, 1777 and September 29, 1778. *VJAA*, April 1, 1784; October 14 and 28, 1784; December 8 and 22, 1785.

pleases; but the perverseness of her temper and the connections she has formed induce him to part with her. – Credit will be given if required.⁶²⁷

The enslaved woman described in the 1785 ad may have been Winney Brown. A November 18, 1803 runaway ad for a man called Bob identified his mother as “Winney Brown, formerly the slave of Mr. John Muir, late of this town.”⁶²⁸ Muir reported nine “chargeable and tithable blacks” in the Personal Property Tax Books for 1787, eight in 1788, and five in both 1789 and 1790. When Elizabeth Muir Donaldson reported the holdings of John’s estate in 1795, the number of enslaved people reported fell to zero.⁶²⁹ If Elizabeth Muir Donaldson followed the pattern set by other Alexandria merchants, she sold the enslaved people to balance the books of the estate.

John Muir hoped to control the people he called “my servants” in a greater degree than his fellow Alexandrians. On February 1, 1787, Muir threatened “all persons from dealing with any of my servants in any manner whatever, except it be by my particularly orders; as I shall deal with them as the law directs.”⁶³⁰ Muir also offered to “either sell or hire” those enslaved men and women under his power. Compare the inscription on John Muir’s gravestone with his life as a slaveholder. The stone in Christ Church Graveyard reads,

Here lieth the body of John Muir, late merchant of Alexandria,
eldest son of Hugh Muir mercht of Dumfries in Scotland. Who
departed this life March 20th A.D. 1791 in the 60th year of his Age.
A friend to all, a foe to none. Firm to the end where justice rules

⁶²⁷ *VJAA*, March 24, 1785.

⁶²⁸ *Alexandria Daily Advertiser*, November 15, 1803. Another John Muir lived on Lot 49 who does not appear to have any relationship

⁶²⁹ Alexandria Land Books, 1787-1795. Transcriptions.

⁶³⁰ *VJAA*, February 1, 1787.

the sway. Mild without weakness without rigour just. Farewell my
kindest friends. Merch & truth follow each other E.M.⁶³¹

A 1787 advertisement offers insight into the life and personality of John Muir. Muir expressed his desire to for “all those that were indebted to me to come and settle their accounts.” Muir had asked once before “but little regard was paid thereto.” His annoyance continued in the following lines as he announced his intention “to prevent accounts being trumped up against my estate after I am gone, that probably would never have appeared had I been on the spot, or alive.” Muir based his judgment on experience, writing, “For in the course of thirty odd years that I have been in business too many accounts of this description have I seen.” Elizabeth Muir, the sister who lived with John Muir for much of his life, helped settle John’s estate after his death.⁶³² In April 1791, only weeks after John’s passing, Elizabeth reminded people that “Mr. Muir, in his lifetime gave public notice to all having business with him to settler their accounts, that his estate after his removal from the country or decease might not be injured by ‘trumped-up accounts (as he emphatically styled them).”⁶³³

In her own right, Elizabeth Muir continued to own and collect rents on several parcels in Lot 49 until 1803. She married Robert Donaldson in 1791. Donaldson sold wheat and flour to bakehouses in Alexandria that might have went into breads sold at Market Square. James Craik, the doctor, wrote of the circumstances of the marriage. “I had advised Miss Muir to Long Island to drink & Bath in the Sea Water for her health,” Craik penned to President George Washington. Continuing, “Mr. Donaldson took the hint and pursued, and last Post writes back to Mr. [William] Hartshorn[e] to rent out his house, as he believes he shall bring back a wife with

⁶³¹ <https://www.historicchristchurch.org/history>, accessed March 4, 2026.

⁶³² John Muir Will, December, 1789. Fairfax County Will Books F:17-19.

⁶³³ *VJAA*, May 12, 1791.

him.”⁶³⁴ Hartshorne and Donaldson may have had a direct business relationship. Craik could also have made a joke about Hartshorne’s reputation as a real estate agent. By a Power of Attorney dated May 7, 1800, Elizabeth Muir enlisted Hartshorne to dispose of the lots inherited from her brother in Virginias.⁶³⁵ The 1800 authorization continued an agreement made on April 18, 1796 through which Muir Donaldson authorized Hartshorne to act as an agent to handle John Muir’s estate. These documents shows how widely Hartshorne worked as a real estate agent as well as the social and economic interconnectedness of early republican Alexandria. In 1799, Muir’s sister and sole heir, Elizabeth Muir Donaldson, sued two men for debts owed to John’s estate in Prince William County, showing the family’s influence spread even wider.⁶³⁶

Although the Land Books show a number of tenants on Lot 49 who paid ground rent to Muir, deeds recording these transactions do not survive. Edward Ramsay occupied a parcel on Royal Street from 1787 until 1789.⁶³⁷ In 1788, Muir further divided the King Street real estate with parcels rented to both John Hickman and William Fields. Hickman paid £45 compared to the £2 paid by Fields, indicating Fields may have only paid for a stable, shed, or other such

⁶³⁴ “James Craik to George Washington, 31 August 1791,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-08-02-0333>. [Original source: *The Papers of George Washington*, Presidential Series, vol. 8, 22 March 1791–22 September 1791, ed. Mark A. Mastromarino. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999, pp. 472–473.]

⁶³⁵ FDB F:27-33. Elizabeth Muir Donaldson enlisted Nicholas Slubey to care for her assets in Maryland.

⁶³⁶ “Elizabeth Donaldson, Executrix of John Muir, dec’d, Pltf. agst. John Alexander and Charles Bemis, Jr. Defts.,” August 8, 1799,” *Prince William County, Virginia, District Court Order Books*, 1799. <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QHV-V36N-ZQ61?cat=395905&i=358&lang=en>, accessed March 4, 2026.

⁶³⁷ 1787-1788 Land Books.

minor appurtenance. Fields, at any rate, did not stay, his place taken by Philip France in 1790.⁶³⁸ Hickman stayed into the 1790s.⁶³⁹ John Beale paid taxes for a King Street parcel in 1790.⁶⁴⁰

After John Muir died and Elizabeth married Robert Donaldson, Donaldson managed the property until his own death, in 1796. The 1795 Land Books indicate Donaldson collected rents on the King and Royal street parcels of Lot 49. Edward Ramsay remained on Royal. John Bryan and Jessy Wherry rented on King Street, as did Ford, Patton & Co. and Jonathan Hickman & Co.

