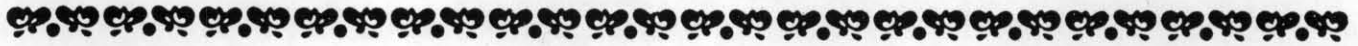




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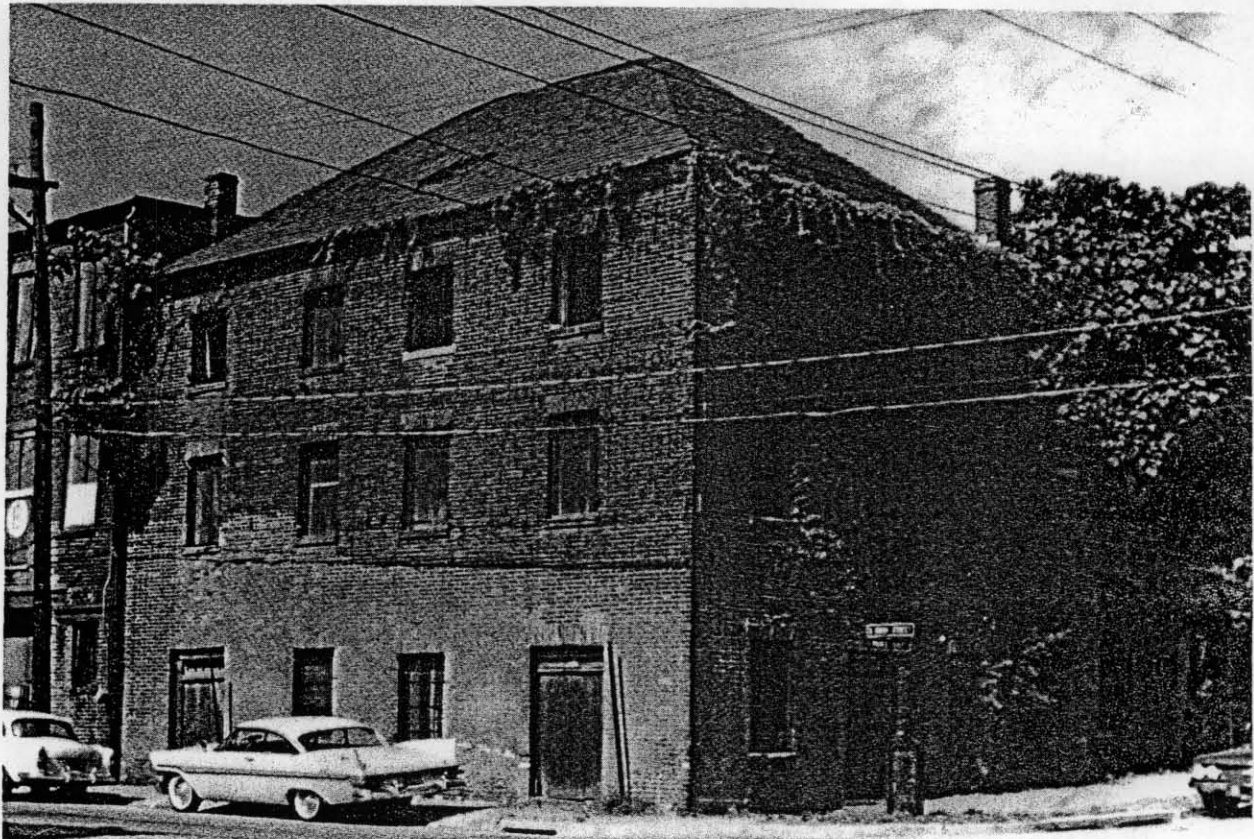
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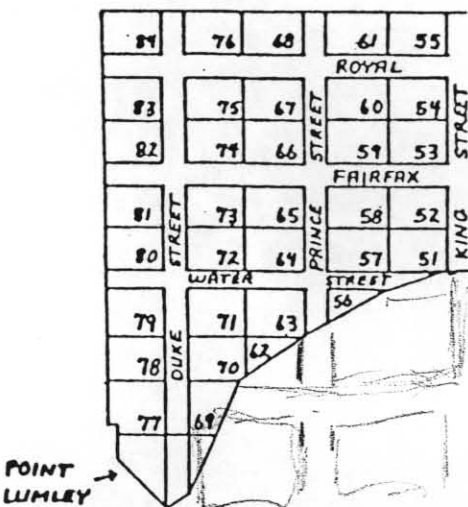
WANDERING ALONG THE WATERFRONT: The Prince to Duke Street Corridor

