

"Alexandria's first doctors were real people, real flesh and blood..."

Dr. David Stuart, who married the widow of Martha Washington's son, John Parke Custis, Eleanor Calvert Custis, was the father of thirteen children by her. In his spare time he worked closely with President Washington on the Potomac Canal project and was on the committee which chose the site of the Capital. Being fluent in French, it is said he was the only Commissioner to be able to converse with the architect L'Enfant in his native tongue.

These short stories and anecdotes that have survived the passage of time show that Alexandria's first doctors were real people, real flesh and blood. So often their records seem to go to dust.

After all, they lived in our houses, they drove carriages down our streets, they married and bore children, had their sorrows and their joys, and made history in their time, just as history is being made now by their successors.

From Princess to Queen: Wandering Along the Alexandria Waterfront

By: T. Michael Miller

As part of the Fireside Sentinel's continued inquiry into the history of the Alexandria waterfront, this article will focus on the Princess to Queen Street landscape. An investigation of this region is the chronicle of old town lots 20, 21, and 26.

On July 13, 1749, the Alexandria trustees conveyed to Roger Lindon of Whitehaven, England lot 20 for L24.9.1½ and lot 21 for L20.9.1½ (Fairfax Deedbook: C:302-3). Because of Lindon's failure to build on these properties, the lots escheated to the trustees. Subsequently in September, 1754, the property was struck off to William Ramsay, an early town trustee, Lord Mayor in 1761 and merchant in the firm of Wm. & Thomas Gilpin. Ramsay kept the real estate a relatively short time before he conveyed lot 21 in April 1764 and lot 20 in December 1766 to Jacob Hite of Frederick County, Virginia. (Fairfax DB: F:146) In February 1768, the trustees met to affix the length lot 20 should extend down the Potomac River opposite to lot 26. After due consideration, it was determined to extend Hite's property 59 feet. Hite and Robert Adam were business associates who operated a pier and warehouse south of Princess Street. (Alex. DB: F:311) By 1773, Hite had sold lot 21 "with 2 houses" to Joshua Storrs of Henrico County and a moiety of lot 20 to Robert Adam. (Fairfax DB: M:211 - Courtesy Connie Ring, Archivist, Fairfax County)



Plan of the town of Alexandria, 1749 by John West, Jr.



In addition to the ownership of the Princess Street wharf, Adam held lots 4 and 5 which were situated at Point West on the northeast and northwest corners of Water (Lee) and Oronoko Streets. On March 8, 1774, the trustees leased lot 4 to Adam for 63 years.

Robert Adam, a very adventuresome man, was the proprietor of a store in Alexandria, a grist mill on Four-mile Run, a tannery, iron foundry and bakery at the northeast corner of Lee and Union Street (lot 4). Adam's bakehouse caught fire on November 16, 1785 and "burnt with great violence, but the timely active exertions of the inhabitants, it was with difficulty extinguished." (Va. Journ. & Alex. Adv., 11/17/1785, p.3) After repairing his bakehouse Adam offered to lease the same in March 1786:

A complete Bake house with 2 ovens, lately occupied by Mr. James Adam, deceased, with all the necessary conveniences...also to be hired by the month or year, two good bakers...There is also convenient to said bakehouse, a kitchen, meathouse and garden and convenient brick store house with a good dry cellar. (Va. Journ. & Alex. Adv., 3/2/1786, p.4.)

Robert Adam died in 1789. The executor of his estate, James Irwin, leased the bakehouse to Robert Anderson and Andrew Jamieson on March 18, 1795. (Alex. DB: G:9) Unfortunately, four months later the Jamieson bakehouse burned. The Columbia Mirror and Alexandria Gazette reported on June 27:

The bake house of Mr. Andrew Jamieson caught fire last Thursday morning. Notwithstanding that every exertion was made to arrest the progress of the devouring element, it soon laid waste this house and dwelling adjoining; while the most unremitting efforts of the citizens did with difficulty prevent it communicating to the buildings adjacent. By this unfortunate affair Mr. Jamieson lost a large quantity of flour and bread; the books, papers, and the most valuable of the furniture were removed before the dwelling took fire. (See: Alex. Gaz.: 4/6/1864, p.2)