Between 1796 and 1803, Elizabeth Muir Donaldson subdivided Lot 49 as she deeded parcels to John Janney, Charles and William McKnight, Joseph Smith, and Peter Sherron. John Janney paid £700 for a parcel fronting on King Street for thirty-five feet and a depth of ninety-five feet on July 22, 1796.⁶⁴¹ William and Charles McKnight paid £701 for a lot facing Royal Street and running back towards Courthouse Alley for 111 feet. Joseph Smith acquired a parcel beginning 100 feet north of King Street, facing Royal, with a depth of 111 feet to Courthouse Alley.

Parcel 49.1

Parcel 49.1, with its 111 feet frontage on the Market Square and just over fifty-one feet frontage on Royal Street, encouraged owners to maximize the use of space by building multiple structures on the parcel. As later deeds showed, the property had three equal parcels of thirty-seven feet each fronting on the Square. Despite the present-day subdivision of Parcel 49.1 into

⁶³⁸ 1789 Land Book.

⁶³⁹ 1790 and 1795 Land Books.

⁶⁴⁰ 1790 Land Book.

⁶⁴¹ FDB G:426-30.

four sections, a historic plat shows six definite pieces of the lot.⁶⁴² Beginning at the corner of Royal Street and Sharpshin/Market Street, the first lot has 32'5" front on Royal and a depth of 32'. The second lot has a front on Royal Street of 18'8" with a depth of 77'6". The plat labels this second lot "House Ocp'd by Mrs. Sidebottom. Behind the Sidebottom lot, a third parcel extends back 33'6" the rest of the way to Market Alley, on which it fronts 20'. A 10' wide alley with a depth of 54'6" separates the third parcel from the fourth. The fourth lies at the corner of Shinbone/Market Alley and Sharpshin Alley/Market Street with 21'1" front on the former and 30' front on the latter. A fifth lot snugs between the fourth and the first, measuring 24'6" on Sharpshin Alley/Market Street and 21'1" in depth.

The McKnights already paid rent to Robert Donaldson for the parcel at the corner of Royal Street and Market Alley in 1795.⁶⁴³ When Robert Donaldson died and Elizabeth Muir Donaldson took over, the McKnights acquired at least three separate houses from her, one facing Royal Street and two facing the Market Square. A 1784 "For Sale" ad already describes "a two-story brick house with a good kitchen and cellar, situated on Royal-street, fronting the Court-House."⁶⁴⁴ The 1810 Tax Books show William McKnight at the corner of Sharpshin Alley and Royal Street with Charles one door closer to King Street, still facing Royal. Hypothetically, it makes sense that the two McKnight parcels are the same or most of the 52 feet of Benjamin Sebastian's tavern. The McKnights may have bought the Sebastian tavern.

⁶⁴² Ted Pulliam, "Wes Pippenger Documents, from the Alexandria County Chancery Court files in Arlington, 9. Undated and unlabeled plat that appears to be part of Market Square," Folder "Market and Market Square Newspaper Clippings," Market Square Vertical File, ALSC.

⁶⁴³ 1795 Land Tax Book. The McKnights also owned property across Royal Street at the corner of King in Lot 50, the well-known McKnight's Tavern.

⁶⁴⁴ *VJAA*, July 8, 1784.

Although a clear photograph of 115-117 N. Royal Street has not emerged, two separate artistic renderings show a similar building on the parcel. A Civil War-era sketch by “a special artist attached to Gen. McClellan’s Command” shows a sliver of a two-story building with its roof sloping towards Royal Street.⁶⁴⁵ The sketch of Adolph Cluss’s plan for City Hall in 1871 shows the full building as a three-bay, two-story cottage style storehouse with windows on the Sharpshin Alley side and an attic window at the center of its sidewall. A historic photograph of the Alexandria Market building in the 1907 *Tercentennial Souvenir* volume shows that these artistic renderings were taken from life.⁶⁴⁶

The fire of 1871 that burned down City Hall and the Market House broke out on Parcel 49.1, “in the framed building on the corner of Royal street and Market Alley occupied by George A. Huntington as a liquor and grocery store.”⁶⁴⁷ The paper expressed that Alexandrians “generally considered [the fire] to have been the work of an incendiary.”⁶⁴⁸ As to who burned down City Hall, no one ever found out. The policeman who discovered the fire reported, “the blaze ran along behind the counter and spread to the wall so rapidly as to singe his whiskers.” The officer, [FIRST NAME?] Hepburn watched the fire roll “along the floor, as if it ran, not mounting upward so much as spreading laterally.”⁶⁴⁹ The path of the flames suggest some liquid fuel that covered the floor, of which the liquor store had an abundance.

The fire also destroyed the two frame buildings behind the source of the fire and the brick building at 113 N. Royal. As the *Gazette* reported, the fire also burned the Rainbow Tavern,

⁶⁴⁵ *Alexandria, U.S.A., yesterdays remembered*, unpaginated. MSVF, ALSC.

⁶⁴⁶ Alex. J. Wedderburn, *Souvenir Virginia Tercentennial, Historic Alexandria, Va., Past and Present*, 1907.

⁶⁴⁷ *Alexandria Gazette*, May 19, 1871.

⁶⁴⁸ *Alexandria Gazette*, May 19, 1871.

⁶⁴⁹ *Alexandria Gazette*, May 19, 1871.

widely known as “one of the oldest houses in the city.”⁶⁵⁰ This tavern was most likely the same built by Benjamin Sebastian, Sr. in the 1750s. William Gregory, who owned the buildings at the time of the fire, replaced them all with a single, four-story brick commercial and residential space.