by T. Michael Miller

For almost 250 years the Prince to Duke Street waterfront has played an important role in the maritime history of Alexandria. It has been the site of a number of important wharves and businesses, including a major industrial strip called the Strand, which included coopers' shops, foundries, ship chandleries and wholesale and retail groceries. Schooners and ships



100 Prince Street, 18th Century warehouse of Benjamin Shreve and James Lawrason



1749 map of Alexandria lots.

BENJAMIN SHREVE, Junr.
HAS FOR SALE
At his Store, corner of Prince and Union Streets.
A few pipes 4th proof brandy,
Ditto ditto 2d and 3d proof Rum,
20 Quarter casks Malaga wine,
4 Tierces acid,
20 Barrels herrings,
32 Bags coffee,
3 Boxes glass tumblers,
Bandanna handkerchiefs,
China and blue gilt ditto,
India check,
Ravens' duck,
Ladies' London shoes,
And a few pieces of furniture, consisting of a desk and book case, a side board and secretary, 1 bureau, 1 wash stand.
July 15.

An advertisement for Benjamin Shreve's store.
[AA: 7/15/1802]

from Portugal, Spain, France, Great Britain and the West Indies tied up at its wharves while stevedores unloaded their precious cargoes of sugar, molasses, china, whiskey, guano and manufactured goods. After a devastating fire leveled the Strand in June 1897 it was described as follows:

Nothing but charred piles were left of wharves which, in times gone by, were the receptacles of shiploads of West India sugar and molasses, and upon which direct importations of articles from nearly every clime had been deposited. ...What was many years ago Lambert & McKenzie's commercial house ... had suffered a like fate, as had also the mammoth warehouses used by Fowle & Co. ...The buildings in olden times used by McKenzie's, Philip H. Hooff's, Isaac Paul's, R. I. T. Wilson's, John McCracken's and Ebenezer Bacon's commission houses and ship chandleries were in ruins. These old landmarks had been gazed upon with interest for many years by the older residents, recalling reminiscences of half a century ago. Some of the buildings had in recent years been used for other purposes, while others had become the refuge of bats in the absence of human occupants. [AG: 6/3/1897]

The early history of the Prince to Duke Street riverfront is to a great extent the chronicle of the original old Alexandria lots numbered 62, 63, 69 and 70. As early maps clearly show, a large area of the harbor from the N.E. corner of Prince and Water Street [Lee] to Union Street was not filled in until the late 18th century. Many of the houses and businesses which now occupy the south side of the unit and 100 blocks of Prince Street would have been under water during the early 18th century.

During the initial sale of lots by the town trustees on July 13, 1749, Col. George William Fairfax of Fairfax County purchased lots No. 62 and 63 for 39 pistols. [Trustees Minute Book: 1, 40] Lot No. 62 contained less than half an acre and incorporated the eastern half of the present-day 100 block of Prince Street. Union Street was not extended across the eastern terminus of Prince Street until 1785.