Besides the bakehouse, Irwin also leased portions of Adam's wharf (south side of Princess St.) to Wm. Hodgson, merchant, for seven years in March 1795 (Alex. DB: F:311) and a section to Robert Brockett, bricklayer, in September 1795. (Alex. DB: F:379) Prior to his death, Robert Adam had conveyed to Henry Gardner at 52' x 23' parcel of his Princess Street wharf. (Alex. DB: C:194) Gardner, a baker from Boston, had originally settled at Fairfax and Prince Street in August 1784. He



"The bake house of Mr. Andrew Jamieson caught fire late Thursday morning..."





advertised the "best loaf bread and all sorts of crackers in kegs." (Va. Journ & Alex. Adv.: 8/5/1784, p.4.) However, Gardner mortgaged his lot on Adam's wharf to John Reynolds and Alexander Smith, whereupon they advertised the lease of the "house and bake oven" on April 12, 1787. (VJAA: 4/12/1787)

On July 30, 1774, Joshua Storrs sold lot 21 to William Herbert and Andrew Stewart, merchants, for L850. (Fairfax DB: M:2) Herbert, a mercantile giant, later was a partner in the firm Leven Powell and Co. and in 1780 operated a store with John Potts at the southeast corner of Queen and Fairfax Street. Herbert also served as Alexandria's third mayor (1782-83) and was president of the Bank of Alexandria (1796-1819). A pillar of his community, he died in February 1819 and was interred at Christ Church cemetery on Wilkes Street. (See: Fireside Sentinel, September 1987)

Upon Andrew Stewart's death, Herbert and the executors sold the lower moiety of lot 20 to Captain Richard Conway for L3000 (Fairfax DB: D4:253). Capt. Conway, Alexandria's fourth mayor (1783-84) resided in a beautiful home called Beverly which was located north of Oronoko Street to the east of Union. A vibrant merchant, Richard Conway supported political measures which favored his social class. On May 27, 1780, he signed a petition to the Virginia General Assembly protesting a proposed tax on importers. (See: Fireside Sentinel, January 1988). Conway also constructed a large wharf which jutted out from lots 21 & 26 into the river where he imported Lisbon salt, operto wines, rum, moscovado and clay sugars. (VJAA: 9/22/1785)

On July 1, 1782 Conway and his wife Mary leased a 71' x 72' parcel of lot 21 to John Lomax for L17.15 annual rent. (Fairfax DB: Q:195; Alex. DB: A:10; F:152) Lomax was the proprietor of a large tavern in the middle of the block south side of Princess Street east of Fairfax St. The tavern is reported to have been in operation as early as 1773. (Ethelyn Cox, Street by Street, p. 140) Frequented by George Washington, this commercial establishment was the epicenter of Alexandria's social life and witnessed many historical gatherings. The commercially important Potomack Co. was organized and established here on November 15, 1784:

...a very numerous and respectable Meeting of the Gentlemen of this State and Maryland convened...at Mr. Lomax's Tavern, to deliberate...on...the rendering navigable the River Potomack from the Tidewater. Petitions to the Respective Honorable Assemblies were prepared, praying to form a Company...

The wharves of Robert Adam, Capt. Richard Conway and John Thomas Kirkpatrick. (Fairfax Survey Book, 1795)



...The opening of the Navigation of the Potomack is, perhaps, a Work of more political than Commercial consequence, as it will be one of the grandest chains for preserving the federal Union the western world will have. ...and we shall be one and the same People, whatever System of European politics may be adopted. (VJAA: 11/23/1784)

And on May 19, 1785:

...being the day appointed by the States of Virginia and Maryland relative to the opening of the inland Navigation of the River, a meeting was held at Mr. Lomax's Tavern, consisting of a very numerous Assembly of the first people in the respective States. ...Daniel Carroll, Esq., President of the Assembly of Maryland being appointed to the Chair, the Subscription Books were read...when it appeared that Forty Thousand Three Hundred Pounds was subscribed, a Sum far beyond what was required to incorporate the Company. The Company ...proceeded to the Election of a president and Directors, when the following Gentlemen were appointed: His Excellency, General Washington, President; George Gilpin, John Fitzgerald, Thomas Johnson and Thomas Lee, Esq., Directors. (VJAA: 5/19/1785 - Research of Ethelyn Cox)

It was also at Lomax's tavern that "dancing assemblies were held; members of Lodge No. 29 (later Alexandria-Washington Lodge No. 22) dined in 1783 and 1784" and Washington met with commissioners from Maryland and Virginia in May 1785. He then invited them to Mt. Vernon to continue the negotiations on the Potomac and Chesapeake Bay fishery dispute. The Mt. Vernon Conference subsequently led to the Annapolis Convention of 1786 and still later to the Constitutional convention at Philadelphia in 1787.