115-117 North Royal Street (Parcel 49.1A)

The McKnight ownership of the parcel came to a gradual end during the 1850s, as William H. McKnight executed the will of his father, Charles. The sub-parcels of Parcel 49.1 evolved out of the leases the McKnights held on the property. By the time the full 49.1 parcel came to be sold, the boundary lines of former leases became the new ownership lines. When the McKnights sold the property in 1854, James P. Coleman occupied the lot “at the corner of Royal Street and Sharp-Shin Alley...having a frame store house thereon.”⁶⁵¹

William Gregory bought the property from Sidebottom’s heirs on March 7, 1866, a parcel “Beginning at a point on [Market] Alley 37' to the eastward of Royal Street and extending east on said Alley 37' with a depth of 30' the eastern and western boundary lines being parallel to Royal Street.”⁶⁵² Two years later, the vagaries of early lot measurements arose, forcing Gregory to pay \$165 to the McKnight heirs for a sliver of ground measuring seventeen-and-one-half inches wide by seventy-two-and-one-half feet long.⁶⁵³ Gregory died in 1875 but his heirs held on to the property until 1926. Mary Donaldson Long Gregory, William’s wife, continued to collect rents until she passed the property to her daughter, Janet G. Leadbeater in 1896. Leadbeater then

⁶⁵⁰ *Alexandria Gazette*, May 19, 1871.

⁶⁵¹ *Alexandria Gazette*, March 15, 1854.

⁶⁵² BKS X3:130-32, March 7, 1866.

⁶⁵³ BKS Y3:373-74, April 29, 1868.

sold to the Sanitary Grocery Company a parcel firmly identified as 115-117 North Royal Street.⁶⁵⁴ The Sanitary Grocery welcomed customers until its closure in 1938.

The R.H. Wattles Fertilizer Company had its headquarters at 115-117 N. Royal in the years around 1900. By 1920, the Alexandria Market Company rented the building for its own offices. City directories show the Alexandria Goodwill Industries Store at 115-117 N. Royal beginning in 1940 and lasting through World War II.

When urban renewal took the building in 1965, it had been home of Chauncey Provision Company, a retail and wholesale grocery specializing in meats for two decades.

113 North Royal Street (Parcel 49.1D)

In the background of a sketch of Adolph Cluss's plan for City Hall in 1871, a three-bay, three-story building with two attic dormers stands on this parcel facing Royal Street. These are likely the buildings burned in the 1871 fire.

The parcel's proximity to the Market Square made it an ideal location for merchants like Stephen Davis to open The Alexandria Sea Food Market, a privately owned market offering the bounty of the waters.⁶⁵⁵ Previously, the Monroe & Monroe Grocery held down the location.⁶⁵⁶ In 1912, the Monroe duo succeeded J.C. Milburn in the grocery business at 113 N. Royal which Milburn had established in 1865.⁶⁵⁷ Milburn had waged war against the United States as part of the 17th Virginia regiment and taken prisoner at the conclusion of the war. After his parole, Milburn promptly took the oath of allegiance and entered the grocery trade.⁶⁵⁸ J. Clinton and

⁶⁵⁴ BKS 88:150-53, September 24, 1926.

⁶⁵⁵ *Alexandria Gazette*, February 16, 1922.

⁶⁵⁶ *Alexandria Gazette*, December 22, 1916.

⁶⁵⁷ *Alexandria Gazette*, October 25, 1912. *Alexandria Gazette*, September 24, 1912.

⁶⁵⁸ *Alexandria Gazette*, May 1, 1865.

Corinne M. Milburn, his wife, acquired 113 N. Royal from Charles H. Schaaff for \$4600 on December 2, 1881.⁶⁵⁹ The first advertisements placing the Milburns at this location appears in 1882.⁶⁶⁰

Prior to the Milburn occupancy, “Mrs. Englebrecht respectfully inform[ed] the citizens of Alexandria...that she has received a full supply of...china, glass, and earthenware.”⁶⁶¹ Ann Englebrecht did not survive the Civil War at the location. An 1868 auction saw the dispensing of “crocery ware, boots, and shoes” from the location.⁶⁶²

109-11 North Royal Street (Parcel 49.2)

The southerly parcel purchased by the McKnights in 1796 has been given the label Parcel 49.2. Photographer Russell Jones snapped a photo of 109-111 Royal Street in 1959, showing a three-bay, two-story brick storefront with twin attic dormers. Adorned with neon lights, the building housed the Royal Café when Jones took his picture. The Royal Café opened in 1904 and moved to 111 N. Royal in 1926. Gus Kyriacos, a Greek immigrant to Alexandria who lived at 109 N. Royal, owned the café by 1926. Kyriacos also operated the Liberty Lunch at 103 N. Royal Street.⁶⁶³ Before the Royal Café, 109-111 N. Royal was the Busy Bee lunch counter.⁶⁶⁴

⁶⁵⁹ Alex. 10:446-447.

⁶⁶⁰ *Alexandria Gazette*, April 21, 1882.

⁶⁶¹ *Alexandria Gazette*, October 23, 1862.

⁶⁶² *Alexandria Gazette*, May 4, 1868.

⁶⁶³ “Gus Kyriacos,” *Immigrant Alexandria*, <https://immigrantalexandria.org/blog/gus-kyriacos/>, accessed April 2, 2026. Known publicly as Gus Kyriacos, his real name was Constantinus K. Pikrallidas, according to Alex. 126:92-93.

⁶⁶⁴ Hill’s City Directories, 1920-1925.

In past times, 109 N. Royal served as the longtime home of the Cogan brothers, William and James, who offered their services as plumbers, gas, and steam fitters. A third Cogan brother, Charles, sold Edison Graphophones. In 1898, Charles Cogan invited the public to “Come and hear ‘Dixie,’ ‘Stars and Stripes’ and many other airs by Gilmore’s Band” at 109 N. Royal.⁶⁶⁵ The plumber brothers continued to advertise advances in technology, such as the Kern Incandescent Burner or the Matchless Gas-Igniting Burner, which prompted a claim of “perfection reached!”⁶⁶⁶ Charles Cogan followed suit, with an ad in 1903 describing “The New Columbia DISC Graphophone” whose “Flat Discs are Practically Indestructible.”⁶⁶⁷ Charles A. Cogan also advertised fire extinguishers for sale at 111 N. Royal.⁶⁶⁸ The *Alexandria Gazette* wrote that the Cogan’s built “a new back building on Sharp Shin Alley” around 1870.⁶⁶⁹

Around 1907, the Cogans began renting 109 N. Royal to the Potomac Fish Company. Potomac Fish sold “fish, game, oysters, and a general line of produce” under the management of J.T. Ballenger.⁶⁷⁰ While Ballenger did not last as manager, the Potomac Fish Company did. A duo, Henderson and Arrington, took over management in 1909.⁶⁷¹

The heirs of the Cogans owned the building until their heirs sold to Spyridon E. Priovolos in 1926. At this point, Priovolos opened the Royal Café under the management of Gus Kyriacos.