Born in the Bahamas in 1724, George William Fairfax [d. 1787] attended school in England in 1731 and subsequently took up residence with his father at Belvoir plantation, now the site of Ft. Belvoir, on

the Potomac River. A close friend of George Washington, George William and the future first President surveyed the western lands of Thomas, Sixth Lord Fairfax's proprietary in 1748. Upon the death of William, his father, in 1757, George William Fairfax inherited the beautiful Belvoir mansion where he entertained in grand fashion. From 1768 to 1769, he served as a member of the Virginia Council. George and his lovely wife, Sally Carry, returned to England in 1773 as the fire of revolutionary discontent began to kindle in Virginia.

The Belvoir estate was leased to the Reverend Andrew Morton and was subsequently sold at public auction by George Washington in 1774. Belvoir burned in 1783, which may have dashed the Fairfax family's hopes of ever returning to America after the Revolution. [Donald Sweig, & Kenton Kilmer, *The Fairfax Family in Fairfax County*, pp. 31-32]

George William Fairfax either failed to meet the Alexandria trustees' requirements to build a structure on lot No. 63 or defaulted on his payment. On November 20, 1749, Willoughby Newton of Westmoreland County became the owner of lots No. 62 and 63. Two years later Newton conveyed the properties to George Johnston, a brilliant lawyer and Alexandria trustee, for £64 on November 10, 1751. [FDB: C1:382]

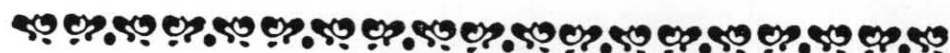
A resident of 224 South Lee Street, Johnston is remembered as the member of the House of Burgesses who seconded Patrick Henry's famous resolutions against the onerous British Stamp Act in 1765. Johnston, who had removed to Alexandria from Winchester, Virginia in 1757, also served as presiding Justice of the Fairfax County Court.

On August 7, 1766, Johnston placed an advertisement in the *Maryland Gazette* for the sale of three lots in Alexandria:

TO BE SOLD -- Three lots of land adjoining each other, in the town of Alexandria, whereon stands a good Dwelling House, upwards of 100 feet long, with six Fire Places below stairs, another house thirty-six feet long, with two fire places, stable, milk house, meat house, office, other houses and a good garden: the whole enclosed with pails [sic] and brick; there is also a



224 S. Lee Street, residence of George Johnston.



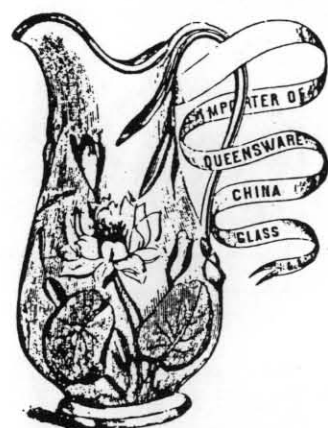
well of good water. The lots have a front on the River, of near seventy yards [Lot 62?] defended from the Water by a stone wall, to which wall, boats and other small vessels may come at a moderate tide..."

The 36-foot-long house may describe Johnston's residence at 224 S. Lee Street, while the 100-foot dwelling probably occupied lots 62 and 63. Johnston died after a "long and lingering indisposition" on August 29, 1766.

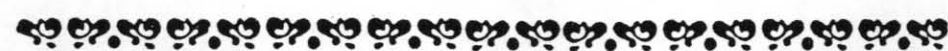
George Gilpin, Alexandria's noted surveyor, purchased lot No. 62 from Johnston's executors sometime prior to 1769. [FDB: H:40] A man of many talents, Gilpin held several positions of civic responsibility, including member of the Common Council; Commissioner of Streets; weigher and measurer for the port; Director of the Bank of Alexandria; Director of the Little River Turnpike Company; postmaster; the first judge of the Orphan's Court; flour and tobacco inspector; Director of the Potomac Company; collector of customs, and harbor master.

