

# TRAVELER'S ACCOUNTS of the HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA WATERFRONT

Organized  
by  
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Office of Historic Alexandria/ Alexandria Archaeology  
City of Alexandria  
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## EARLIEST TRAVELERS' ACCOUNTS OF THE POTOMAC- 17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY



John Smith's map of 1608 was the first survey of the colony of Virginia. The detail of the same map shows the area where the town of Alexandria will eventually stand. (John Smith, *Virginia: Discovered and Discribed by Captayn John Smith 1606* [i.e. 1608], Grauen by William Hole, sixth state [London, 1624], 13 by 16 ½ in., Library of Congress, G3880 1624.S51 vault)

**Captain John Smith, "General Historie of Virginia," published for a London audience in 1624.**

**1624-** The "Patawomake" [sic] was navigable 140 miles, up to a point where "the river maketh its passage down a low pleasant valley overshadowed in many places with high rocky mountains, from whence distill innumerable sweet and pleasant springs."

**Journal of Captain Henry Fleet, May-September 1632.**

**June 26, 1632-** [He] comments while anchored six miles from the Falls, “This place without all question is the most pleasant and healthful place in all this country and most convenient for habitation, the air temperate in summer and not violent in winter... it aboundeth in all manner of fish. The Indians in one night commonly will catch thirty sturgeons in a place where the river is not above twelve fathoms broad. And as for deer, buffaloes, bears, turkeys, the woods do swarm with them and the soil is exceedingly fertile.”

**Father Andrew White (a Jesuit missionary), 1634 (quoted in Friis as coming from “A Briefe Relation of the Voyage unto Maryland, 1634,” C.C. Hall, ed.; also quoted Wilstach “Potomac Landings.” p.43.)**

**1634-** “This is the sweetest and greatest river I have ever seene, so that the Thames is but a little finger to it. There are noe marshes or swampes about it, but solid firme ground, with great variety of woode, not choaked up with undershrubs, but commonly so farre distant from each other as a coach and fower horses may travel without molestation. The soyle...is so excellent that we cannot set downe a foot, but tread on strawberries, raspies, fallen mulberrie vines, acchorns, walnuts, saxafras, etc.; and those in the wildest woods. The ground is commonly a blacke mould above, and a foot within ground of a readish colour. It abounds with delicate springs which are our best drinke.”

**From Lloyd House: Port of Alexandria File**

**1670-** “Alexandria’s first tobacco warehouse probably was built about 1670 and is generally believed to have been near the present intersection of Fairfax and Oronoco Streets.”

**From a 1697 treatise by three Williamsburg gentlemen.**

**1697-** “In short, if it be looked upon in all respects as it came out of the Hand of God, it is certainly one of the best countries in the World.” But on the other hand, “if we enquire for well-built towns, for convenient Ports and Markets...and other...human improvements...it is certainly one of the poorest, miserablest and worst countries in all America, that is inhabited by Christians.”

## TRAVELER'S ACCOUNTS OF ALEXANDRIA- 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

### *1730s: Transformation from Plantation to Port*

Wilstach, Paul. Potomac Landings, p. 156-157.

**1730-** “Among the public warehouses ordered in 1730 was one to stand at ‘Great Hunting Creek on Broadwater’s land.’ Here, or at least nearby, grew a settlement at first called Belhaven, later Alexandria.”

#### Excerpts from Hening’s Statues at Large (Virginia)

**May 1730-** Public warehouses shall be kept at “Quantico upon Robert Brent’s land, and Great Hunting Creek, upon Broadwaters land, in Prince Williams County, under one inspection.”

**May 1732-** “And whereas, by the said act, public warehouses were appointed to be built and established at Quantico, upon Robert Brent’s land, and Great Hunting Creek, upon Broadwater’s land, in Prince William County, under one inspection; and houses were built accordingly on Brent’s land, which have since burnt ; but Broadwater’s land being found inconvenient, no house was built there, pursuant to the said act, but a warehouse in the room of it, was built upon Simon Pearson’s land, upon the upper side of Great Hunting Creek; and in the room of the warehouse upon Brent’s lands, a warehouse has been since built at the head of Quantico, upon Richard Brit’s land: Be it therefore enacted, that the said warehouse upon Pearson’s land, and the warehouse upon Brit’s land, be hereby established, and shall be accounted public warehouses within the meaning of the said former act; anything therein to the contrary thereof, notwithstanding.”



Note the warehouses on the left hand side which stood prior to the founding of the town. (Jennings Survey, Book of Surveys, 1746, 8 ½ by 11 in., Fairfax County Courthouse, Fairfax, Virginia)

## *1740s: Alexandria is Founded*

### Excerpts from Hening's Statutes at Large (Virginia)

**February 1745-** An act appointing several new ferries, “on the Potomac River- from the land of Hugh West, in Fairfax County, over the said river, wither to Frazier’s of Addison’s landing, the price for a man, one shilling, and for a horse the same. The above is an act ‘for appointing.’ In October 1, 1748, and act ‘for settlement’ was created with the same routes and rates.”

### From Lloyd House: Port of Alexandria File

**1748-** “The city wharf at West’s Point north of King Street has an especially long history...House of Burgesses Act of October 1748: ‘It has been represented...that a town at Hunting Creek Warehouse...would be commodious for trade.’”



When considered together these two maps show the transition of this area into the town of Alexandria. The map on the top shows the land as it was in 1748 while the bottom map shows the original streets and lots of Alexandria. ([George Washington], "Plat of Land where on Stands the Town of Alexandria" [1748], manuscript, 12 ½ by 16 in., title from verso of map, Library of Congress, G3884.A3 1748.W3 vault. [George Washington], "A Plan of Alexandria now Belhaven" [1749], manuscript, 13 by 16 in., Library of Congress, G3884 .A3G46 1749.W3 vault.)

### ***1750s: Beginnings of a New Town***

#### **Maryland Gazette September 4, 1751 (From the Microfilms at Library of Congress).**

**1751-** “Belhaven. Will be sold by public venue, on Tuesday the first day of October next, a brigantine called the *Fairfax*, two years old, well built and well fitted, Burthen about 75 tons; an inventory of her tackling and apparel may be seen at Nathanael Smith’s.”

“Also a new sloop, completely fitted, and appareled; burthen about 40 tons, built for stowage to the best advantage, and hath good accommodations both for master and men, distinct from each other; an inventory may be seen at the same place.”

“Also a lot of ground in said town, containing half an acre, on which are several buildings; viz. a dwelling house twenty-four feet by sixteen, with a brick chimney, and under pinned with stone; two rooms below, and one above.”

“A warehouse, thirty feet by eighteen.”

“A smith’s shop, eighteen feet square, with a brick chimney in the middle.”

“Also a likely Negro fellow, that hath been near three years at the blacksmith’s trade.”

“Any person inclining to purchase any of the above, are to pay down one half, either in good bills of exchange, Virginia currency, or paper money; the other half in three months, giving good security to...”

#### **Depositions: dtd 1789-1793 (further source information unclear)**

**1753-** “Warehouse built 1753 at water edge of #69 (foot of Duke on north side). Some fill to firm up land. Dwellings on #70 and #77. ‘Ground Below’ intended for shipyard...’Ivy round lower edge of lot to west to present warehouse lot, which lies along Gutt or Marsh on part of which last mentioned lot, the kiln for burning tobacco stood.”

#### **From Mrs. Browne’s Diary - Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, Volume XXXII, No.4, October 1922.**

Excerpted entries:

**March 22, 1755-** “Went on shore the Bellhaven...extremely hot, but as agreeable a place as could be expected, it being inhabited but 4 years. Went...to every house in the place to get lodging, and at last was obliged to take a room but a little larger than to hold my bed and not so much as a chair in it...”

**March 23, 1755-** “Was hurried on shore with my baggage to my lodging. My brother took one next door. I now think myself very happy that I am at liberty once more, having been a prisoner in that wooden world called the London four months and four days. I have sailed since I left England three thousand leagues.”

**April 22, 1755-** “All the troops march’d [sic] to Will’s Creek. Left behind one officer and forty men, my brother and self in care of the sick, having fifty ill...” (From Miller, Michael T., ed. “Mrs. Brown’s Diary” Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987.)

**May 3, 1755-** “Major Carlile’s lady came to see me, but I was at a loss to seat her not having a chair in the house. She sent home for three.”

**May 5, 1755-** “Removed into our first floor. It consisted of a bed chamber and dining room, not over large. The furniture was three chairs, a table, a case to hold liquor and a tea chest.”

**May 27, 1755-** “Went with Captain Johnson’s lady to Mr. Roshar’s in Maryland. We were received with great politeness. The neatest house I have ever seen since I left England, and furnish’d [sic] in taste.” (Miller, Michael T., ed. “Mrs. Brown’s Diary.” Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987.)

**May 28, 1755-** “Captain West’s lady came to see me, and found me very bust packing up. Spent the evening at Captain Johnson’s much entreated to stay all night, but did not.” (Miller, Michael T., ed. “Mrs. Brown’s Diary.” Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987.)

**May 29, 1755-** “Received a card from Mrs. Salkedat, with her comp’ts [sic] and desired my company to her husband’s funeral at two. He had been dead a month. It is the custom of this place to bury their relations in their gardens.” (Presumably Henry Salkedat’s bones lie somewhere on the north side of the 300 block of Cameron. He owned a half block, including half-way north on Royal and Fairfax.) (Miller, Michael T., ed. “Mrs. Brown’s Diary.” Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987.)

**May 30, 1755-** “Extreeme [sic] hot. Very busy making bread and ginger, bread and boiling hams for our march. Had company to dine with us in our Anti Chamber which is as hot as Bagnio. We are to march on Sunday for Will’s Creek if Mr. Falkner our commanding officer does not get lit in his upper rooms and forget it...”

**June 1, 1755-** “At four in the morning I was call’d upon by Mrs. Johnson who came to take her leave of me, and at eight we march’d for Will’s Creek...” (Miller, Michael T., ed. “Mrs. Brown’s Diary.” Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987.)

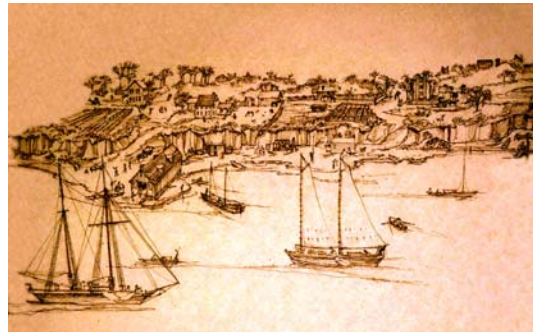
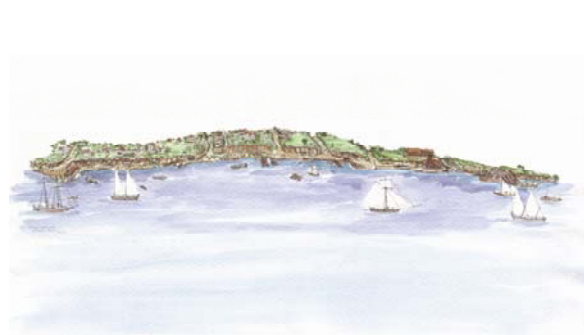
### **Extracts of Letters from a (British) Officer in one of those Regiments to he friend in London, Letter I.**

**April 8, 1755-** [Around this time] a British officer, who was part of Braddock’s expeditionary forces, wrote a friend in which he described in great detail everyday plantation life in Northern Virginia: He notes, “...as for the climate it is excessively hot in summer, and as disagreeably cold in Winter, and there is no comfort in the spring...what is excessively disagreeably here is, that the wealth of the country consists in the slaves, so that all one eats rises out driving and

whipping these poor wretches; this kind of authority so corrupts the mind of the masters, and makes them so overbearing, that they are the most troublesome company of Earth, which adds much to the uncomfortableness of the place. You cannot conceive how it strikes the mind on the first arrival, to have all these black faces with grim looks around you, instead of being served by blooming maid servants or genteel white livery men: I was invited to supper by a rich planter, and the heat of the climate, the dim light of the Myrtle wax-candles, and the number of black half-naked servants that attended us, made me think of the infernal regions, and that I was at supper with Pluto...”

**Miller, Michael T., ed. “Deposition of John Muir, Age 57.” Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987, p. 12.**

**1755-** “He settled in Alexandria in 1755 and always understood Lumney and West point were reserved for the use of the town. Lumney lay on both sides of Duke Street. The warehouse was built on [the] north side [of] Duke on point Lumney. There was dry ground on [the] 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 as he was informed be the trustees. At that time there was dry ground adjoining the north side of the warehouse but Muir did not know of what quantity. He remembered that a man could pass (and he himself had) between the west end of [the] warehouse and the bank about the time [the] warehouse was built. He didn’t know the bounds of point Lumney...” (Prince William County, Virginia, Land Causes, 1789-1793.)



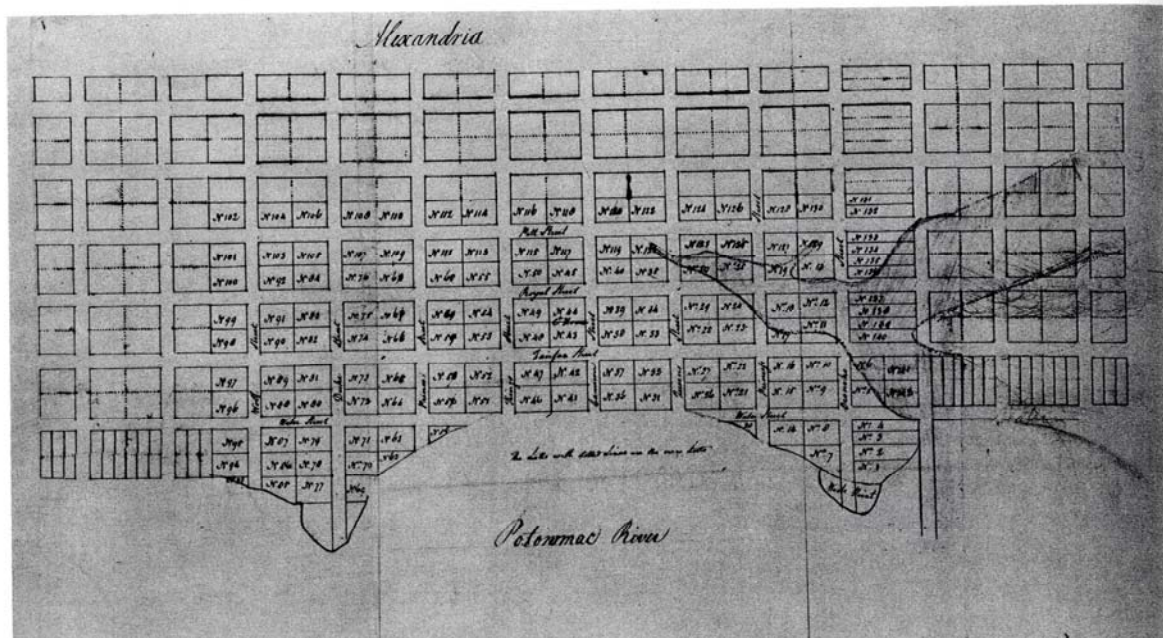
This illustration shows the waterfront of Alexandria during the period from 1760 to 1775. The detail of the left side of the same illustration offers a close up of the area known as Point Lumley, which was located at the bottom of what is now Duke Street. For an additional view of Point Lumley please refer to the city map of 1845. (Alexandria, VA 1760-1775, Elizabeth Luellen Illustration, Alexandria Archaeological Commission, 1983.)



**From Travels Through the Middle Settlements in North- America by the Rev. Andrew Burnaby, London, printed for T. Payne, 1775. Travels covered the year 1759-1760, in part. Little about Alexandria in this edition, pp.29-30**

**1759-** (After visiting the Great Falls of Potomac) “In the evening we returned down the river about sixteen miles to Alexandria, or Bel-haven, a small trading place in one of the finest situations imaginable. The Potomac above and below the town, is not more than a mile broad, but it here opens into a large circular bay of at least twice that diameter. The town is built upon an arc of this bay; at one extremity of which is a wharf; at the other a dock for building ships; with water sufficiently deep to launch a vessel of any rate of magnitude.”

### *1760s: A Period of Expansion for Alexandria*



This 1763 map by George West demarcates both the old lots as well as the new lots which were added the previous year. This map was intended to be used in the sale of these lots. ([George West, Map of Alexandria, 1763], manuscript, 13 by 23 ½ in., Library of Congress G3884 .A3 1763.W4 vault.)

**William Waller Hening, “An Act for enlarging the town of Alexandria, in the county of Fairfax.” The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of all the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legislature, in the year 1619, vol. VII. Richmond: Franklin Press, 1820. 604- 607.**

**1762-** “I. Whereas by an act of assembly made in the twenty-second year of the reign of his late majesty king George the second, entitled, an act for establishing a town at Hunting-Creek warehouse, in the county of Fairfax, a town was erected and established on [the] Potowmack [sic] River, by the name of Alexandria, in the said country, and it represented to this present general assembly that all the lots by the said act included within the bounds of the said town are already built upon, except such of them as are situated in a low wet marsh, which will not admit of such improvements; and that divers, traders and others are desirous of settling there, if a sufficient quantity of the lands of Baldwin Dade, Sibel West, John Alexander the elder, and John Alexander the younger, which lie contiguous to the said town, were laid off into lots and streets, and added to and made part thereof: Be it therefore enacted by the Lieutenant Governor, Council and Burgesses, of this present General-Assembly, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same, that so much of the said adjacent lands as are included within the bounds herein-after described shall be vested in the trustees of the said town, and their successors, for the time being, and shall be added to a made part of the said town of Alexandria, to wit: beginning at the corner of the lot denoted in the plan of the said town by the figures 77, on the said river Potowmack, at the lower end of the said town, and to extend thence down the said river the breadth of two half

acres, and one street thence back into the fields, by a line parallel to the lower line of the said town, such a distance as to include ten half-acre lots and four streets, thence by a line parallel with the present back line of the said town to the extent of seventeen half acre lots and eight streets, and from thence by a line at right angles with the last to the river.”

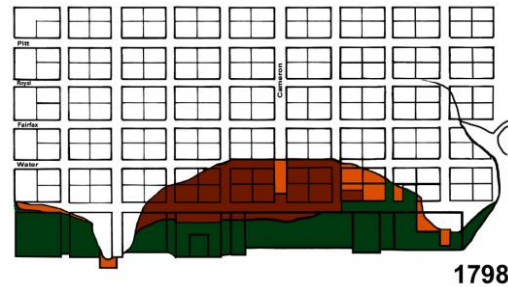
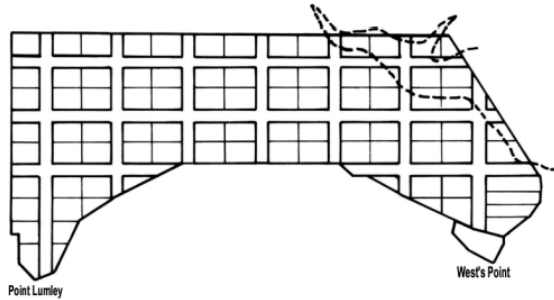
“II. And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid, that the directors and trustees of the said town, or any eight of them, shall have full power and authority to direct the surveyor of the said county of Halifax to survey and lay off the said additional land into the streets and lots, as they shall think fit, and shall sell the same when laid off at publick auction, from time to time, to the highest bidder, so as that no person shall have more than two lots and when such lots shall be sold by said trustees, or any two or more of the then, shall and may, on payment of the purchase money, by deed of bargain and sale, or feoffment, convey, and assure the fee simple estate of and in such lot or lots, to the purchaser or purchasers; and he or they, and his or their heirs and assigns, respectively, shall and may, forever hereafter, hold and enjoy the same.”

“III. Provided always, that the said trustees, shall pay money arising from such sale, from time to time, to the owner or proprietor, for the time being, respectively, of the lands whereon the said lots shall happen to be laid off and sold as aforesaid.”

“IV. And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid, that the freeholders and inhabitants of such of the said lots as are not part of and laid out upon the marsh included with the said additional lands, as soon as the same shall be built upon and saved by the above mentioned act of assembl[y], and also the freeholders, owners and proprietors of the lots on the said marsh, as soon as they shall have complied with the rules and orders herein-after prescribed respecting those lots, shall then be entitled to, and have and enjoy, all the rights, privileges and immunities, granted to and enjoyed by the other freeholders and inhabitants of the said town.”

“V. And whereas it was by the said act required that the grants or grantees of every lot within the said town, when the same was by the said act established, should within the time therein-mentioned erect, build and finish, on [the] lot conveyed to them by virtue of the said act, one house of the dimensions and according to the regulations in the same act particularly expressed, under the penalty of forfeiting the same, but it is found impractical to build on such of the said lots as are included within the said marsh: Be it therefore further enacted, by the authority of the aforesaid, that the owners and proprietors of such marsh shall not be obliged to build thereon, as by the said act is directed, and shall not be subject or liable to any forfeiture of the same for not building thereon, as aforesaid; but that such owners and proprietors, together with the purchasers of such of the said additional lots as shall be laid off on the said marsh, shall drain the same, so as to render them capable of improvements, wither but building thereon, or turning the same into meadow grounds, in such manner as the said trustees shall order and direct, and shall pay their proportionable part of any expense occasioned by such draining to the said trustees, to be by them applied to the purposes aforesaid.”

“VI. And be it further enacted, that if any such owner, proprietor or purchaser, shall fail or refuse to pay such proportionable part of the said expense as shall be adjusted and awarded against him or them by the said trustees, such owner, proprietor or purchaser, shall forfeit their said lots in the said marsh, and the same shall be revested in the said trustees, and shall and may be sold and conveyed to any other person or persons whatsoever, in the manner before directed; and the money arising from the sale of such lots shall be by the said trustees, from time to time, applied to such use, for the common benefit of the inhabitants of the said town, as to them shall seem proper.”



This series of maps captures the changing Alexandria waterfront as it appeared in 1749, 1774, 1789 and 1798. These changes were a result of the construction of wharves (the original wharves are shown in orange) and by filling in the Potomac River (shown in red and green) which were both methods for expanding the area of Alexandria and to encourage further settlement of the town. (Alexandria Archaeology, 2005)

**From Land Records, Fairfax County (in Lloyd House), October 21, 1766, p. 231.**

**1766-** “Morse Ball by deposition felt that the river bed had gained on the land since Howson’s patent had been granted in 1669.”

**From Land Records, Fairfax County (in Lloyd House), October 21, 1766, p. 274.**

**1766-** “Benjamin Sebastian testified that Alexander’s land along the shores of the Potomac had washed away considerably since he had known it.”

**From Land Records, Fairfax County (in Lloyd House), October 21, 1766, p. 237.**

**1766-** “Charles Griffith by deposition, stated that the beginning of Alexander’s land was opposite Mason’s Island formerly called My Lord’s Island.”

### *1770s: Prosperity and Revolution*

**Maryland Gazette. Annapolis, Maryland Thursday, July 18, 1771.**

**1771-** “The brigantine Fairfax, Captain Samuel Brodin, Master, now lying at Alexandria, will take in tobacco for Liverpool, with liberty of consignment, from both sides of Patowmack [sic] River. Those that incline to ship, by sending their notes or order to Mr. John Carlyle, will be taken care of and shipped.”

**William Waller Hening, “An Act to Encourage the Further Settlement of the Town of Alexandria, in the county of Fairfax.” The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of all the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legislature, in the year 1619, vol. VIII. Richmond: J. and G. Cochran, 1821. 613-615.**

**1772-** “I. Whereas by an act of assembly, passed in the twenty-second year of the reign of his late majesty king George the second, for erecting a town at Hunting creek warehouse, in the county of Fairfax, which was established by the name of Alexandra, the proprietors of the lots in the said town were in joined to improves the same in the manner, and within the time, thereby directed and limited”

“II. And whereas by another act, passed in the third year of his present majesty’s reign, for enlarging the town of Alexandria, a parcel of land and marsh adjoining was added to and made part of the said town, and the proprietors and purchasers of such marsh lots, were exempted from the forfeiture prescribed by the said first recited act, for not building thereon within the time limited thereby, but directed to drain the same, in such manner as the trustees of the said town should appoint, under penalty of forfeiting such lots.”

“III. And whereas by another act, passed in the forth year of his present majesty’s reign, for encouraging the towns of Alexandria and Falmouth, and for other purposes therein mentioned, so much of the two first recited acts, as related to the improvement of the lots in the said town of Alexandria, within a limited time, were repealed, and the purchasers set at liberty to build thereon, when they should think fit, by means whereof the said marsh lots still remain undrained and unimproved, to the great prejudice of the health of the present inhabitants, and delay of the further settlement and growth of the town: Be it further enacted by the Governor, Council, and Burgesses, of this present General Assembly, and it is hereby enacted, but the authority of the same, that the owners and proprietors of the said marsh lots shall direct, within two years from and after the passing of this act. And if any such owners or proprietors shall neglect or refuse to do so, he, she, or they, shall forfeit their lots, and the same shall be revested in the said trustees, and shall and may be sold and conveyed, by them, to any other person, or persons, whatsoever; and the money arising from the sale of such lots shall be, by the said trustees, from time to time, applied to such use for the common benefit of the inhabitants of the said town, as to them shall seem proper: Provided nevertheless, that no forfeiture of any such marsh lots as belong to infants, or persons out of the country, shall be incurred for want of such draining: but the trustees shall be at liberty to do the same and the guardian of such infants, or the attorney of such persons not resident in the country, shall be obliged to repay to the trustees the expense

thereof, if so much they shall or may have in their hands of the estate and effects of such proprietors of the said lots.”

“IV. And be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid, that so much of the said recited act, of the fourth year of his present majesty’s reign, as is contrary hereto, by and the same is hereby repealed.”

“V. And whereas it is represented, by the said trustees, that the wharf at Point West, in the said town, originally built by the public, was afterwards rebuilt by them, at a considerable expense, and that the same is now in a ruinous condition, occasioned chiefly by ships, and other vessels heaving down by and mooring at the said wharf; and the said trustees have petitioned that such a wharfage may be imposed upon such vessels as will enable them to repair and extend the same: Be it therefore enacted, by the authority aforesaid, that from and after the passing of this act, the said wharf shall be, and the same is hereby vested in the said trustees, and their successors, forever, and that they, or the major part of the, shall, from time to time, have power to lay and assess such wharfage on all ships, and other vessels, heaving down by and mooring at the same, under such regulations, and to be collected in such manner, as they, or the major part of them, shall think proper, to be by them applied as to and for the uses and purposes of repairing and extending the said wharf: Provided always, that the said wharfage shall not extend to any country craft [and] shall, at all times, have free access to the said wharf, clear of any expense whatever, and moreover shall have the preference in loading and unloading at the same: Provided also, the public hereafter be exempted and discharged from any future expense or cost in rebuilding, repairing, or enlarging the said wharf; any law, usage, or custom, to the contrary thereof, in any wise, notwithstanding.”

### **The Maryland Gazette. Annapolis, Maryland.**

**Thursday, March 10, 1774-** “To be sold at public venue, on Monday the 28<sup>th</sup> of March, at Alexandria, (pursuant to the condition of a bottomry bond from Mr. Dan J. Adams to the subscriber) the brigantine Anne and Elizabeth, a strong well built vessel, about four years old, lately repaired, and furnished with two anchors and cables quite new- this vessel will carry about 5,000 bushels of grain, or 800 barrels of flour, and may be seen at any time at Mr. Robert Adam’s wharf- the terms of sale will be made known on the day [G. Washington].”

### **Miller, Michael T., ed. “An Early Distillery, Located at the foot of Wolfe Street.” Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987, p. 21**

**1774-** “The distillery and improvements consist of a distillery built of stone, 71 feet by 29; a stone store 50 by 50, with granaries, in two stories above the ground floor, and a sail or rigging loft above, the whole length of the building; a molasses store, framed, that will contain 140 hogsheads; and a framed cooper’s shop 16 by 23, with a suitable chimney. The distillery is furnished with two new stills about the same size, that will hold to work 2,500 gallons; and the working cisterns, twenty in number, will contain the same quantity each. It is also furnished with a third still, that contains 600 gallons, for low wines. Each of these stills have suitable worms and worm tubs. There is also a suitable low wine cistern, and five very ample return cisterns outside of the house and under cover. The whole, and every part of the improvements,

are entirely new, executed by workmen from Philadelphia, and the distillery under the immediate eye and direction of the gentlemen of eminent capacity in distillation. The works are supplied with good cool water from an ample spring, by two pumps with brass chambers six inches [in] diameter; and the cisterns are charged with two other pumps, with chambers of block tin of five inches diameter, through function pipes of yellow poplar. All these pumps are worked by a horse, in an adjoining millhouse of large diameter, well constructed. There is also a woodyard, boarded seven feet high, that will contain much more than necessary for the distillery, into which the wood may be thrown from the water. The whole of these improvements are situated in Alexandria, below the bank; the distillery on said ground, and the cisterns fixed above the highest tide waters; the stores and yard on a wharf which, with the public wharf adjoining, of 66 feet makes an extent of more than 200 feet in width, 156 feet if which run 300 feet into the Potowmack [sic].” (*The Virginia Gazette*, December 1, 1774, p.3.)

**From Journal of Nicholas Cresswell, second edition. Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1774-1777.** (Cresswell was a young Englishman who came to seek his fortune at the wrong moment in time)

*Potowmeck River[sic], Friday, July 8, 1774* - “Contrary wind, came to an anchor off Maryland Point. Went ashore and dined at Capt. Harrison’s. Had a very genteel dinner, but the Captain is a violent opposer of the Government. Got on board in the evening. Fair wind, got up to Colonel George Washington’s, came to an anchor in the Creek. Here is a small insect which appears in the night like sparks of fire. Every time it extends its wings there is something of a luminous nature on the body, just under the wings, which is seen only when it extends them, only discernible in the night, and is called the Fire Fly. A great number of pleasant houses along the river, both on the Virginia and Maryland side. All tobacco planters. Some of them people of considerable property. This river parts the province of Maryland and Colony of Virginia.”

*Saturday, July 9, 1774*- “Waiting for a load of flour from Col. Washington’s mill. I am now got pretty well, but weak and feeble.”

*Sunday, July 10, 1774*- “Went to see the mill. It is a very complete one. Dressing and Bolting Mills the same as in England with a pair of Cologne, and a pair of French stones, and make as good flour as I ever saw. Land much better here than it is lower down the river.”

*Tuesday, July 12, 1774*- “Viewing the town which is laid off in squares of an acre each, streets 80 feet wide, several good brick buildings, and when it is completed according to the plan, will be a beautiful and regular town. Their chief trade is wheat, flour and tobacco. Mr. Kirk tells me they exported 100,000 bushels of Wheat and 14,000 barrels of flour from this port, the last year. Here is as good wheat as I ever saw, brought to this market from the back country. I am told the land is very good about eighty miles to the westward of Thiston. I have told Mr. Kirk of my scheme, he approved of it, and advises me to take a tour into the back country as soon as I am able to travel on horseback. Promises to give me every assistance that lies in his power. In the afternoon [he] introduced me to Capt. William Buddecombe, a gentleman from Liverpool, and several other gentlemen in town. [I] am very glad to find him so well esteemed amongst the people.”

*July 13, 1774*- “I begin to gather my strength very fast. Find this an agreeable place.”