⁶⁶⁵ *Alexandria Gazette*, May 16, 1898.

⁶⁶⁶ Kern: *Alexandria Gazette*, October 18, 1900. “Perfection Reached”: *Alexandria Gazette*, March 21, 1900.

⁶⁶⁷ *Alexandria Gazette*, April 28, 1903.

⁶⁶⁸ *Alexandria Gazette*, August 11, 1899.

⁶⁶⁹ *Alexandria Gazette*, April 9, 1870.

⁶⁷⁰ *Alexandria Gazette*, August 19, 1907.

⁶⁷¹ *Alexandria Gazette*, April 15, 1909.

Kyriacos acquired ownership of the property in 1936, eventually bringing his son, Richard K. Kyriacos, and another partner, P.A. Michaelides, into the business.⁶⁷²

The unit at 111 N. Royal appears to have been mostly residential. The George Welker family lived at 111 N. Royal for many years during the 1910s and 1920s. What we know about the Welker family comes from two obituaries published in the *Alexandria Gazette*. The Welkers hosted the funeral of their son-in-law, Frank Norcome, a well-known baseball player, at 111 N. Royal in June 1915.⁶⁷³ The Welkers' own son, William Weaver Welker, died at age 46 in 1922.⁶⁷⁴

The 1847 Will of Eleanor Sherron, wife of Peter Sherron, helps explain the state of property ownership on Lot 49 at the time of her death and in succeeding years. The Sherrons owned 100 feet front on Royal Street beginning at the corner of King, along with 74 feet, 5 inches front on King Street beginning at the corner of Royal. When Eleanor Sherron wrote her will, she described “the two north houses on Royal Street, occupied by Mrs. Sidebottom and Mrs. Deeton.” These two houses would have occupied the space later filled by the triple-unit 103-105-107 N. Royal Street, called Parcel 49.3. Sherron next described “the house & ground on King Street, now occupied by Jno. T. Creighton and the house on Royal Street now occupied by Robt. E. Buchanan.” These two houses must have both formed the corner of King and Royal, each facing its own street, equivalent to 101 N. Royal and 325-327 King streets. Lastly, Sherron described “the house and ground on King Street, now occupied by Ellis L. Price as a lottery office.” This would have been analogous to 319-321 King Street. In 1837, the tax assessor charged “Nelly” Sherron for tax on “8 houses & lot.”⁶⁷⁵

⁶⁷² Alex. 89:168-169, December 22, 1926; Alex. 149:245, December 16, 1938; Alex 153:8, June 2, 1939.

⁶⁷³ *Alexandria Gazette*, June 14, 1915.

⁶⁷⁴ *Alexandria Gazette*, April 14, 1922.

⁶⁷⁵ 1837 Tax Assessment, 64.

103-105-107 North Royal Street (Parcel 49.3)

In the final sale of property from Elizabeth Muir Donaldson, Peter Sherron paid the enormous sum of \$7000 for a large corner lot at King and Royal streets. The Sherron corner measured 74 feet 5 inches front on King Street with a depth of 100 feet facing Royal. Sherron also acquired “the use and benefit of the alley extending from the eastern line of the said premises along the back of John Janney’s ground into the Courthouse Alley.”⁶⁷⁶ On Royal Street, the 100 feet of Sherron’s lot ended at the northern edge of 107 N. Royal, old number 13.

Intriguingly, three burials enumerated in the Book of Records of burials in Alexandria during the Civil War list the place of death as “13 Royal Street.”

1. William Henry Ward, d. June 23, 1864. Aged 11 months.
Died at 13 Royal Street. Buried in Freedmen’s Cemetery.
2. Infant Cox, d. March 27, 1866, stillborn. Son of Charles Cox. Died at 13 Royal Street. Buried in Freedmen’s Cemetery.
3. Rosa Ann Pollard, d. October 23, 1868, aged 10 years.
Daughter of Susan Pollard. Died on Royal Street, near King. Buried in Freedmen’s Cemetery.⁶⁷⁷

⁶⁷⁶ FDB F:27-33.

⁶⁷⁷ “Book of Records (Contrabands and Freedmen Cemetery, Alexandria VA), recorded by Rev. A. Gladwin,” <https://www.alexandriava.gov/sites/default/files/2024-08/book-of-records-gladwin-transcription.pdf>, accessed April 2, 2026.

Records do not indicate if “13 Royal” was a hospital, a doctor’s office, or other medical establishment. Why would three seemingly unrelated children each die at the same location? Ward, Infant Cox, and Pollard all received burials.

Georeferencing the site of archaeological artifacts excavated by Richard Muzzrole in 1965, the lines of 13 N. Royal from the 1885 Sanborn encapsulate approximately the location of a partial human skull.⁶⁷⁸ Anthropologists D.W. Owsley and K.S. Bruwelheide argue the skull belonged to a “Caucasian” male between the ages of 40 and 55 years. When analyzed, the cranium fragment bore marks that “indicate use of the cranium as an anatomical specimen.”⁶⁷⁹

George T. Baldwin called himself a “dealer in Iron and Steel,” with a “complete stock of Bar, Band, Hoop, and Horse-Shoe Iron; also cast, shear, German, and blister steel” in an 1858 advertisement for his shop at 13 N. Royal.⁶⁸⁰

325-327-329 King Street and 101 N. Royal Street (Parcel 49.4.1)

In 1904, the National Bank of Alexandria purchased the corner of King and Royal streets. In 1926 and 1948, the bank added two other parcels to their holdings. These latter two purchases consolidated Parcels 49.4.2 and 49.4.3 with 49.4.1. Shortly after its purchased, the bank set about renovating the interior of the building to suit its needs.⁶⁸¹

The Alexandria National Bank building had four floors, with the bank on the ground floor and various offices above. The building was entirely commercial, with a rotating cast of tenants in offices across four floors. By 1959, much of the building remained vacant. The city directory

⁶⁷⁸ Analysis of the remains [here](#).