On June 27, 1785, John Wise, the tavern King of Alexandria purchased the Lomax hostel for L1200 and an annual ground rent of L17.15 specie. (Fairfax DB: Q:192, 195) (Wise at one time was the proprietor of four taverns in Alexandria: the Indian Queen, City Hotel, Wise's Tavern, Fountain Tavern) Wise's proprietorship of the tavern was short-lived however. By 1793, Henry McCue operated the old Lomax and catered to the needs of a waterfront clientele. McCue has been immortalized by a letter his wife penned to the Alexandria Gazette on November 4, 1800. It read as follows:

...(He) charged me with leaving him without his desires. For before seven evidences he swore that if I did not leave the house he would murder me. ... I dare say that Mr. McCue wanted me away for some other conveniences; for Mr. McCue has left my bed for three or four months

"On May 19, 1785... a meeting was held at Mr. Lomax's tavern..."



"It was also at Lomax's tavern that dancing assemblies were held..."



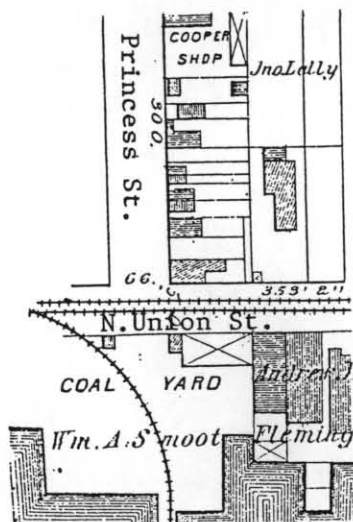
"It is not known if Mr. McCue curbed his errant ways...but his tavern...survived..."

at a time; and for 9 months I don't believe that he has lodged seven weeks at home...I thought he might reform, as he is about fifty, men at that age commonly begin to think about something besides raking; but...he has lately fell in love again. Poor old man, I pity his weakness. ...Well, I have now said as much as injured innocence wishes and not wishing to be troublesome to the printer I will conclude.

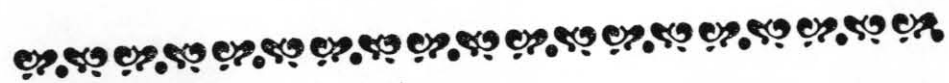
It is not known if Mr. McCue curbed his errant ways, but his tavern (Lomax) survived well into the middle of the 19th century. In April 1854, Edward L. Sheehy of Prince George's County sold it to William G. Cazenove, a prominent lawyer and wheat merchant for \$670.00 (Alex. DB: P3:505). Its disposition after this time is not known.

During the 19th century, Princess Street from Water to the river showed signs of nascent industrialization. In the early teens Wm. Dundas owned the wharf and warehouse at the intersection of Princess & Union as well as two brick warehouses, corner of King and Columbus Street and two homes on Princess between Water and Fairfax Street. (Alex. Gaz. 2/11/1818, p.4). Dundas, who moved to Baltimore in 1818, had offered to sell his wharf and warehouse which was then occupied by Mordecai Miller (b.1763; d.1832), silversmith and importer. (Alex. Gaz. 2/11/1818, p.4.) Miller's grandson, Warwick, writes that "his (Mordecai's) store is now the Alexandria Gazette office (310 Prince St) and from the store to the corner of Fairfax Street there was a large warehouse filled with hides of different sorts which were part of return cargoes brought in vessels which traded to the West Indies and South America..." He also did a large business shipping tobacco to Europe (Reminiscences of Warwick P. Miller, 1896, pp. 2-3) Mordecai also ran a bakery, 1807; was agent for the Mt. Hebron Cotton Mills, 1817; and sold barrels of pork, tar, oil, oak staves, indigo, salt, molasses, sugar (George Cutten, Silversmiths of Virginia, pp. 17, 18).