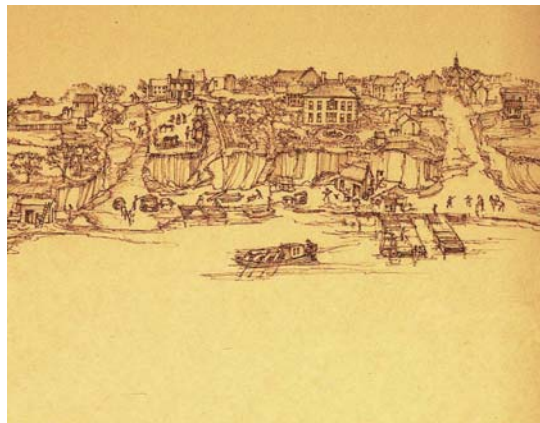
*Thursday, July 14, 1774*- “An election for Burgesses in town (their Elections are annual). There were three candidates, the poll was over in about two hours and conducted with great

order and regularity. The members Col. George Washington and Major Bedwater. The candidates gave the populace a hogshead of toddy (what we call punch in England). In the evening the returned member gave a ball to the freeholders and gentlemen of the town. This was conducted with great harmony. Coffee and chocolate, but no tea. This herb is in disgrace amongst them at present. I have been seized with a violent griping of pain in my bowels all night and a very severe lax- some symptoms of the flux. It if happens to prove the flux I am certain to die. Mr. Kirk and the doctor advise me to take a short voyage to sea as the only method to reestablish my health. I have written to my father, informing him that I have drawn upon him for thirty Pounds. I am not able to go to sea without a supply of money. This money I believe will pay my funeral expenses.”

*Saturday, July 23, 1774-* “...His house is at a place called Mount Vernon about twelve miles below Alexandria on the Banks of the Potowmeck River in Virginia, where he has a very fine plantation and farm, but by the best accounts I could get, his estate, altogether, before these troubles did not amount to more than 300 (pounds?) per a Virginia currency. But estates in this country are seldom valued by the year, it is some difficulty to know exactly what they are worth where they keep great numbers of Negroes and make large crops of tobacco.”

**Honyman, Robert. Colonial Panorama, 1775. “Journal for March and April”, Philip Padelfors ed., 1971.**

**1775-** “Alexandria lies...on a high and level bank. It is built in a stragling manner, with large spaces between the houses, though I believe the plan is very regular. Two or three brigs and a few small craft lye [sic] there. The seat of the town is extremely level and plain, and the opposite side of the river makes a fine appearance, rising gently into the hills. It is larger than Fredericksburgh [sic]. From Alexandria to Colchester [is] sixteen long miles; the country hilly and land but indifferent, the country [is] well settled and cleared, better than [I] think it deserves.”



This detail of a rendering of the 1760-1775 Alexandria waterfront captures the town’s situation on a bluff over the Potomac River. It was not until later, when part of the river was filled in and the streets were graded, that the town was able to expand from its hilltop location. (Alexandria VA 1760-1775, Elizabeth Luellen illustration, Alexandria Archaeological Commission 1983.)



**Gutheim, Frederick. The Potomac, 1948, 1968, p. 104.**

**Circa 1775-** “Toward the end of the third quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the shape of the Potomac valley had become distinct...traversing the valley section from the Potomac’s mouth, the broad tidal bosom of the river was seen dotted with skipjacks and sloops carrying its petty commerce and the larger vessels of the tobacco fleet rocking with the current at plantation wharves. The great seines, drawn in by teams of horses on the river’s bank, collected their fabulous hauls of herring and shad...at the head of navigation lay the towns, where the merchants of Georgetown and Alexandria dealt in tobacco and wheat, Osnaburg and Woolens; where the housewife’s door opened each morning to a cobbled street alive with carts and peddlers, droves of cattle and turkeys from the country, or the carriages of gentlefolk. Beyond lay the wheatlands...”

**Janson, Charles William. The Stranger in America. London: Albion Press, 1807, p.213.**

Circa 1775- “In the course of the (revolutionary) war three small British armed ships sailed up the Potomack [sic] as far as Alexandria and consequently passed Mt. Vernon. I am at a loss to conjecture what this force had in view. There were no stores, not anything on the river worth making a prize of...arrival at Alexandria threw people into a dreadful alarm, the seat of war being far removed from that place. They mustered in haste at the market place under command of Colonel John Fitzgerald, one of General Washington’s a-d-c, [who] happened to be in leave of absence with his family residing there. The ships displayed the intention of landing, and Fitzgerald, leaving the command to a militia colonel, proceeded at the head of several of the citizens to Jones’ point, in order to repel the invaders. Soon after the departure of this party the ships fired a few shots at the town at which the commander of the militia ordered his colors struck; but for this pusillanimity he was chastised on the spot. The ships were not seriously meditating landing...and these were merely random shots on their departure.”

**Sanchez- Saavedra, E.M.. A Description of the Country: Virginia’s Cartographers and their Maps, 1607- 1881. Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1975.**

**1776-** “The tides in Patowmack [sic] River are not very strong, except after great rains the ebb is pretty strong, then there is little or no flood: and there is never above 4 or 5 hours flood, except with long strong southerly winds. In ordinary tides it flows about four feet.”

“It is observed that with northerly winds and moderate weather, the wind usually follows you down each reach, and in like manner, when it is in the southern board it inclined up the reaches.”

“These and all other remarks, additions or alterations which I have made, were done upon the spot, and with the assistance of my pilot Anthony Smith of St. Mary’s.”

“Patowmack River is navigable with large shipping to Alexandria and for shallows as high as the Falls.

**Roberdeau Genealogy, p.91.**

**1776-** “In 1776 General Daniel Roberdeau had purchased a house on the east side of Water between Wolfe and Wilkes, a brick 28 x 42 feet, three stories and attic, still standing today. The rear looked down to the river, terraces. General Roberdeau also owned land adjoining and elsewhere.”

**Alexandria Gazette, “New Year’s 100 Years Age,” January 1, 1876 ([Courtesy of] William F. Carne)**

**1776-** “The town was ten to fifteen feet higher. It was laid out on a hilltop which extended in [a] nearly unbroken plain from Oronoko [sic] Creek and marsh (which has since dwindled to ‘The Gut’) on the north and northwest, to the river shore on the east and to what was called ‘White Oak Swamp’ that ran to the southwest and south. Very low meadows and swampy lands separated this hilltop from another beyond the marshy grounds. To the east the contour of a hill, on which the town was built, corresponded with the river beach to which it had originally descended precipitously, but which had be 1776 been cut away for all the streets between Wolfe and Oronoko, to run down an inclined plain to the river. The river then formed caves in front of the hill similar to those it yet makes north and south of it. It curved in from Fishtown to Lee Street at the foot of Mansion House hill and then away in a curve southeast to the Long Wharf. On this hilltop lay the scattered houses which made up the town. All shipping business was done at two points at the end of the coves, [where] warehouses and wharves extending to deep water had been built. In 1776 the shipyard near the Long Wharf had on its stocks a sloop intended for the continental service. On the hilltop, Cameron Street was the principal street. The courthouse and market were upon it and, crossing Oronoko Creek at Pitt Street by a bridge, it extended to Christ Church, then twenty years old. On the same street, opposite the market, at the northwest corner of its intersection with Royal, stood the Royal George Hotel, a frame hostelry then used as a recruiting station for the Army of Independence. To the east of the market, the large stone Herbert House dominated the smaller frames that lay around and overtopped the modest courthouse and jail that stood on the market square opposite. King, Queen, Princess, Prince, Duke, and Wolfe Streets in one direction and Fairfax, Royal, Pitt in the other, were the only streets. There was not a pavement on any of them. There were not ten brick houses in town, but some of the frames were so staunch that some, with underpinning of brick and stone, which mark how the streets have been lowered, still survive and are comfortable. Not a few of Alexandria’s lads were with Washington beleaguering Boston, whence they drove the red coats only a few weeks later. The talk on the street was of Mr. Henry and Mr. Jefferson’s trouble with Governor Dunmore, and the last news from the army was that Washington was about to plant a battery on Dorchester Heights, and thus force the British to leave Boston. All were waiting with anxiety to hear the news from Canada, where it was known that Montgomery and Arnold were moving to the contest of Quebec. None knew then that on the night before the assault of Quebec had been made in vain and that the Continental troops had been driven back with Arnold wounded and Montgomery slain.”

“Years afterwards our people gave Montgomery a monument by giving his name to a street. We had no Mayor then. A board of Trustees governed the town. There were no elections. When [a] Trustee died or resigned, the others elected a good subject of the King to fill his place.

All commissions ran in the King's name. The indictments found at the January term of the court, were found 'against the peace and dignity of our Lord, the King.' But the New Year had come that was to change all that, and all ears were attentive to catch whatever the breeze borne. All hearts felt that it would not be long before they would see the courier coming that would bring with him the echoes of the bell that proclaimed 'liberty to the land and the inhabitants thereof.'"

**From Journal Ebenezer Hazard in Virginia- Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, vol. 62, 1954, pp.400-402.**

**May 1777**- "Alexandria is a small town of twenty years, with a large trade but at a stand with the war...the houses are mostly wooden and small, but there [are] some brick buildings, the principal of which are an Episcopal and a Presbyterian Church, both of which are large neat buildings."

**Memoirs of Elkanah Watson including Journals of Travels in Europe and America from 1772-1842. Ed. Winslow Watson. 1968 edition, p.72.**

**1778**- "From Fredericksburg to Alexandria we found frightfully bad roads. The latter place is situated on the river. Its streets are laid out after the plan of Philadelphia and upon a large scale, in anticipation of a great city. Considering its peculiar advantages of position at the head of the bold navigation of one of the noblest rivers in the world, I see nothing to prevent the anticipation [from] being fully realized."

"The Potomac "surpassed only by the Hudson in magnificence and utility. It rises west near the sources of the Monongahela. A communication is therefore practicable between the waters of the Ohio and the Potomac. I understood the latter, with the aid of locks of pass three falls, may be navigable for large boats to Fort Cumberland 200 miles west...a strong commercial rivalry will, it is supposed, soon spring up between Baltimore and Alexandria. It appears probable that the peculiarly favorable position of Alexandria will secure to that city the pre-eminence."

He again visited Alexandria early in 1785, "Alexandria had made considerable advances since '78, but afforded no comparison, in its progress, to its vigorous rival, Baltimore."

At one point on his journey he got lost after leaving the main road, "[he was] entangled among plantations and by-roads" undoubtedly on the site of present day Washington.

### **Excerpts from Hening's at Large (Virginia)**

**October 1779**- Naval Office upper part of the district of South Potowmack enacted viz: "That a naval officer of said district be empowered, and he is hereby required to appoint a deputy to reside in the town of Alexandria, there to keep an office for the entering and clearing of vessels, provided there continues to be an office in the lower part of the said district."

### *1780s: Alexandria's Continued Growth and Affluence*

**The Marquis de Chastellux. Travels in North America, volume III, 1780-1782.**

**1780-** “At Alexandria...the Potomac rolls its majestic stream with sublimity and grandeur, sixtygun ships may lie before the town, which stands upon its lofty banks, commanding, to a great extent, the flatter shore of Maryland. This town is rapidly on the increase, and...cannot fail of becoming one of the first cities of the new world.”

**Excerpts from Hening's at Large (Virginia)**

**November 1781-** Enacted: “That all flour, before it shall be exported, shall be first inspected and weighed at the public inspections of tax flour at Alexandria.” Barrel specs: seasoned timber of sufficient thickness, twelve hoops, net contents of flour: 196-2041 lbs.

**May 1782-** Act gave taxing powers and enforcement powers thereto, to the Alexandria town officials, on all vessels making use of town wharfs.

Act gave Alexandria town officials the green light to “open and extend Water Street through the said town from north to south as far as the limits of the said town. Extend, and also to lay off Union Street from north to south as far as the limits of the said town extend. Provided always that the proprietors of the ground through which Union Street may be extended shall have the liberty of making use of any earth which it may be necessary to remove in regulation the said street.”

**Capt. Benjamin Bartholomew, continental soldier from Pennsylvania who returned from the Battle of Yorktown through Alexandria, from Marching to Victory: Capt. Benjamin Bartholomew's Diary of the Yorktown Campaign, May 1781 to March 1782. Ed. E. Lee Shepard, 2002, p. 36.**

**1782-** “Sunday March 24th Cloudy cool morning, left Dumfries at sunrise 10 miles to Colchester the river 100 yds wide very deep, about 30 Houses country from last stop Hilly & ppor, breakfasted at Mr. Lindseys Prince William County, thence 18 miles to Alexandria there bated my Horses (Fairfax County) this Town is situated on the Bank of the Patomack, flourishing place 150 Houses, cross'd over to Maryland River 1 1/4 mile wide, (began to snow)...”

**Claude Blanchard, Commissary of French auxiliary army sent to U.S. during Revolution, 1780-1783, translated from French mss by Wm. Duane and ed. T. Balch Albany, J. Munsell, 1876.**

**1782-** “On [the] 20<sup>th</sup> [of] July 1782 we stopped at Alexandria, a city situated on the Potomac where ships of 50 guns can approach. The city is perfectly well situated for becoming commercial. Therefore they have built much there; it may become considerable, still it is not much.”

**From Lloyd House: Port of Alexandria File**

**1783-** “One shipyard established about 1783 by John Hunter...another pre-war yard, Godhand's...”

### Excerpts from Hening's at Large (Virginia)

**May 1783-** Enacted: that public warehouses for the reception of tobacco shall be kept at Alexandria. Rent: one shilling six pence per hogshead received, inspected and delivered out.

**May 1784-** Alexandria (as well as Norfolk- Portsmouth, Bermuda Hundred, TappaHannock, and Yorktown) created as exclusive ports of entry for vessels trading from foreign ports (extended in October 1786 to include under Alexandria the 'mouth of the Quantico').

Amended act for appointment of Naval Officers viz: There shall be a naval officer for each of the following districts- "for the district of South Potowmack, and a deputy for the said district to reside at Alexandria."

### Virginia Journal and Alexandria Advertiser.

**Thursday, February 12, 1784** – "The post from the southward, who was expected last evening, has not arrived."

**Thursday, March 11, 1784-** "The post from the Northward, in crossing Potomack [sic] last week on the ice, near George-Town, with his horse, broke it; but fortunately saved himself and horse."

**Thursday, March 18, 1784-** "Sunday last the ice in the river Potomack began to break up, and on Monday ran very rapid, exhibiting an appearance of such vast bodies of ice and timber as was never known before by the oldest inhabitants here. Our apprehensions for the shipping, wharves and stores were great; but luckily neither have received much damage, and we are in hopes the river will soon be clear. We hear that much damage has been done at George-Town by breaking up of the ice in this river."

**June 8, 1784-** "Baltimore Packet. The schooner *Jolly Tar*, John Humphries, Master, will ply as a packet from Baltimore to Alexandria once a fortnight. She is very commodiously and comfortably finished for passengers, who may depend on good treatment, sails remarkably well, and is completely rigged. Any gentlemen wanting a passage or freight to Baltimore, or any part of the Potomack, may depend on the Captain's care and punctuality. She will sail from Alexandria every 10<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of each month

**June 23, 1784-** "James Lownes. N.B. He has a convenient store, and a good cellar in which goods may be stored, to rent on moderate terms."

**Thursday, June 24, 1784-** "The subscriber has just removed to the house, lately occupied by Dr. Brown, where he intends [on] keeping private victually and lodging for gentlemen, who can be well recommended, on as reasonable terms as can be afforded."

### **From Lloyd House: Port of Alexandria File**

**1784-** “Jones Point was the site of a shipyard in 1784 when the Alexandria Marine Railway and Shipbuilding Company were founded there by Robert Portner...”

### **Travels in Virginia in Revolutionary Times, Lynchburg, 1922. A. J. Morrison mentions Travels of Count Luigi Castiglioni in 1785-1786.**

**1785-** “Alexandria numbers 300 houses and possibly 3, 000 inhabitants. At times...the cold is so great that the Potowmack may be ridden and driven over...this newly established town has already received the name and privileges of a city, and as soon as the Potowmack is made navigable will become one of the most flourishing of the trading towns of Virginia... the public buildings include two churches (a Presbyterian and an Anglican), a Quaker assembly, and the municipal building. Near Alexandria brick and tiles are made at a reasonable price, the soil thereabouts being a soft, viscous clay. Oyster shells which were plentiful in this section were used to make mortar; the very white ones were used to make plaster.”

### **Maise, Jedidiah. A View of the Present Situation of the USA, reprint 1970.**

**1785-** [The] Potomak [sic] is 7 ½ miles wide at the mouth; 4 ½ at Nomony Bay; 3 at Aquia; 1 ½ at Hallooing Point; 1 ¼ at Alexandria. Its foundings are, 7 fathoms at the mouth; 5 at St. George’s island; 4 ½ at Lower Matchodic; 3 at Swan’s Point, and thence up to Alexandria; thence 10 feet water to the falls, which are 13 miles above Alexandria.”

“The distance from the Capes of Virginia to the termination of the tidewater in this river is about 300 miles; and navigable for ships of the greatest burden, nearly to that place. From thence the river, obstructed by four considerable falls, extends through a vast tract of inhabited country towards its force. These falls are, first, The Little Falls, three miles above tide water, in which distance there is a fall of 36 feet, second, The Great Falls, six miles higher, where [there] is a fall of about 10 feet; and fourth, the Shenandoah Falls, 60 miles from the Seneca, where [there] is a fall of about 30 feet in three miles: from which is last, Fort Cumberland is about 120 miles distant. The obstructions, where are opposed to the navigation above and between these falls, are of little consequence.”

“Early in the year 1785, the Legislatures of Virginia and Maryland passed acts to encourage opening the navigation of this river. It was estimated that they expense of the works would amount to 50,000 pounds sterling, and ten years were allowed for their completion...According to the opinion of the president and directors, locks will be necessary at no more than two places- the Great and Little Falls: six at the former, and three at the latter...”

**Louis B. Wright, Marion Tingling ed., Quebec to Carolina in 1785-1786, the Travel Diary and Observations of Robert Hunter, Jr., a Young Merchant of London: the Huntington Library, San Marino, California, 1943.**

**1785- 1786-** "... the stage reached George Town about half past five...we had the pleasure of seeing some of the belles and beaux, who were elegantly dressed as if they had been in London or Paris. We drove to the ferry at six and were just ten minutes in crossing, in an amazing large scow...as soon as you cross the Potomac you enter the state of Virginia, and after two miles of bad road ride long the banks of the river, which a fine moonlight gave an elegant appearance to. We arrived at Alexandria about half past seven and put (up) at Thomas's tavern."

November 1785- "Alexandria, Tuesday, November 15...this morning after breakfast I waited on Mr. Watson and Colonel Fitzgerald with my letters, who will either introduce me to an acquaintance of his or go with me tomorrow to Mount Vernon. I afterwards called upon Mrs. Dolby (Miss Rose that was). She was very much surprised but extremely happy to see me. After talking a considerable time about our dear friends in England, etc. I took a stroll about the town. The chief beauty of it is its situation upon the noble river Potomac, which is navigable for 150 miles farther up the country. At Alexandria, the Potomac is a mile wide, and 130 miles from the Chesapeake. They load about twenty or thirty vessels annually, with tobacco (chiefly), wheat and flour. They export 10,000 hogsheads a year, and the whole state about 90,000, at a guinea per hogshead. The town consists chiefly of one street which runs northeast and southwest, parallel with the rivers...the houses are straggling. There are a few good ones built of brick, but the greatest part of them are wood. The stores are very neat for the place; and they seem to be building here as rapidly as Baltimore. Alexandria is a very growing place, and when the canal is finished will become a very important trading town. Even now there seems to be an amazing deal of business carrying on. The streets are not yet paved, which makes it disagreeable walking. There are some excellent wharves here, where ships can lay their sides quite close to them and load and unload their cargo. The country about is rather barren and hilly; a great deal of turf, part of which is a line race ground. A few straggling streets cross the main one irregularly, and here and there you meet with a decent house. They reckon, whites and blacks, about 2,000 inhabitants."

"Their assemblies begin on Thursday and last till May. They have a pretty good room, and Mrs. Dolby says its very well attended. It's surprising that so small a place as this should excel Baltimore in balls. There are no remarkable buildings worthy of a stranger's attention. According to a polite invitation I dined with Mr. Josiah Watson, who introduced me to his lady, a most agreeable woman, his niece, Miss Peggy (dressed in the 'Alexandria style' with a low head and two black feathers), his nephews, Captain Goodwin and Mr. Porter. After a great deal of interesting conversation about General Washington, the manners and customs of the country, etc. I left them to go and drink tea with Mrs. Dolby, with whom I had breakfasted this morning. We sat and conversed some time together about Mrs. Lloyd, her marriage, travelling, breaking her arm in going from Philadelphia to Baltimore, etc. I find she does not like this country at all, and if her husband were not settled here would immediately return to England. Mr. Dolby was expected every moment from a little excursion into the country about business. He pays one hundred a year for a little pimping house that a gentlemen would hardly condescend to live in, in England. It's astonishing how dear house rent it here. Mr. Williams, an English gentleman, came to tea who Mrs. Dolby introduced me to. Poor woman, she misses Mrs. Lloyd and Miss

Strachan much, and finds an amazing difference betwixt the manners of her English and American acquaintances. Besides, this country does not agree with her...”

Wednesday, November 16- “After breakfast, I waited on Colonel Fitzgerald. A fire that broke out in the town hindered us from setting off so soon as we intended. However, after some trouble it was extinguished, and at half past eleven we left Alexandria with Mr. Lee, the president of Congress, his son and his servants. You have a fine view of the Potomac, till you enter a wood... (Description of a visit to Mt. Vernon).”

“We arrived in Alexandria by one. I immediately called on William Wilson, and was sorry to find his sister-in-law Miss Ramsay ill. Eliza looked quite beautiful. This indisposition will put a stop to their being at the ball tonight. I afterwards called on Mrs. Dolby, who (I) could not see, being employed in dressing her hair for the occasion. I then paid a visit to Mr. Watson, and after stepping to the inn to get my hair dressed went to Colonel Fitzgerald’s to dinner, where I was introduced to Mr. Maxwell and Mr. Forester. Mrs. Fitzgerald chattered away very agreeably. After dinner, I went home to dress for the ball. Mr. William Wilson and Mr. William Hunter called on me (the gentleman Hadfield gave me a letter to). Wilson introduced me and we soon got very well acquainted – so much so that, mentioning my desire to go down to see Mr. McCall...Wilson immediately offered me his horses and servant; however, Mr. Hunter (said) his man would do better, as he was acquainted with the shortest way...it was agreed I should go tomorrow morning.”

“We parted upon this, and I called upon the Colonel and went with him to the assembly room at six. Soon after, the ladies began to come very fast. After dancing a minuet with a most horrid partner to still worse music, I was repaid in having the pleasure Mrs. Dolby for my partner in country dances. We had some good cotillions and kept it up till eleven, when we walked downstairs to tea and supper. I was surprised to meet with Monsieur \_\_\_\_\_ of London here. Shaw and Hunter favored us also with their company. After supper we continued dancing reels and jigs, bumpkins, and country dances till two o’clock in the morning. I cannot say much either for the elegance in dress or appearance of the Virginia girls. They have not the least notion of setting themselves off to advantage. Mrs. Dolby introduced me to her husband, a very genteel young man. I accompanied her home and afterward walked to the inn, though much pressed to sleep at the Hunter’s...”

“Left Alexandria Friday, November 18...”

**“Letters from Olney Winsor of Providence, Rhode Island to his wife Mrs. Hope Winsor- Written in Alexandria 1786-1788”. Originals at the Virginia State Library Manuscript Division.**

Alexandria, September 2, 1786- “My Dear, This will inform you of my safe arrival in this town last evening about four o’clock, in good health...On our arrival here we were very politely received by Messrs [John] Murray, [Edward K.] Thompson and other northern acquaintances and introduced to a number of gentlemen of the town. I have been here so short a time that I can say little of the place- it appears to be flourishing, many new buildings going up- Wharves filling out, and other marks of profitable business. There are several lotts that we can have to set our store on- have not yet viewed them- shall do it this day or Monday and fix on the spot, in order to get the store up as soon as possible...Our acquaintance[s] here are very healthy and there is no



complaint or appearance of sickliness here and that is uncommon in all places...your over constant and affectionate husband, O. Winsor.”

So wrote Olney Winsor in the first of a series of letters to his wife Hope back in Providence, Rhode Island. Olney, born in that city about 1752, was the fourth son of Samuel and Lydia Olney Winsor.<sup>1</sup> Nothing is known about his early life, but he must have had good schooling, at least in grammar, penmanship and literature, as shown by his well-written letter.

He and his first wife, Freelove Waterman, had four children, Nancy, and three who died in infancy. After Freelove died, Olney married Hope Thurber, whom he sometimes addressed as Hopee. Besides Nancy, they raised a nephew Charles as one of their own.

In Providence, Winsor worked in a store owned by John Jenckes, father of John, Joseph, Crawford and Scott, all of whom visited Alexandria at one time or another.<sup>2</sup> Joseph, then 22, and Olney, about 34, were dispatched to Alexandria to start a branch of the family sailing on the sloop Susan, Captain Samuel Packard.<sup>3</sup>

September 7, 1786- (Winsor finds lodging in Mr. John Short’s boarding house<sup>4</sup>) “...he has from eighteen to twelve boarders of us from Providence (viz) In. Murray, Edward K. Thompson, James Murray, Joseph Jenckes, Thomas Rogerson, John Wheaton and your humble servant- the other boarders at present are Mr. William McWhire, who is master at the Academy in this town<sup>5</sup>, he is from Ireland, has had the small pox very badly and has many large and rough features which distinguish that nation- but he is a very sensible well bred man, and a very agreeable and witty companion. And Mr. Joshua Merryman, a young gentleman from Baltimore who keeps a book store here. We are very well boarded- I breakfast on coffee- dine on meats- sup on tea or milk, most generally the latter- we have beer at all times. I have been as well since I have been here as I ever was in my life, and am fully convinced want of care and attention is the foundation of fevers and agues which some times prevail here- they do not now prevail, our company of boarders in general are more fleshy that I ever knew them...”

In the same letter he added, “We have hired a good lot, and I now spend my time [nowa]days in getting ready to raise our store...”and on October 1, “we have got our store in good forwardness, and hope to have it in readiness to receive captain Wheaton’s cargo, who [we] expect in about ten days, and the prospect remains good of doing business to advantage, with proper application in which hope we shall not be wanting.”

“The transaction is described in an indenture of October 5, 1786 between John Fitzgerald and his wife, and John Jenckes, Olney Winsor, Joseph Jenckes and Crawford Jenckes, in which the four partners, two of them in absentia, leased a parcel of ground at the southeast corner of King and Water [now Lee] Streets, stretching 40 feet 6 inches eastward on King Street and 76 feet 6 inches south along Water Street, “the same being a part of the Wharf made by him the said John Fitzgerald or joining to or part of that lott of ground described in the plan of the said Town by No.II...” The annual rent was 202 ½ Spanish milled dollars at six billings each or the value

<sup>1</sup> Winsor, Olney, “Genealogical Account of the Ancient Winsor Family in the Unites States...” Providence, R.I.: L.W. Winsor, 1847, p.12. Original at the Rhode Island Historical Society Library. This article was signed by Olney Winsor on December 14, 1817 “...in the 65<sup>th</sup> year of his age,” meaning that he was born in 1752.

<sup>2</sup> “Representative Men and Old Families of Rhode Island,” vol. 3, 1908, p. 1464-1465; p. 2124.

<sup>3</sup> *Virginia Gazette and Alexandria Advertiser*, September 7, 1786- Inward Entries.

<sup>4</sup> Cox, Ethelyn, “Historic Alexandria, Virginia- Street by Street.” Alexandria, Virginia: Historic Alexandria Foundation, 1976, p.21. This house at 210 Duke Street was probably built by John Short soon after he acquired the lot in 1783. It was later owned by John Murray and by Dr. James Craik.

<sup>5</sup> The first principal of the Alexandria Academy, or Alexandria Latin School, near the southwest corner of Washington and Wolfe Streets.

thereof in half Johannes's weighing nine penny weight at forty eight shillings each, or in any other Gold and Silver coins according to those rates and values."<sup>6</sup>

"Captain Samuel Wheaton arrived on October 5 in the brigantine Absolonia from Surinam<sup>7</sup>, and by October 17 they had launched their enterprise and had made "very good sales of the Brig's cargo...Mr. Jenckes and myself harmonious exceedingly in our business, which is a great satisfaction." Captain Wheaton and Captain Samuel Packard seem to have been the chief provisioners of the store, and the carried various cargos back to Providence. Olney Winsor often sent merchandise to his wife- a barrel of flour, half a dozen oranges, crackers, linens and cambries and always the mail. Letters in those days went by stage or by any ship that happened to be headed in the right direction. Due to the dangers of shipwreck or seizure by enemy ships, mail delivery was uncertain, and it was customary to send copies of letters by separate means of transportation. Winsor often sent a summary of his last letters just in case they had not arrived.

On December 9, 1786 Olney wrote to Hope, "I have begun to lodge in the store," and two days later, "Mr. Jenckes and myself this day began to breakfast and sup in the store and have concluded to enlarge our bed and lodge together during the cold season. I will assure you it is more agreeable to lodge and board where our business is...we have a lad...who now cooks for us..." They also acquired a dog.<sup>8</sup> The store is described in later advertisements as a "large and commodious store and dwelling house," and as "a two story frame building, the upper part of which is divided into four rooms..."<sup>9</sup>

Business evidently prospered, and, on October 29, 1789, Jenckes and Winsor rented another piece of land from John Fitzgerald, described in an indenture of that date as stretching along the east side of Water Street from a point 76 feet 6 inches south of King Street southward for 40 feet to an alley \_\_\_<sup>10</sup> feet wide, then eastward along the alley 40 feet 6 inches. The rent for this land that adjoined the store was sixty Spanish milled, or the value thereof in half Johanneses, or the equivalent in other currencies. Both pieces of property were leased in the names of John, Joseph and Crawford Jenckes and Olney Winsor, but the some time in 1789 Crawford Jenckes died. In an indenture of October 28, John Fitzgerald returned sixty dollars of the rent of the corner property to "the heirs of C. Jenckes."<sup>11</sup>

Jenckes and Winsor Co. traded in whatever goods arrived in their cargo ships or other ships coming from the West Indies, Europe or ports on the eastern seaboard, "we have a good store of the goods that we have, especially West India goods sell very well." Their first advertisement appeared in the Virginia Gazette and Alexandria Advertiser on April 19, 1787 and ran for a few issues thereafter:

*To Be Sold*  
*Jenckes, Winsor and Company*

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<sup>6</sup> Hustings Court, Deed Book D, p.234-40. The lot would have been to the east of lot 56. The Spanish milled dollar equaled six shillings, one piece of eight, peso, dollar or piaster, and was adopted by Congress in 1775 as the monetary unit of the United States, and by the Virginia General Assembly in 1792. A Johannes, sometimes called a "Joe" was a Portuguese coin.

<sup>7</sup> Virginia Gazette, October 12, 1786- Inward Entries. The sloop Susan, Captain Samuel Packard, departed the same day.

<sup>8</sup> Alexandria Tax Record, 1787, 1789. In 1787, "Winsor Jencks & Co." were taxed 9 shillings for 2 whites and 1 dog. In 1789, the dog does not appear, but they, Mr. and Mrs. Winsor, had 2 servants or slaves.

<sup>9</sup> Virginia Gazette, July 11, 1793: July 1, 1797.

<sup>10</sup> Text unreadable.

<sup>11</sup> Hustings Court, op cit.

At their store at the foot of King Street in Alexandria, by wholesale and retail, on the lowest terms, for cash or country produce, Muscovado and Loaf Sugar, Coffee, Chocolate, Stone Lime, Cheese, Vinegar, Duck and Cordage. A small assortment of European goods, among which are Lustrings, Muslins, Cambricks and Lawns. Also, a few New- England potatoes for feed or family use.

For some reason they did not advertise again until November 5, 1789:

*For Sale By  
Jenckes, Winsor and Company*

American manufactured 20d. 10d. and 4d. nails; cordage of various sizes; writing paper; wrapping, bonnet and sheathing ditto; wool and fur hats; wool and cotton cards; men and women's shoes; soal leather; soap and chocolate in boxes; indigo; the best cider vinegar for pickled. Also spirits, West-India and New England rum; Geneva; molasses; sugar; coffee; hyson and bohea tea. Likewise, and elegant phaeton, with harness complete, and a few neat painted free mason's aprons.



Although from 1900, this photo shows the foot of King Street looking towards the Potomac River. This is the general area where the store of Jenckes, Winsor and Company once stood. (Foot of King Street, Alexandria Library, Special Collections, William F. Smith Collection.)