⁶⁷⁹ D.W. Owsley and K.S Bruwelheide, “Alexandria Specimens, 44AX93-WELL H-671987,” 1.

⁶⁸⁰ *Alexandria Gazette*, September 1, 1858.

⁶⁸¹ *Alexandria Gazette*, January 25, 1904.

for that years listed the entire 3rd and 4th floors as vacant, with rooms on other floors vacant, as well. Tenants included the attorney Thomas R. Dyson and the U.S. Selective Service System Local Board No. 10.⁶⁸² The two uppermost floors had been vacant since at least 1929. Before 1929, city directories list the 4th floor as home to the hall of the Fraternal Order of Eagles and various subgroups.⁶⁸³ Another fraternal order, the Knights of Pythias, rented the space during the 1870s.⁶⁸⁴ The minister James H. DePue used the third floor of the bank building as the Pitmanic School of Business and Shorthand earlier in the twentieth century.⁶⁸⁵

Daniel. F. Witmer occupied old 73-75-77 King Street and operated a dry goods store between the Civil War and the 1890s, when Isaac Eichberg took over the dry goods business. The 1885 Sanborn indicates “D.G. [dry goods] / Carpets.” Isaac Eichberg occupied the site from about 1894 until 1904.⁶⁸⁶ Daniel Witmer had a partnership with his brother, Edmund, and H.C. Slaymaker, as Witmer & Slaymaker. Witmer and Slaymaker advertised “buck gauntlets for boys” in 1867.⁶⁸⁷ As in later years, the four-story Witmer building opened space on its upper floors for public assemblies, such as the Christ Church Children’s Fair of 1874.⁶⁸⁸

Although known to 1960s historic preservationists as the Alexandria National Bank building, a deed of 1887 refers to the building at this corner as the Witmer Building.⁶⁸⁹ Witmer purchased the building in 1865 from his brothers, Edmund and George.⁶⁹⁰ Edmund and George Witmer bought the parcel at the end of 1859 and immediately “contemplated the erection of

⁶⁸² 1959 City Directory, 262.

⁶⁸³ City Directories, 1920-1928.

⁶⁸⁴ Alex. A4:100, February 16, 1870.

⁶⁸⁵ *Alexandria Gazette*, May 20, 1908.

⁶⁸⁶ *Alexandria Gazette*, August 20, 1895. Alex. 32:169-170, May 8, 1894.

⁶⁸⁷ *Alexandria Gazette*, January 29, 1867.

⁶⁸⁸ *Alexandria Gazette*, May 12, 1874.

⁶⁸⁹ Alex. 18:331-334, April 14, 1887.

⁶⁹⁰ Alex. W3:532-533, November 28, 1865.

buildings and improvements.”⁶⁹¹ An item inserted into the December 5, 1859 *Alexandria Gazette* reported on the construction.

The lot, corner of King and Royal streets, known as Sherron’s corner, which has been purchased by Messrs. Witmer & Bro. and Wm. N. McVeigh, esq., at \$10,000, is to be very handsomely improved. We learn that these gentlemen are now contracting for its improvement by a handsome four-story building, to be immediately commenced. The lower story and basement to be occupied by Messrs. Witmer & Bro. as their Dry Goods Store, and the upper stories to be occupied by C.A. Baldwin & Co. as their wholesale Shoe store.⁶⁹²

Before the Witmer acquisition, heirs of the Peter Sherron family still owned the parcel at the corner of King and Royal street. Sherron had purchased the original parcel from Elizabeth Muir Donaldson in 1803 and, when he died, passed it on to his wife, Eleanor. In her own 1847 will, Eleanor Sherron deeded the parcel to Francis J. Murphy.⁶⁹³ Murphy subdivided the main Parcel 49.4 into three smaller units through sales to John Jones in 1850 and George W. Keating in 1857.⁶⁹⁴ The forward-looking investment by the Witmers and McVeigh to build a new building only served to create a new home for old goods. Eleanor Sherron first sold dry goods from the corner of King and Royal as early as 1821, not long after Peter Sherron’s death.⁶⁹⁵

⁶⁹¹ Alex. U3:233-234, January 19, 1860; Alex. U3:236-238, January 19, 1860

⁶⁹² *Alexandria Gazette*, December 5, 1859.

⁶⁹³ Alex. L3:150-151, January 16, 1850.

⁶⁹⁴ Alex. L3:150-151, January 16, 1850; Alex. S3:392-393.

⁶⁹⁵ *Alexandria Gazette*, April 18, 1821

Although she likely played a behind-the-scenes role in the family's business activities prior to Peter's death, Eleanor embarked on her own at the age of 60. The Sherrons had started out together on King Street as early as their 1796 purchase of the corner lot from Elizabeth Muir Donaldson. Sherron had a number of business ventures on the property, including a tan yard and a brewery.⁶⁹⁶ By an 1813 advertisement, Sherron announced that he had bacon for sale.⁶⁹⁷

Peter Sherron may have built one or more houses on the corner lot shortly after his 1803 purchase. Alternately, the houses may have predated his ownership. John Muir collected £50 rent for the Royal Street frontage of this parcel (even though he himself occupied it) and £10 for the King Street frontage from Edward Ramsay.⁶⁹⁸

323 King Street (Parcel 49.4.2)

Like its neighbors at 311-313 King, the building at 323 King did not begin as an annex to the larger building on its west but ended its life as such. Although built as a stand-alone building, time and convenience led to the connection of 323 King to the National Bank of Alexandria building at 325-327 King Street.

Alexandrians could purchase a suit of clothes or other wearing apparel from one of the tailors who occupied old 69 King Street during the 1840s and 1850s. The 1850 deed from Francis J. Murphy to John Jones places William Arnold at this location.⁶⁹⁹ When Jones made his purchase, the deed described the property as "a certain tenement and lot of ground...now in the

⁶⁹⁶ *Alexandria Daily Gazette, Commercial & Political*, August 2, 1809.