From 1770 to the early 19th century, Gilpin dominated the scene along the Prince to Duke Street waterfront. He owned an extensive two-story warehouse, 36 by 86 feet, and a wharf at the S.E. corner of Prince and Union Streets from which he engaged in commerce. Gilpin also leased his wharf to many local artisans and merchants. Adam Bence, a sail maker, informed the public in June 1786 that he kept his "sail loft on Col. Gilpin's wharf, adjoining Capt. M'Clenachan's store, where orders from gentlemen are thankfully received." Bence was also willing to sell sewing twine, ships' colours, palms and glasses. [Alexandria Advertiser: 6/8/1786]

M'Clenachan's store on Gilpin's wharf also did a lively business. Among the commodities he advertised in 1786 were old Jamaica spirits, West India and New England rum, china and Queensware. [VJAA: 6/1/1786] In 1787, James Irvine, a rope maker, let it be known that he sold cordage from M'Clenachan's store while William Worth, on board the sloops *Polly* and *Sally*, off loaded hogsheads and barrels of New York rum, hollow iron ware, a few casks of oil and a quantity of codfish and cheese at Gilpin's wharf. [Virginia Journal & Alexandria Advertiser: 1/11/1787; 4/12/1787] The firm of M'Leod



Some of the commodities sold at M'Clenachan's store included China and Queensware.



and Yeatman, wholesale and retail merchants, was yet another business which offered to sell the best coffee, wines, shad and herring at its warehouse on the wharf. [Columbia Mirror & Alexandria Gazette: 9/6/1796]

By 1795 merchant James Cavan offered lemons, oranges, corks, salt, sugar, candles, tar, pitch and pork in barrels from Gilpin's wharf. [AG: 7/4/1795; 7/9/1795]

During the early 19th century, John G. Ladd announced that he had removed his "stock of goods from the frame warehouse on Col. Gilpin's wharf to the warehouse next directly west where he offered for sale wet and dry goods on reasonable terms." [AG: 8/6/1801]

Besides his wharf transactions, Gilpin conveyed numerous parcels of lot No. 62 to interested merchants and entrepreneurs. On November 18, 1783 Gilpin leased to Michael Madden and Andrew Wales two 40 by 44 foot tracts on the south side of Prince Street. [FDB: O:104, 107, 110; Alexandria Deed book: C:278; Connie Ring, Title Search]

Madden constructed a store at 106 Prince Street and offered "a few hogsheads of good Antigua and Barbados rum" as early as May 1784. [Alexandria Advertiser: 5/20/1784; 12/2/1784] By 1791 Patrick Burns occupied this building and operated a tavern on the site.

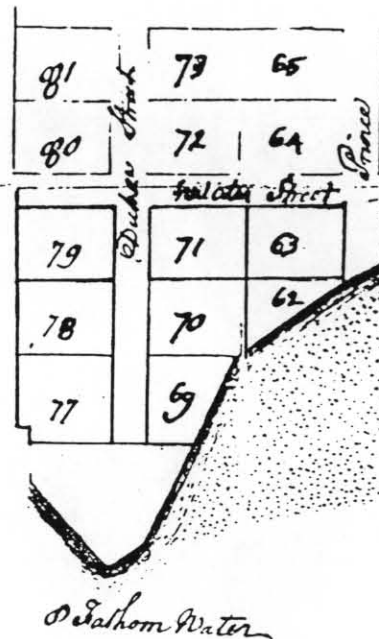
Andrew Wales, the owner of the other tract, was a very successful brewer who operated a distillery on the east side of the 100 block of South Lee Street. He sold yeast, beer, grain and spirits and also managed a tavern on the 100 block of South Union Street in the 1790s. After a severe fire damaged his brewery on January 28, 1788, Wales offered to sell the establishment and went out of business in 1799. [See: "Wandering Along the Waterfront: King to Prince Street" in the Fireside Sentinel: August 1991, pp. 100-102]

In 1802, Thomas White, a blacksmith, informed his friends and customers that he had moved to Union Street between Prince and Duke Streets where citizens could "be accommodated with all kinds of smiths' Work..." [Alexandria Advertiser: April 24, 1802]

Wine, Oil, Almonds, &c.
SEVENTY pipes Corsica wine, similar to Malaga,
 12 boxes salad oil
 1000 lbs. first quality soft shell almonds
 1 case Italian superfine black sewing silk
 50 marble chimney pieces with solid hearths
 Colored straw entry mats
 Just landed from schr. Adeline, from Leghorn, and for sale by
JOHN RUMNEY.
 July 17 sw3w

An advertisement for John Rumney's store.
 [AG: 7/20/1819]





1749 map showing lots in Alexandria.