In one letter he informed Hope “that the printing paper is very scarce here and I think [it] will sell readily- the paper in this town is printed on demoy, which generally sells at 12/ [shillings] km. Crown for Pamphlets etc. - 10 km. Cotton and Linnen Rags to be had at 12/per 100 weight.”

The greater part of each letter that Winsor wrote to his wife concerns his family and their welfare, but occasional remarks give us snatches of life and events in Alexandria.

“...finding there were no barber's shops here, but that barbers visited their customers, for which they charge at a high price, and it is very inconvenient, I have got my ear locks cut off, and stand my own barber, in which I succeed tolerably well.”

“There are here a Church, Prisyterian [sic] and Quaker's Meeting...I have taken a seat in Mr. Short's pew in the Prisyterian, which I have regularly filled the two Sundays I have been here...”

“Attended meeting and heard a good discourse by Mr. [Isaac Sockton] Keith on the Prodigal Son...<sup>12</sup> but feeble state of health and general formality renders his discourses void of that animation which I think adds greatly to clerical oratory, and tends to impress the importance of the subject on the minds of the hearers...”

“On Thursday I attended [a] Friends Meeting by particular request from some of my acquaintances of that Society, had two speakers, both in petticoats- the subject, morality and adherence to Profession...”

“This day Mr. John Joseph Heydick, a native of Germany, son of a Jewish High Priest, who was lately himself a Jewish Rabbi, but now converted to Christianity, dined with us, and this evening a sermon at Mr. Keith’s meeting, he is bound into the back country to preach to the Indians.”

“Mr. Jenckes is introduced to a very agreeable circle of male and female acquaintances here, which renders it very probable that he will spend his time agreeably...we are treated very well by the people in general...”

“...the girls do not show the effects of Hommini here now, because of the scarcity of corn this summer I suppose- I have not seen anything made out of Indian meal since I left home...”

“Tomorrow the Alexandria races commence, the town is already crowded with people from all the country round- this is a favorite diversion in this country...”

“Last evening there was an elegant ball in this town, being the anniversary of General Washington’s birth, no less than fifty ladies elegantly dressed graced the ball room, tho’ the mud in our intolerable streets, was up to the knees in shoes (rather boots) and stockings. Mr. Jenckes attended- says the ball was agreeable for one so numerous- he has formed [a] considerable acquaintance with the ladies, who are very agreeable, but in general they talk rather too broad Irish for him.”

“This being the annual election of the Mayor, Alderman and Common Council for this town, Mr. Jenckes and myself were pressingly called on by our friends to give our votes, out of complaisance we went to the court house and exercised that privilege, thus you see we are considered Alexandrians.”

“...the great quantity of rain which has fallen has made the streets almost impassable- the ground in general is a red loamy clay below which is hard clay, that forms a pan, to hold the water on the top of the ground- but as it is easily wet, so it dries surprisingly whenever the sun opens and the northerly wind prevails- I forgot to tell you that we have a great plenty of musketoes [sic], and that they are very troublesome in the warm nights.”

“I have paid the greatest attention to my health since I have been here than I ever did...indeed it is very healthy here- I have not seen a funeral since my arrival.”

But a few months later he wrote: “My Dear, you have heard of funerals being attended by an invited guest, and that after returning from interring the deceased they are highly treated with the best of liquors. Here this improper, not to say indecent, custom prevails, among the higher ranks, and many of the guests are frequently almost as insensible before they quit the house, as their deposited friend. Among the lower classes they use almost as little ceremony as they would on the death of any common domestic animal- if the poor deceased happens to be a stranger, perhaps a few humane persons will contribute to purchase him a rough coffin and to defray the expense of interment- otherwise perhaps they may lie two or three days before authority interferes, in which case the corpse is put on a dray and drove off by two or three drunken

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<sup>12</sup> Minister of the Presbyterian Meeting House, 1780-1789.

Draymen, with as much noise and as little concern as tho' they had a puncheon of rum on their dray."

"Last autumn a Negro woman drowned in the harbor, supposed by design- a few days after she was taken up and laid on the shore in the most public part of the town, where she lay until she became very offensive, when some Negroes that were filling a Wharf nearby, was ordered to put her into the wharf and cover her up, which humane deed they preformed. What absurdities will not habit and custom palm on mankind! These spectacles of disrespect to unanimated human clay, strike a damp on the humane, that have accustomed to see it treated with sacred respect."

On March 2, 1787 he wrote on another subject: "This afternoon we had a humiliating spectacle presented to view seven women of easy virtue, charged with keeping bad houses etc. tied to a dray, or truck, and dragged through the streets, by a large concourse of boys, attended by a numerous train of spectators of all ranks- they have a custom here of ducking these characters. The ducking chair was prepared and it was expected that these poor objects would have undergone, that watery trial: but it was said that several of them were pregnant, which prevented it. However criminal these poor miserable wretches were, it could not but excite pity in a human mind to see them thus exposed."

"Persons who reside in New England and are accustomed to see the smart well dressed females in their lower orders of life, have no adequate idea of the appearance those orders make her. In the midst of winter, without a shoe or stocking to their feet, or their clothing sufficient to hide their nakedness, part of their daily business is to carry water from the river in large tubs on their heads- I think any man might be well excused for living a bachelor all his days if these were all the females he was to see."

A hint of trouble appeared in Winsor's letter of November 12, 1786, "I mentioned in my last letter that I expected to attend the trial of Brigantine Absolonia at Williamsburgh. I propose to set off for there in the stage next Tuesday morning- her trial is to be the Monday after- I dread the long and tedious journey, and the more disagreeable business. On my return I will write you the first conveyance and inform you how the brig and cargo stands..." And the 27<sup>th</sup>, "...the brig trial is put [off] to 16<sup>th</sup> January next, in order to obtain Captain Wheaton's evidence in the case..."

The "long and tedious journey" is described in his letter of December 5: "On Monday evening (13<sup>th</sup> November) about ten o'clock Mr. Jenckes waited on me to Lomax's Tavern, where I went to lodge in order to be ready for the stage in the morning<sup>13</sup>- at four o'clock the stage set off, in which was Mr. Lyon, of Baltimore, and Mr. Rice of New Orleans and myself, at eight o'clock arrived at Colchester, a small village situated on Aquaon Creek seventeen miles from Alexandria. Breakfasted, detained almost an hour in passing the ferry, which is about one eighth of a mile wide, about ten o'clock passed through Dumfries, situate[d] on a creek of the same name, ten miles from Colchester, it is a flourishing little town, containing a few handsome buildings and a considerable number of inhabitants who appear to be industrious in business- there is a large tobacco house here- their houses are the center of business in the country- dined at Sanford Court House, at half after four o'clock passed through Falmouth, a small village situated on the East side of the Rappahannock, where are large Tobacco houses, passed the River at the Rope Ferry and arrived at Fredericksburgh at about five o'clock, where we put up for the night having rode fifty two miles..."

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<sup>13</sup> John Lomax ran a popular tavern at 310 Princess Street until his death in 1787.

“Wednesday morning four o’clock proceeded on our journey twenty two miles to breakfast, forty more to dinner, and from thence ten more to Richmond where we arrived about sunset. This city is the seat of the government of Virginia, situate[d] on the N.E. side of the James River just below the falls, a small creek runs through the town, over which is a handsome bridge, with a railed foot way on each side, it is lighted nightly with six lanterns- the principal part of the city [which] lies under the hill on each side of the creek, is rather irregularly built, mostly of wood. The present State House is a low and inelegant building tho’ tolerabl[y] convenient to accommodate the legislature- this will soon be deserted as a large and elegant new brick Capitol is now erecting on the hill above the town- the Court House is a small brick building- there is now erecting a neat Mason’s lodge about 28 or 30 feet square, many of the private buildings... [Missing text?] Saturday morning seven o’clock (November 18<sup>th</sup>) took stage for Williamsburg- dined at Birds about three o’clock and at five o’clock arrived at Williamsburg, being sixty miles from Richmond...here is a large brick Church, a small brick Court House and a large handsome brick Mad House (for lunatics etc.) all the public buildings, except the Mad House are in a decaying situation, as are most of the private buildings, business having almost entirely left the place since the removal of the Government...”

“I was mortified to stay so long at Williamsburg idle, and from badness of weather, not to be able to visit the ground, where the haughty Briton Cornwallis, submitted to the allied army of America and France- even such a ground must inspire sentiment of heroism and liberty!”

“...in the country through the lower part of Virginia is very light and mostly worn out, that that has been thought [worthy of] cultivation. The inhabitants in general (except the rich planter who has chosen a particular spot) live in very poor open log houses, generally no floor, and no chimney but wood, filled in with clay, as is the sides of their houses- in travelling a New England road into the country, you will view the farm houses which are palaces, in comparison to these miserable huts and much thicker settled and better improved lands...”

Nothing more is said about the situation of the brigantine until December 17: “We have calculated that the goods that we saved out of the Brig will fetch us about six thousand dollars including the cocoa and cotton sent home- we have sold to the amount of about four thousand, six hundred and fifty dollars of them, for the cash in hand and shall doubtless sell the principal part of the remainder in a short time...you say that we have to reflect that the vessel was not lost at sea, with the lives of the seamen- I must say that I feel more mortified at the loss than I should to have lost the same sum at sea, providing no lives were lost- this is granting it eventually to be a loss, which I hope it will not- I think most probably that I am censured by my friends, who are but partially informed...I think you must be convinced that we complied to the general custom of the place in the entry, and that it was a particularly unlucky time that subjected us to the misfortune. On Captain Packard’s arrival, we entered fully [in] to the minutest article, expecting that the searcher would examine critically- but he has not been aboard but once and then did not see Captain Packard on the permit- thus you can see how things ebb and flow, we could have safely run half of the sloop’s cargo, but shall run no more risques of that kind...”

This description provided a hint as to why the brigantine was on trial. As early as 1671 a customs officer had been appointed to collect duties from merchant ships plying the Potomac River. And in 1779 Alexandria was made a port of entry by the Continental Congress, with a customs officer responsible for collecting duties on both sides of the river. Permits describing ships and their cargos were issued to merchants who shipped goods in or out of Maryland or

Virginia, and bonds were required to see that they adhered to the description on the permit and to the strict regulations of the port.<sup>14</sup>

Human nature being what it is, many merchants tried to evade these controls and duties, and the “customs searchers” constantly had their hands full. Congress, in 1789, finally closed the existing collections offices and created the U.S. Customs Service of the Potomac, with five districts in Maryland and Virginia, but smuggling was never completely stopped.

On January 18, 1787 Winsor wrote again about the trial: “You say you are displeased with Alexandria on account of the rigor with which we have been treated...be assured that the people in Alexandria in general (the searcher and his particular connections excepted) are friendly to us, and think the proceedings severe. I have been treated politely at this place by the officers of the Admiralty Court, but by the influence of the Judge advocate Captain Wheaton’s deposition was rejected as evidence- on which we prayed a continuance, in order that the captains may have time to appear in person, which was granted...I expect to get the brig into possession by giving bond for her appraisal and to be paid if [it] should be finally condemned, and if not to be void. By this you see, we must have another journey for trial, which I intend to endeavor to get Mr. Jenckes to attend with Captain Wheaton...”

A footnote to his letter of January 19 said, “Trial fixed 15<sup>th</sup> March.” Then, on January 26, “we have wrote him [Captain Wheaton] on the subject of desiring him to come forward as soon as possible to be ready for trial and to take charge of the bring which [we/they] shall take into possession in a day or two, on giving bonds to pay two hundred pounds, which she was valued at...shall put her in order and get a cargo for her as soon as we can that we may have the advantage of her and Captain Wheaton [being] in business.”

The final word on the brigantine came on March 23, “I met Captain Wheaton at Williamsburg the 14<sup>th</sup> Inst. the trial of the brig came on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> and she was condemned with 24,826 [tons] sugar and 1,133 tons coffee- altho’ the brig is condemned we have had refunded to us about three thousand pounds of coffee which has been retained ever since the seizure of the brig- the sale of the sugar and coffee is to be on 5<sup>th</sup> April- hope to purchase in to advantage. I went down with considerable confidence of recovering our property, but as I am disappointed I submit with fortitude.”

On April 6, “...the sale of the brig’s cargo came on yesterday, at which I stood principal bidder and bought in all the sugar except two barrels, which the searcher had the audacity to purchase- this made the Winsor blood boil and it displayed itself as much as I thought prudent- the sugar averaged us 23/6 per Cwt. And the coffee at 9 ¼ per W/ we have made sale to near 100...the principal inhabitants of this town exerted themselves to prevent any persons bidding on us, for which I feel very thankful...”

For some time Olney had been writing to Hope that as soon as the matter of the brigantine was settled, he would be coming home. No letters are available after this last one of April 6, 1787 until January 4, 1788, so it may be assumed that he returned to Providence at that time. His first long letter of January 9 describes the journey back to Alexandria: “My Dear, you doubtless recollect that it was on Friday the 7<sup>th</sup> of December that I left home, we arrived in Dutch Island harbour that evening... [He then describes in detail the vicissitudes of the voyage, the gale winds that blew them off course, drifting in the Gulf Stream and skirting the shoals of Cape Hatteras.] Early on Tuesday morning, New Years Day, was favoured with a S.W. wind brought us into the Powtomac about sunrise, soon after which Captain [Benjamin] Wheaton and myself

<sup>14</sup> Tilp, Frederick, “This was [the] Potomac River.” Alexandria, Va. 1978. p.73-75.

got into a pilot boat,<sup>15</sup> in order to go into Yeocomico Creek to make entry of the brig<sup>16</sup>, we had with us one of our own people and a boy belonging to the boat to manage her- however the boy, may justly be said to be a ‘stupid ass’ for although, he had been at the office twice before in ten days past, he carried us up the wrong branch of the creek two of three miles and then declared that ‘he was a dog if he knew where he was’...we had no fire but what was in the hold of the boat, where they burnt pitch wood, which produced a smoke almost as dismal as that described to issue from the Tartarian Gulf<sup>17</sup>- you will judge that he now received ‘more curses than coppers’...”

After spending the night anchored near the mouth of the “Powtomac,” the travelers: “...called the boy to give us a breakfast of warm chocolate- he proceeded to wash his large (only) iron pot and to boil a suitable quantity- when ready we called for cups and dishes, but were informed that there were none aboard- he then produced two spoons, which would not reflect the visage, and paraded the pot in the small bunk of the cabin- we each took his spoon and laded out a good quantity of warm chocolate, which relished equal to the most elegant repast- at dinner had good beef and bacon- stood in up the river all day...and at five o’clock came up with the brig at anchor, nearly opposite Fort Tobacco. Next morning at daylight got underway again- the distance we now were from this town rendered it very doubtful whether the brig would get up in the course of the day, and being very anxious to give information of our arrival by the next days post, induced Captain Wheaton and myself again to embark in the pilot boat, the swiftness of which sailing rendered our arrival at town very probable- fortunately we arrived about five o’clock and very un-expectantly the brig between nine and ten- if she had not arrived that evening, she would have [been] stopped in the ice, which [was] made rapidly in the river the next day, and the succeeding night closed it entirely, even so hard that it has been crossed with horses for some days past...our company was so large that the passage was rather uncomfortable- we diverted ourselves frequently in Psalmody, as some on board had some small knowledge of that art and a few notes were on board- I regretted leaving mine at home- please forward me Billing’s books, and the manuscript notes that you will find with them, by the first water conveyance...”<sup>18</sup>

“Business is very dull, and great complaint of scarcity of casks- hope to get the brig away early February...our river continues [to be] entirely shut...”

In another letter that summarized the voyage, he ended, “I have been cordially received by all friends, who flock’d to the store to see me on my arrival...” Not long after he reported that: “...on the evening of Tuesday the 22<sup>nd</sup> [of January] Inst. we had a alarming fire in town, it caught in a brewery, which it destroyed together with a house and store adjoining, all belonging to Mr. [Andrew] Wales<sup>19</sup>- the nearest part of these buildings was not more than 150 feet from our store, but fortunately the wind which was small drove the flames from us- we made the necessary arrangement to secure ourselves if a shift of wind had taken place by having water in the store.”

“My Dear, please try to send my fire bags and buckets by the first vessel- that I may be better prepared in case of a repetition of the calamity- Mr. Wale’s buildings are stone and brick, otherwise the fire undoubtedly [would] have extended much farther for many buildings were

<sup>15</sup> Earlier in this letter Winsor said “Captain Benjamin Wheaton” was the master of the brigantine. An earlier newspaper mentioned “Samuel Wheaton, Master” of the Absolonia.

<sup>16</sup> This was the Kinsale navel office which was responsible for issuing permits for shipping on the lower Potomac.

<sup>17</sup> Milton, John, “Paradise Lost,” Books II and VI. This refers to the “Gulf of Tartarus, “the fiery realm of Satan.

<sup>18</sup> Probably William Billingsby’s “New England Psalmsinger.”

<sup>19</sup> The brewery on Wales Alley south of King Street was on the Potomac River, whose shore at that time was near the present day Union Street.



very near to leeward...with my buckets and bags please send one sheet of the printed articles of our fire society.”

A year before he had commented on the fire-fighting situation in Williamsburg in his letter of January 17, 1787: “Last Monday morning week about one third of the city of Richmond was destroyed by fire- the part burnt was the richest and best houses and stores, great property was lost. Last night about one o’clock this town was alarmed with the cry of fire- I turned out and found one small house almost down and another on fire- I proceeded to the fire and exerted myself to extinguish it and preserve property- continued out until about four o’clock...three houses only were destroyed, two of which could easily [have] been saved, had they had any fire implements- but they had no engine, hooks, or anything suitable for the occasion.”

Winsor’s buckets and bags arrived in April 1788, and shortly after that he joined the Relief Society of America, one of the several fire companies in the city. In the minutes of that society, probably for a meeting that year, the following resolution appears: “Resolves that whereas Mr. Olney Winsor having lost his buckets at the fire of Captain Stous’ schooner, at Mr. Watson’s wharf in the month of June, Mr. James Kennedy having lost his bags, Mr. John Murray having lost Mr. Obadiah Bowen’s buckets and one of his own bags at the time and place above mentioned, and the above gentlemen having reported the same to the clerk within the time limited for doing so; that the treasurer is here by authorized to furnish them the money to replace [their buckets and/or bags].”<sup>20</sup>

The social life of Alexandria continued apace, and Olney [wrote of ten] invitations to dine or drink tea: “Mr. Thomas Porter one of our New England friends was married to Miss Sally Ramsay about six weeks past. I dined with them the day after [the] wedding.”

“Our family [Edward Thompson and his brother, Joseph Jenckes and other close friends] dined with Mr. Murray on roast beef and tongues.”

“Just received a billet from Miss. Rogerson and Dabney to dine with them, but the previous engagement to Mr. Bowen would not admit. Thus you will see we Yankeys [sic] live sociably.”

“I mentioned to you last evening that I was to drink tea with the ladies...I called on Mr. Bowen and we paraded ourselves at Mrs. Murrays’ where we found Mrs. and Miss Swoope, Mrs. and Miss Fleming and the two Misses McClenachans, after being introduced, a considerable chat took place- Miss Swoope being rather given to taciturnity in large companies, took no considerable part- I believe I have told you that she was not handsome in the face, her figure is elegant and her manner easy, for further particulars of her enquire of Joseph Jenckes or Ned Thompson...”

“Yesterday afternoon attended the public exhibition of the scholars at Mr. McWhir’s Academy with some select friends, who requested my company, among them were several agreeable females- the parts of the scholars were rather injudiciously chosen, in my humble opinion, but tolerably well preformed...”

“... [stopped] at Miss Swoope’s and were treated to a very good pineapple...”

“The loaf cake you [were] so kind to send me came in good order, and is very fine- it is a great rarity here- most of my particular acquaintance[s] has a cut at it. The pickles are excellent.”

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<sup>20</sup> Mckinney, Ashton, “A History of the Relief Truck and Engine company Number 1 of the Alexandria Fire Department.” Alexandria, VA. 1958.

Then in late March of 1788 Olney Winsor and Joseph Jenckes received an invitation to dine with General and Mrs. Washington at Mount Vernon on Saturday the 29<sup>th</sup>. Winsor's letter describing this momentous occasion is published in volume IV of *Alexandria History*.

At that dinner the General had discussed with his guests the new Constitution of the United States of America, which had been referred to [at] special conventions in the various states for ratification. He asked Winsor what he thought Rhode Island was going to do about ratifying the Constitution, but Olney was not able to answer for his state. Rhode Island was balking. On January 25 he had written to his wife: '...a very cold stormy day has given me the opportunity to peruse of governor's [John Collins of Rhode Island] long letter to the general assembly on the subject of the present confederation, the defects of which he largely [dissected?] and declared its inadequacy to the purposes of the Union, and of the Constitution proposed to cement and perpetuate it under a firm and energetic system. He appears to be a real friend to the Union, we can only stand as a Nation- his fears of a dissolution are very freely expressed.'

[Further discussion regarding the ratification of the Constitution]...The following anonymous letter from Providence, dated December 19, 1789 appeared in the Virginia Gazette and Alexandria Advertiser: "a complete renovation of the character and consequence of this state, or its further degradation...must rest with our General Assembly, at their session in January. The rule of conduct now to be pursued is plain as through written by a sun beam. [Oh] that reason and sound policy might determine the important question! Then should we be united under a government which bids fair to make Americans the happiest of humankind, and having for its supreme head the man whom millions revere, and almost adore, as the political father and savior of this country."

In the same issue of the Gazette, dated January 14, 1790, another letter was published, this one from the Federal Gazette: "Addressed from the United States to Rhode Island on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1790. The twelve confederated sister states salute the deluded sister, who unkind to them and cruel to herself, stands aloof in solitary gloom from the joyful cordial band...We beseech you, come to our arms, receive our hearts and give us yours, (signed) Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Georgia, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, South Carolina, New Hampshire, Virginia, New York, North Carolina." [Rhode Island eventually agreed to ratify the Constitution on May 29, 1790]

[General discussion about the common religions across the United States]

Olney frequently wrote to his wife, telling her how much he missed her and how he hoped that she would come to Alexandria to live. On March 18, 1788 he stated: "...supposing that Mr. Joseph Jenckes will settle in Providence [Jenckes was married in that city that year] in which case our business will demand my almost constant attendance here, I am led to ask you, if you are willing to remove to this place. I will assure you it is improving rapidly in the agreeable arts of society- the many people already here from our part of the country will render society much more agreeable at first than it otherwise could be...Notwithstanding what Captain Wheaton formerly said of this town, he now says that if he could sell his house in Providence for its value, he would quit the seas and remove here to set up business."

[In June of 1788 Winsor traveled to Providence to be with his family and make repairs to his sloop. They all return to Alexandria the next year in 1789.] Little is known about the Winsor's subsequent life in Alexandria, except what can be gleamed from a few newspaper accounts and official records. The King Street property, which was listed in the city's Land Book of 1787 as owned by John Fitzgerald and occupied by the Jenckes and Winsor, in the 1788 book [it] was owned by Crawford Jenckes and in the 1789 book by "Alney" Winsor, Jenckes,

Winsor and Co. were the owners in 1790. Unfortunately land books do not exist for the next few years, but in 1795 the property is owned by then Jenks and Winsor Estate, and in 1796 by a different owner.

The following advertisement appears in the July 11, 1703 issue of the Virginia Gazette: “To be rented- That large and commodious store and dwelling house, lately in the tenure of Messrs. Jenckes, Winsor and Co. situated on Water and King Street, together with a new three-story brick warehouse, adjoining the same lot, 24 feet front and 40 feet back, well calculates for the reception of grain and flour. For terms apply to Murrays and Wheaton.”

Then in the July 1, 1797 issue: “To be rented- For one of more years, and possession given the first of next month. That valuable property, situate[d] at the intersection of King and Water Streets, now in the possession of Mr. John Ramsay. This property consists of a large two-story frame building, the upper part of which is divided into four rooms and neatly finished for the accommodation of a family, with a covered passage leading to a convenient kitchen in the yard below. Also a large three-story brick store at the foot of the lot on Water Street and an alley leading through to Union Street. The premises will be rented either separately or together, as may suit the applicant. To be leased on a ground rent forever, a vacant lot of ground situated on Water Street, between the aforesaid buildings. For terms apply to Thomas Rogerson.”

Olney Winsor was evidently a respected and responsible citizen of Alexandria for the short time that he lived here. He was on the grand jury in 1790, and was elected recorder of the city on February 17, 1791 for a one year term.<sup>21</sup> According to the Act of the Virginia General Assembly dates October 4, 1779 which incorporated the City of Alexandria, the Common Council elected from its twelve member a Mayor, Recorder and four Aldermen, who held Hustings Court and were Justices of the Peace. Unfortunately, the records of the Common Council from 1780 to 1794 are not available. We do know that Winsor acted as arbiter in two cases in Fairfax court, and that he was appointed on February 19, 1791 as one of the managers of a street lottery to raise money to pave some of the city streets.

**From Surveys, Fairfax County, September 20, 1788, p.145.**

**1788-** “East front of Lewis Western’s brick house is said to be true with the line of Water St.”

**From Brissot de Warville’s Nouveau Voyage Dans Les Etats Unis, as quoted in Fairfax Harrison’s The Landmarks of Old Prince William, pp.341-352.**

**1788-** “Regulations and taxes foolishly imposed on commerce by the state of Virginia have brought to Georgetown a large part of trade normally going to Alexandria, eight miles farther down the Potomac. From Georgetown and even from vessels in rivers goods are smuggled into Virginia...(Note: there is good evidence that Brissot wrote this letter considerable after the event, at a time when his memory could no longer supplement his rough notes). The river is superb here with delightful views. The channel is deep...”

“From the ferry landing across the river to Alexandria there are eight miles of very good roads. Alexandria, which 30 or 40 years ago had only one or two houses, is not as large as Baltimore but ought to be even bigger. It is laid out in almost as irregular a fashion and the

<sup>21</sup> Fairfax County Records, 1788, p.298; Alexandria City Directory, 1791.

streets are just as muddy. There is a greater display of luxury but it is a tawdry sort of ostentation: servants in silk stockings, men wearing silk stockings inside their boots, and women most elegantly arrayed and with feathers in their hats.”

“The people of Alexandria believed that their city was destined to become a big center of commerce at the end of the war because of all its natural advantages- good air, a well protected port with water deep enough to take the largest ships and permit them to anchor near the docks, and an abundance of agricultural products in the surrounding area. Consequently they did a great deal of building and constructing superb wharfs and vast warehouses. But the trade is still stagnant. This is attributed to the unwise taxes I have mentioned. As a result many residents are leaving or trying to do so. Some trade, however, is carried on by ships to [the] West Indies and New Orleans.”

“A Frenchwoman in Alexandria has started making fine cotton cloth, but her example has no imitators...”

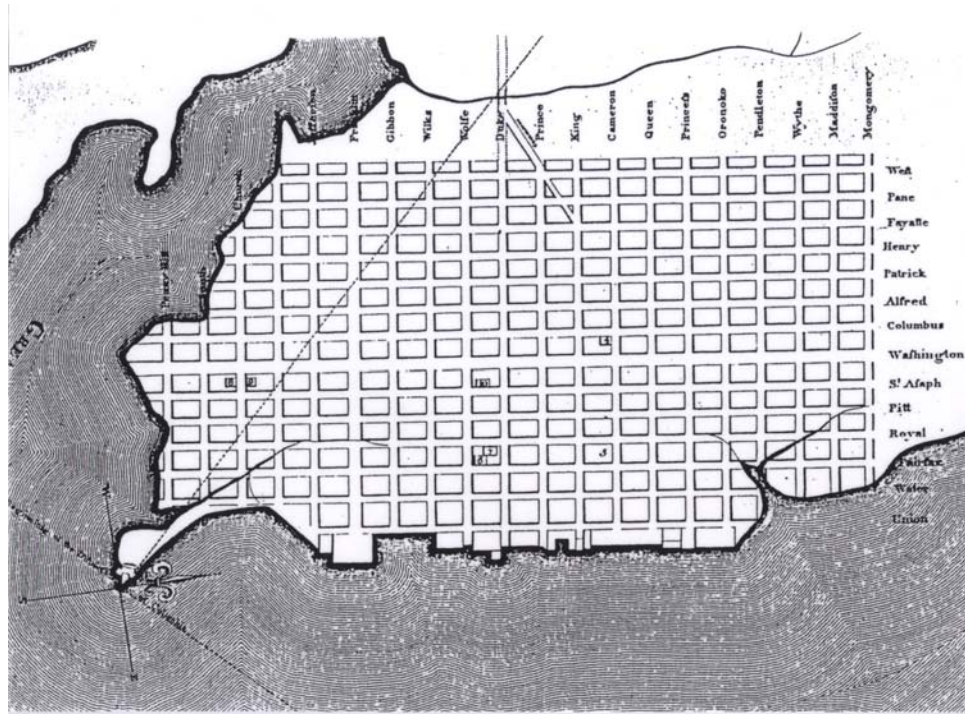
“(Why small coins are scarce)...In the second place, small coins are necessary where there are many small families and where there are artisans and independent journeymen; but these classes do not exist in Virginia, for almost all the work is done by slaves who are fed by their masters...in the towns merchants buy wholesale lots what they need or else resort to makeshift arrangements to get around the lack of copper coins. For instance, in Alexandria when an ox is slaughtered every citizen buys a large piece which he salts down. To pay for small objects, pistereens (peseta, small Spanish silver coins) and sixpences are cut into two or three pieces, [they] keep the middle part for himself and give the two others as half dollars. People who do not have scales or have the time or patience to weigh the money are forced to accept them and later when they spend the money the coin is weighed and they [lose] the difference.”

### **The Reverend Jedidiah, “American Geography.**

**1789-** “Alexandria stands on the south bank of the Patomak [sic] River. It’s situation is elevated and pleasant. The soil is clay and, alas, the water [is] so bad the inhabitants are obliged to send nearly a mile for that which is drinkable...it contains upward of 300 houses, many of which are handsomely built. This town, upon the opening of the navigation of the Patomak River, will probably be one of the thriving commercial places on the continent.”

“Notwithstanding it was sneeringly said by some foreigners, at the beginning of this undertaking, that the Americans were fond of engaging in splendid projects which they could never accomplish; yet it is hoped the success of this first essay toward improving their inland navigation, will, in some degree, rescue them from the reproach intended to have been fixed upon their national character by the unmerited imputation.”

### *1790s: A Spirit for Trade*

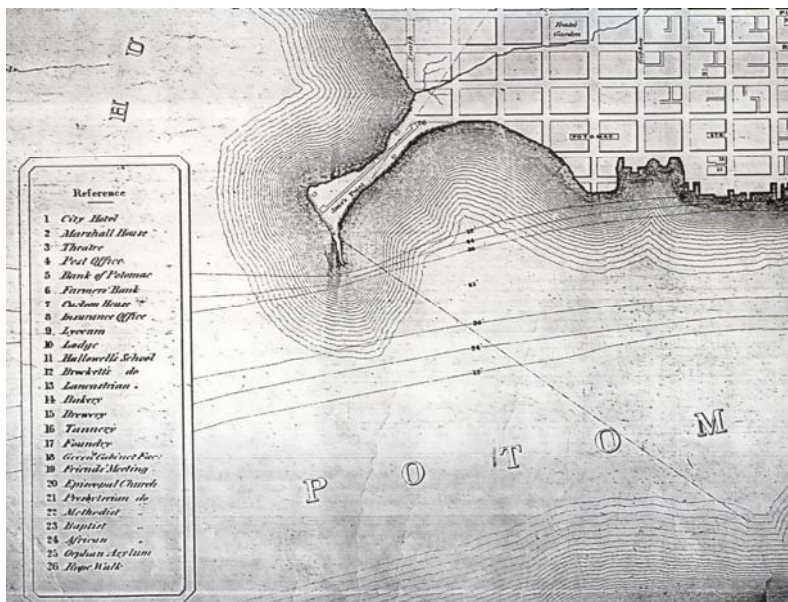


George Gilpin's Map shows the earliest boundaries laid for the District of Columbia. Upon the laying of the cornerstone at Jones Point Alexandria was incorporated as part of the District. ([George Gilpin], Plan of the Town of Alexandria, in the District of Columbia, 1798, engraved by T. Clarke, New York, Alexandria, Va., I. V. Thomas, 1798, 23 ½ by 18 ½ in., Library of Congress, G3884 .A3 1798. T5 vault (Peter Force map collection no. 768).)