As part of an internal improvement program, Common Council ordered that Wm. Mills, Street Commissioner, have Union Street paved, graveled and covered with a top layer of sand in 1851. (Alex. Gaz.: 7/29/1851, p.2.). And, when railroads came to town in the early 1850's, City Council enacted legislation in 1849 which granted permission to the Orange and Alexandria Railroad Company to lay trackage on the western side of Union street. (Ch. VI -Railroad... Right of Way on Streets - Charter and Laws of the City of Alexandria, 1874, pp. 46-47).



From City Atlas of Alexandria, Va., 1877.



A devastating fire swept across the southwest corner of Union and Princess Street on October 13, 1857 consuming "ten houses and sheds, 4 of which belonged to George H. Smoot and six to McVeigh Brothers and Francis L. Smith."

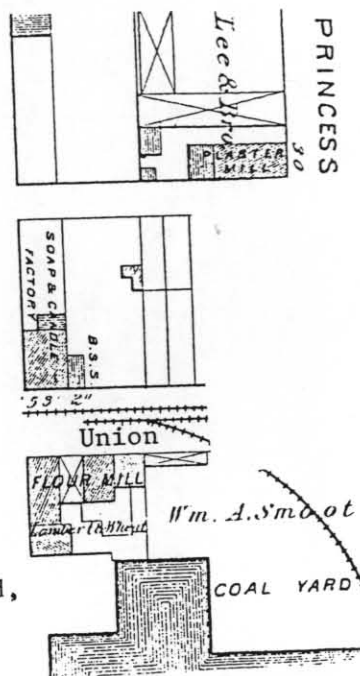
1857

All six were occupied by families, many of whom lost much of their furniture, clothing. Mr. Thomas Javins who occupied one of the houses on Princess street, as a store house, lost about 2700 bushels of salt, besides barrels on which there was no insurance. Mr. Geo. W. Harrison, who occupied the corner house as a storehouse for salt, loses some hogsheads, barrels, ...The fire originated in the second story of the corner building, and but little doubt exists that it was the work of an incendiary. The buildings being frame, old and very dry, burned rapidly, and were speedily consumed, despite the effort of the firemen. During the progress of the fire at this point, it was discovered that the frame stable, attached to the cracker bakery establishment of Messrs. Jamieson & Son had caught fire from a spark which entered the window and lodged among the hay, and before the flames could be extinguished the stable and its contents were consumed. (Alexandria Gazette, 10/13/1857)

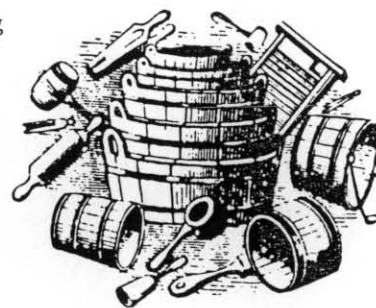
During the Civil War Alexandria served as a logistical supply center for the Union army in Virginia. Once again the Princess Street streetface was metamorphosed as tons of quartermaster equipment, provisions and supplies were off-loaded. To prevent the outbreak of destructive fires, a U.S. steam firehouse was constructed on the south side of Princess between Fairfax and Lee Street. (Wm. Hurd, Alexandria, Va., 1861-1865, p. 53).

As early as 1820, John T. Armstrong had operated a cooper shop at the intersection of Princess and Union Streets. By the fall of 1869, W.A. Smoot, who contemplated building a large warehouse on the northeast corner, had his lot surveyed. In 1871 it was reported that "Smoot has now a waterfront extending from the old steam mill (Queen St.) the Columbia wharf to Princess Street and along the whole length of it he intends to build a substantial pier and greatly enlarge the wharf accommodations of the port. Of course the old framed buildings which so long has stood on the site of the contemplated improvement will be removed." (Alex. Gazette, 11/22/1871, p.3) This warehouse remained in situ until 1895 when a new structure measuring 68 x 353 feet was constructed. (Alex. Gaz., 10/10/1868, p.3; 11/22/1871, p.3; 1/1/1895, p.3).