East of Madden's store and still in existence at 100 Prince Street, there is a three-story 18th century warehouse which was owned by William Fowle of the respected firm of Lawrason and Fowle. These local entrepreneurs offered to sell this imposing edifice in May 1818. Since 1816 it had been occupied by James F. Caldwell and John Jackson, grocers, who peddled cognac brandy, English cheese, cigars, salt, mustard and other items. By June 1818 Caldwell and Jackson had dissolved their partnership. [AG: 5/27/1818; 6/1/1818; 1/12/1819; 7/20/1819; 10/20/1819]

Next door to Caldwell and Jackson's store was the firm of Edward and John Rumney. These entrepreneurs sold wine, marble chimney pieces with solid hearths, and Turks Island salt. [AG: 1/12/1819; 7/20/1819; 10/20/1819]

George Gilpin also conveyed to Isaac McPherson a parcel of lot No. 62 on March 20, 1786. [ADB: E:34, 37] Located just three doors above Gilpin's Wharf on Prince Street, Daniel and Isaac McPherson retailed groceries and foodstuffs here until Isaac declared bankruptcy in 1803. [Alexandria Advertiser: 3/8/1803]

Joshua and Thomas Gilpin tried to lease all the property fronting on Water and Union Streets in June and July 1802, including the warehouse, lumberyard, and wharf. [Virginia Journal and Alexandria Gazette, June 25, 1802]

In 1809, four years before his death, Gilpin began to liquidate his assets. In addition to his wharf, he offered to sell several Prince to Duke Street riverfront lots.

...The other lot has a front of 44 feet on Union Street and extending 220 feet to the Potomac River. ...On the front there is a valuable wharf, which is at present fit to accommodate large vessels, and may, if necessary, be extended to seven fathom water. There is on the water lot a Store House 20 by 40 feet, two story high, built with stone, the streets in front of the above lots are well paved. For terms of sale apply to Joshua and Thomas Gilpin, the proprietors, in Philadelphia or to George Gilpin in Alexandria. [AG: 5/22/1809]



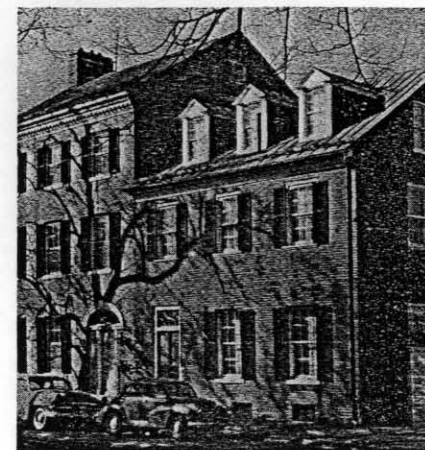
No less important to the history of the Prince to Duke Street waterfront is the chronicle of lots Numbers 69 and 70.