**Miller, Michael T., ed. "A Suit in Chancery in the County Court of Fairfax." Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987, p. 5.**

**1790-** "Deposition of Thomas Graffort, Age 79- ... (Graffort) heard Hugh West deceased in his lifetime say that he intended to build a warehouse on the lot where the present warehouses now stand, (Oronoco and Union Street), and that he intended that lot and the lot in which the old warehouse then stood for warehouse lots and that the said Hugh West soon after employed Thomas Duggle to build the said warehouse on the lot where the present warehouses stand, which house was completed in the lifetime of the said Hugh West in the year 1753, that at the time the said new warehouse was building this deponent kept tavern in Alexandria and that this deponent began to pick tobacco in the new warehouse so soon as it was finished, which was in the lifetime of the said Hugh West, and that it was used as a warehouse for some considerable time before Hugh West's death. This deponent further states that he perfectly remembers that there was a great quantity of Ivy growing round the lower edge of the lot to the westward of the present warehouse lott which lies along the Gutt or Marsh on part of which last mentioned lott the kiln for burning tobacco stood, but that he well remembers that the ivy never extended near so far up the bank as to the present warehouses now are, till after the warehouses were purchased by Hepburn and Dundas. Thomas Graffort. The foregoing depositions were taken and sworn

before us at the time and place before mentioned...at the house of Josph Thomas in the Town of Alexandria the eighteenth day of September 1790. (Prince William County, Virginia, Land Causes, 1789-1793.)



Although this detail is from the 1845 Ewing map of Alexandria, it provides a close up of Jones' Point where the cornerstone of the District of Columbia was placed thus enclosing the town of Alexandria within its boundaries. (Maskell C. Ewing, Plan of the town of Alexandria, D.C. with the Environs Exhibiting the outlet of the Alexandria Canal, the Shipping channel, wharves, Hunting Creek, etc., Lithograph: of T. Sinclair 79 South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Philadelphia: [Alexandria], 1845, 21 by 25 in., Library of Congress, G3884 .A3 1845.E9.)

**Miller, Michael T., ed. "Laying the Cornerstone of the District of Columbia at Jones Point." Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987, p. 38.**

**1791-** "The Mayor and the commonality, together with the members of the different lodges of the town, at three o'clock waited on the commissioners at Mr. Wise's, where they had arrived. After drinking a glass of wine to the following sentiment, viz.: 'May the stone we are about to place in the ground remain an immovable monument of the wisdom and unanimity of North America,' the company then moved on to Jones Point in the following order:"

"First, the town Sergeant; second, the Honorable Daniel Carroll and the Mayor, third: Mr. Ellicott and the recorder; fourth, such aldermen and councilmen as were not free Masons' fifth, stranger; sixth, the master of Lodge No. 22, with Dr. David Steward [sic] at his right and Reverent James Muir at his left. Lastly the citizens two by two."

"When Mr. Ellicott has ascertained the precise point from which the first line of the District was to proceed, the master of the lodge and Dr. Steward assisted by some of the other brothers, placed the stone; after the following observations were delivered by the Reverent Muir: 'Of America may it be said as it was of Judea of old, that it is a good land and large...'"

“May this stone long commemorate the goodness of God in those uncommon events which have given America a name among the nations- under this stone, may jealousy and selfishness be forever buried...!” (*The Virginia Gazette and Alexandria Advertiser*, April 21, 1791.)

**From the Journal of William Loughton Smith, 1790-1791, pp. 62-63, as quoted in Tidewater Towns by John W. Reps, p.209.**

**1790 - 1791-** “Alexandria is a considerable place of trade, is well situated on the river which is  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile wide. It ...is not thriving rapidly; the situation of the town, a capital one, a fine eminence, plain level, and bounded by a pretty range of hills an excellent, safe and commodious harbour, a fine back country to it, will soon make it a very important post; much business is done here;...there are about 3, 200 inhabitants; the houses principally of brick; the streets are not paved and being of clay, after rain they are so slippery it is almost impossible to walk in them. I went to the top of Col. Howe’s house, a very lofty one, the prospect a magnificent one. The town laid out at right angles the harbour, river to great distance, with its windings, creeks, and island, the extensive plain contiguous to the city, all formed a fine scene.”

**Miller, Michael T., ed. “An Old Fort at Jones Point.” Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987, p. 63.**

**1794-** “In 1794, a French engineer names Jean Arthur De Vermonnet constructed a fort at Jones Point to protect the city from marauding pirates and privateers. Shortly afterwards, the fort fell into a state of disrepair. In 1808, Jon Williams, Colonel Commandant of Engineers conducted a field investigation of old military forts and among his reports was a description of the Jones Points site:”

“Having been favored with the company of Colonel Burbank, they proceeded together to Alexandria by water where they arrived in the afternoon of the 2<sup>nd</sup> instant. They walked to a point about a mile below that city, where they saw the vestige of an old fort which presented a circular battery in the front and two small bastions in the rear; the whole ditched round in the usual way. The fort did not occupy the whole ground; but appeared to the subscriber to be tolerably well designed. The small size of the bastion in the rear, evidently discovered that only a picket defense by a quarter was there contemplated.”

“This spot appears constantly well calculated for a water battery with very little expense. It is so low that the guns would be on a level with those of the enemies ship; and it looks down the channel in such a manner that no ship could avoid an attack on her bows and from the first moment that she came within cannon shot, could she keep out of it, while the whole width of the channel would not permit her to pass at more than 300 or 400 yards distance. On each side of the fort is a fine harbor where any number of gunboats could ride in perfect waters and complementary aid the batteries. The command of the high ground in the rear is distant and being in our possession is a circumstance rather in favor than against the position. A fort or rather breastwork battery could be built with little expense, since the earth might be taken from the ditch would be ample to make the rampart and parapet and by proper sluices, the ditch might be full or empty at will. (Jonathan Williams to Secretary of War, February 13, 1808, War Department, Chief of Engineers, Buell’s Collection, 58510/134, National Archives.)

**Fairfax Harrison, in a footnote, p.417, of his Landmarks of the Old Prince William, combines several comments.**

**1795, 1796-** “Even as late as 1795, when Thomas Twining passed through Alexandria, he could comment: ‘What most struck me was the vast number of houses which I saw building...the hammer and the trowel were at work everywhere, a cheering sight.’ The effect of this was evident to the Duc de la Rochefoucauld in 1796: ‘Alexandria,’ he said, ‘is beyond all comparison the handsomest town in Virginia and indeed among the finest in the United States.’ In that same year Isaac Weld testified: ‘Alexandria is one of the neatest towns in the United States. The houses are mostly of brick.’”

**The Duke de la Rochefoucauld- Lian Court**

**1796-** “Alexandria carries on constant trade with the West India Islands, and also some with Europe. There is a bank at Alexandria, the only one in Virginia.”

**Latrobe, Benjamin Henry. The Journal of Latrobe, New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1905.**

**1796-** “Arrived about eight o’clock at Alexandria. About half-past eight the Philadelphia company of players who are now acting in a barn in the neighborhood came in in a body. They had been at a ‘drinking party’ in the neighborhood. Once, in Virginia, these drinking parties had a much more modest name- they were called ‘barbeques.’ Now they say at once a ‘drinking party.’ And as insincerity gets the better of hypocrisy, or, to use the more clerical and decent phrase, as vice expels shame. We shall have the nature of the meeting explained at once by hearing it called a ‘drunken party.’

“This honorable company was shown at first into a small room opposite the supper room, where those who could not stand sat down. The others filled the passage and hiccoughed into the faces of those who had business at the bar. In this small room two or three songs were well sung, and mellowed by the distance, the sound arrived pleasantly enough in the supper room when I was writing.”

**Powell, Mary G. History of Old Alexandria, Virginia. As quoted in Brian Brown’s research article covering the period from 1781- 1883, taken from the Dorothy Kabler File, Lloyd House.**

**1796-1798-** “The merchants at home grew rich with the valuable imports of wool and silk goods, and today it is not an uncommon thing to see in the homes of the descendents of these merchants and sea captains, beautiful pieces of china and cut glass, brought in by my great-grandfather’s ship in 1796 or 1798.”



**The Times and Alexandria Advertiser, Thursday, September 5, 1797. As quoted in Brian Brown's research article covering the period from 1781- 1883, taken from the Dorothy Kabler File, Lloyd House.**

**1797-** "Remarks Disparaging the Federal City and Extolling Alexandria: When it is considered that at Alexandria there are inspected in three months, upwards of thirty six thousand barrels of flour, near 10,000 barrels more than exported during the same time, from Philadelphia, and that there are never less than 50 and 100 vessels lying in the harbor, and loading with produce for transportation, it will not be difficult to determine, whether the richest counties in Virginia 'convey their produce to Georgetown.' The farmers of Fairfax, Frederick and Berkley, know that it will always be their interest to bring their flour to this Market, till, like Georgetown, the industry and capital of Alexandria, is destroyed by speculation."

**Davis, John. Travels of Four Years and a Half in the Untied States of America 1798- 1802, New York, 1803, p.244.**

**1798-** "...I found elegant accommodations at Gadesby's [sic] hotel. It was observable that Gadesby's keeps the best house of entertainment in the United States."

**From Gadsby's Tavern Museum, Parkinson's American Tour in 1798, 1799, and 1800.**

**1798-** "The next day we landed in Alexandria [and lodged at] the inn kept by Mr. Gadsby, an Englishman. Here the stables were floored with boards; for in many parts of America, as there is not enough straw produced to litter the horses with, this is the practice. We put our horses, cattle, pigs into these 'rooms.' The charges were very high; and in about twenty one days, our bill amounted to seventy pounds currency; we had moved out horses and cattle some days before, or would have been much more."

**Ritson, Anne. "Part III, Alexandria." Political Picture of America: 1799-1807. London, 1809.**

**1799-** "The town itself was next to view.  
But Business from the place had fled  
And all exertion seemed as dead.  
No one with energy would start,  
Except arrived a country cart  
With better beef or better flour  
Than had been seen for many an hour..."

"The beef was fine, the butter good,  
Flour, as I have understood,  
The very best than can be found  
Is raised on Alexandria's ground.

The place was mean, the people poor,  
The same dull scene went constant o'er,  
No change except approaching cold,  
Which there in frozen fetters hold  
The bold Patomak [sic] in a chain  
Of ice approaching near the main."

"... (Speaks of calf's head treat, 7 dishes out head and pluck was of small expense and showy)

Some fry'd, some stewed, some hashed, some boiled  
Sometimes well dressed, tho oftener spoiled.  
Fat bacon constant food was there  
And sweet potatoes fry's with care,  
Complete this curious bill of fare.  
No other kind of meat nor soup  
Nor fish nor wheaten bread...with this calf's head."

She also refers to "large, fine duck...oysters favorite...roasted turkey nicely fry'd...and through the winter wholesome food."



recently received, it is required, that all masters of Swedish or Danish vessels, before their departure from the said district, call upon him, in order to receive such certificates for their cargoes, as the exigencies of the state of neutral commerce, and the several decrees of the belligerent powers render indispensably necessary; and that any master of vessels belonging to the aforesaid nations, or sailing under the protection of their flags, in omitting to take such certificated, will personally stand responsible for the consequence. – Jonathan Swift”

**Historical Magazine, vol. VIII, 20, 1868, p.249.**

**1800-** “In an Act for raising revenue for 1800, passed by the City Council of Alexandria, the following taxes are levied: two dollars tax on every white male who has attained the age of twenty-one. Three dollars on every male free Negro over the age of twenty-one, and on every slave over twelve years of age, three dollars. On every license to a broker, three hundred dollars. Clock- pedlars, twenty-five dollars. On every license to a person engaged in the renting of houses and the hiring of Negroes, ten dollars. On every firm or individual who keeps a private Negro jail, or a place wherein slaves are confined and boarded or kept for sale, one hundred dollars.”

“Breeches (leather) making was a business in the early history of Alexandria, which is now extinct. They were worn very tight. The mode of getting into them by the dandies of the day was to hang them on hooks, and let the person down into them from above. So I have been told by old people. One old gentleman tells me that these hooks were not many years ago to be seen in the old Roberdeau house. How they peeled themselves I am not informed.”

**Brian Brown in his research article covering the period from 1781- 1883, taken from the Dorothy Kabler File, Lloyd House.**

**1800-1830’s-** “For the first 35 years of the nineteenth century Alexandria’s foreign commerce continued to decline, with sporadic ups and downs, while coastwise shipping just increased enough to keep the total figure about static. Then came the lean years of the late 1830’s, when twenty to thirty foreign vessels a year entered and cleared the port. This was partly due to poor crops, partly due to a general business letdown, partly due to the increasing competition of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.”

**From the Baron Alexander, as quoted by Herman R. Friis, in the Records of the Columbia Historical Society, 1960-1962, p.24.**

**June 1804-** Alexandria “has increased considerably since my last visit to it in the Revolutionary War. It was then composed of a few scattered buildings, and chiefly along the river and which was bordered by a high bank, said bank is now cut away to make long wharfs, and the streets here are paved...the houses, mostly of brick, and many of them are a good stile [sic] of architecture.”

**Janson, Charles William. *The Stranger in America*. London: Albion Press, 1807, p.213.**

**1807-** “Alexandria was about eight years ago a very flourishing place, but the losses sustained from the capture of American vessels by the French in the West Indies occasioned many failures. In the year 1803, the yellow fever, which broke out there for the first time, carried off a number of its inhabitants. These shocks have so deeply affected the mercantile interest, that the town has but two or three ships in the trade with Great Britain; and there is little prospect of its ever attaining to its former prosperity.”

“Alexandria, of Belhaven, is laid out on the plan of Philadelphia; and being well built and paved in point of uniformity and neatness it somewhat resembled that city on a small scale. Its situation is elevated, commanding a view of the river and opposite shore of Maryland. Navigation of the Potomac, on whose banks it is built, is very good. I question whether a line of battleships might not come up to the navy yard of the government.”

**From the Journal of Captain Henry Massie in the Tyler Quarterly, vol. IV, no.2; October 1922, pp.78-81. (Travelling from Fredericksburg to Boston)**

**1808-** “On the 29<sup>th</sup> of April 1808 Mr. Coleman and myself left Little York in two days we reached Fredericksburg the most extravagantly dear place I ever saw, at twelve o’clock in the night of the first day of May. We took the stage there for Alexandria, breakfasted at Dumfries, and halted at Gadsby’s tavern about four o’clock in the evening. Alexandria is a very handsome town, prettily situated on the banks of the Potomac, which is there one mile and a quarter wide. The commerce of the place is diffused in many parts of the globe, but more particular to the West Indies, and the northern seaport towns of America. Flour appears to be the principal article of exportation, in return they receive groceries of various kinds, such as sugar, salt, rum, brandy, etc. The streets of Alexandria intersect each other at right angles, they are well paved, of an extensive width, and kept perfectly clean. It is not less noted for the excellence of its police, than for its many other advantages, which very materially result from that source. There is here open every morning, an abundantly supplied market with all kinds of meats, and every species of vegetables. The buildings are chiefly of brick, some of them stately and elegant. The banks are kept in houses quite magnificent. The embargo has very much checked and restrained the active and enterprising commercial spirit which has prevailed here in a very high degree. The wharves are crowded with vessels of different sizes, many of which are [locally] laden for an immediate departure- when circumstances will permit. From Alexandria to Washington by land is eight miles, the distance by water six and a half, which may be sailed in thirty minutes- with the sail of a breeze that prevails every day from the hours of eleven ante meridian until sun set...New York is a gay and lively place- the houses large, the shops splendid- there are many great taverns kept there, none of them though in my opinion superior to Gadsby’s of Alexandria.”

**From a Tour Through Part of Virginia by John Edwards Caldwell, 1951 edition, p.42.**

**Summer 1808-** “...little appearance of improvement since my last visit, three years ago...it contains about 780 houses and 6000 inhabitants. The new bridge erecting over the Potowmack [sic] will reduce the distance to the capitol in the Federal City to about six miles.”

### *1810s: Troubled Times*

**Miller, Michael T., ed. “The Distressing Fire of 1810.” Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987, p. 68.**

**1810-** “The evening before last, about ten o’clock, the inhabitants of this town were alarmed with the cry of fire. It began in a cooper’s shop near the wharves adjoining Union Street. A workman, leaving a candle burning in the shop, went out for a handful of ashes. On his return he discovered that the candle had fallen among some shavings. The cry of fire was immediately circulated, but the adjacent materials were of so combustible a nature, it was found impossible to stop the progress of fire; which raged till nearly two o’clock, before the inhabitants were able to control it. Every building was burnt in the square, lying on Union Street and extending from Duke to Prince Streets, bordering on the river. The houses west of Union Street several times caught fire, but by the great and imminently dangerous exertions of several inhabitants it was extinguished, and the destruction of perhaps a hundred houses prevented. There was no wind till after twelve o’clock when a breeze sprang up bearing the flames to the river.”

“The following is a list of the buildings and rough calculation of the property destroyed:”

Col. George Gilpin, two wooden houses- \$2,000.

John G. Ladd, one large warehouse full of goods- \$100,000.

George Slacum, one warehouse- \$15,000.

Anthony P. Gover, one warehouse- \$2,000.

Jacob Leap, one store and dwelling house- \$3,000.

James Lawrason and Lawrason and Fowle, one brick and frame warehouses- \$20,000

Harper and Davis, lumber yard and ship chandlery- \$12,000.

Joseph Dean, wooden warehouse- \$3,000.

Mordecai Miller, wooden warehouse- \$1,500.

Thomas Preston, two brick, three wooden houses- \$6,000.

George Coryell, one dwelling house- \$500.

Thomas White, blacksmith’s shop and grocery- \$500.

Ricketts and Newton, wooden warehouse- \$1,500.

Benjamin Ricketts, bake house- \$1,000.

J&T Gilpin, old stone house- \$1,000.

Lawrence Hill, cooper’s shop- \$300.”

“We pretend not to exactness in these calculations. Probably the estimations are underrated; and the loss little short of \$200,000. Very little of the property was insured.”

“A report that one of the stores contained a large quantity of powder, tho’ erroneous, prevented the saving of considerable property, and considerably checked the exertions of the citizens for some time. No lives were lost, and little personal injury received. (Alexandria Daily Gazette, Commercial and Political, September 26, 1810, p.3.)”

**Benham, Mary Louise Slacum. Recollections of Old Alexandria.**

**1810-** (Details about the fire at her father’s warehouse from *Chapter V- My Father ‘Why Don’t He Come’*) “Late in the night, there was an alarm of fire in the town. The securities for life and

estate were widely different then from the perfected arrangement of the now advanced century. The strong, long black leather fire-buckets were unhooked, and my father with two of them in hand started to the scene of the conflagration. He went to aid his fellow townsmen in their simple arrangements to battle with the formidable destructive element of fire. Each householder was compelled by law to have his long leather fire-buckets in order, with his name on them in white paint, to keep them in a front or rear hall where they could be open to inspection; and to hasten with them men of his household to take their place in the ranks, forming from every neighboring pump corner. When the pumps gave out the lines were extended down to the Potomac the buckets filled with water were passed from hand to hand. The returning empty ones were carried along a second line, to be refilled from pump or river. In the meantime, fire bells rang awakening appeals; and if the fire was of large advancing force, the courthouse and the church bells added their clangor, and the watchmen wound their shrill-sounding horns while the alarmed people ran through the streets crying, 'fire, fire!'"

"That winding of the horns was as regular a night performance as ringing the curfew bell was in England; save that the hour in our old town was extended to ten o'clock. At that hour the watchmen assembled in the market square, passed from the upper watch-room to a small balcony where for fifteen minutes they blew their shrill ear-piercing horns. They called it 'winging the horns.' It was to give notice that the city was then surrendered to the night watch. After that they separated, each man 'to his beat.' On the first alarm that things were going wrong, the watchman nearest the disturbances of the fire swung his rattle for an alarm. It was responded to by others, who, running forward, sent the sounds of commingling rattles far and wide."

"It was, I think, believed that none but honest and strong-bodied men were of those who kept watch and ward in the town of Alexandria. I distinctly remember that in my early childhood I was often awakened and terribly frightened by these noises of the night proceeding from the horns and rattles. I, however, was often consoled as I heard the watchmen, as they tramped the streets with lanterns in hand, loudly proclaim the hour and state of the atmosphere."

"...It was the time of the autumn equinox. A high wind, another uncontrollable element, gave force to fire, which in its quick progress soon claimed the lofty warehouses bordering the wharves, among them two belonging to my father. They were filled with recently-received merchandise. A brig and large schooner which he owned had that week arrived in safety from the West Indies, and on the morning of the fire the prosperous merchant had refused many thousands of dollars for the sugars and liquors just stored, as there was but little in the market."

"The sugars and the liquors and their merchantable values were not that night his care. He well knew their power to feed the approaching flames. It was his books, his papers, his desk he endeavored to save as he struggled into a warehouse seemingly for the moment, safe. It was filled with hot air and smoke. He did not reach his desk, but struggling to return, gasping, almost exhausted, he fell against a faithful slave, a sailor recently arrived on the brig 'Louisa.' Hensen was seeking his master. They both would in a few minutes more have been lost, save that the Negro, by a glowing flash of flame, saw a white sail that was spread as a protection over the wheat in bulk. It proved the protection of master and of man- it was near the stairway. It guided them to light and life."

"The warehouses were, on the following day, a piled-up mass of smoking brick and mortar..."

(Chapter VI- *My Mother's Widowhood*) "My father's books and papers, deeds and securities all fed the flames of the fire that destroyed his valuable warehouses and their contents,

and insidiously entered with a death breath in to his system. Houses and ground rents were safe, but the manifold complications of commercial life where constant trade of his several vessels was involved, left my mother open to the aggressive assaults of demands for monies; and accounts that had been settled were almost daily presented and sworn to. She had no relating testimony. The shavings in a cooper's shop, ignited by the carelessness of an apprentice, had in a few hours inflicted on us evils present and evils to be apprehended."

**Chorographical and Statistical Description by a French Visitor, published Paris, 1816.**

**As of 1811-** "The inhabitants are truly hospitable. The usual visit of friendship is in the evening, when tea, cakes, and fruit are offered without [ostentation]. The women are industrious by habit, [and] prefer the joys of private life and objects of utility to luxurious repasts."

**From the Diary of Elbridge Gerry, Jr. 1813.**

**1813-** [pg.172-173] "We (father and self) rode to Alexandria this morning and had a delightful ride. We rode before dinner to see the town, which is laid out in right- angular streets paved in the center and sides and they are very broad. The place has much shipping and is very large, probably contains 700 houses or many more. It has been a place of much business, but the war has affected it sensibly. The houses are mostly brick and are not very handsome. After dinner I called on Miss. Brown whom I found as interesting as before. We then returned by a different and longer route...crossing the Potomac and arrived at Mr. Parrot's."

**"Chapter XII. Capture of Washington and Alexandria The History of the War between the United States and Great Britain. Ed. J. Russell, Jr. Hartford: B. and J. Russell, 1815, 268- 269.**

**1814-** [Copy of a letter from the Mayor of Alexandria to the Mayor of Georgetown] "Dear Sir, Enclosed is a copy of the terms proposed to the common council of Alexandria, by the commanding officer of the squadron now lying before the town, to which they were compelled to submit."

"Charles Sims. Terms of Capitulation. His majesty's ship Sea Horse, off Alexandria, 29<sup>th</sup> August, 1814."

Gentlemen- In consequences of a deputation yesterday received from the city of Alexandria, requesting favorable terms for the safety of the city, the under mentioned are the only conditions in my power to offer."

"The town of Alexandria, with the exception of public works, shall not be destroyed, unless hostilities are commenced on the part of the Americans, nor shall the inhabitants be molested in any manner whatever, or their dwelling houses entered, if the following articles are complied with: 1.) - All naval and ordinance stores, public or private, must immediately be delivered up. 2.) - Possession will be immediately taken of all the shipping, and their furniture must be sent on board by the owners without delay. 3.) - The vessels that have been sunk must



be delivered up in the state they were, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of August, the day the squadron passing the Kettle Bottoms. 4.) – Merchandise of every description must be instantly delivered up, and to prevent any irregularity, that might be committed in its embarkation, the merchants have it at their option to load the vessels generally employed for that purpose, when they shall be towed off by us. 5.) – All merchandise that has been removed from Alexandria, since the 19<sup>th</sup> inst. is to be included in the above articles. 6.) – Refreshments of every description to be supplied [to] the ships, and paid for at the market price, by bills of the British government. 7.) – Officers will be appointed to see that article No. 2, 3, 4 and 5, are strictly complied with, and any deviation of non-compliance, on the part of the inhabitants of Alexandria, will render this treaty null and void. I have the honor to be, John A. Gordon, Captain of H.M. ship Sea Horse, and senior officer of H.M. ships off Alexandria. To the Common Council of the town of Alexandria.”

**Glascow, John M. “Letter X.” Travels through part of the United States and Canada in 1818 and 1819. Vol.1. Glascow: University Press, 1823.**

**1818-** [Alexandria, September] “This beautiful spot is about ten miles below Alexandria, on the banks of the Potowmack. In leaving the Federal city the traveler crosses the main branch of the river by a wooden bridge, very nearly a mile in length. This is a simpler erection than the bridges over the Schuylkill; it has no roof, and consists of a floor of planks, supported upon piles, and level from end to end. A portion of it suspended in the form of a drawbridge at the deepest part of the channel, admits [for] the passage of vessels up or down the river.”

“The country between Washington and Alexandria is similar to that around the capital. The surface of the ground in the neighborhood of the river is agreeably diversified with woods, meadows, and sloping inequalities; but the soil, wherever it has been broken up, seems to consist principally of light sand and gravel.”

“Alexandria, seven miles from Washington, is a commercial town of considerable activity, containing about nine thousand inhabitants. The harbor is capacious, and vessels of the largest size can float alongside the wharfs. The town is compactly built, on the plan of Philadelphia; the streets are wide, well paved, and better lighted at night than those of most American towns. The principal articles of export are flour, biscuits, and tobacco. It is said that 200,000 barrels of flour have been inspected here in the course of a single year. The biscuits, or crackers as they are universally called, are quite celebrated, and are shipped in large quantities to all parts of the United States and even to the West India islands. The principal manufactures are two worthy countrymen of ours; one of whom served his apprenticeship in a well known baker’s shop at the ‘foot of the burn close,’ in our native city. It is quite gratifying to meet with a townsman when one is so far away from home, and this pleasure I have unexpectedly enjoyed more than once.”

“One of the cracker bakers was rather unceremoniously used, by some of the British ships of war which went up the Potowmack to Alexandria, to co-operate, had that been necessary, in the attack on Washington.”

“At Alexandria I was favored with an introductory note to the honorable Bushrod Washington, the General’s nephew, and one of the judges of the Supreme Court, to whom Mount Vernon now belongs. I believe that strangers are politely received at the mansion house without any introduction, but it was of course more agreeable to be possessed of it, and I accidently obtained the company of two young gentlemen who were going a pilgrimage to the same shrine.

The road to Mount Vernon after running for a short way within view of the Potowmack, strikes off into the woods on the right; the day was hot, and we found the shelter of the trees very grateful, but coming to a place where the road divided we chanced to take the wrong one, and after proceeding about a mile were indebted to a black girl for being set right again.”

“At the bottom of the avenue to Mount Vernon, the gate was opened to us by an old negro...the avenue is narrow and in bad order, it has indeed more the air of a neglected country road, than the approach to a gentleman’s residence.”

### *1820s: An Era of Peace*

**The Alexandria Gazette and Advertiser, March 6, 1823, p.2. (Courtesy of T. Michael Miller, August 8, 1984)**

**1823-** “Mr. Editor, I am a stranger in your town, not having resided in it more than four months. I am an old man, nearly fifty years of age. I have been a great traveler; have resided in various parts of North America and in the dominions of other nations besides ours. From these circumstances, my knowledge of the world and of man have been improved; and so has the sympathetic feelings of soul been heightened. Will you permit me here to indulge in a few remarks in accordance with my knowledge of man and feelings of mind at the present time as applicable to the town and inhabitants of Alexandria, D.C.”

“In the first place- I have remarked, that the situation of the town, of the river, and of the surrounding land is goodly; but that poverty appears in the town, on the river and in the land.”

“Secondly, I have remarked, that the inhabitants of this town are uncommonly healthy; uncommonly beautiful, particularly the youth and especially the females amongst them; uncommonly intelligent; uncommonly courteous and polite in their behavior with each other and especially with strangers. I must, be permitted to state, that I have been in different towns in the south, where it was dangerous to walk the streets on account of the boys- especially if not well dressed: but here I have been seen in different kinds of apparel, and in different places and company, but never was the least insulted by any individual at all. This polite and courteous conduct of the youth of Alexandria does much credit to parents- to the teachers, to the clergy and to human nature itself.”

“Again, the inhabitants of this town are uncommonly industrious- uncommonly moral; but above all their excellencies the disposition of benevolence stands conspicuous. It might be supposed that a people whose character could justify so much praise must be very religious, but of the religion of the people of Alexandria I have nothing to write, for I candidly own that I am one of these sort of men who believe that a Godlike disposition of soul is true religion, even it is found in the hearts of those whom some may consider heretical in faith. The religion which is found in our own belief, and the religion of benevolent disposition are entirely dissimilar...”

“Notwithstanding that I have discovered so many traits of goodness in the generality of the inhabitants of Alexandria, as a man of impartial sentiments, aside from truth, I have some fault to find with them also. The women dress too fine, and also appear too often in the streets.”

“Now Mr. Editor I am one of those kind creatures who are often attending to other people’s business and neglect their own; or studying the happiness of others more than their own happiness, but it is a fault I cannot help it. I have been thinking over and over again how these good people of Alexandria could be benefitted, and at length one scheme hit my old head, and that was this: let some two or three hundred of the benevolent people of the district form themselves into a society, for the purpose of giving two of three dollars a piece, a year, and then lay the money out in buying land in the western country, for the benefit of the present industrious poor of this place and those who in a few years will be able to earn their own living.”

“Mr. Editor, I have heard it whispered in the district, that there has already been some talk of a society and that some of the benevolent members of Congress will, if such a thing should be started, use their influence and their purse in favor of the object of such a society. But, Mr. Editor, I am perhaps using too much liberty in writing to you thus, as I am a stranger; but I

would not have done it if I had not been informed that you had a heart of philanthropy as well as some others in Alexandria.”

- A Lover of Man.

**Levasseur, A.. Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825 or Journal of a Voyage to the United States. Vol.1. Philadelphia: Carey and Lea. 1829.**

**1824-** “The two most considerable cities of the District of Columbia, are Georgetown and Alexandria, both much older than the formation of the district...The population of Alexandria amounts to 8,000 souls, and its exports, consisting principally on flour, annually amount to nearly 9,000,000 dollars...”

**From the Diary of Ronald MacDonald with [Introduction] by Caroline Dale Snedeka, 1824- 1826.**

**1824-** “The city is marked out on rather a flattish country. The soil is a mixture of sand gravel and clay. The houses which have already been built are of brick, and many [are] small and of wood. As the scale on which the city has been planned is very extensive and as every one seems to have built at any point which suited him, the present appearance of the city is extremely irregular and broken. The surrounding country does not rise high. The cultivation of the land does no good. There is very little wood in the immediate neighborhood of the city. What there is appears stunted. On the distant lands and on some hills on the southern side of the Potomack there are woods, but as at this season they look brown and bare, the panoramic prospect is uninteresting. At some distance down the river and on the opposite side, smoke marked out to us the situation of Alexandria. We dined at the Ordinary. Immediately after dinner we called on Mr. Flower, and went with Miss Ronald to see the wooden bridge which is nearly a mile from the avenue. It is a mile and a quarter lone and between thirty and forty feet wide. It is built with large and strong timbers and oaken planks in a substantial manner with drawbridges for the passage of vessels...”