⁶⁹⁷ *Alexandria Herald*, July 5, 1813.

⁶⁹⁸ 1787 Land Tax Book.

⁶⁹⁹ Alex. L3:150-151, January 16, 1850.

occupancy of William Arnold as a tailors shop.”⁷⁰⁰ Rudolph Massey succeeded Arnold in the tailor’s shop. Both men rented their space from a succession of landlords.⁷⁰¹

The purchase of the property by Isaac Buckingham in 1852 initiated the era of the tobacconist at this location.

For much of its history, the building at old 71 King Street was a cigar store and manufactory. William Buckingham had his tobacco shop there until his death in 1868. An 1884 auction advertisement reveals that John A. Field kept the building “as a tobacco and cigar store.”⁷⁰² Prior to the auction, Field advertised himself as a “wholesale and retail dealer in smoking & chewing tobacco, cigars, pipes, &c” as far back as 1868.⁷⁰³ The Hamilton & Company cigar manufacturing plant opened at 323 King Street in 1895, after partners J.P Steiner, A.H. Oehlestrand, and F.M Hamilton purchased the building on Parcel 49.4.2.⁷⁰⁴ The Hamilton & Co. partners received a loan for \$2200 soon after from the German Cooperation Building Association No. 5 to make improvements to the property.⁷⁰⁵

*319-321 King Street (Parcel 49.4.3)*⁷⁰⁶

Along with its neighbors closer to Royal Street, 319-321 King Street served as a commercial space on the ground floor with residential units above. The City of Alexandria

⁷⁰⁰ Alex. L3:150-151, January 16, 1850.

⁷⁰¹ *Alexandria Gazette*, January 3 and April 26, 1852; Alex. O3:57, November 29, 1852.

⁷⁰² *Alexandria Gazette*, November 28, 1884.

⁷⁰³ *Alexandria Gazette*, April 3, 1883.

⁷⁰⁴ Alex. 34:497-499, December 19, 1895.

⁷⁰⁵ Alex. 35:490-493, December 27, 1895.

⁷⁰⁶ While Sanborn maps show 317-319 King in the same building in 1902, 1912, and 1921, other maps show 319 and 321 in the next building closer to Royal Street. Adding to the confusion, the 1902 Sanborn puts “319” in parentheses under “317”, next to the 317-319 label on a different building. Ultimately, knowing that the Salvation Army in one building and the *Gazette* was in the other building makes it possible to delineate the correct addresses.

purchased the parcel from the Alexandria National Bank late in 1961, well in advance of any definite plan of urban renewal.⁷⁰⁷ The building, vacant since 1954, must have stood out as a prime example of why city officials called for such a plan.

When Gadsby's Urban Renewal took the 300-block of King Street, the Salvation Army had its headquarters at 316 King Street but, from 1920 until 1947, the organization kept its hall at 319-321 King Street.⁷⁰⁸ At a fundraiser in May 1920, the S.A. asked for \$12,000 "two-thirds [of which] will go toward the purchase of the building for their new headquarters."⁷⁰⁹ According to the deed, the sale had already taken place and cost the S.A. \$6000 at 6% interest payable in one year.⁷¹⁰ The unit at 319 King housed the offices of the Franklin Life Insurance Company and Jack L. Levinson, an independent insurance broker between 1948 and 1954 but directories do not include listings thereafter.⁷¹¹

Before the Salvation Army took possession, a long succession of businesses occupied the building. At old 69 King Street, a succession of daguerreotypists captured images of customers in Alexandria. In fact, Alexandrians had options for having their portrait taken with the new technology on the Market Block. At old 11 (105) N. Royal, David Haas offered the same services.⁷¹² N.S. Bennett pleaded with patrons, "Don't forget the No. 69 *King street, between Royal and Fairfax*, nor the fact that PICTURES are taken equally well at this establishment in

⁷⁰⁷ Alex. 545:538-539, December 20, 1961.

⁷⁰⁸ Hill's City Directories, 1921-1947.

⁷⁰⁹ *Alexandria Gazette*, May 11, 1920.

⁷¹⁰ Alex. 70:478-480, April 13, 1920.

⁷¹¹ Alexandria City Directories, 1955-1959.

⁷¹² "Pioneer American Photographers, 1839-1860,"

<https://pioneeramericanphotographers.com/tag/hass-mahler/>, accessed April 2, 2026.

cloudy or rainy weather.”⁷¹³ Bennett traveled to New York to buy “gold lockets, pins, rings, and watch seals...which will be fitted up with one of Bennett’s superb Daguerreotypes.”⁷¹⁴

In 1860, William Arnold bought old 69 King Street, now 319-321, the building next door to his old tailor’s shop. Arnold, one recalls, formerly had his tailor’s shop at old 71 (now 323) King. The shop had moved to old 83 King (405) but, after the Civil War, Arnold moved the shop into his own building.⁷¹⁵ An 1868 advertisement by Andrew H. Nott (“late of Richmond”) and Bertrand S. Ashby (“late of Fauquier co.”) offered “satisfaction” to customers looking for housekeeping articles from silverware to toilet seats.⁷¹⁶ Henry Strauss “opened an up to-date Gents’ Furnishing Store” in 1898.⁷¹⁷ By 1900, the building hosted the Havenner Baking Company, which opened a “sample room...replete with samples of the finer line of Crackers and Cakes in all styles of packages.”⁷¹⁸ The William A. Smoot Coal & Wood Company had its purchasing offices at 319 King Street from 1900 until 1911. Smoot stored the coal, presumably, in a warehouse on the waterfront at the “foot of Princess Street.”⁷¹⁹ Around the beginning of 1903, Smoot had the office “handsomely fitted up and refurbished.”⁷²⁰

City directories and tax records do not indicate the names of individuals who rented the apartments above 319-321 King Street. A 1919 item in the *Gazette* suggests a possible reason. The ad describes the units as “exceptionally well located for catering to transient[s] seeking furnished rooms.”⁷²¹ Short-term renters would not pay taxes or put their names in city directories

⁷¹³ *Alexandria Gazette*, December 29, 1854.