As early as 1778 Richard Arell conveyed part of lot No. 69, which bordered on Duke and Union Streets, to William Hunter, Sr. [ADB: C:167] Arell (b. 1719; d. 1796) operated a very successful tavern on Market Square. The tavern was a very important 18th century gathering spot, and in 1774 a committee of Fairfax citizens chaired by George Washington was appointed to draw up resolutions at Arell's Tavern, disapproving actions taken by the British parliament against the city of Boston in retaliation for the latter's famous Tea Party. What use Arell made of lot No. 69 is not known. William Hunter, Sr., an Alexandria merchant, may have been a partner in the firm of Hunter and Allison, wheat dealers. The elder Hunter signed petitions in 1785 and 1788 which favored increased power for Congress and which stiffened wheat inspection laws in Alexandria. [Robert Rutland, The Papers of George Mason, Vol. I]

Lot No. 70 encompassed one-half acre bounded by Water [Lee], Duke and Union Streets. On March 28, 1752, the Alexandria town trustees sold this parcel to Nathaniel Harrison, a gentleman from Stafford County for £24.19.6 [FDB: C:312]. In March 1775 Harrison conveyed the property to Richard Arell. [FDB: M:33] Arell subsequently became embroiled in a suit with the town of Alexandria over the property, and as part of the evidence presented in this case, a survey of both lots 69 and 70 was entered into the court record. [See: Diagram [Fairfax County Record of Surveys, p. 146]

In 1795, Arell leased a portion of lot No. 70, on the north side of Duke Street, to Henry Walker for £9.2.6 annually. [ADB: F:402] As early as 1793, Walker and his partner John Beatty had been the proprietors of a baking business at Fairfax near Princess Street. [Virginia Journal & Alexandria Advertiser: 5/17/1793]

Another major wharf which fronted the Prince to Duke corridor was owned by James Lawrason of 305 South St. Asaph Street. Lawrason had two daughters who married celebrated Georgetown citizens: "On May 30, 1810, Mercy Ann married Romulus Riggs, whose house at 3038 N Street in Georgetown is still standing; and on September 17,



305 S. St. Asaph Street, home of James Lawrason.



Lawrason's two daughters married celebrated Georgetown citizens.

1812, Alice married Elisha Riggs." [Ethelyn Cox, Alexandria Street by Street, p. 166] James Lawrason died on April 18, 1824 in his 71st year.

Lawrason's son, Thomas, was in a business partnership for many years with William Fowle of 711 Prince Street. In 1816 Thomas Lawrason constructed one of Alexandria's most elegant mansions at 301 S. St. Asaph Street. Lawrason and Fowle were importers and exporters of large quantities of foodstuffs, manufactured goods and raw materials as early as 1805. The *Alexandria Gazette* is replete with advertisements which vividly illustrate this vibrant enterprise. Among the many goods sold were: chocolate, shoes, cotton, suspenders, New York prime pork, cheese, plaster of Paris, crockery ware, lumber, English mustard, indigo, soap, tanner's oil and rope. When the September 1810 fire devastated the waterfront, Fowle and Lawrason thanked the Alexandria citizenry for extinguishing the blaze at their wharf. From October 1810 to April 1811, until the firm constructed a new fireproof store on their wharf, Lawrason and Fowle operated their business from Merchant's Wharf, situated on Union Street between King and Prince Streets. With the death of Thomas Lawrason in June 1819, the firm was dissolved.

POINT LUMLEY

Since the formal establishment of Alexandria in 1749, West Point, at Oronoco and Lee Streets, and Point Lumley, at the foot of Duke Street, have served as major port facilities for the town. Named for Captain Lumley, an eighteenth century mariner who moored his ship at this promontory, this Potomac River dock has been owned by the City of Alexandria for almost 250 years.

In an early land suit, Richard Arrell vs. James Kirk, Mayor of Alexandria, several depositions placed in the Prince William County records detail the early history of Point Lumley. Thomas Graffort, a surveyor's assistant, testified that lots 69 and 77 were laid out by John West, Jr., then deputy surveyor.