**Bernard, Duke of Weimar. Travels Through North America, 1825-1826, p.178.**

**1825-** “Alexandria has a ‘harbor with wooden wharves...several schooners and two brigs’ anchored there. Town ‘said to have 8,000 inhabitants. The streets are long and very straight, crossing at right angles.’”

**Anne Newport Royall, Sketches of History, Life, and Manners, in the United States, By a Traveler. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, printed for the author, 1826.**

**1826-** “...from Nashville to this place, I have seen but one driver who would not drink! My present driver is bold in it; he carries his bottle in the box; this is soon emptied, but the grog shops abound on the road, to these he has recourse. Several time tonight, has he left the stage in the road, without any one to attend it, and went, God knows where, to buy whiskey; absent

sometimes thirty minutes. It was well the horses were sober! The risk is not only in the mismanagement of the stage, and the horses, by these drunken drivers, but in matters of much greater consequence. Although I am not much of a coward, I must confess, I felt rather uneasy in the stage, while this fellow was absent, particularly in a country where mail robbery was not unknown. A little before ten o'clock, I arrived in Alexandria, the first town I ever set foot in, in the eastern country."

"Having been whirled here in the night, I had no opportunity of seeing the city. Upon going to the window the next morning, which faces the street, and market-square, I was shocked at a sight entirely new to me. The street and market-square presented groups of men, women, and children, combing every shade of colour, from the fairest white, down to the deepest black. White and black people I had been accustomed to see, and a few mulattoes, but such a multifarious mixture, bursting upon the sight at once, was as novel, as it was expected. Some of these were about half white, some almost white, leaving it difficult to distinguish where the one ends and the other begins. The one unaccustomed to see human nature in this guise, it excited feelings of horror and disgust. It has something in it so contrary to nature, something which seems never to have entered our scheme, to see a man neither black nor white, with blue eyes and a woolly head, has something in it at which the mind recoils. It appears that these people, instead of abolishing slavery, are gradually not only becoming slaves themselves, but changing color. Strange that a nation who extols so much, who praise themselves in such unqualified terms, as possessing in the highest degree, both moral and political virtue, should afford no better proof of it than this before me! Without criticizing upon that degree of credit attached to self praise, or calling into questions their moral and political virtues, we would remark, generally, that those who boast most of virtue have the least of it. But the fact before one speaks for itself, and naturally leads to the conclusion, that the man who can entail slavery upon his offspring, a free-born American, who has tasted the sweets of liberty, who can abandon his flesh and blood to the most ignominious slavery, ought truly to sound his own trumpet. There is a measure even in crime. There is a point, beyond which the most daring will not venture. History affords us many examples, amongst the most barbarous nations, in the most barbarous ages, where the most lawless ruffians became softened at the sight of human distress, to which they were impelled by no law, but that of common humanity. But for man in this free, and (as they say) enlightened country, to doom his own children, to a state (to say the least of it) fraught with every species of human misery, we want no better evidence to prove, that such men must not only be void of virtue, but guilty of the most indignant crime.

"Everyone remembers the humanity of the robbers to Margaret, of Aragon, Queen of Henry the sixth, of England. But we have many more instances."

"The market- I turned from this spectacle, to observe the appearance of the citizens, who were passing to and fro, engaged in marketing, which is not, by great odds, so crowded as ours are in the western country, in proportion to the size of the town. The first object that attracted my attention, was a gentlemen of middle age and good size, walking with a slow, but dignified step, his eyes bent on the ground in thoughtful mood, his mind evidently revolving some good intent, while his mien bespeaks the benevolence of his heart. Next steps a man of portly size, declining from the centre each way, arrayed in shining black, contrasted with an elevated face of scarlet red. His hands locked behind his back, keeping his coat in rear, the better to display his graceful front, and a massy seal, which he surveys with great seeming approbation. Turning his back upon the market-house, where, perhaps his royal highness found nothing to his taste, with an important step, he seeks his way whence he came. After him steps out a dignified personage,

with evident signs of displeasure, followed by a black boy, with an empty basket on his arm, whilst he can hardly keep pace with the hasty step of his master. I should like to know what has turned up with him; probably some presuming mechanic; has had the assurance to set his fancy upon some delicate morsel, which he of domineering look, designed for his own breakfast. Approaching slow, with modest step, a graceful matron, with a round crown bonnet, and a long whitish colored cloak, appears next, and with a basket in her hand, enters the market-house, whilst by her rushes a pert black boy with a basket likewise. And now we have a country man, who has sacrificed [his] mid morning nap to pecuniary views, with dusty hat, and friend of thread-bare drab, buttoned round him, unlading his sturdy cart, Sunday morning, notwithstanding. And hence steps, with deepened front and bold independence a group of Negro men, with erect impudence; you might perceive by their forward looks that it was Sunday. Next appears forlorn, with timid step, a female whose worn mien bespeaks her friendless-may God befriend you then, I thought. To these succeeded a troop of coloured females, (as they are termed here) in neat attire, with heads swathed in handkerchiefs, resembling sugar-loaves, horizontally usurping the place of the head, with the base in front. With these are mingled others of the same sex and colour, with bushy neither wool nor hair, tied in a vast round knot, and looking another head. Anon, a doudy [sic] drab, with soiled clothes, recalling her African hue, walks on as cheery as a lark, whilst a pool old man, limping upon crutches, comes meeting her. An inquisitive old women comes next, I know her be the shape of her bonnet, and ‘what’s this and what’s that.’ I have always fancied that the bonnet of hat took the tone of the wearer, and gave some indications of the predominant disposition or quality of the mind: I have thought I could perceive cunning, pride, prodigality, wisdom, folly, taste and refinement, by the turn of the bonnet or hat, and have been displeased with my friends when they put on a new one which made them appear not themselves. There goes a little boy whose mother has proclaimed her folly by tying a flaming red ‘comfort’ round his neck; it crosses and ties behind, hanging down to his heels; he is equipt throughout with corresponding foolery, and struts with all the importance of man grown, with his broad white collar. What thorns his mother is planting against her old age! How she is sowing the seeds of pride and folly, and preparing a fund of sorrow for the evening of her life, if god in his mercy does not disappoint her by taking this idol to himself. Hard by, on the step of a neighboring door, sits a little girl with matronly attention, arrayed in her Sunday frock- no doubt the idol of her mother’s heart, as I was once of mine.”

“My attention was not attracted by a party in the street. Two young ladies in full dress, tripped along the pavement with mincing step and unlocked arms, as though they would make room for a little light fop, who walked neither exactly behind nor yet between them; (he had a faint hear, that is evident). In his hand he carries a cane of neat device, which his well turned arm advances at every step, with studied grace, in the van of the ladies, sticking its brazen point into the interstices of the brick, as if to let the fair ones know ‘I am here.’ In conscious triumph he often looks to one side, and often behind, with design, no doubt, to say to those who see him, ‘am I not a happy man?’ ‘Yes, you are a happy man,’ says the downcast look of a brother dandy, who walks with a slow melancholy air, some distance behind, while the life-cheering smiles and brilliant eyes of the ladies, are often bestowed upon his happy rival. A little dabbling girl, with health in her face and plenty in her hand, goes next, and after her a black woman, with her apron thrown over her shoulder and a string of fish in her hand.”

“The slaves of this place bear every mark of good treatment; they look happy and are comfortably clothed, though not half so fine or richly dressed: indeed the white people of this place lack a great deal of being dressed equal to the blacks of Huntsville, or Lexington. Those of

the mixed breed, some have a beautiful bloom in their face, while others again have a sickly squalid hue, very disgusting. Having satisfied my curiosity, at least for that morning, I partook of a fine breakfast alone in my parlour, and spent the rest of the day in rest and reading.”

“History- The land where Alexandria now stands was formerly owned by the Alexander family, and the first building erected on the site, was built by one of the Alexanders.”

“Alexandria was erected into a town by act of assembly, in the year 1749, at Hunting Creek ware-house, on the lands of John and Phillip Alexander, and Hugh West, in Fairfax County, on the south side of the Potomac River, 120 miles from the Chesapeake, 70 miles from Winchester, 8 from Washington. Beginning at the mouth of Hunting Creek up the river, sixty acres of land were laid out into half acre lots and streets. The Rt. Hon. Thomas Lord Fairfax, the Hon. Wm. Fairfax, George Fairfax, Lawrence Washington, Wm. Ramsay, John Carlisle, John Rogers, Richard Osborn, Hugh West, Gerard Alexander, and Phillip Alexander, were appointed trustees of the town, which by act of assembly was called Alexandria. It is a very handsome town, the streets cross each other at right angles, running north and south, east and west, the former cutting the river at right angles. There are no squares in Alexandria, except the market-square, which is very small, and enclosed or surrounded with buildings, independent of the market-house itself, which takes the form of the letter L, and makes two sides of the square. In the opposite corner of the square, stands a fish market, the upper story of which is destined for the city guards, and called the watch house. Besides these market houses, the other public buildings are, two churches for Episcopalians, two for Presbyterians, one for Methodists, (white) one for Methodists, (black) one for Baptists, (white) one for Friends, one for Catholics- ten in all- a court-house, a museum, a town hall, a library, and insurance office, a theatre, and six banks, a collectors office, and a post office. There are two printing offices in Alexandria. Besides the manufactory of tin and leather, a great quantity of sugar is refined in Alexandria. Great attention seems to be paid to education: there are academies and several schools.”

“Manners and Appearance- The people of Alexandria are mild and unassuming. They have not that éclat and splendor, of which many of the towns in Alabama and the western states are so vain. They are rather distant, when compared with people of the west, tho’ friendly and unreserved upon an acquaintance; they are said to be hospitable; but my opportunity was such, that I am unable to give an opinion. They have none of that bold assurance, that distinguished the appearance of the people between it and the Blue Ridge. They are, on the contrary, remarkably diffident. The young people are handsome, and well formed of both sexes, particularly the young men, they have very expressive countenances, and noted for black sparkling eyes. Both young men and ladies, have beautiful complexions, but as to size, they are not to compare to the people of the west, nor are they so dressy or fashionable. Laboring men and women, however, are stouter than those who do not work. Married ladies look pale, and have for the most part a bloated appearance, for want, I suspect, of proper exercise. Viewing Alexandria in a relative view, it does not seem to progress much in wealth, and so far from improving, it is losing ground . . . it is used to reckon twelve thousand inhabitants, whereas it not contains only eight thousand and eight, with the exception, however, of two thousand houses in Fairfax Country, which, though without the limits of the district, is a continuation of Alexandria. Alexandria has not recovered the loss sustained by the late war, and from everything I have seen respecting this town, is has seen its most prosperous days. It is a matter of some surprise, that with the same advantages, as to situation for trade, it should be so far behind Baltimore, which is only two years older. In some respects it has the advantage of Baltimore, having power to furnish all the western part of Virginia, and east Tennessee, who freight their groceries in

Philadelphia vessels to Alexandria, which is some distance, and wagon them from thence. Why the people of Alexandria have not seized the advantage, has been owing, perhaps to want of capital or system. One great cause I am told, is want of union amongst themselves. Alexandria exports little else than flour though heretofore, it is said, that twelve thousand weight of tobacco was shipped in one year from that port. Besides ware-houses, it has commodious wharfs for the loading and unloading of vessels. These are built in the river on piles, differing in width, length, and height, to suit vessels of all sizes. They extend in a right angle, from the shore to a vast distance in the river, which comprises their length, and sufficiently asunder to admit vessels between them. They are perfectly level on the top, being filled up with gravel and earth, of such height as to be even with the decks of the vessels, which draw up close to them, side by side, and roll out the cargo, and the same, when going to land. The first ship I ever saw was in Alexandria, and though a very small merchant ship, it had enough of curiosity in it, to engage my admiration. The greatest disappointment to me, was the height of the deck from the water, and the quantity of rope. I had expected these decks were at least five times as far from the surface of the water, nor had I an accurate idea of the extent of a deck, it embracing the extreme height of the ship, with the exception of the masts. It is nothing more than a flat floor, from one end of the vessel to the other, with a balustrade on the extremity, of from two to three feet in height: the deck is the covering of the ship. The mast, that is the main-mast, was another matter in which I was extremely out, as to the height and thickness, it is as large as a common tree; and as for the rope, I should be at a great loss myself, how to dispose of the one half of it, my knowledge of navigation notwithstanding. I found only the mate on board, who, with a great deal of patience, answered the thousands queries I put to him, while the sailors who were hard by on the wharf, testified at once their surprise and ridicule, by a loud peal of laughter. Since this has been written, I have seen war ships at Boston with five decks”

“From the Alexandria side of the Potomac, you have a fine view of the Maryland shore, which is elevated and beautifully diversified with farms and elegant buildings. The first sight of my much loved native state, since I left it at three years of age, filled me with sensations, for which language wants expression. Nor have I indeed a distant recollection of my feelings. The first glimpse, vibrated upon every fiber of my heart, and seemed to fill that vestal void, long locked up by Polina’s care. The ecstasy resulting from the full fruition of this new affection, absorbed every power of my mind; it was amongst the sweetest moments I ever tasted. Every creature loves the place of its nativity, but those only are susceptible of its highest pleasure, who have, like myself, been long absent from it. I would not exchange the pleasure I felt on beholding my ever dear country, for any earthly consideration.”

“Alexandria has a gradual ascent from the river back to the utmost limits; the streets are spacious, and paved with stone, and the side-walks with brick; these streets are kept very clean, not a particle of any substance or rubbish whatever, is suffered to lie or be seen in the streets; they are lighted every dark night. A man, or perhaps more, goes round at dusk with a light ladder in their hands, by which they ascend the lamp post, and set fire to the lamps. These lamps are at every corner where the streets cross. The lamp is placed in a large glass lantern, such as taverns use; and this is tenaciously fixed on the top of a high post, out of reach, so that disorderly persons may not have it in their power to extinguish them. The houses in Alexandria are built of brick mostly, three stories high, they are comfortable and convenient, but not very splendid. Instead of wooden cornice, the top of the house walls are ornamented with from one to three rows or pointed brick, (in the form of a wedge) these brick project beyond the wall, and gives it a handsome appearance; most of the houses are covered with slate and tile. The banks are very



handsome buildings; but the greatest piece of architecture is the market-house. From the centre of the north end, arises a splendid cupola of hexagon figure, ornamented with a lofty steeple. The squares of the cupola present six faces of a single clock, which shows the hour of the day to a vast distance. The mechanism of the clock is contained within the body of the cupola and strikes so loud as to be heard over the town (These are common in the Atlantic states, being in almost every church). Alexandria is an incorporated town, under the government of a Mayor and Aldermen; the police is under the best regulation; no disturbance, not the least noise, interrupt the repose of the citizens. Instead of bells, the watch is preceded by a number of loud trumpets, which blow a tremendous peal at the hour of ten at night, when the watch goes out. They do the rounds, crying the hour till day. If any person, either black or white, be found in the streets after ten, who cannot give the account of him or herself, they are taken by the watch, and put in the guard-house till morning, when they are taken before the Mayor, and thereupon fined; if they are not able to pay the fine, they are sent to the work-house for a certain time."

"The market of Alexandria is abundant and cheap, though much inferior to any in any part of the western country, except beef and fish, which are by far superior to that of the western markets. But vegetables, fowls, lamb, and veal, are all very indifferent indeed. Nor is their bread equal to ours in whiteness or taste. But their exquisite fish, oysters, crabs, and foreign fruits, upon the whole, bring them upon a value with us. Besides these delicacies, they have several sorts of wild duck, the greatest luxury I found in the market. Vegetables of every description are small; what they call cabbage, with us would not be gathered except to feed cattle; their potatoes are large enough, but not well tasted. They have no greens in the winter, owing to the excessive cold of the climate. Their fish differ from ours, even the same species. Their cat-fish is the only sort in which we excel; they have nothing like our mud-cat. Their cat-fish is from ten to fifteen inches in length, with a wide mouth, like the mud-cat of the western waters; but their cat differs from both ours in substance and color; they are soft, pied black and white. They are principally used to make soup, which is much esteemed by the inhabitants. All their fish are small compared with ours. Besides the cat-fish, which they take in the latter part of the winter, they have the rock, winter shad, mackerel, and perch, shad and herring. The winter shad is very fine indeed. They are like our perch, but infinitely smaller. These fish are sold very low; a large string, enough for a dozen persons, may be purchased for a few cents. No fish, however, that I have tasted, equal our trout. I often went through the market; in doing so, I would address those who had the things to sell. It was laughable enough to see with what total disregard I was treated, when the discovered my object was not to buy. Upon my first approach I was met with a smile, and 'will you have a piece of nice veal this morning?' 'No sir, I am a traveler, I only call from curiosity; I am just looking at the market: your veal is very thin sir, do you not feed them in this country?'" Not a word! Another, 'will you take a nice stake piece this morning, here's a charming piece;' 'thank you sir, I am only viewing the market; I don't keep house; this is really fine beef indeed, how long may it have been fed?' Might as well address a post. 'Will you buy bread this morning? Here's some very nice.' 'How do you sell it?' 'Six cents, take two?' (Handing out the bread) 'I don't wish to but, I only wish to ascertain to prices; what profit do you make?' Could not get another glimpse of his eye. All the information I obtained was from buyers. The benches and stall are kept neat and clean, being washed every day. Market is held every day in the week, not excepting Sunday, which accounts for its thinness. The constables attend to prevent riot or disturbance. Several attempts have been made to suppress Sunday markets in Alexandria, but those 'outrageous' religious people, but without effect. It is alleged by them that it is heinous sin thus to violate the Sabbath; while those who

advocate the measure, contend that the greater crime would be to debar poor slaves from the only opportunity they have to sell their produce, the hard acquired pittance of many a weary night's labor (many of those people own slaves, and yet make a merit of enjoining the observance of the Sabbath). Besides, they have a number of laborers and mechanics, who cannot spare time to provide for Sunday market. Market begins at day-light and usually ends at ten o'clock every day, except Sunday, which is out an hour sooner. At nine o'clock a.m. on Sunday, you hear a small bell ring for about a minute, this is succeeded by a peal from the great market bell. The first is give notice to those in the market, to pick up his or her unsold articles, and be off; by the ring of the great bell, all who fail to do this, forfeit what they have to the constable; whose business it is to take those articles so forfeited to the poor houses, for the benefit of the poor. The poor house is supported by the corporation; it is nothing more than a house where cooks are employed to prepare soup and bread for those who are unable to work. They attend daily, and carry home the amount of that day's provisions, and so on. Alexandria, though generally a healthy town, was visited by the yellow fever some years ago, which swept off a number of its inhabitants; since that, the corporation has been very careful and attentive to the means of health."

"Fountains and Baths- There are no springs in the city; the citizens procure good water at some expense from a fountain in the suburbs of the town; for ordinary purposes, however, they have fountains in abundance. There is an elegant bathing house, but the price of bathing is so unreasonably high, (fifty cents) that it is of no benefit either way; whereas if it were within the bounds, it would prove a fortune to the proprietor, and tend more to the health of the citizens. There seems to prevail amongst the citizens of Alexandria, a deep rooted enmity against the Federal city; they sigh to be reunited to the state of Virginia. They are now engaged in an attempt to separate themselves from the District of Columbia, by a petition to Congress."

"The merchants suffered greatly by the late war, particularly in the loss of their shipping. On the day that succeeded the capture of Washington, the British entered Alexandria; the citizens capitulated upon conditions not very favorable, for it seems the British burnt their shipping, and plundered the stores and ware-houses. The citizens, however, were not guilty of abandoning their city, as were those of Washington. It was amusing to all (except the owners) to see with what liberality the British dealt out the sugar, coffee, flour and blankets, to the poor, and the negroes. These articles were turned out into the streets, and all who wished might come and take what they pleased. It is said that the flour taken off by the British was considerable; but the Americans attacked them after clearing the port of Alexandria, and destroyed the whole."

"The Potomac at Alexandria, is rather over a mile in width; it is celebrated for its beauty. It is certainly a great blessing to this country, in supplying its inhabitants with food in the article of fish, and for commercial purposes; without it, the country would not, it could not exist, the soil being nearly good for nothing. But Potomac, the only tide river I have seen, yields greatly to the western rivers, in point of beauty. It is always turbid and rough, owing, I suspect, to the wind from the ocean, and the ebbing and flowing of the tide. The tide, I am told, extends as high as three miles above Georgetown. Notwithstanding the visible decline of Alexandria, the number of strangers who pass through it, the number of stages, carriages, wagons and drays, rattling on the pavement from the morning till night, and almost from night till morning, gives to it a very lively appearance. All travelers going from the north to south, or from south to north, and so of the east and west, have necessarily to pass through Alexandria."

"Yesterday, 22 February the militia companies turned out, preceded by a band of music. The Artillery, the Blues, and the Independent Blues, were distinguished by very handsome

uniforms; the Independent Blues made a splendid appearance- as respected their equipages, they were second to none that I have seen. But in manly size, there are children compared to our men of the west. There will not do, too effeminate; otherwise they are handsome looking men. They, with the clergy, proceeded to Christ's Church, where an oration was delivered by S. Cox, Esq. They then returned to the hotel, whence they set out; after firing twenty-four rounds, preceded by the band, with banners flying, followed by the clergy and the citizens. When they arrived at the hotel, they formed in two lines; the clergy walked bare-headed through into the hotel, when the dispersed: on Monday (to-morrow) a splendid ball is to close the celebration. During Saturday, national flags were suspended from the east and west fronts of the market-house. These flags are of the richest deep blue silk, floating almost to the ground, the centre being ornamented with a white eagle, with twenty-four stars of the same. They were trimmed with a border of brilliant deep red. The celebration is over; the ball took place last evening, at the city-hotel, agreeably to arrangement. Notwithstanding a very unfavourable evening, upwards of two hundred gentlemen and ladies attended, amongst whom was the Vice-President and several other distinguished characters, from Washington City. A splendid room was prepared for Gen. Jackson, (who was expected to participate in the celebration) but was prevented by indisposition. His destined apartment was ornamented with national flags, suspended at each end; but to our great mortification, the General was unable to witness this testimony of events. Mr. Clagett, the proprietor of the city hotel, received great applause for his promptness and skill in providing a supper, in which the taste, elegance, and profusion were displayed. The national flag floated at each end of the table, which was upwards of an hundred feet in length; this was the most superb supper I ever beheld. In Alexandria, dwells John I. L., brother of him who signed the Declaration of Independence. He has nothing engaging in his countenance or appearance; on the contrary, he has a sly, cunning look. He is of middling height, about fifty years of age, sallow, spare, and thin visaged. Though much disappointed in Mr. L., I was pleased with his son, a very promising young man, upwards of twenty, of genteel manners, and very engaging figure. I should, very probably, have quitted Alexandria without having either the honour or the pleasure of knowing it contained such an august personage, but for a mere accident."

"After spending some months at Alexandria, I took my departure for Richmond, Va. in the steam-boat "Mount Vernon," intending, on my return, to visit Washington City. The Mount Vernon carries the southern mail when the river is open. The boats commence running the last of March, and continue till the middle of December, when the stages take up their line till the return of spring, and so on. The Mount Vernon leaves Alexandria at two o'clock, p.m. and arrives at Potomac creek from six to eight o'clock, same day, as the wind is more or less favorable: we arrived at the creek about eight, the wind being against us.

"...Next day I derived no little amusement from looking at the great number of wagons which (through Sunday) were going and returning from Alexandria; the road which passed near the door, was full from morning till long after dark. These wagons were conveying flour to Alexandria, which affords a good market for that article. I had met upwards of an hundred the preceding day; and it appeared that it was to have no end. The road from Berry's ferry to Alexandria is paved the whole way; which though it facilitates the transportation of flour in these wagons, is not very pleasant to travel on at the rate of seventy miles per day; it is the roughest pavement I ever was on; it would not be bad policy to have one's life and limbs insured, before undertaking the trip. The toll I am told is very high; but wagons with broad tire[s] pass free, on account of the service they are to the road. At the end of every mile, there is broad stone set up near the road."

“...Productions of the Country- The principal growth consists of black oak, black jack, hickory, sassafras, box, ash, pine, and persimmon. Good wheat is reared in the counties near the Blue Ridge, in some places as high as thirty eight bushels to the acre. Some of the land brings good tobacco, maize does not succeed well, timothy succeeds well as low down as O’ Neal’s. Some limestone too, is found in places- good water is scarce.”

“On Monday evening I bid adieu to Cobrun and Marcus O’ Neal, and undertook a journey of twenty-five miles about sunset, in the worst carriage I ever was in! Once more patience. One distinguishing trait in the character of the lowlanders, is a fondness for drink; besides the evidence already mentioned, I witnessed a few in the course of the evening. When we drew near Fairfax court- house, we met numbers of gentlemanly looking men on horseback, reeling in the saddle, their red faces and bloated bodies, proved them to be old veterans of the bottle...”

**Miller, Michael T., ed. “The Great Fire of 1827.” Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987, p. 110.**

**1827-** “The derangement consequent upon the removal of our printing establishment, during the ravages of the late fire, saved us from being the first messenger of woe. That painful task was promptly and feelingly preformed by our friends of the *National Intelligencer* and *National Journal*, and with an unexpected degree of accuracy, considering the confusion and uncertainty that pervaded every channel of information. It remains for us, however, to give a detailed account of the interesting occurrences of one of the most awful and disastrous days that ever rolled over the inhabitants of Alexandria, and we shall discharge the duty as briefly as circumstances will permit.”

“On the morning of Thursday, the 18<sup>th</sup> inst., our town was happy and prosperous, and the citizens rose to their usual avocations, inspired with all the gratitude and confidence peculiar to their previous exemption from a species of calumny, which providence had so often visited upon other communities; but in a few brief minutes the hum of industry was drowned but the melancholy warnings of approaching distress, and in a few more, hope and exertion yielded to apathy and despair. Human ability seemed to be utterly inadequate to the task imposed upon them and the allied elements of destruction marched over us in all their mighty strength and grandeur, prostrating every obstacle thrown in their way and scattering desolation in every direction. And so they would have continued their victory, till nothing was left to conquer, but for the humanity and unparalleled aclarity of our friends from Washington and Georgetown, who flew to our succour by thousands, and regardless of danger, expense and every consequence but our salvation, breasted the raging storm with composure and skill, and saved us from ruin. All of us are distressed, and many are disconsolate; but there is not one whose heart does not swell with gratitude to his deliverers, and who is not filled with admiration of their disinterested philanthropy, and more than brotherly affection. We owe them in debt which words cannot acknowledge, and which, we trust in God, we shall never have an opportunity to pay in kind, but it is indelibly recorded in our memories, and if ever a citizen of Washington or Georgetown find us faithless to our profession, may disgrace be our reward, a greater calamity, if possible, than that which has been averted, overwhelm us forever. Of our citizens, we must say no more than that they did their duty to the utmost of their ability; even delicate females, in the highest grade of society, exposed themselves to danger, and performed services of the most important

character, but there were strangers among us, who might have done far less than they did, and still have exceeded our expectations, and been entitled to our thanks. We should be wanting in duty, therefore, did we omit to name them. Mr. Brown, the manager of our circus was here with his corps. As soon as it was seen that the fire must spread, he volunteered his services and horses to convey the intelligence to Washington, and executed his trust with a zeal and dispatch which was only exceeded by his subsequent activity and usefulness. Mr. Samuel Shrock, another of the corps, was literally worth his weight in gold. As the very crisis of the disaster, he mounted the highest and steepest roof in town, while everybody else supposed it to be untenable, and sustaining himself by a shallow gutter within a few inches of the eaves, received water from a dormant window, and applied it so judiciously for hours together, that he saved the house and prevented the flames from crossing a street at a point which was truly regarded as the breast of the work to the whole range of the property between that and the river. And in another part of the town, the coolness and intrepidity of Mr. John Campbell, a member of the same corps, contributed mainly to preserve the fine house owned and occupied by Captain Rhodes, and thereby checked the progress of the fire in the direction of the Custom house, and other property of great value. Captain Jenkins in the steam boat Potomac, was a host in himself. To him we are indebted for many services which one less fearless and efficient could not have rendered. He was chiefly instrumental in saving a vast amount of property among which was our own office.”

“It would be fruitless, if not invidious, to distinguish between the services of our friends of Washington and Georgetown; suffice it to say that every engine and hose was sent to our aid and every man that could be spared, was with us. Congress adjourned- the Navy Yard and public offices were closed- the Marine Corp under Captain Howle, came down in a body- Artificers from the War Department were sent with their implements to blow up and pull down houses- the Secretary of War and many members of Congress worked in our ranks- the toll gates at the bridges were thrown open- and in fact, everything was done for us which moral power could suggest, or physical accomplish.”

“The fire originated, by accident, in a workshop of Mr. James Green, cabinet maker, which stood in the interior of the square bounded by Fairfax, Prince, Royal, and King Streets, and near the intersection of the two last. The alarm was given a few minutes before nine o’clock, a.m., and while the fire was confined to the floor, but such was the combustibility of everything around, that before the citizens could collect in force, the house was wrapped in flames, and several others were on fire, particularly the back buildings of stores and dwellings fronting on King and Fairfax Streets and running back to the alleys on which the workshop was situated. By great exertion the fire was prevented from reaching the front buildings of King Street, but the kitchens, stables, and other out houses of Mr. Samuel Smith, Mr. William A. Williams, Mr. John Adam, Mr. Archibald Douglass, Mr. Thomas Mount, Mr. Robert Barry, and Mr. Thomas L. Martin were either burnt or pulled down.”

“The back buildings of several houses fronting on Royal Street were consumed, as was also a frame dwelling fronting on an alley, and immediately south of Mr. Green’s workshop. The fire soon reached Fairfax Street, where it was checked on the North by a three story fireproof, occupied by Messrs. Edward Stabler and son as a drug store, but every other house on the west side of Fairfax and between Stabler’s and Prince Street, were almost simultaneously in flames, and were speedily consumed. At Prince Street the progress of degrees of the fire was arrested south and west, but, notwithstanding every effort, it crossed over Fairfax Street to the east, consuming two three-story brick houses fronting thereon, when it was again miraculously arrested. In the meantime, however, the lighted shingles, borne by a powerful north-west wind,

had kindled another, and a still more awful fire, in a separate part of the town. This commenced about four hundred feet from the termination of the first and on the north side of Prince Street, near the intersection of that and Water Street. In a few minutes, both sides of Prince Street, between Water and Union, together with a warehouse on the east side of Water Street- four others on the west side of Union Street south of Prince and three others on the same side of Union, north of Prince were all in flames, and every house except two was destroyed- many of them with their whole contents.”

“It was while the last fire was in its height and the first yet raging- and at a moment when the exhausted citizens were almost without hope- that our brothers of Washington and Georgetown came to our aid- reanimated our drooping spirits- stimulated us to new exertions- and redeemed the most valuable part of the town, and perhaps the shipping, from the inevitable destruction that otherwise awaited it. For the next five hours the flames were rushing from house to house with increasing force- furniture and goods were scattered in every direction, women and children were flying for safety and houses that were not burnt, were often on fire, sometimes a dozen at once. Language cannot paint so distressing a picture nor will those who did not see the original ever be able to equal it with their imagination. But thanks to Heaven and the friends it sent to us, we have escaped with less injury than we expected, and there are fewer of us reduced to a dependence on charity than might have been had the fire raged to the same extent, in almost any other part of the town. Even those who are thus reduced have the consolation to believe that, through the generosity of Congress and our sister cities, who we know are making exertions in our behalf, they will not be allowed to suffer.”

“We shall proceed now to detail as accurately as we can, the nature and extent of the loss: We have already enumerated the buildings which were burnt in the interior of the square where the fire originated. The sufferers there, in personal property burnt, and injured by the removals were Mr. James Green, Mr. Samuel Smith, Mr. William A. Williams, Mr. John Adams, Messrs. James and Archibald Douglass, Mr. Thomas Mount, Mr. Robert Barry, Mr. Thomas L. Martin, Messrs. John M. Johnson & Co., Messrs. Withers and Washington, Mr. Presley Simpson, Mr. James W. Scott, and Messrs. Edward Stabler & Son. On Fairfax Street the houses burnt were:”

“A frame warehouse owned by Messrs. John Lloyd and Mordecai Miller and occupied by Mr. George Hill, tinner and coppersmith- loss considerable.”