⁷¹⁴ *Alexandria Gazette*, December 29, 1854.

⁷¹⁵ *Alexandria Gazette*, September 22, 1865.

⁷¹⁶ *Alexandria Gazette*, December 30, 1868.

⁷¹⁷ *Alexandria Gazette*, October 7, 1898.

⁷¹⁸ *Alexandria Gazette*, September 1, 1900.

⁷¹⁹ *Alexandria Gazette*, December 31, 1903.

⁷²⁰ *Alexandria Gazette*, January 29, 1903.

⁷²¹ *Alexandria Gazette*, October 16, 1919.

as permanent residents. The real estate agent John D. Normoyle had an office in Room 4 of the Alexandria National Bank Building in 1905, when he advertised “3 rooms, partly furnished” on the third floor of 319 King Street for \$15 per month.⁷²² Seven years later, the monthly rental for a “fine large store room” at 319 King reached \$25.⁷²³

In all likelihood, Normoyle signed a lease with the New York Bargain House, who advertised from 319 King in June 1912.⁷²⁴ New York Bargain were still there in September 1914 when they advertised a “Great Fire Sale...owing to the recent fire in our store.”⁷²⁵ Unfortunately, no further record of a fire at 319 King has been found.

317-319 King Street (Parcel 49.5)

The name Shinbone Alley fell out of use soon after the *Alexandria Gazette* moved into this parcel in the early twentieth century and the lane became known as Gazette Alley. The *Gazette* offices faced the alley. “From Market Square to King Street there was an alleyway, a cobblestone alleyway, and the Gazette office—the Gazette office was the local newspaper—was in the alleyway,” recounted Dorothy Joan Roland in an oral history interview. “Of course, I wasn’t born,” Roland recalled learning, “...but I’ve heard that during the 1918 flu epidemic, there were so many deaths that they stacked the bodies in the alley because it always stayed cold.” The 1918 Spanish influenza epidemic reached its highest levels in Alexandria between

⁷²² *Alexandria Gazette*, June 9, 1905.

⁷²³ *Alexandria Gazette*, January 6, 1912.

⁷²⁴ *Alexandria Gazette*, June 18, 1912.

⁷²⁵ *Alexandria Gazette*, September 23, 1914.

October 1918 and January 1919. As fall turned to winter, lower temperatures would have helped keep all of Alexandria cold, not just Gazette Alley.⁷²⁶

During the ownership of John Janney, tax records show who else occupied the parcel. In 1799, both Alex Pezzy and Joseph Ingle occupied different houses on the lot, with Ingle's allotment facing the alley.⁷²⁷ From 1810 to 1813, James Sheehy paid Janney rent, probably for a grocery store.⁷²⁸ In 1816, William Gilham occupied both portions of the property, which then had an assessed value of \$2500.⁷²⁹ Gilham sold wine and spirits and "a general assortment of groceries...on King Street next door to Paton & Butcher."⁷³⁰ In later years, Gilham hawked Le"fresh raisins, olives, & capers."⁷³¹ Around 1819, Gilham went into partnership with John Creighton which lasted until August 1820.⁷³² Gilham then removed from the premises.

John Janney died in 1823 but his heirs continued to own and use the property. The 1827 Land Tax books show that Joseph Janney and Robert H. Miller occupied the three-story building as wholesale merchants. Miller, it seems, moved into the property around 1825. That year, he advertised "earthenware, china, and glass" to potential customers.⁷³³ Samuel H. Janney, who now controlled the real estate, offered for rent "the fire proof warehouse on King Street, between

⁷²⁶ Frimmel Smith, Interview with Dorothy Joan Roland, November 30, 2006, *Alexandria Legacies Project*. I could not verify the statement about the use of Gazette Alley as an overflow morgue during the 1918-1919 flu epidemic. See Krysten R. Moon, "A Brief History of Public Health in Alexandria and Alexandria's Health Department," 2014.

<https://media.alexandriava.gov/docs-archives/health/info/sitereportmoonhealthdept517nstasaph=1=.pdf>, accessed May 15, 2026.

⁷²⁷ 1799 Land Tax Book.

⁷²⁸ 1810 Land Tax Book. The *Gazette* of January 3, 1812 contains an advertisement by Sheehy for selling lard.

⁷²⁹ Land Tax Book 1813 and 1816.

⁷³⁰ *Alexandria Gazette*, July 4; September 14, and 1815.

⁷³¹ *Alexandria Gazette*, December 9, 1817.

⁷³² *Alexandria Gazette*, January 25, 1819; *Alexandria Gazette*, August 19, 1820.

⁷³³ *Alexandria Gazette*, September 24, 1825.

Royal and Fairfax Streets, adjoining the store now occupied by Robert H. Miller” in March 1826.⁷³⁴ In July 1826, Joseph Janney advertised that he would “after a few days, do business in the house adjoining on the west the one occupied by Robert H. Miller.”⁷³⁵ By 1832, Janney was again on the move.⁷³⁶ Miller and his heirs continued advertising similar products all the way through the 1890s.

Robert Hartshorne Miller purchased the parcel from the heirs of John Jones Janney in 1835.⁷³⁷ Indeed, Miller’s wife, Anna Janney Miller, was John Janney’s niece, the daughter of his brother, Elisha. Robert H. Miller’s son, Elisha, inherited the property according to the 1874 will.⁷³⁸ Elisha Miller then bequeathed it to his own son, Ashby.⁷³⁹ Ashby Miller, in turn, sold it to the Virginia Safe Deposit & Trust Corporation of Alexandria. The parcel thus stayed in the hands of the same family for the entire nineteenth century.

G Shinbone Alley and Sharpshin Alley, unnumbered (Parcel 49.1B)

An 1854 advertisement promoting an auction of real estate held by the McKnight Estate described “at the corner of Sharp-shin and Market Alleys...a small framed tenement.”⁷⁴⁰ In the middle of the three parcels facing the Market, Ann Sidebottom ran an ordinary beginning in the 1850s while she also lived at 113 N. Royal Street.⁷⁴¹ By an 1854 deed, Sidebottom paid \$2140

⁷³⁴ *Alexandria Gazette*, March 15, 1826.