"He remembered that in laying out lot 69 on the north side of Duke Street to the bank head they there stuck down a stake as a corner and in laying out all the lots

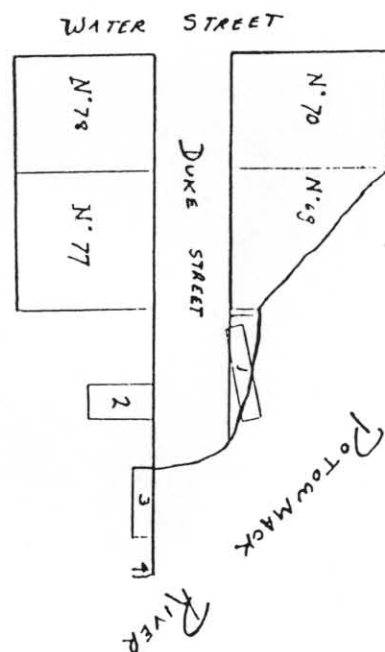


Diagram shows Richard Arrell vs. James Kirk, Mayor of Alexandria plat.

1. Old warehouse
2. Col. Hooe's store
3. Mr. Hartshorne's store
4. End of wharf

next the river and above that lot they stuck down a stake at the corner of the several lots on the bank head." [Deposition taken July 19, 1788 at the home of John Wise]

"He [Graffort] stuck a stake as near upon river bank and upon Duke Street as could well be done and immediately under the stake the river at high tides washed against the bank (which was very perpendicular and broken there) being there a very miry pocoson or swamp and no firm land. In laying off the lot opposite and on south side of Duke Street the stake was stuck some distance from the water at least 30 or 40 feet but upon the bank head. ... Point was called Lumley's Point from a certain Capt. Lumley whose vessel used to lay along there ..." [Prince William County Land Causes, 1789-1793]

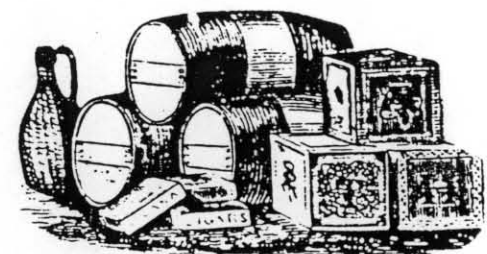
Robert Adam, a local gentleman aged 56, stated:

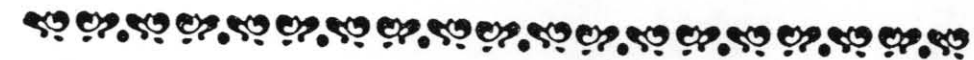
"He first came to Alexandria in 1752 and always understood that Point Lumley and West Point were reserved for use of the town and that Point Lumley lay on both sides of Duke Street as well as he remembers a public warehouse was built in the year 1753 on part of Point Lumley on the north side of Duke Street by Col. John Carlyle by the direction of the trustees of the town for the reception of [General Edward] Braddock's casks."

"The owner of lot 69 lived at a great distance from this town and there were no other dwelling houses in this part of town at the time the warehouse was built, but one on lot 77 and one on 70 and a house of Mr. Johnston. He did not know of any actual survey being made of Point Lumley except what was made by Jonathan Hall in 1774. There were no houses which could point out the street called Duke Street when the warehouse was built..."



121 N. Fairfax Street, home of John Carlyle.





John Muir testified: "There was dry ground on north side of Duke Street under the bank where the warehouse was built and he understood that there was dry ground enough belonging to the point to build another house to the north of that warehouse ... He remembered that a man could pass (and he himself had) between the west end of the warehouse and the bank about the time warehouse was built."

In August 1751 the town trustees ordered that John Carlyle "have a good road cleared down to Point Lumley and to see that it shall be kept in repair." [Alexandria Trustees Minute Book, 1749-1767, p. 16 in Donald Shomette, *Alexandria Archaeology*, 1985]

Thomas Fleming, an early shipbuilder, established his shipyard at the point in the 1760s. He was granted permission in August 1764 to erect a warehouse "under the Bank of Point Lumley as near the bank as convenient." [Shomette, *op. cit.*] Fleming's warehouse was 40 feet long and 20 feet wide. In 1866 a story was circulated by the city auditor that General Edward Braddock's troops supposedly built barracks on the site of the Hay house at the foot of Duke Street circa 1755. [AG: 29/1866] It is more likely, however, that the auditor saw the plans of Fleming's warehouse and attributed them to General Braddock.