“A frame house owned by Mr. John Lloyd and occupied by Mr. Laughlin Masterson, shoe maker, loss inconsiderable.”

“A frame house and three- story brick back building, owned and occupied by Mr. Thomas Brocchus, merchant tailor- shop and family- almost a total loss.”

“A three- story brick house owned by Mr. John Adam, and occupied by Mr. Joseph Dodds, shoe store, manufactory, and family- loss considerable.”

“A three-story brick house owned and occupied by Dr. William Harper- apothecaries store and family- loss considerable.”

“A three-story brick house owned by Mr. Peter Wise, and occupied by Captain John Johnson as a dwelling, and by his daughters as a military store- loss considerable.”

“A three-story brick house, owned by Mr. Thomas Irwin and unoccupied.”

“A three-story brick house owned and occupied by Captain Rumney, and family- loss considerable.”

“A two-story brick house belonging to Jane Simmons’ estate, and occupied by Mrs. Murphy, as a dwelling- loss inconsiderable.”

“A two-story brick house owned by the same estate, and occupied by Mr. John Rudd (painter) and family- loss about \$150.”

“A frame house owned by Mr. Mordecai Miller and occupied by him as a warehouse- loss not known.”

“Two frame houses belonging to the estate of George Slacum- one empty and the other occupied by John Hepburn, confectioner- loss inconsiderable.”

“A three-story brick house owned and occupied by Messrs. C. & I.P. Thompson- wholesale dry good store, and swelling of Mr. Craven P. Thompson- loss inconsiderable.”

“A three-story brick house owned and occupied by Mr. Robert T. Wilson and sisters- loss considerable.”

“Besides those whose houses were burnt, many persons on Fairfax and the neighboring parts of Prince and King Streets lost by removal. Among them were Mr. Francis Murphy, Doctor William Wedderburn, Messrs. Snowden and Thornton, Mr. M. F. Thornton, Mr. W. Barleman, Mrs. Washington, Mr. William Gregory, Messrs. Clagett and Page, Mr. George Hill, Mr. Bryan Hampson, Mr. Zachariah Nicholas, Mrs. Price, Mr. Matthew Robinson, Mr. Henry Mandsfield, Mr. John Corse, Mr. Samuel Plummer, Mr. Frederick Koons, Messrs. M. Miller and Son, Mr. Daniel Bryan, post master, Mr. Peter Hewett, Mr. Joseph B. Ladd, Mr. Thomas Taylor, Mr. John Hooff, Mrs. Mills, window, Mr. Robert Massie and others whose names we have not been able to ascertain.”

“On Water Street a two-story brick warehouse, owned by the Bank of Alexandria and occupied by Mr. Samuel A. Marsteller as a storehouse was consumed with many valuable goods.”

“On Prince Street, between Water and Union Streets, the following houses were consumed:”

“A two-story frame house, owned by Dr. John Vowell and occupied by Jonathan Fields, tobacco store and family- loss considerable.”

“A frame warehouse owned and occupied by Mr. Mathias Snyder, oil and paint store, brass foundry, etc. - loss considerable.”

“A two-story frame house owned by Mrs. Slacum, and occupied by Mr. John Hill, boarding house- loss inconsiderable.”

“A two-story frame house owned by Mr. William Harper, Senr. and occupied by Mr. Gerseling (painter) and family- loss inconsiderable.”

“A two- story frame and two-story brick house owned and occupied by Mr. Edward Sheehy- grocery store, soap and tallow chandlery, and dwelling- loss very heavy.”

“A two-story brick house, owned and occupied by Mr. Williams Isabell- clothes store and family- loss considerable.”

“A three-story brick warehouse owned by Mr. Thomas Vowell, and occupied by Mr. Edward Sheehy as a bacon and pork store- loss very great.”

“A three- story brick house owned and occupied by Captain Robinson, grocery store, family, and a bacon and pork warehouse in the rear- loss very heavy.”

“Two frame houses owned by the heirs of Joshua Riddle and occupied by Mr. J. Brown, seaman, and Mrs. Hunt, widow- loss inconsiderable.”

“A two-story brick house owned and occupied by Mr. Arthur T. Urie and family- loss inconsiderable.”

“A three-story brick warehouse, owned by Mr. Norman R. Fitzhugh, unoccupied.”

“A two-story frame house owned by Bank of Alexandria and occupied Moses Brent and Joseph Williams, colored men- loss inconsiderable.”

“A two-story frame house owned by Mr. Anthony Rhodes, and occupied by Mr. Peter Rhodes and Mr. David Stewer- loss inconsiderable.”

“A two-story frame house owned and occupied by Mr. Jacob Fortrell and family- loss inconsiderable.”

“A two-story frame house owned by Mr. Fortrell and occupied by Messrs. Charles C. Smoot and Co., curriers- loss inconsiderable.”

“A two-story frame house, owned by Mr. Mathias Snyder and occupied b Mr. Henry Hobb (shoemaker) and family- loss inconsiderable.”

“A two-story frame house, owned by Mr. Jacob Fortrell, and occupied by Mr. Jonathan C. May, as a sugar and tobacco manufactory- loss very great.”

“A two-story frame house, owned by Mr. John Lloyd, and occupied by Mr. Richard Horwell (suspender manufacturer) and family- loss considerable.”

“A two-story brick house, owned by Mr. William McLaughlin, and occupied by Mr. McFarlin (shoemaker) and family- loss considerable.”

“A two-story brick house and extensive back buildings, owned and occupied by Mr. Jonathan C. May, (merchant taylor) and family- loss very heavy.”

“A three-story brick house, owned by the heirs of Seth Cartwright, and occupied by Mr. James Nightingale (shoe maker) and family- loss considerable.”

“A three-story brick house, owned by Mrs. Susan Douglass: unoccupied.”

“A three-story brick warehouse, southwest corner of Prince and Union owned by Messrs. Fowle and Co. and occupied as a grocery store by Messrs. Cohagan and Whittles- loss inconsiderable.”

“The houses burnt of Union Street, south of Prince were:”

“A three-story brick warehouse owned by Colonel Francis Peyton- unoccupied.”

“A three-story brick warehouse belonging to the estate of Joseph Dean, and occupied by Mr. John Creighton as a store house- loss inconsiderable.”

“Two frame houses belonging to the estate of Joseph Dean: one unoccupied by the Mr. George Swain, as a carpenter’s shop, and the other by Mr. Goddard Hill, as a cooper’s shop- loss inconsiderable.”

“A two-story frame house, owned and occupied by Mr. Daniel Wright, (hatter) was partly pulled down- loss in personal property inconsiderable.”

“The houses burnt on Union Street, North of Prince were:”

“A three-story brick house, owned by Mr. Norman R. Fitzhugh- unoccupied.”

“A two-story frame house, owned by the heirs of Mrs. Boyer- unoccupied.”

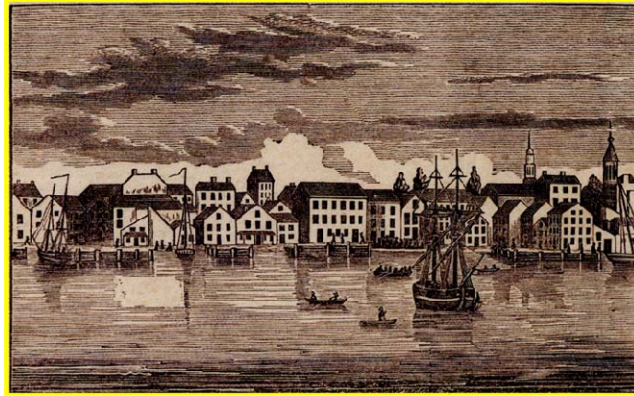
“Two frame houses owned by Mr. Anthony Rhodes- unoccupied.”

“Here we close the list of houses burnt; others, however, were materially injured and with all out enquiry, we have omitted the names of many who sustained considerable losses by moving their goods and furniture. It may be necessary to mark that wherever we have mentioned losses as being ‘considerable’ or ‘inconsiderable,’ etc., they allude solely to personal property.”

“In another column will be found a hasty report made by a committee appointed to investigate the cause of the fire and to ascertain the amount of loss incurred thereby. In that report the gross amount of loss is estimated at \$107,277, but we are well satisfied from subsequent information that it will equal if not succeed \$150,000.” (*Alexandria Gazette*, January 23, 1827, p.3.)



### *1830s: Economic Difficulty and Decline*



This image depicts a slave ship preparing to transport slaves to the south but it also serves as a record of the Alexandria waterfront during the 1830s. (Ship awaiting Slaves, woodcarving, 1834: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1836.)

#### **From Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, 1949 edition.**

**1830-** Frances Trollope stayed in Alexandria from the fall of 1830 into early 1831. Her *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, at least the 1949 edition, tells us little about Alexandria. She calls it a “pretty town,” and says “a few weeks residence in Alexandria restored my strength sufficiently to enable me to walk to a beautiful little grassy terrace, perfectly out of the town, but very near it, from whence we could watch the various craft that people the Potomac between Alexandria and Washington.” Where was the terrace she speaks of? Either north or south of the settled town.

#### **From *Manuscripts of an Old Bachelor: Reminiscences of Alexandria, 1830s.***

**1830-** “I lingered on the pavement of the City Hotel- that used to be of marble slabs- now dead brick. I have stood on the steps there and seen the ‘old time gentlemen’ with their little table before them, taking a glass of iced wine in the summer afternoon, and ‘none to make them afraid.’ Not I saw five or six ‘fast young men’ lounging at the corner, puffing horrid cigars and suggesting a ‘brandy julep!’ I went up to look at ‘Washington’s ballroom’ in which the Father of his Country had often met the young people doing honor to his birthday. I saw it filled with beds for the passing traveler! A stroll on the wharves, gave me no pleasure. When I was young, many a time have I counted over the ships and barques and brigs belonging to Alexandria- ten or twelve first class ships- several of them in port at a time. I could jump, when I was a boy, on board a West India trader, and pick up a pineapple, a banana, or an orange. I could take out of a hole in the bag a handful of palm nuts covering the deck of a regular packet to and from South America, bringing cargoes of hides. Where are all these now? I asked for the tobacco warehouses, and the tobacco sloops that used to run up the Eastern Branch and down to Piscataway- all gone! I looked round for the Charles County, St. Mary’s Choptank and Westmorland craft. Filled with wood, grain, and country produce- none were to be seen!”

“Next, I strolled to the graveyard! Ah! There the old names met my eyes. They were more populous than they used to be- but, save in that, not much altered from the old times. There was no one with me, and I have full vent to my feelings. My tears could not but flow- although ‘unused to the melting mood’- as I stood over the graves of the best men and women that ever lived in Alexandria. Here lie many of the excellent of the earth. Here rest, forever, some of the noblest spirits that ever blessed their friends and companions. Oh! How I lingered around the tombs. How the names engraved upon the tomb stones called up the past. I threw myself in agony of grief upon the turf which covered the remains of one I had loved fondly when he was in the pride of youth- now, he is scarcely remembered- and of whose talents the whole town did honor- and there prayed for the dead! Some may haggle- but the heart and the feelings prompted the utterance from the lips. If prayers can avail, Father in Heaven, bless the dead- glorify them! Make them happy forever!”

“Returning from my visit to the graveyards, I met an aged man whom I had known in other days. The lapse of time had not obliterated his recollection of my features. How cordially we grasped each other’s hands! ‘Let us,’ said I, ‘cross over to the Spring Garden.’ ‘Ah! Sir,’ said he, ‘there is no such garden now.’ We leaned over the fence of a market garden and looked at what used to be ‘Spring Garden.’ Its Theatre- its ball alley- its shuffle boards- its bower over one of the finest springs I ever saw- were all gone. I believe the spring is there yet- but I would not look at it or drink its water! As we sauntered down the lane we talked of the ‘eccentricities’ of our younger days- Josey Williams- shamefully called the Goat by the boys- Robin Vaughn- all in that easy, familiar way which was natural to him, and which, while it made plain the most abstruse points, seemed more like the earnest conversations of an intelligent gentleman, than the studied effort of a learned counselor. And yet I have also heard him when seemingly unconscious to himself, he was truly eloquent- moving a jury to tears, or exciting them to share his feelings as well as to follow his judgment. He will be remembered by the Alexandrians who still survive him, as an honor to their community, and, had he lived, there is no post of distinction at the bar or on the bench in Virginia, to which he could not have attained.”

“I have already said so much of Mr. T\_\_\_\_\_ for ‘out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh’- that I cannot do more than refer to the names of some of the other lawyers, no deceases, who in my time flourished with him- such as Thomson F. Mason, quick, acute, ready; and Thomas W. Hewitt, zealous, indefatigable, intrepid and determined; the younger members of the bar at that day I must pass over for the present, but may recur to them again, and give some ‘reminiscences’ of their talents and acquirements.”

“A constant attendant and practitioner at our bar was Walter Jones, then in the height of his fame. This profound and accomplished lawyer always was ‘at home’ in Alexandria. He had formerly lived here much, and knew all our people. He was constantly employed in important cases. On two occasions I heard William Wirt speak in the old Court House. The place was crowded, I remember on both occasions his efforts were able. And this calls to mind the fact that when interesting cases were expected to be tried, the officers of the court saw that props and beams were placed in the market-house, under the floor of the court-room, to prevent an accident from the weight of a crowded audience. Once, a long time ago, at the trial of Burfoot, for shooting and robbing Peters, the court adjourned to the theatre and the trial was held in the latter building.”

“The Court House is now in another place-out of town, in the northern suburbs- I am told not as convenient, or even as safe as the old one. Other men fill the places of those of whom I

have spoke. There are not many of us left to remember that was in the days of which I have written.”- *The Local News, November 9, 1861, p.2.*

“*Pulvis et Umbra Sumus. Dust to Dust-* ashes to ashes- Burial Services. I think I have before mentioned, in these manuscripts, a visit I recently paid to the burial grounds in the western suburbs of the town. I am told that a new cemetery has recently been laid out beyond the Shuter’s Hill, which is too far off- and besides, it has none of the associations and recollections connected with the old Alexandria, which endear it to my heart and feelings. Doubtless, however, the new ‘city of the dead’ may in time come to be as populous as those which I know about, and to it will repair such pilgrims as I am, to mourn over the departed- but none to mourn as those without hope!”

“The first grave digger whom I recollect was Pompey Gales- a black man- who it was said had his weaknesses, and was a particular favorite with young medical students. I do not know but that this was a scandal, however, the students aforesaid always stoutly contended that Pompey never poached beyond his own manor, or in other words, never allowed them a privilege outside of ‘Penny Hill.’ To him succeeded Harry Darnell, a tall, melancholy looking black man, whose appearance corresponded to his vocation. He was, I believe, strictly honest, and a worthy man, in every sense. He had the confidence of all the citizens. He was alive when I left Alexandria to take up my abode in a neighboring country in Virginia.”

“The original ‘Penny Hill,’ or public burial ground, was at the extreme south end of Royal Street, bordering on Hunting Creek nearly surrounded by the marsh. Here were buried many of the victims of the yellow fever in 1803- that epidemic having extensively prevailed in that year. Subsequently the present Penny Hill was purchased by the Corporation, and in it were buried such as had no lots or resting places in the grave yard belonging to the different religious denominations. The lower part of the ground must by this time have been used over and over again for the interment of the dead. I was crossing it the other day, musing upon other times, and upon the ‘simple annals of the poor’ who lay all around me, and whose bodies are here sleeping as peacefully as if they had never know pain and want and hardship when my eye rested upon a plain marble headstone, nearly concealed by bushes, on which was inscribed ‘to the memory of Francis Hall.’ I stopped and lingered at that headstone, a thousand recollections of my early manhood thronging my brain- called up the name of the humble man, once so well known to me, and to all the citizens of Alexandria. How many of the generations now active in the street and employed in the business of the place, remember Frank Hall? Except but a few- though it is comparatively but a short time since he died. He was a ‘bar keeper’ - nothing more, nothing less- of the principal hotels in Alexandria for forty or fifty years- commencing, I believe, at the old Washington Tavern and ending his career at the City Hotel, at which latter public house he had served, I have heard, under the management of Gadsby, Jesse Brown Claggett, Newton and Wise. These gentlemen retained the services of Frank almost as a matter of course. He knew every body and every body knew him. He had really a good memory for names and faces, and always affected, at least, never to be at a loss on that score. I have seen him shake cordially by hand, ‘a new arrival’ enquire affectionately after his health, compliment him upon his appearance, and tell him exultingly that he looked just as young as he did ten years before- when to my certain knowledge- he had never seen his guest before in his life, and did not know him from Adam. Amiable subterfuge! How often has ‘the Recording Angel when he carried to Heaven’s chancery’ these little peccadilloes, ‘blushed as he gave them in,’ and begged to have them obliterated!”

“Frank Hall was, as I have said, a ‘bar keeper’ of the old school- and therefore I liked him then, and like to think of him now. He was no ‘clerk in the office’- no ‘caterer’- no ‘steward’- no ‘manager’- no ‘assistant.’ He had no ‘office’- he stood behind the counter at the bar, where he handed you the bill for meals and lodging- received your money- gave you the change- mixed you a glass of toddy- chatted with you- received your orders politely and had them executed promptly. He was, besides, an excellent cook, and knew how to make a Welsch rabbit (or rare hare) or a mutton stew- and how to prepare a canvass back, equal to anybody- and, at the dinner table, always saw, when he was present that the guests were bountifully supplied. He had a vivid ‘reminiscences’ of peach brandy from Accomac, and reached the climax of his glory, in quietly getting ready for himself and his friends, a ‘rum punch.’ Where is there such a bar keeper left?”

“Hall was very amiable, courteous to all, and especially kind to young people. Hence he was a great favorite. He scarcely ever left the hotel, except to go over to market- and always had something to tell of what he had seen and heard during his half hour’s absence from his post. There was a spice of humor, too, about him. ‘What’s the play, to-night,’ said a traveler stopping at the hotel, one evening, as the boy ran over to the hotel with the theatre bills fresh and damp, from the old Gazette office, at the corner of King and Royal streets. The question was rather pompously put. Hall, glancing at the bill, with imperturbable gravity replies- ‘I see, sir, it is Venison preserved, or the Pot uncovered.’ This was a new rendering of the title of Osway’s celebrated drama- ‘Venice preserved, or the Plot discovered!’ The gentleman who asked the questions, it is said, was satisfied with the answer!”

“But the old man, with his foibles, his virtues, his unpretending merit, is gone! I was not here to pay the tribute of my respect to this old acquaintance, by following his remains to the grave- but I have gladly taken this opportunity to call up, to the older citizens of Alexandria, the recollection of a very humble, but very honest and faithful man.”

“I find that the Presbyterian burial ground, and those belonging to the Roman Catholic Church, Christ Church, St. Paul’s Church, the M.E. Church, the M.E. Church South, (the latter the new one) the Methodists Protestant Church, and the Friends’, etc. are all well enclosed, and tolerably well attended to – but there is still much room for more care and attention. These ‘God’s acres’ which were used in my time are dotted all over with marble slabs containing the names of those whom I once most valued, and whose memory I still cherish. I feel, when I am passing through these grounds, that I am once more in the company of the ‘loved and lost’ of my early days!- and I pause, at their tombs, and think over the happy hours and days that we have spent together. I used to wonder why people had any disposition or wish to come among the graves and ‘hold, as it were, converse with the dead.’ I do not wonder any longer. I know that we should always renew our friendships, as former ones are removed from us, and keep a live in our hearts the active sympathies of our nature with those who come upon the theatre of action, to take the place of those upon whom the curtain has fallen. But, oh! The old friends! Oh! The friends of my youth, the companions of my boyhood, the sharer of my early sports, and joys- the participators in my griefs and sorrows- those who cheered me on, and bade me God’s speed, when I first started on the career of manhood- and who prayed for my success in life, without ‘envy, hatred, malice, or uncharitableness!’ Here they are; on my right hand and on my left; before me and behind me; the green turf covering their once warm hearts, and holding down their once willing and ready hands. Busy memory calls before me their very forms and features. I see them, as it were, as they once looked and talked- as we were wont to greet each other- and, sometimes, to promise ourselves what we would do when we were old men, and ‘dandled our grand children on our knees. They lie here- and I remain, a veteran, as I sometimes think,

‘superfluously lagging on the stage.’ Well, in a little time, it will be my turn, and some friendly hand may plant a flower upon my tomb in one of the Alexandria burial grounds, and give his reminiscences of the ‘Old Bachelor.’”- *the Local News, November 16, 1861, p.2.*

“*Bella- horrida bella. Wars- horrid wars* – How few of the present inhabitants of Alexandria remember the events of the war with Great Britain, in 1812-’15! It was an eventful war for Alexandria- and the town never recovered from the proceedings prior and subsequent to its capture by the British. ‘Retrocession’ made a favorable change and I hope it will now go on prospering and to prosper.”

“The other day I was passing by the head of the dock at the foot of Prince Street, and suddenly it came to my remembrance, that there occurred a singular scene during the occupation of Alexandria by the British: and then, came trooping up before my ‘mind’s eye’ the men and scenes of those days. Not, that I can write- ‘pars fur (?)’<sup>22</sup>- but I have a cloudy and indistinct recollection of some of the incidents- and have been familiar and often conversed with many of the citizens who could tell ‘all that they saw, and part of which they were.’ At an uncommonly early age, Dr. Johnson was touched for the King’s Evil, by Queen Anne, but he always affirmed when he... (missing text?) themselves the porcelain of the earth when they are in truth the common clay, and frequently not the best of clay; but I referred [to] the general manners, culture, taste, decorum, habits, and intelligence of the mass of the citizens, ‘of all ranks and degrees I have, as every other observer of human nature, and lover of kind has, often found in the humblest walks of life, if not the polish, at least the courtesy and the old English idea of [gentry] (a phrase now perverted from its original meaning and ludicrously misapplied) which I failed to discover in the splendid mansions of the rich, or in the conduct and conversation of the affluent. [If]<sup>23</sup> I speak of society, than, all will understand what I mean.”

“And how pleasant- how agreeable- how charming was the society of old Alexandria, when I resided here near thirty years ago! [The] people, as I think I have already intimated, were fond of \_\_\_\_ (?) amusements: they supported a Theatre- they had balls and ass[emblies] – they visited Concerts when the entertainment offered was such [as] ladies and gentlemen could be pleased with; and they gave day parties- at which, in a side room, open to all- horresco [refreshments]- there was a table for whist! Strange to say, the contrast I draw between Alexandria then, and the Alexandria now, [due to] my present visit, does not make it appear that we of the [older] were less moral, or charitable, or, if you please, religious, [or] those who figure upon the stage of action at the present day. [It] seems to me, that we used to dance more, to laugh more, and to drink more wine; but then we were more indulgent to the error of our neighbors, knowing our own imperfections; more sociable and friendly; and used far less whiskey. Not that the latter art [not] in its proper place, and time, and quantity, was ignored even in the good old days of which I write.”

“We had one of the best theatres in the country, as far as actors and actresses were concerned. Our balls were well attended- few young ladies, then, failing to take part in them. [The] ‘Birth Night balls’- 22<sup>nd</sup> of February- given in honor of Washington’s birth day- and which he honored with his presence on [several] occasions, were kept up until a comparatively recent period, were famous all over the country. Invitations were applied [for] by gentlemen for ladies living fifty miles off- and the town country belles divided the suffrages of the beaux, as to their grace and beauty. These balls were always given at the City [Hall] and a splendid supper

<sup>22</sup> In original document some of the text is cut off along the right hand edge. In such cases, an educated guess was made to fill in the missing text.

<sup>23</sup> See footnote 22.

followed the festivities of the dance. 'Assemblies' were held once in every two weeks at the same place. Annually, on St. John's night, there was a Masonic ball, at the Washington Lodge Room, which was always a pleasant re-union...or our citizens as were 'brothers of the mystic tie,' and of lady friends. I fell in love with a beautiful girl, from the country, at one of these balls, and had the audacity afterwards [to] address her. The result, of course, is known, from the fact [of] still being an 'old Bachelor.' She was afterwards happily [married]- is the mother of a large family- and sitting cozily with her band by her side, not long since, she knitting socks for the [little] ones and he laughing at her unnecessary work, and talking of times. I good humouredly asked her, upon calm review of the circumstances of the occasion referred to, how she could have had the heart to treat me as she did? She seemed still to think that it was all for the best- certainly it had turned out the best for her- and her husband fully acquiesced in the opinion. Mr. Generes, a French refugee from St. Domingo, where his family had been wealthy, but from which island he was forced to fly during the bloody insurrection there, and who upon landing in this country, like the gentlemen as he was, determined to make a support for his family, and commenced a dancing school, gave his practicing balls and cotillion parties, every two or three weeks. They were attended by all his scholars, of both sexes, and by their parents, and many young ladies who were already out. They were considered the most pleasant parties ever given in Alexandria. An English gentlemen of high rank, went to one of them with some friends, and struck with admiration at the scene presented, declared that 'he had never seen before so many beautiful girls collected in one room, or witnesses so much hearty, honest, unaffected happiness and enjoyment.'

"But, this is not the 'society' to which I intended more particularly to refer, when I took up my pen, to write this sheet of my reminiscences. What I thought of, was the society of home- the intercourse of social life- the visits of friends and neighbors- the hospitalities to strangers. Large and fashionable parties, of course, to a man of my age, are great bores- but I have no right to object to them, because they are agreeable to young people- at least they say so- and I have had my day and pleasure at them. And, of these, every winter, in old Alexandria, there were always enough."

"In old Alexandria sociable dinner parties were very frequent- not formal, long studied, and elaborately prepared entertainments- but, if not impromptu, they were given, generally, after the invitation of a day. At these, the lady of the house, (with a few of her lady friends, frequently the wives of some of the gentlemen present, to support her and grace the company) always presided. The old English custom of sitting after the ladies had retired, to indulge in a bottle or two of wine, and then to return to the parlor for a cup of coffee, and to hear the music of the piano, was universal. And talking of wine- especially Madiera, Port and Sherry were imported here, and had in all their perfection. They were generous, manly liquors. I think the finest Port I ever drank was used at the table of \_\_\_\_\_; and he, in the language of Sergeant Talfourd 'agreed in one great taste with some of the most distinguished men of a past day- of a noble thirst should be called by so finical a name- an attachment to Port, as sustaining, tranquilising power, the true cement of various labors, and promoter of great thoughts.'"

"It was, however, at the sociable evening parties, where the nearest neighbors, the kindest friends, and the most cherished acquaintances, were called around the family fireside- and where the wife and children were supreme, for the moment, and as much in the remark. To prepare such a feast as I have spoken, they were of course, employed and busy. But if it was labor, it was a 'labor of love.' I really believe the cooks enjoyed the day more than other people, for master, mistress, and for the honor and credit of the house- in which they took as much interest

as if it belonged to them. Happy days for the servants in Virginia! They had not then been debased, corrupted and ruined, as I fear many of them have been since; nor had they, then been deceived and deluded by siren strains, which only lure them to a deeper degradation than any servitude can entail.”

“And so, on through the whole day, at the old homestead around the domestic hearth, ‘the hours sped with noiseless tread,’ and as light and joyous as if they had been garlanded with roses, and fanned by the breezes of spring. What though the keen wind might roar, or the snowfall in feathery flakes without- the chimney blazed within, and ‘December was as pleasant as May.’ When night came, ‘the parting glass was taken- honest hands were shaken,’ farewells were given- wishes for health and prosperity were reciprocated- and then the guests departed ‘pleases with their hosts and happy in themselves.’”

“Such were the feasts, the socialability, the merry making, the gathering in the links of family, by blood and marriage, which marked the celebration of Christmas day in old Alexandria more than thirty years ago. It was a time when the home feelings were, perhaps, more strongly developed, and more fully exhibited. Than at any other period- and this gave it the great charm it possessed, and made it to be highly enjoyed, and makes it now so fondly remembered. To think of such a festival as I have attempted to describe does, indeed, bring ‘the light of other days around me.’ It is on that account that I linger as my pen traces these lines, not willing to stop, but knowing that I may become wearisome in such reminiscences of an Old Bachelor, who lived more upon the past than most men, and who thinks that the ‘old times were the best times,’ despite of modern ‘improvements and modern progress.’” *The Local News, December 28, 1861, p.2.*

“*Ariston men udor, etc. - Pindor. Water is the best of things- Trans. – Willis, the poet, in one of his poetical prose essays, calls water ‘the belle of the elements’ - and he proceeded in an ingenious and fanciful manner to show that it is every way more lovely- not to say useful- than earth, air, or fire. This ‘belle’ in the olden time, was a ‘coy nymph’ in Alexandria- highly prized- carefully treasured- not too often seen- and had to be sought after. Every body, of course, will understand, that I refer to good wholesome drinking water- and not to the noble river that rolls its waves before our doors, deep enough to float the largest ships, and wide and broad enough for all the purposes of and extended commerce. And even the water of that river, when filtered, and sweet and good- and will keep as long at sea, if not longer, without spoiling, as that from any other stream on the Atlantic coast. But I speak now of wells, and fountains, and springs, which supplied the town, and were resorted to for the use of their liquid riches, by the citizens.’”*

“I can remember when the principal sourced of the supply of water for domestic use, were the Old Diagonal Pump at the upper end of King Street- the Bridge pump- the Gate pump- the White pump at the lower end of Water Street- and the Stone Spring north of the town. Subsequently, Yeates’ pump, in the yard of his house at the garden, and the new Diagonal pump a few squares from old, were brought to use. The rest of the town pumps- and there were many of them- nearly all of which I see still remain- were entirely useless, so far as drinking or washing purposes were concerned. They gave forth, as they still do, a hard, unpleasant stream- disagreeable to that takes and impregnated with iron. Neither the kitchen, nor the wash house, nor the bath could use it. The substratum of soil is ferruginous, and all the wells sunk in the streets contained the same description of water. Indeed, this was the only drawback to Alexandria in its location. It had every other ‘coign of vantage’ which could be found for a city of trade and manufactures.”

“Early in the morning the water carts would be seen standing round the Old Diagonal, the drivers contenting for precedence, and the rule of ‘first come first served.’ A wooden pipe was fixed to an upper spout and joined to the hogshead, the common spout closed up, and the pumping commenced. At it they kept until the carts were all supplied- and the impatient individual citizens who sent their servants to the pump, and did not ‘take’ from the ‘ancient and honorable fraternity’ of water carriers, had to possess their souls in patience, until the general public were provided for.”

“This method of supplying the town with water continued for a long time, and various methods were devised for organizing a better state of things. The disadvantages- and even dangers- consequent, for instance, from having to rely upon the pumps in cases of fire- were early seen, and frequently keenly felt. All those who recollect the scenes at the great fire in 1827, and indeed, at all fires where ‘buckets’ were passed, in long lines from hand to hand, to fill the engines, have a lively idea of the want of water in cases of emergency. It was at one time proposed to raise a supply of water, by steam power, from the river- but that was soon given up. At another time the Corporation ordered the boring of an Artesian well in the centre of the Market Square- not then lumbered up, as it now is, with sheds, but thickly planted with fine trees which gave a grateful shade to the market people, and were not in the way of anybody. This boring continued for months- specimens of the clay brought up at different depths were formerly to be seen in the Museum. But the patience and money of people gave out- no water was reached- the project was abandoned- and the deep hole finally filled up.”

“At last, the scheme was started of the Cameron Water Works- (this long since the time of which I am writing, and when I had removed from my native house) - and carried into [a] successful operation. Water carts ‘faded away’ like ghosts at morning beams, before the full and plentiful streams from Cameron as they flowed though the streets, and gushed out from the hydrants, and Alexandria is now as well watered as any town in the country, North or South- the water itself delicious, and, I am told, wholesome, and the Water Works and Reservoir most admirably constructed, and well preserved- and the whole business conducted efficiently. When I so often speak, with regret, of the changes which I see around me in our town, do not let it, for one moment be supposed, that I cannot appreciate and approve of, beneficial changes.”