⁷³⁵ *Alexandria Gazette*, July 27, 1826.

⁷³⁶ *Alexandria Gazette*, July 17, 1832.

⁷³⁷ Alex. V2:483-86, October 21, 1835.

⁷³⁸ Will of Robert H. Miller, WB1:92-97, Corporation Court of Alexandria, February 10, 1874.

⁷³⁹ Will of Elisha J. Miller, WB2:125, Corporation Court of Alexandria.

⁷⁴⁰ *Alexandria Gazette*, March 14, 1854.

⁷⁴¹ *Alexandria Gazette*, April 6, 1859-04-06, April 4, 1860, April 3, 1861.

for a parcel “beginning at a point on [Sharpshin] Alley 37’ to the eastward of Royal Street and extending east on said Alley 37’, with a depth of 30’.”⁷⁴²

Shinbone Alley, unnumbered (Parcel 49.1C)

The McKnight executors also sold “a two-story framed tenement” on this lot, “fronting 20 feet on Market Alley and extending back 34 feet.”⁷⁴³

⁷⁴² Alex. Q3:25-26.

⁷⁴³ *Alexandria Gazette*, March 14, 1854.



Figure 23 Market Alley, South East corner Market Square Alley, photograph by Russell Jones. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC.

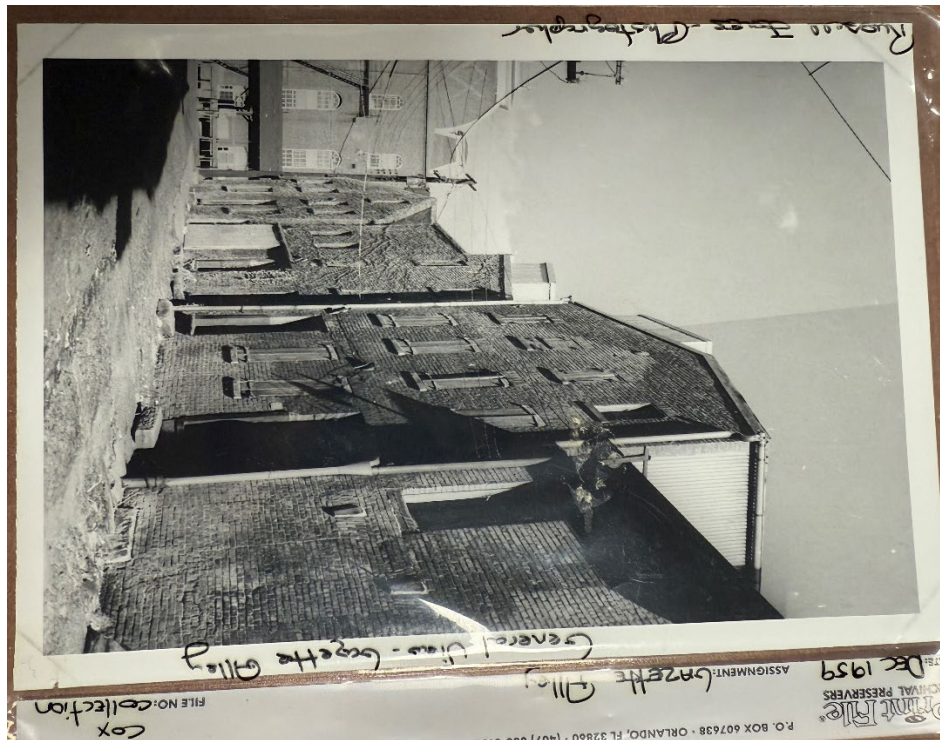


Figure 24 Warehouse, General View, Gazette Alley, photograph by Russell Jones. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC.

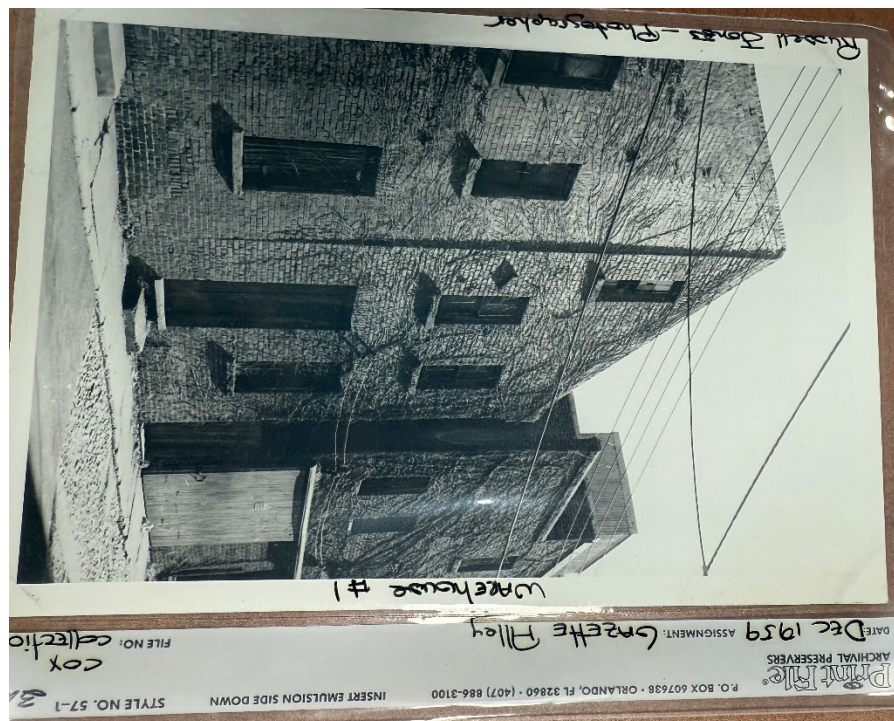


Figure 25 Gazette Alley, Warehouse #1, photograph by Russell Jones. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC.



Figure 26 Gazette Alley, photograph by Russell Jones. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC.



Figure 27 Gazette Alley, Warehouse No. 2, photograph by Russell Jones. Ethelyn Cox Collection, MS 287, ALSC.