On the 29th of March 1774, the trustees agreed to rent to Thomas Fleming for 63 years part of Point Lumley adjoining his lot numbered 77 on the south side of Duke Street.

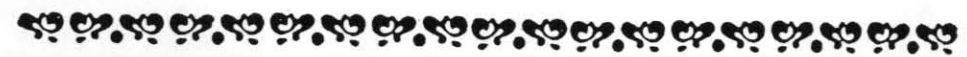
Fleming's shipbuilding venture was not successful. Thomas Preisser in his Ph.D. dissertation "Eighteenth Century Alexandria, Virginia, 1749-1776", writes:

"Although the Alexandria shipbuilding industry got off to a promising start, it faltered in the early 1770s and became inconsequential within a few years. ..."

The limited scale of shipbuilding in Alexandria is reflected in the fact that there was probably only one shipyard in the colonial town. Thomas Fleming, a shipbuilder and town trustee, ran the yard. For whatever reason, Fleming refused to undertake very large



"Although the shipbuilding industry got off to a promising start, it faltered in the early 1770s..."



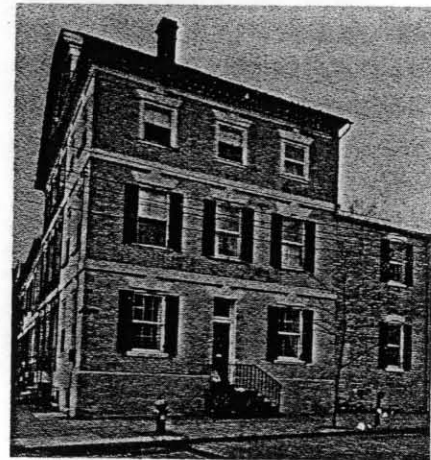
shipbuilding ventures. Hampered by a lack of skilled assistants, he even found it difficult to engage in major ship repair projects. Fleming's business remained on a limited scale to the time of the Revolution. In comparison, Annapolis had two shipyards in the late colonial period. ...

The factors underlying the collapse of Alexandria's shipbuilding industry are close at hand. For one thing the region's timber supply began to disappear in the later 1760s. Observing the lumber shortage, Harry Piper wrote in 1771 that "Ship building is done (i.e., finished) at Alexandria, as there is no Timber to be got, therefore little demand for rigging." The situation had not improved by 1774 when he remarked, "we have no Vessels a building, nor likely to have any." [Thomas Preisser, *op. cit.*, p. 107]

Upon Fleming's death his will stipulated that as much of his real estate be sold to settle his estate as was necessary. Therefore, George Hunter, administrator of Thomas Fleming's estate, sold a part of Fleming's waterfront terminal to Col. Robert T. Hooe for £160 on January 17, 1794. [ADB: F (Hustings Court), 294]

Robert T. Hooe and Richard Howson, wheat merchants, occupied a wharf on the south side of Duke and east of Union Street. The original suit papers in the case Richard Arell vs. James Kirk, Mayor of Alexandria contain survey notes concerning Duke Street and the original town lots 69, 70, 77, 78. Clearly visible on the survey are the sites of the old warehouse, Col. Hooe's and Mr. Hartshorne's store. [See diagram]

On June 10, 1785, the town of Alexandria leased lot No. 77 to Robert T. Hooe. [ADB: B, p. 154] Col. Hooe, Alexandria's first mayor, maintained a warehouse on his wharf where he marketed rum, sugar, and a few hogsheads of choice Demar spirits. [Columbia Mirror & Alexandria Gazette, Sept. 22, 1785] In return, Col. Hooe wanted to barter flour and Indian corn.



200 Prince Street, home of Robert T. Hooe, Alexandria's first mayor.