“The ‘Spa Spring,’ north of town, was once a favorite place of resort, and, indeed its water, slightly impregnated with iron was an excellent tonic, and those who used it for that purpose, gave it commendation. I remember that one of our old citizens, Mr. A.C. made a daily visit to the spring, and attributed much of his usual good health to the Spa. He took some pains in making a rustic path to it, and others afterwards placed around it benches. Then the Corporation, I think, ordered the Spring to be walled around, and had a pipe fixed from the fountain to a small reservoir- but the water was not improved it was popularly believed, by the ‘improvement.’ Large numbers of the ladies and gentlemen of the place used, every morning and evening, to walk to the spring- and gay and happy parties have I often met there. Frequently in the pleasant ‘moonlight nights’ of our Virginia summer have I seen hundred of our young people, under the eyes of their parents, enjoying the cool air, around this old spring, and, no doubt, many of them, making love to each other- which love afterwards ripened to happy marriages. I know of more than one of our Alexandria belles who were ‘wooed and won’ at the Old Spa Spring- and who yet, on the anniversary of their wedding days make a pilgrimage to the spot, to think of ‘auld lang syne.’ It is a digression, I know- but pardon it! Who, when he thinks not only of the illustrious men who have made the old State- the ‘blessed mother of us all’- famous through the world by their deeds in the council and in arms, but, when he remembers ‘the



home of his youth'- and all the pleasant, delightful, associations connected with his birth place, his former friends, his manhood- when he thinks of the dead that lie buried under the green turf and those who are yet to lie there, connected to him by the dearest and tenderest ties- who, thinking of these things, that has the hear of a man, can fail to love the very soil on which he treads, as his own, his native soil- and to consider, and regard it, and be proud of it, as sacred soil!"

"The Stone Spring was a fine flow of water from the clay ground, near Yeaton's marsh, and, at one time, and around it a small brick enclosure, roofed. The enclosure is now gone, leaving 'not a wreck behind'- nor do I know that the spring exists yet. That pains were taken to preserve and protect the spring, may be known from the fact that the municipal authorities, on more than one occasion, inflicted proper punishment upon persons convicted of washing in it- concerning which there are records yet extant. Yet farther North, in the Valley, now so altered that its former features can hardly be recognized, was, what was called the 'Gump Spring'- excellent water and furnishing a supply to many families in the quarter of the town nearest to it."

"I believe the old Diagonal pump no longer affords good drinking water. The new Diagonal- the name not appropriate-is still, they tell me, good- the water very much like that which was formerly procured from its old namesake. The Gate and Bridge pumps, and the White pump, near the 'Baptising Hill'- are in 'full flow,' unaltered and uninjured but the lapse of time. Many persons from long habit, prefer the water from these pumps to that obtained from the hydrants- and one of the most highly esteemed physicians in Alexandria, I am informed, to the day of his death, used only Diagonal water in his family, considering it more healthy and pleasant than the stream from Cameron- at least, it suited his taste better. The Gate pump was so called because it was near a gate which was at the entrance of the lane to the Catholic burial ground- and the Bridge pump because it was near a small bridge across the ditch close to the corner of the streets where it is located."

"Alexandria, as I have already said, was in the olden time, not well supplied with good drinking water- that is, not abundantly and plentifully supplied- but the water from its pumps, wells, and springs was of remarkable excellent quality. Those who did not like the water as it was drawn from the casks, admitted that it was drawn quite another thing when drank fresh from the fountain itself. Judging from the deficiency in the quantity of the fluids, then, some persons might have thought the town would not be a healthy place. But the fact is, Alexandria was then more healthy that it has ever been since. There was not as much bathing in private houses- but we had public bath houses, kept in very good style- and the river- the river- was the resort of all the boys and young men- and, I may say, old men- through the days of summer. Convenient places for bathing were found all along the river shores, were lined with the dresses of the school boys, 'disporting in the placid waters' every afternoon and night, when the weather was favorable."

"But I think I have said enough, for the present on the subject of my theme. It will hardly interest any one but old Alexandria- but to us- to us- all that related to the good old town, will ever agreeable, imperfect as may be the reminiscences." *The Local News, January 4, 1862, p.2.*

"*Hæc studia adolescentiam alunt, Cicero. These studies improve youth.* There is no better evidence of the sound and healthy condition of society- and of the taste and refinement of a community- than<sup>24</sup> the attention that is paid by it to education, literature, and culture of the fine arts. Wherever you see colleges, academia,<sup>25</sup> and schools flourish- libraries collected- and

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<sup>24</sup> See footnote 22.

<sup>25</sup> See footnote 22.

science and bella lettres pursued with pleasure- there, you may be sure, not only the graces but the virtues of life, most abound. ‘To have a good book in one’s house, is better than to have a joint of meat,’ an Italian saying, of wise philosophy; and when you find that theoretical philosophy carried out into practice, in so far that the intellectual wants of our minds are as much cared for as the<sup>26</sup> material wants of our nature, be assured that happiness, contentment, and harmony will prevail. The old Roman poet long ago what is now so often quoted, that it may be called a classic verb- and proverbs are the wisdom of antiquity sanctioned and firmed by experience- ‘ingenuas didicisse fidelitur artes, emmores<sup>27</sup>, nec sinit esse ferus.’ This is as true as this day, as it was when the words were first written.”

“It was the boast of Alexandrians, in the days of old Alexandria, and in the times of which I write, that no community excelled theirs, in the qualities just alluded to, and which will be the theme of this short manuscript. Our boys and young men, they were ‘brought up’ to appreciate the value of, and to take dear<sup>28</sup> in, useful knowledge and literature. While they early learned in the words of Cicero, which I have adopted as the motto for...”

**Tudor, Henry. *Narrative of a Tour in North America; Comprising Mexico, with an Excursion to the Island of Cuba.* London: James Duncan, Paternoster Row, 1831-1832.**

**1831-** “One of the delightful excursions that I have made from this place, has been to Mount Vernon, the once favorite residence of that great patriot of this country, General Washington. This I enjoyed in the society of a most agreeable and amiable family from Quebec, with whom I had the good fortune to become acquainted; having indeed, come in the same coach together from Baltimore. Our first object was to reach Alexandria, situated about six miles on the opposite banks of the river, and which we effected in one of the steam boats constantly plying between that town and the capital.”

“We found the shores of the Potomac beautifully undulating, and offering many eligible sites for villas, with which there is no doubt a future generation will adorn their banks. At Alexandria we stepped into a carriage, and were jolted over eight or nine miles of extremely bad road to Mount Vernon. For this, however, we were, in great measure, compensated by the highly picturesque country through which we passed. The trees, groves, and woods, were of the most luxuriant foliage; and the numerous verdant glades, peeping forth like so many sunny spots amid the forest, presented the very beau ideal for a woodland cottage. The house at Mount Vernon is very simple and unpretending, but is enchantingly situated on the banks of the Potomac...”

“In returning through Alexandria, on our way back to the city, we visited the museum, of that place, where the various relics of the departed hero were preserved with, apparently, as much religious veneration as those of a patron saint by the most enthusiastic devotee. To give you a specimen of some of the articles: one was an elegant satin robe, in which Washington was baptized, and which struck me as being rather aristocratic for a simple republican. At all events, the distinction was not his, as not being exactly of age, when he wore it, to make it a dress of his own adoption. Another was a penknife, given to him by his mother when he was twelve years old, and which he had preserved for fifty six years. A third article was a pearl button, taken from the coat that he wore when first installed into office as President of the United States. A forth

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<sup>26</sup> See footnote 22.

<sup>27</sup> See footnote 22.

<sup>28</sup> See footnote 22.

was the last stick of sealing wax that he used, and the last letter ever written by him, declining an invitation of himself and Mrs. Washington to a ball at Alexandria, and containing the expression, 'Alas! Our dancing days are over.' I merely mention what you may consider to be rather trifling, to evince to you how ardently his memory is cherished, when such trivial mementos as these are thought important enough to be placed and exhibited in a public museum."

**Martineau, Harriet. Retrospect of Western Travel, 1834-1835.**

**1834-** "Our party in three carriages, and five or six on horseback, left Washington about nine o'clock, and reached Alexandria in an hour and a half, though our passage over the long bridge which crosses the Potomac was very slow, from its being in a sad state of dilapidation. Having ordered a late dinner at Alexandria, we proceeded on our way, occasionally looking behind us at the great dome of the Capitol, still visible above the low hills which border the grey, still Potomac, now stretching cold amidst the wintry landscape. It was one of the coldest days I ever felt; the bitter wind seeming to eat into one's very life. The last five miles of the eight which lie between Alexandria and Mount Vernon wound through the shelter of the woods, so that we recovered a little from the extreme cold before we reached the house. The land appears to be quite impoverished; the fences and gates are in bad order; much of the road was swampy, and the poor young lambs, shivering in the biting wind, seemed to look round in vain for shelter and care. The conservatories were almost in ruins, scarcely a single pane of glass being unbroken; and the house looked as if it had not been painted on the outside for years. Little Negroes peeped at us from behind the pillars of the piazza as we drove up. We alighted in silence, most of us being probably occupied with the thought of who had been there before us, what crowds of the noble, the wise, the good had come hither to hear the yet living voice of the most unimpeachable of patriots! As I looked up, I almost expected to see him standing in the doorway. My eye had rested on the image of his remarkable countenance in almost every house I had entered; and here, in his own dwelling, one could not but look for the living face with something more than the eye of the imagination. I cared far less for any of the things that were shown me within the house than to stay in the piazza next [to] the garden, and fancy how he here walked in meditation, or stood looking abroad over the beautiful river, and pleasing his eye with a far different spectacle from that of the camps and conventions."

"Many prints of British landscapes, residences, and events, are hung up in the apartments. The ponderous key of the Bastille still figures in the hall, in extraordinary contrast with everything else in this republican residence. The Bible in the library is the only book of Washington's now left. The best likeness of the great man, known to all travelers from the oddness of the material on which it is preserved, is to be seen here, sanctioned thus by the testimony of the family. The best likeness of Washington happens to be on a common pitcher. As soon as this was discovered, the whole edition of pitchers was bought up. Once or twice I saw the entire vessel, locked up in a cabinet, or in some such way secured from accident: but most of its possessors have, like the family, cut out the portrait, and had it framed."

"The walk, planned and partly finished during Washington's life, the winding path on the verge of the green slope above the river, must be very sweet in the summer. The beauty of the situation of the place surprised me. The river was nobler, the terrace finer, and the swelling hills around more varied than I had imagined; but there is a painful air of desolation over the whole. I wonder how it struck the British officers in 1814, when in passing up the river on their bandit

expedition to burn libraries and bridges, and raze senate chambers, they assembled on the deck, and uncovered their heads as they passed the silent dwelling of the great man who was not there to testify his disgust at the service they were upon. If they knew what it was that they were under orders to do, it would have been creditable to them as men to have mutinied in front of Mount Vernon...”

**Martin, Joseph. “Alexandria, Virginia and the District of Columbia.” Charlottesville: Mosley and Tompkins Printers, 1835.**

**1835-** “Alexandria originally called Belhaven, a *Post Town* and *Sea Port*, situated on the western bank of the river Potomac, near the head of tide water, on the south corner of the District, 6 miles south of the city of Washington, and 180 miles from the ocean. The meridian of Washington passing through the Capitol leaves the central part of Alexandria, near 3’ to the East lateral of Alexandria 1 degree 38’ 48” North.”

“This town lies principally in the District of Columbia, but a small part of it is in the state of Virginia. It was incorporated in 1779 by the state of Virginia, and that part of it which lies within the District was ceded to the general government in 1801. The laws of Virginia, enacted previous to that time, still remain in force in the town and country of Alexandria, except those which have been repealed by Congress. The municipal government consists of a council of 16 representatives and a mayor. Four members of the council are annually elected in each of the four wards into which the city is divided, and the Mayor is elected every year by the council. The political situation of Alexandria in common with the other portions of the District of Columbia is singular. The President of the United States is the governor, and Congress, the Legislature of the District, but the people have no voice nor are their sentiments officially heard, in any of the political concerns of the country. The Circuit Court of the United State, for the District of Columbia, sits in Alexandria twice a year, and its expenses are defrayed by the General Government. From the decision of the Court, there are appeals to the Supreme Court of the United States.”

“Alexandria is very handsomely situated. The streets are laid out on the plan of Philadelphia, crossing each other at right angles, and are generally well paved. It is considered remarkably healthy, and the view from the City is very fine. The town is situated in the bottom of a valley which to the eye of an observer is terminated in every direction by lofty and verdant hills. To the north he sees the City of Washington, the capitol with its beautiful columns, white walls and towering dome, forming a most conspicuous object; to the south, the broad translucent expanse of the Potomac opens upon him, with, lying like a white line on its distant margin, opposite to Mount Vernon.”

“On the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 1831 the tonnage belonging to the town was 8,230 tons, and it is still increasing. There are three banks in Alexandria with an aggregate capital of one million, seven hundred thousand dollars, and three incorporated insurance companies. The amount of real estate is assessed at two million, seven hundred dollars; and according to authentic information from the treasury department of the United States, the town paid into the treasury the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 1791 to the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 1829 inclusive, on account of customs, three millions, seven thousand, one hundred and sixty one dollars and twenty seven cents- on account of the post office, one hundred and seventy three thousand, seventy three dollars and thirty four cents- for direct tax in the year 1815-1816, eleven thousand, one hundred and fifty dollars and

seventy cents. The amount of internal revenue which cannot be accurately ascertained would swell the clear revenue from the town of Alexandria during the period above mentioned, to upwards of four million dollars.”

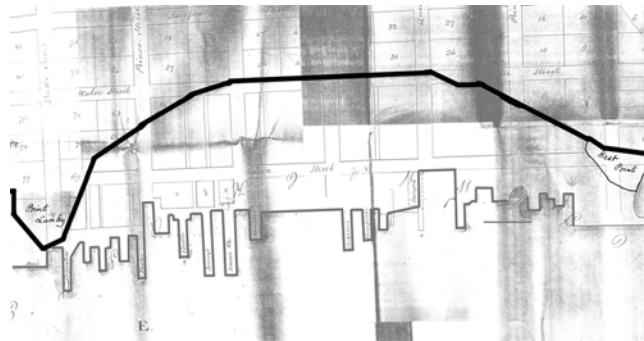
“Religious and Moral Associations, Manufactures, etc,- There are in this town nine houses of public worship, two Episcopalian, two Presbyterian, one Friends, two Methodists, one Catholic and one Baptist. There is also a philosophical society, and an incorporated library, containing about 4,000 volumes, a library instituted by an association of apprentices and other minors, a savings fund institution, an orphan asylum, a poor house and dispensary, a bible, missionary and temperance society, a colonization society, a benevolent society for improving the condition of the people of color, a society for furnishing employment to the industrious, indignant, and several for supplying food, clothing, and fuel to the poor in winter. There are several baking establishments, where ship bread and crackers are made equal to any manufactured in the United States or elsewhere, 2 ship yards, and extensive brewery, and several tanneries, a foundry upon a large scale, with a manufactory of steam engines and various machinery for cotton factories, and several manufactories of segars, on an extensive scale. Alexandria contains a handsome market house, at which a market is held every morning. It is generally well supplied with meats, fish, fruits, and vegetables in their season. In the latter part of the spring, wild strawberries abound in the adjacent country, and are brought in great quantities to market. Over the market house is the Court house, clerk’s office, council chamber, town hall and library; and in the upper story of the same building an extensive and well arranged museum. Over the center of the building is a steeple in which an excellent clock tells the hours on a bell, that weighs fifteen hundred pounds.”

“There is a boarding school for young men, in which the languages, mathematics, philosophy, and every useful branch of education are taught. A part of the course consists of a series of lectures on astronomy, chemistry, etc. in which the principles of the sciences treated are illustrated by experiments with suitable apparatus. There are also boarding schools for young ladies under the charge of Four Sisters of Charity from Emmitsburg, in the state of Maryland. This institution, though but lately established, and not yet completed, in is a flourishing condition. When finished it will have connected with it an orphan asylum. There are also in Alexandria, free schools for children of both sexes, and about 30 other schools, exclusive of Sunday schools. In the vicinity of Alexandria is established a Protestant Episcopal Theological Seminary on an elevated situation, commanding an extensive and delightful view of the District of Columbia, the river Potomac and the surrounding country. This institution at present occupies two large four story buildings, having space enough between them for the erection of a center structure.”

**Power, Tyrone. Impressions of America, 1836, p.149-151.**

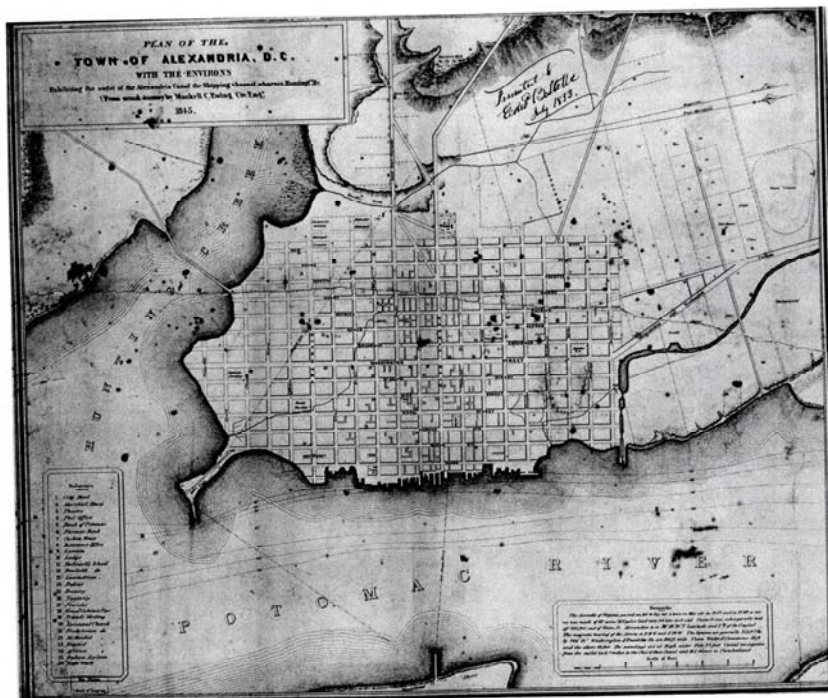
**1836-** “The spires could be seen any fine day from Georgetown heights...I traversed the interminable bridge uniting the District of Columbia and Virginia...the road was excellent, bordered with turf nearly the whole way, commanding extensive views of the Potomac, together with Georgetown and the Capital...nothing can be more panoramic than the aspect of these cities lying in one of the best defined and beautiful of natural amphitheatres and flanked by the grandest of rivers...he went to the theatre, built when the place flourished...now decayed.”

**1840s: Alexandria's Comeback**



This 1845 Map compares the original Alexandria waterfront to the contemporary one. This change was brought about by the filling in of the Potomac River which allowed for the expansion of the town. (Original Town Plat on 1845 City Map, Arlington County, Court House.)

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Maskell C. Ewing's 1845 map of Alexandria issued the year before the town was retroceded to Virginia, indicates the planned extension of

streets to Hunting Creek on the south, the terminus of the Alexandria Canal on the north, and the location of twenty-six points of interest.

This 1845 map shows the entire layout of the city of Alexandria and includes several points of interest, among the most notable landmarks is the Alexandria Canal located to the north of the city. (Maskell C. Ewing, *Plan of the town of Alexandria, D.C. with the Environs Exhibiting the outlet of the Alexandria Canal, the shipping channel, wharves, Hunting Creek, etc.*, Lith: of T. Sinclair 79 South 3<sup>rd</sup> street Philadelphia: [Alexandria], 1845, 21 by 25 in., Library of Congress, G3884 .A3 1845.E9.)

**[Alexandria] Gazette, "A day in Alexandria- Correspondence of the N.Y. Express."  
February 29, 1840, p.2. (Courtesy of T. Michael Miller, August 16, 1984)**

**1840-** "A holiday in Congress, a very rare occurrence by the way, and one which few of us have enjoyed since the commencement of the present extraordinary session, of a very extraordinary Congress, has enabled me to leave my post at the Capitol to visit the interesting city of Alexandria. The people here call it a dull place, and through the Union I believe Alexandria is known as a dull city. The past cannot be forgotten, and many who speak of this ancient city, speak of the present in comparison with the past. Many there are here, even yet, who remember Alexandria as almost the Queen city of the south, as the busy, bustling, beautiful, crowded, fashionable city, where were congregated the men of wealth, of leisure and of business. The mark of uninterrupted business and the theatre of almost uninterrupted gaiety were here. An immense foreign and domestic trade was carried on, and the shipping of the town whitened almost every harbor in the civilized land. Here went forth the products of a second part of the great state of Virginia, and here were returned all the articles of use and luxury, brought in return and exchange in American vessels. The great granary of the country was here, and as rich a trade almost in another prolific product of the Virginia soil and one which in time past made many of the Planters of the 'Old Dominion' rich and independent. But the embargoes and wars and a lagging spirit with a careless ease, and a sort of Richmond-like sleep, fell upon the city, and gradually despoiled her of her wealth, and what was worse, of her spirit and enterprise. As her star was descending others were ascending to take the place of the fallen brightness. Georgetown and Washington prospered at her expense and are still prospering with the benefits of a trade once confined to the better known Alexandria. So fickle is fortune. Not men nor cities can escape her innovations. But no city in the Union perhaps has exhibited so sad a contrast as the one I am in. Her commerce has dwindled to less than the tithe of what it was, and the trade of a great producing country has gone with it. Many of the streets for lack of the destroyer man to walk upon them, have given a quiet resting place for the rank weed. Blades of grass have come more frequently than the passing stranger, and the sight has been a melancholy one- especially to those who have seen Alexandria in her beauty and in her decay."

"But they tell me that Alexandria, in that slow and steady movement, which in the end wins the race, is gradually recovering. There are signs of prosperity seen within and upon the borders of the city. Much of the ancient spirit of the ancient commonwealth is left to act upon the material here."

"I have said thus much by way of prelude to the celebration which took place here on Saturday, and upon the occasion of the anniversary of Washington's Birthday. The day was celebrated with as much spirit and animation as though it had been the anniversary of our National Independence. There orations were delivered before different Societies, and a procession was formed, which for order, arrangement, neatness, splendor, and in every thing but numbers, far surpassed any thing in the great metropolis of the Union. I saw the closing festivities for the day, and fancied myself in a much more thriving, enterprising and prosperous city than Alexandria is thought to be. A multitude of active young men were seen scattered through the city, and what ever their vocation in society or employment, there are no signs of future prosperity more striking. The young men of a city are her jewels and the fathers of the city as the guardians of the honor and her peace, are bound to cherish and encourage them."

"Alexandria, the world over, is famed for beautiful women. They are here as numerous almost as the visible stars of Heaven. Too much has not been said of their beauty abroad. This

evening there are two 'Birth Night' balls, and the beauty and the fashion of the town will be metamorphosed into a bevy of dancing seraphs. Some doubt that there are 'natural graces which extinguish art.' They who doubt have not been visitors in this pleasant paradise. But I will not praise, though I might, and with good show of reason, beauty."

"Needs not the painted flourish of my praise, beauty is bought by judgment of the eye. Not uttered by base sale of chapmen's tongues. So I'll say no more. Yours etc. E.B."

**[Indiscernible last name], Joseph John. A Journey in North America: Letters to Amelia Opie, 1841.**

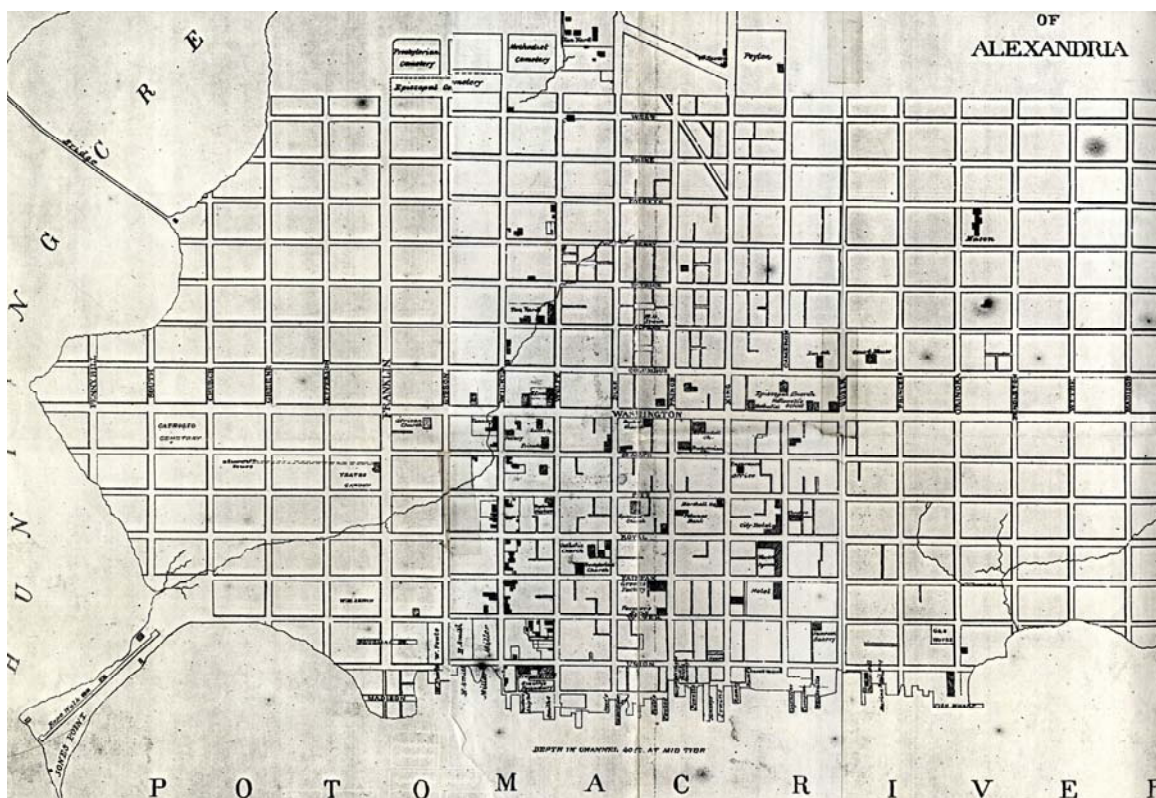
**1841-** "On this occasion we spent four days at Washington, ending with the first of the week; except that on one day we were occupied in visiting our friends, and holding a religious meeting, in the neighboring city of Alexandria. In a commercial point of view the two places may be described as rivals, neutralizing each other's prosperity. Neither of them can be said to flourish as places of trade; and Washington particularly, derives its main support from its being the seat of government."

**From Willian V. Morrison's Strangers Guide to the City of Washington and its Vicinity, published in Washington D.C., 1842, pp.88-89.**

**1842-** "Alexandria received a check in the early part of the century, followed by a long period of vicissitude and depression. But the visitor will be gratified at witnessing many proofs of revived activity, and will observe, in the style of several recent buildings, sufficient evidence that a new impulse has been communicated to the hopes and spirits of the inhabitants ...a new court house of large dimensions and handsome design, has recently been added to the convenience of the town...within a few years past, an association styled the Lyceum, and accommodated in a new and tasteful edifice, built of free-stone, after the Doric order, has served to evince that the citizens...the guide gives the population of Alexandria in 1830 as 8,263; in 1840, 8,459, an increase of only 196."



### *1850s: Building Boom*



This map of Alexandria from ca. 1853 includes the names of some of the wharves as well as some of the city's most prominent buildings. (Josiah Davis' Rope Walk, ca. 1853)

**From the account of a trip to the Episcopal Convention at Alexandria, reprinted in the Alexandria Gazette of June 19, 1850, from the Norfolk Beacon.**

**1850-** "There are many handsome mansions in the town, gracefully adorned with trees and shrubs."

**From Alexandria Gazette, Auction Sales, September 1850.**

**1850-** "Sale under decree- Notice is hereby given that on Wednesday the 9<sup>th</sup> day of October, 1850 at ten o'clock a.m. before the Mayor's office, in the town of Alexandria, the undersigned, Trustee, pursuant to a decree of the Circuit Court of the District of Columbia, made on the 31<sup>st</sup> day of October 1846, and a decretal order of the Circuit Superior Court of Law and Chancery to the County of Alexandria, aforesaid, made at June term, 1850, in the suit of Joseph Smith and others, against John West and others, will proceed to sell at public auction, to the highest bidder, the real estate, hereinafter mentioned and described (being parts and parcels of real estate, situate in the county of Alexandria, whereof the late Joseph Mandeville, died seized, and by his last will devised to the said John West) or so much thereof, as may be necessary to raise a sum of money,

adequate to the payment of the debts, and legacies, with interest thereon, expenses of sale, costs, & e<sup>29</sup>, provided for in said decree.”

“1.) Two story brick houses and lot, corner of Cameron and Pitt streets, beginning at the distance of 144 feet westwardly from Royal Street; thence, west on Cameron St. 102 feet 2<sup>30</sup> inches, more or less. On Pitt street \_\_\_\_\_<sup>31</sup> with Pitt street northwardly 85 feet to a 10 feet alley; thence with said alley eastwardly the same distance with the first line; thence to the beginning.”

“3.) Two houses and lots of Clay Hill, part frame and part brick, beginning at the middle of the square between Princess and Queen streets, on the west side of Fairfax street; thence northwardly on Fairfax street 31 feet; thence westwardly parallel to Princess street, to Royal street; thence south on Royal street 31 feet; thence eastwardly to the beginning. The western front of this lot adjoins the contemplated inner Basin of the Alexandria Canal.”

“4.) Vacant lot (No.1 in the original plan of Alexandria) beginning at the northwest intersection of Union and Oronoko streets; thence westwardly to Rd. Conway’s eastern line; thence northwardly parallel with Union street to the Potomac river; thence with said river to Union street thence with Union street to the beginning; containing about half an acre- the Orange and Alexandria Rail Road, when extended, will run along the Eastern side of this lot , which is directly west of the Fish Wharf and near to it and the outlet of the Alexandria Canal, and can be considerably enlarged by removing a large bank of earth and filling into the river.”

“5.) A large warehouse, wharf, and lot situated on the east side of Union street, and on the north side of a 20 feet alley, separating them from the property of Henry Dangerfield, bounded on the west by Union, and extending on that street northwardly from the said alley 55 feet, 7 inches; on the south by the said alley; on the north by a line from Union street into the river parallel to said alley, and at the distance of 55 feet 7 inches from it, to the north, and on the east by the river. Length of this lot about 181 feet 3 inches, length of pier about 98 feet. The Orange and Alexandria Rail Road will pass along the western front, on Union Street. There is water enough at the pier for a large ship. The water front includes one half of the 20 feet alley on the South, making 65 feet 7 inches.”

“6.) Lot on Water street, beginning on the west side of Water street, 78 feet 8 inches, south of Cameron street: thence southwardly 67 feet on Water street; thence westwardly 90 feet parallel to Cameron street; thence northwardly parallel to Water street 67 feet; thence eastwardly to the beginning.” (The Castle 1028).

“7.) A three story brick building, consisting of two stores and two dwellings, and lot, beginning at the intersection of King and Henry sts. and extending thence southwardly 100 feet on Henry Street, to a ten feet alley: thence eastwardly on said alley and parallel to King Street, 49 feet 5 inches; thence northwardly parallel to Henry Street 100 feet; thence on to King Street to the beginning.”

“8.) A house and lot on King Street (1012-1014) beginning on the south side of King Street, 98 feet 5 inches to the east of Henry Street: thence southwardly parallel to Henry Street. 100 feet to a 10 feet alley; thence eastwardly on said alley 25 feet; thence northwardly parallel to Henry Street 100 feet; thence on King Street to the beginning. On lots No. \_\_\_<sup>32</sup> and 8 there are ground rents the total amount of which is \$100.”

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<sup>29</sup> At certain times, print is difficult to read, words included here are based off an educated guess.

<sup>30</sup> See footnote above.

<sup>31</sup> See footnote 29.