Cassius F. Lee, Jr., Robert E. Lee's second cousin and co-partner with Robert Jamieson in the shipping and commission business, purchased a lot of ground on the south side of



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EDITOR'S NOTE:

Byrates are a mineral commonly called heavy spar, used in the leather industry, in ceramics (enamels) and as a cement of sandstone.

- Spelling corrected by P. Matthews, 5-4-89 (8th OED)
Barite (modern spelling) is the sulfate of barium.



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Editor:
T. Michael Miller
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Barbara E. Nicely
Copy Editor:
Virginia Kahl

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Princess Street between Lee and Union from George W. Harrison for \$750 in December 1868. (Alex. Gaz.: 12/30/1868) Without delay Lee erected a plaster mill on the site of an old fish house. This was an era when the stench of fertilizer caused numerous citizen complaints. (Alex. Gaz. 9/8/1869) Plaster and guano were imported and used extensively to revitalize the soil which had been leached by overproduction of tobacco. Lee's mill continued in operation until January 1880 when Lee, Hewet & Co. agreed to convert it to grind byrates*. The byrates were shipped to Alexandria over the Virginia Midland Railroad from a quarry on Mr. Hewets farm in Campbell County near Lynchburg. Apparently this venture was not successful because Lee sold his mill in 1883.

During the remainder of the 19th century, the Princess Street landscape remained virtually undisturbed until another fire visited the square in October 1896:

...In an incredibly short time the flames were licking everything combustible from that part to the river...W.A. Smoot & Company large frame structure, that of the Alexandria Chemical Company and about a dozen small houses were all roaring flames ...W.A. Smoots and Co.'s building and that of the Fertilizer Company stored with fertilizers and chemicals ... were destroyed.

...A breeze urged on the fire with great rapidity and before it was arrested by the river about 15 buildings were destroyed...The tracks were lined with cars, 12 of which were consumed ...All the houses burned except one, the old distillery, were wooden buildings...Fishtown was completely wiped out again. On the railroad tracks a car loaded with oil was standing and when it was ignited a huge column of white flame leaped up to an enormous height...During ...the destruction of the warehouses of Smoot and Co. and the fertilizer Company, explosions startled the city...

The loss to the Southern Railroad is about \$8,000. ...W.A. Smoot and Company and the Fertilizer Co., \$15,000. The total loss will not exceed \$30,000. (Alex. Gaz., 10/18/1896) Fortunately these businesses were covered by insurance and the American Chemical and Smoot & Co. rebuilt their facilities shortly thereafter.

(To be continued next month: The wharves of Benoi Wheat and John and Thomas Kirkpatrick.)



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Alexandria Suggests an Answer to the Riddle of Colonial Williamsburg's Logo

By: Philip M. Erickson, CDR, USNR (Ret.)

Many Revolutionary cities have their stories to tell and Alexandria, Virginia is certainly one of them.

During the course of researching sugar imports which entered the harbor of Alexandria during the late 18th century, I had occasion to visit the U.S. National Archives. There I was able to examine several ship manifest lists. These lists are extremely revealing and describe a multiplicity of exports which arrived in many port towns. In shipping cargoes, each merchant/importer had his own special insignia to identify his wares. Why was this so? The sailors and dock workers were basically illiterate and a special mark on a cask or a bale was a clue to where cargoes might be placed or stored aboard a ship or on a dock. These insignia or logos were most important because they assured the local importer that his wares would be delivered properly.

Ship masters and the Collector of Customs all had a hand in this operation. In one particular case, manifests from the Powhatan of Richmond were recorded as follows:

Report and Manifest of the Cargo of the Powhatan of Richmond last from the port of London and bound for Alexandria measuring three hundred and fifty tons, as per register duties dated 9th May 1792 ... built at Smithfield...owned by Nathaniel Anderson ... at present commanded by Mills Reddick and during the voyage by Mills Reddick.



The phrase "commanded by -- and during the voyage" indicated there were no mutinies on board. This particular cargo was assigned to William Wilson of Alexandria.

During the late 18th century, Alexandria was populated by numerous merchants and shippers. As an aside, let us look at some of their markings as they appeared on other Alexandria manifest lists.