<sup>32</sup> See footnote 29.

“9.) A frame house and lot on Pitt and Princess Streets, beginning at the southwest intersection of Pitt and Princess streets; thence southwardly on Pitt Street 17 feet 7 inches; thence westwardly parallel to Princess Street 123 feet 5 inches; thence northwardly parallel to Pitt Street 176 feet 7 inches; thence eastwardly on Princess Street to the beginning. Being a quarter of a square or half acre of ground. The eastern front of this lot 176 feet 7 inches, adjoins the contemplated Inner Basin of the Alexandria Canal.”

“10.) A three story brick store and lot on King Street, beginning on the north side of King Street at the eastern line of a lot of ground conveyed by Robert Allison and Ann his wife, to James Patton and David Finley, supposed to be 60 feet to the east of Water Street; thence eastwardly on King Street 30 feet; northwardly parallel to Water Street 81 feet [to] an alley 30 feet wide; westwardly on said alley and parallel to King Street, 30 feet; southwardly parallel to Water Street to the beginning.”

“14.) A small frame house and lot on the south side of Prince Street, opposite the Bank of Potomac, beginning at a point on the south side of Prince Street, supposed to be 127 feet 3 inches to the east of Pitt Street; thence westwardly 50 feet on Prince Street; thence southwardly parallel to Pitt Street 118 feet 4 inches to a ten feet alley; thence eastwardly parallel to Prince Street, 50 feet; thence northwardly 118 feet 4 inches to the beginning.”

“22.) Part of a lot adjoining on the west the small house and lot on the south side of Prince Street opposite the Bank of the Potomac, the whole lot having a front of 27 feet 3 inches on Prince Street, and running back 118 feet 4 inches to a 10 feet alley. Of this lot 25 feet fronting on Prince Street, and running back as above stated, was conveyed by Joseph Mandeville to Robert I. Taylor, by deed dated 13<sup>th</sup> September, 1815, leaving 2 feet 3 inches fronting on Prince Street, and running back as above stated, as part of the estate of the said Joseph Mandeville.”

“15.) A lot on the corner of Duke and Fairfax Streets, beginning at the northwest intersection of Fairfax and Duke Streets, thence northwardly on Fairfax Street 56 feet to a 4 feet alley; thence westwardly 51 feet on the line of said alley, to a lot sold by Joseph Mandville to Bartholomew Delphy, by deed dated 10<sup>th</sup> February, 1836; thence on the line of Delphy’s lot south 56 feet to Duke Street, eastwardly 51 feet to the beginning.”

“16.) A lot on Duke Street, beginning on Duke Street at the west side of the aforesaid lot sold to Delphy; thence westwardly on Duke Street 51 feet to a 10 feet alley. Thence northwardly with said alley 56 feet to a 4 feet alley; thence eastwardly with said alley 51 feet to Delphy’s west line; thence with said line 56 feet to the beginning.”

“17.) A lot on Water Street, old brewer beginning on Water Street on the north side of an alley, commonly called Wailes’s alley being 138 feet to the northward of Prince Street, and running thence eastwardly with the line of said alley, and parallel to Prince Street, to a point 60 feet to the westward of Union Street 38 feet 1  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches, to the north line of that lot or half acre of ground described in the plan of the town by No. 56, be the same more or less, thence by that line westwardly 240 feet to Water Street; thence with the street to the beginning.”

“18.) A half square one acre of ground, on Wythe, Pitt, and St. Asaph Streets, bounded on the east by Pitt Street, on the west by St. Asaph Street, on the south by Wythe Street, and on the north by a line drawn from Pitt to St. Asaph Street, parallel to and equidistant from Wythe and Madison Streets so as to divide the square into two equal parts. This lot is near the basin of the Alexandria canal.”

“19.) A 10  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre lot on the Washington road, beginning on the east side of the Georgetown road, on the line of a tract of land formerly held by Elisha c. Dick; thence extending

along said road, and binding therewith, south five degrees eastwardly, 35 poles to the corner of Baldwin Dade's purchase from Alexander; thence south 85 degrees eastwardly, 48 poles; thence north 5 degrees westwardly 35 poles to the first mentioned line of the land which was formerly Elisha C. Dick's; thence along the same southwardly 85 degrees, westwardly 48 poles to the beginning. This lot is very near the Basin of the Alexandria Canal, and being out of the limits of the town is not subject to corporation taxes."

"20.) Half of a fifty acre lot on the Washington road, beginning at a point on the west side of the Washington Turnpike, 16<sup>33</sup> feet north of the fence of a lot formerly Hoffman's, supposed to be the north line of a lane separating Hoffman's lot from Alexander's land; thence on the said lane south 87 ½ degrees westwardly, 113 poles; thence north 3 degrees westwardly, and parallel with the Washington Turnpike 93 poles to a stake in the lane leading to Mount Ida; thence eastwardly on the lane to Mount Ida 122 poles to the west side of the aforesaid Turnpike; thence southwardly 3 degrees, eastwardly on the said Turnpike 47 poles and 17 links to the beginning; containing as by surveys made by William Yeaton, and M.C. Ewing, 50 acres. By deed of partition the northern bait<sup>34</sup> conveyed to Joseph Mandeville's estate. This lot is with one mile of town."

"21.) A lot on Franklin Street, beginning on the south side of Franklin Street at the distance of 92 feet 6 inches east of Water Street; thence eastwardly on Franklin Street 32 feet 6 inches to a private street called Potomac Street; thence southwardly with Potomac Street, and parallel with Water Street 88 feet 3 ½ inches; thence westwardly 32 feet 6 inches; thence northwardly 88 feet 3 ½ inches to the beginning."

"24.) A vacant lot on the east side of Washington Street, containing one acre and bounded on the north by the line parallel to Wythe Street and on the south by Wythe Street- with the exception of a small tenement<sup>35</sup> and lot about 20 feet in front on the north line, and \_\_\_ feet deep. This lot is near the Basin of the Alexandria Canal."

"\_\_\_\_\_<sup>36</sup> of sale prescribed by the decree are- one- fifth of the purchase money to be paid on the day of the sale, or within three days thereafter, and the residue with interest from the day of the sale, to be paid in four equal installments at 6, 12, 18, and 24 months, and secured by bond and security, approved by the undersigned. The title to the said property is to be retained until the purchase money with interest shall have been fully paid. All expenses attending conveyancing to be borne by the purchasers. Should the sale, from any cause, not be completed on the first day, it will be continued from day to day at the same hour and place, until the property advertised or so much thereof as necessary under the Trust, shall be disposed of. *Jos Eaches, Trustee.*"

### **From Rev Guley. "Morrison's 'Strangers Guide to the City of Washington.'" 1852.**

**1852-** Alexandria "rising by a gentle acclivity from the water's edge, the country subsides into a wide and level plain until it reaches the base of a range of hills...such as Shuter's Hill."

<sup>33</sup> See footnote 29.

<sup>34</sup> See footnote 29.

<sup>35</sup> See footnote 29.

<sup>36</sup> See footnote 29.

**From a letter giving an account of a visit to Alexandria in the spring of 1852, originally appearing in the *Pennsylvanian*, reprinted in the *Alexandria Gazette* of April 24, 1852.**

**April 1852-** The traveler “found a hearty welcome at Newton’s Mansion House, a hotel that would be called excellent in any part of the country.” [This originally the Bank of Alexandria.] “Alexandria may be said to be a finished city. It bears upon in all the marks of decay. All was old-fashioned and ancient. There were many comfortable residences, but the crumbling wall, the neglected hut, the deserted streets and the propped up tenement, spoke eloquently of the absence of enterprise and capital.” [Alexandria was given city status by the Virginia Assembly in May 1852; this may have touched off the building boom commented on by the *Gazette* in 1852 and 1854. See item included in excerpts from local newspapers.]

**Miller, Michael T., ed. “Building Improvements.” Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987, p. 148.**

**1852-** “To give some idea of the improvements in the way of building going on in different parts of the town, and to be commenced and completed this spring, we subjoin the following list:”

“Two brick warehouses on Union Street, fronting on the river, next block to the large warehouse of McVeigh, Harper and Chamberlain, for William N. McVeigh. They are to be commenced immediately. Dimensions 115 feet, by 47- three stories high- an iron grating front, with all the modern improvements. Contractors- George and William Davis, carpenters; Henderson and Bro., bricklayers.”

“A block of brick stores fronting on Union Street, and the river, north of King Street, 100 feet by 44- three stories high, for Carlisle S. Whiting to be commenced at once. The front is to be finishes with cast iron heads over the windows and doors and all the modern improvements. Same contractors.”

“A block of brick stores, three stories high, on the north side of King, between Pitt and Royal Streets, for J.M. Stewart, and J.D. Corse. They are to be commenced at once. They will be 100 feet in depth, and to be finished with cast iron ionic columns, and the whole front in imitation of brown stone, done in mastic. Contractors- Jenkins and McKnight, carpenters- Henderson and Bro., and Emanuel Francis, bricklayers. These stores will occupy the place of a row of old frame buildings, and will be a great ornament to King Street.”

“A large three-story brick building, at the corner of Prince and Fairfax Streets, next door to the *Gazette* office, for Harrison Jacobs. This building is to be commenced at once. It will be executed with all the new improvements. Contractors- Fadeley and Mankins, carpenters; Elihu Stanton, bricklayer.”

“A three-story brick dwelling on the corner of Duke and Columbus Streets- a large and well arranged residence for C. W. Hooff. Contractors- B.H. Jenkins, carpenter; E. Francis, bricklayer.”

“A three-story brick dwelling, commodious in its plan and arrangements- corner of St. Asaph and Duke Street, for E.B. Powell. Contractors- J.W. Nalls and Bros., carpenters; Henderson and Bro., bricklayers.”

“A large and handsome frame building on Pitt Street, between Duke and Wolfe Streets, for each Enoch Grimes. Fadeley and Mankins, contractors.”

“A commodious two-story brick dwelling on Pitt between Duke and Wolfe Streets, for John Keys. Contractors- John Bontz, carpenter; James Javins, bricklayer.”

“Two frame dwellings north end of Water Street, for George O. Dixon. Chrismond, contractor.”

“A two- story frame dwelling on St. Asaph between Queen and Princess Streets, for A.D. Collinworth. Grymes and Taylor, contractors.”

“Two frame dwellings on Columbus Street, opposite the Court House, for Mr. Fitzpatrick. Grymes and Taylor, contractors.”

“Two frame buildings on Alfred Street, west of the Court House for Harrison Javins and Robert A. Stephenson. J.W. Nalls, contractor.”

“The large and elegant three-story brick dwelling belonging to James H. McVeigh, corner of Cameron and St. Asaph Streets is about to be finished. It is finished with all the modern improvements. Contractors- George and William Davis, carpenters’ Henderson and Bro., bricklayers; Swann and Williams, plasterers [sic]; and J.H. Higdon, painter.”

“The three-story brick building of George Plain, corner of Fairfax and Duke Streets has just been finished. Contractors- Elihu Stanton, bricklayer; McKnight and Jenkins, carpenters.”

“The large and commodious dwellings on Prince Street, owned by William N. McVeigh, heretofore noticed, have been finished, and are now occupied.”

“Two large and handsome frame buildings on Water, between Wolfe and Wilkes Streets, for William Markley.”

“A large frame building, corner of St. Asaph and Wolfe for George Weaton- built by him.”

“A store on King Street, next door to Ashby and Herbert’s, recently enlarges, for the proprietor, Samuel Miller. The store is 100 feet deep, and finished in the most modern style. Contractors- B.H. Jenkins, carpenter; E. Francis, bricklayer; G. Maxwell, plasterer; and George Plain, painter.”

“The store of G.W. Witmer and Bro., corner of King and Pitt, has also recently been enlarged and improved.”

“Two brick dwellings on Pitt Street, between King and Cameron for R.F. Preetyman. Contractors- John Bontz, carpenter; James Javins, bricklayer.”

“The interior of the Bank of the Old Dominion, which is now nearly finished and ready for use, will present a very handsome appearance, corresponding to its exterior architecture. The carpenter’s work by B.H. Jenkins; E. Francis, bricklayer.”

“A small frame dwelling at the corner of Queen and Henry Streets for Daniel Bayliss.”

“Smith and Perkins are making an addition to their blacksmith shop, attached to their locomotive and car manufactory, which will make it about double its present size.”

“Two frame dwellings on Fairfax Street, between Cameron and Queen Streets, for G.W. D. Ramsay- Thomas Smith, contractor.”

“An engine house for the Relief Fire Company- no contract yet made, but the building to be commenced soon.”

“There are doubtless other buildings and improvements, commenced or in contemplation in addition to those enumerated above, and we should be happy to be furnished with notices of them, in order to make our list complete. It always gives us pleasure to record the evidence of the prosperity and growth of Alexandria.” (*Alexandria Gazette*, April 3, 1852, p.3.)

**Miller, Michael T., ed. "Virginia Locomotive and Car Works Located at Wolfe and Union Streets." Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987, p. 373.**

**1852** – The establishment in Alexandria, Virginia, is one of the most extensive in the country. The Locomotive and Car Works cover 51,500 square feet of ground, front 177 feet on the Potomac River, which has an average depth of 18 feet for several miles above and below the works and are connected by a turn-out with the Orange and Alexandria Railroad. The Machine Shop is a three-story building 130 feet long by 40 feet in width. On the first floor there are three tracks for setting up locomotive engines and on these tracks at the time of our visit, we saw three powerful freight engines destined for the Pennsylvania Central Railroad, one of which the most finished specimen of workmanship we ever saw, was shipped on that day for its destination. On the same floor is the Tool Shop, which is capable of turning 11 and the other 7 ft in diameter. Besides these two, there are ten other powerful lathes and seven large machines, one for planeing, one for slotting, flour for drilling and boring and one bolt cutter.

The second floor is occupied in part for office and drafting room, but we also observed in well-appointed apartments fourteen power lathes, four planeing machines, three drill presses and very large bolt cutters. The third floor is exclusively occupied as a Pattern Shop and is fitted up with suitable apartments for depositing patterns, models, etc.

The Foundry Building covers 81 by 60 feet and turns out from 3 ½ to 4 tons casting per day; the Blacksmith Shop, 100 feet by 36, has 12 fires and a powerful steam hammer for heavy work; the Boiler Shop, 112 feet by 40; and the Car Shop, 150 by 40, containing four tracks for setting up and removing cars. In addition to the above, this splendid establishment is supplied with circular upright saws, the necessary tools for punching and shearing iron, and all the requisite machinery for planeing, morticing, etc.

Smith & Perkins are building, at this time, in addition to the shop mentioned before, engines for the Manassas Gap Railroad, Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and Hudson River Railroad, together with a considerable number of house cars for the Orange and Alexandria Railroad. Indeed, we learn that all the cars used on the Manassas Gap and Orange and Alexandria Railroads have been built at this establishment.

In glancing over the books of the Treasurer's Office, we find the following statistical information showing the force expenditure of the establishment. Number of hands employed from 160 to 200; coal used per annum 800 tons Cumberland, and 250 tons Antracite; and during the same period, from 700 to 800 tons pig iron and 450 tons Bar and Boiler iron. Expenditures from \$12,000 to \$15,000 per month.

The whole of the establishment is under the general superintendence of Mr. Thomas Dunmead, a gentleman represented to have great experience and skill in every branch of railroad machinery. Mr. Dunmead was formerly employed by the Baltimore and Ohio railroad Company as general superintendent of their extensive Shop in Martinsburg. *Alexandria Gazette*, December 1, 1852, p. 3.

**Miller, Michael T., ed. “Pioneer Mills.” Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987, p. 361.**

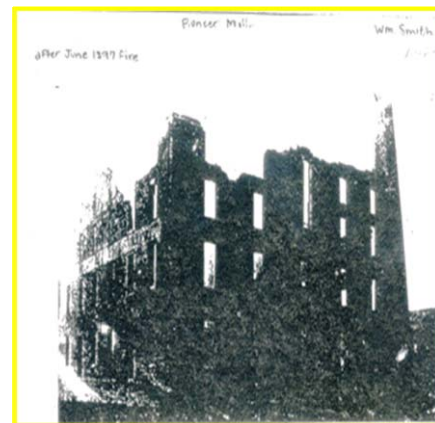
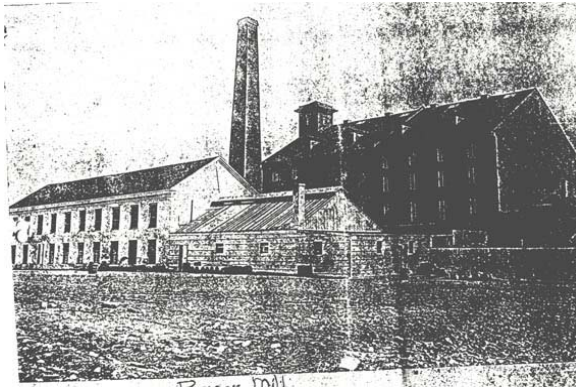
**1854** – “The Alexandria Steam Flour Company has now erected their splendid Steam Mill in this place, and it being nearly completed and ready for the commencement of operations, we have taken great pleasure in going through it, and examining its capabilities.

“The Mill, built of brick of the best and most durable materials, slate roof and fire proof, is situated on the Strand at the foot of Duke Street. It fronts on the Potomac River 122 feet – the main building being 80 feet deep – and the engine room 32 – making a total depth of 112 feet. It is six stories high, and the roof 77 feet above high water mark, or 73 feet from the first floor. It has 12 run-of-burr mill stones and a splendid steam engine of 250 horse power. The Mill is capable of turning out eight hundred barrels of flour per day, and of consuming, per day, four thousand bushels of wheat. Attached to the Mill is an elevator for taking grain from the holds of vessels, and carrying it directly into the building. Large vessels can be loaded directly at the door of the Mill. A wharf has been constructed on the north side of the building on which a switch from the track of the railroad on Union Street will be laid – so that grain from the cars will be brought, also directly to the Mill.”

“This establishment is the largest Steam Flour Mill in the United States – and second only in extent to the Gallego Mills in Richmond. All the appurtenances and machinery are of the best kind, and the most modern improvements have been introduced.”

“Mr. William H. Fowle, is the general Agent, Mr. James C. Nevett, the Clerk and Treasurer, and Mr. R. F. Roberts, Chief Miller.”

“The Mill will be entirely finished throughout in the course of four or six weeks and operations commenced soon afterwards.” *Alexandria Gazette*, March 11, 1854, p. 3.



These photos depict Pioneer Mills as it appeared in 1863 and after its destruction in the 1897 fire. (Pioneer Mills, Circa 1863: Alexandria Library, Special Collections, William F. Smith Collection. Pioneer Mills after the 1897 Fire, Alexandria Library, Special Collections, William F. Smith Collection.)

**Miller, Michael T., ed. “Alexandria.” Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987, p. 164.**

**1855**- “Some two months since, it was believed that the Virginia Locomotive Works were to be removed from Alexandria. We are now glad to know that the proprietors have decided to keep their works going at their present location. On a recent visit at the works, we found them



occupied with a fair amount of work. Two heavy ten-wheeled engines were lately sold to the Ohio and Pennsylvania road, and we understand that the prospect is good for a fair amount of patronage from the roads west and south.”

“The Virginia Locomotive Works, Wolfe near Union Street, is a large and well organized establishment. The machinery is ample, and built mostly in Lowell, Massachusetts. The works are competent to turning out thirty engines of the heaviest class yearly, besides 300 freight cars. From 225 to 240 men are employed when all the departments are in full operation. The yearly payments for labor and materials are over \$300,000.”

“We have before us a recent drawing of the passenger engines built at the Virginia Locomotive Works. It shows an outside-connected engine, with four six feet drivers and a truck. The cylinders are slightly inclined. The boiler is of good size, being 43 inches in diameter, 11 feet tube, and with a fire grate of about 51 inches in length. The outer firebox has an elevated crown, with a single large dome on top. There are flanges on both pairs of driving wheels. The valves are worked by the shifting link motion. Pumps are half stroke.”

“The general design of the engine is simple and in good proportion. We may perhaps suggest that in some details of minor importance, some modifications might be made. Were the trucks spread somewhat more, the cylinders could be got in level. The boiler stands quite high for an outside connection, the under side being 16 inches above the center of the driving axle, which makes the top of the boiler 8 feet 2 inches from the rail. The check valve is also placed on the side of the firebox, a position which most builders have abandoned, as the injection of water at that place is apt to contract the tube and cause leaking.”

“Alexandria is a smarter town that would be supposed at the north. It has a large steam cotton mill; a large flour mill, lately started with machinery from Otis Tufts’ well known East Boston works; a fine machine shop operated by Thomas S. Jamieson, Esq; a very large steam cabinet ware manufactory, besides the Locomotive Works, and a good amount of commercial and mercantile business.”

“It is in proximity to abundant and rich deposits of iron ore at the outlet of the great Cumberland coal region with a navigation upon the Potomac equal to vessels of 1200 tons at all stages of water, and at the head of the great southern system of railroads, Alexandria certainly possesses natural and artificial advantages sufficient to make it in time a very important city.”

“Iron is not only rich and abundant in the vicinity of Alexandria and in the Shenandoah Valley, but it exists in every desirable quality. We saw broken up at Jamison’s machine shop, several varieties of pig iron, obtained in adjoining beds. Some of these showed a fracture of great black grains, as large as medium sized shot. This iron was no doubt as soft and tough as any Scotch or other foundry iron made. Other kinds were of medium, coarseness. Still other pigs showed fractures as white and as silvery as that of a deep chill. Bush and Lodbell, we are told, obtain much of the iron for their celebrated wheels from the neighborhood of Alexandria.”  
(*Railroad Advocate* in the *Alexandria Gazette*, June 13, 1855, p.2.)

**Miller, Michael T., ed. “Fishtown.” Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987, p. 342.**

**1856-** “Situated between Princess and Oronoco Streets to the East of Union Street- This part of our city, not unknown to fame, that has for several months been so quiet and nearly deserted, is beginning to show evident signs of reanimation. The booths that have been unoccupied and

closed since the last fishing season are now being fitted up and arranged; the dealers in, and packers of, fish are busy getting everything in readiness for the approaching season, and, instead of the quiet that has so long reigned, all is now bustle and animation. We hope that the broils and ‘fusses,’ that are so common at Fishtown during the fishing season, will, this year, be omitted, and that we may not have to record a disturbance of any kind during the whole season.” (*Alexandria Gazette*, March 15, 1856, p.3.)

**Miller, Michael T., ed. “Alexandria and Its Improvements.” Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987, p. 187.**

**1859-** “Swampton, October 8- It has been some time since I visited your city, and as I saw a good many things on my recent trip worthy of notice, I have the vanity to think that a letter from me would not be uninteresting to the numerous readers of the old Gazette. Well, the first thing that struck my attention upon entering the town was, that the upper end of King Street had been repaired- and gracious knows it wanted it bad enough. The time before this last when I undertook to drive over it, I expected nothing else, than that the wagon would be smashed all to pieces, and the old woman too. The gals didn’t seem to mind it, and Mary Jane’s dyspepsia has been better since. However, the street is better now, and with a little more patching, a little lower down town, it will be quite a respectable thoroughfare. Coming along down town, when we got to where the dry goods and other kinds of stores are, I could see a marked improvement in their appearance; Each store seemed to vie with its neighbor in outward looks. I did not stop to look within, as the women folks were along, and you know their failing if they ever get into a store. What a terrible time the poor men in the cities must have when their wives and daughters can go shopping every day! Oh, dear me, it is terrible to think of- seldom as I go to town, I feel it severely- but when this ‘shopping’ is going on all the time it must be vastly expensive. But, I suppose, people get used to such things, and then they don’t mind it. Well, we drove round to Chatham’s- saw the horses carefully attended to- cracked a joke with ‘Jim,’ and then went down to the Mansion House; but gracious me, how it has grown- why, one would hardly recognize the old Hotel. Mr. Green, the present owner, has built a large addition, in which are about one hundred new rooms, and, whew! how he has furnished them; elegant carpets on the floors, magnificent curtains at the windows, great big looking glasses- which I thought the gals never would get done admiring- elegant bedsteads, and luxurious beds, with the linen looking white as snow- in fact, everything is grand. After admitting our apartments, we went down into the parlor, where we found plenty of company- had a pleasant chat, and were in a little while summoned to supper. After supper, the old woman and the gals insisted upon going to the theatre- so round we went. I was most agreeably surprised to find such a neat and handsome room, such a very fine company and such capital acting. Now, I’m very glad that the theatre has been ‘resurrected’ in Alexandria. Instead of having to run to Washington every night to witness a play, strangers that visit your city will now stay in it at all night and go to the theatre there. It used to [be] as dull as the d- - l after night- no amusement- nothing to do- nowhere to go. Go into any of the hotels, or restaurants, and you’d see half a dozen or a dozen fellows sitting round the stove or fireplace, (with their legs cocked up in the air) smoking, chewing, or drinking, and looking as disconsolate as could be- and the consequence was that you would occasionally hear a not very complimentary ejaculation thrown out upon Alexandria and its inhabitants, as being the dullest place, and most stupid people in the world. Well, now, while the contrary of this is the

truth, yet a stranger in a strange place naturally seeks some place of amusement after the labor of the day, and what's more, he will have it; then it is to the advantage of every city to furnish places of amusement, and none are as attractive as the theatre. It has long been a want in Alexandria, and now that some of your enterprising citizens have established one, do pray keep it up- you'll see the benefits in a very little while. When the stockholders to the Railroads meet, which they will do in a short time now- instead of one-half of them going up to Washington every night, you'll find that nearly all will remain in town. But enough on this head."

"In looking about on the wharves, I think I can see very perceptible signs of improvement. Why, really it put me somewhat in mind of old times to see so many square rigged vessels in port, and as to Bay and River craft, I don't know when I have seen so many at one time. Union Street, too, looked lovelier than I had seen it for some time. I extended my walk to the depot of the Alexandria, Loudon and Hampshire Railroad, to look at the improvements going on there, and very fine they are; all brick built in the most substantial manner and approved style. By the way, wouldn't it be well for the Orange and Alexandria Railroad Co. to improve their depot building- put up a good passenger house, and remove the present wooden structure, which is an eyesore to the community and the travelling public and not creditable to the company. The depot for steamships is a very large and convenient structure, and the Mount Vernon, I hear, is a fine vessel. I hope the enterprise will be sustained. I was sorry to see the Pioneer Mills idle- Alexandria needs manufacturing establishments, and her people should strive to build them up. The Locomotive and Car Works should be put in operation- there's no reason why they should not succeed. Coal is brought to your doors as cheap and cheaper than it can be got in Baltimore or Richmond. The best quality of iron can be procured with ease- then why should operations cease. Pick your flint and try it again, and be sure success will crown the efforts of those who try it!"

"What a large trade is done in your town in Guano and Fertilizers generally? Why, I expect in this your merchants will outstrip any other city in the State. I am no believer in Guano, but as the farmers will have it, I'm glad to see they buy in Alexandria. Dr. Stabler, I see, has opened a regular manufactory of fertilizers in a big brick house, near the tunnel. Lots of darkies, with shovels and hoes, mixing one kind of Guano with another- a busy sight, but, my! it must be hard work, and such a smell- I don't see how the workmen stand it. Its considerably worse than having a bottle of harshorn poured all over one's head. In my perambulations, I got away out on Jones Point- the proposed depot of the Manassas Gap Railroad. It would make a magnificent depot- but from present appearances, it will be some time before it will be used as such. The government has put a light house on the end of the point, which, for its own credit, should be removed. Such a burlesque on a light house is not where else to be seen in the country. I, also, paid a visit to Ivy Hill cemetery. It is a beautiful place, and the situation a very commanding one. The distance from the town is an objection, but a very slight one. The lots are well and tastefully enclosed, and there are many beautiful monuments erected there to the memory of loved ones departed. But have already made this letter too long; so good bye for the present. Your, etc. Ezekiel Homespun." (*Alexandria Gazette*, October 13, 1859, p.2.)

### *1860s: The Civil War in Alexandria*



This 1863 bird's eye view of Alexandria offers a view of the city and its bustling waterfront during the Civil War. Included are some of the major streets and important public buildings of Alexandria. (Charles H. Magnus, Birds Eye View of Alexandria, Va., New York and Washington, D.C., Chas. Magnus, ca. 1863, colored panorama, 15 ½ by 23 in., Library of Congress, Geography and Map Reading Room, framed.)



This photograph taken in 1865 from Pioneer Mills looking north along the Waterfront accurately depicts the Alexandria waterfront as it appeared during the Civil War era. (View from Pioneer Mill, looking north along the waterfront, May 1865: Alexandria Library, Lloyd House.)

**Brian Brown in his research article covering the period from 1781- 1883, taken from the Dorothy Kabler File, Lloyd House.**

**Circa 1860s-** “Naturally, as ship owners disappeared, Alexandria’s ship building declined. One shipyard, established about 1783 by John Hunter, continued in the same family for 80 years, finally succumbing during the upheaval of the Civil War. Another pre-war yard, Godhand’s, suffered the same fate.”

**From the Alexandria Gazette[?], 1861-1865.**

**1861-** A curfew [was set] for soldiers at 9 p.m., for businesses at 9:30 p.m., and for all others 10 p.m., and prohibited the discharge of firearms within the city.

General Slough took vigorous action to collect the stragglers and return them to military control in the forts and Camp Convalescent. When, later in the year, the tavern and restaurant owners protested his order against the sale of spirituous and malt liquors, General Slough wrote them: "On the 25<sup>th</sup> of August last, when the present military governor took command here, there was, as there had been for days previous, a 'reign of terror' in Alexandria. The streets were crowded with intoxicated soldiery; murder was of almost hourly occurrence, and disturbances, robbery, and rioting were constant. The sidewalks and docks were covered with drunken men, women, and children, and quiet citizens were afraid to venture into the streets, and life and property were at the mercy of the maddened throng- a condition of things perhaps never in the history of this country to be found in any other city."

The crowds of soldiers brought a superficial prosperity to the city. The Alexandria gazette described this: "We believe all the stores and shops on King, and the other principal streets of this town are now occupied, and probably room is wanted for more; at least the stores are frequently cut up and subdivided in such a way as to make three out of one, and we see booths and shanties erected on vacant lots, and one new brick house commenced on the main street. Rents, we understand, have increased to a very considerable extent...the renting is from month to month, for three to six months, and in some cases for a year...the goods brought here for sale are chiefly those likely to be wanted by the officers and soldiers of the army sutlers' stores, and such like, and provisions and groceries- interspersed with cheap watches, plated ware, flashy looking jewelry and ornaments. Most of the dealers are strangers to our older citizens and to the resident population."

**Miller, Michael T., ed. "High Tide- Fish Town Submerged- the Wharves Inundated." Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987, p. 197.**

**1861-** "The North Easterly wind which has prevailed for some sixty hours past produced its usual effect upon the waster of the river Potomac, backing the flood up and preventing free egress of the waters of the river into the Chesapeake Bay, and of the Bay into the Atlantic Ocean. The flood tides of Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning were more than ordinarily high, and accompanied as they were by an extremely high wind and a driving rain, were not without damage to property. Some timber was floated off, and a small vessel, the *Ellinor*, belonging to Mr. Padgett of the Alexandria Sailing Loft, was broken to pieces by the wind and waves driving her upon some logs, near the Ferry Slip."

"The flood tide of yesterday afternoon rose however, to a much greater height, and worked much greater damage to property along the wharves. The tide began its flood about two o'clock, and continued to rise until half-past seven. During the afternoon and evening, the reportorial corps of the Gazette visited the different localities along the river front of the city. They compiled the following statement of the appearances at various points during the flood:"

"The upper Coal Wharves were overflowed. The American Coal Wharf was also in great part under the water, but we heard of no damage to vessels at any of these wharves."

“The low grounds crossed by the embankment of the Alexandria, Loudon and Hampshire Railroad, were six or seven feet under water, while the whole valley of Yeaton’s Marsh became for awhile a brimming lake. The waves washed the embankment considerably, and must do it great injury.”

“Fish Town was threatened in the morning by the advancing waves, and even at noon, the lowest point of the tide, the water washed upon the wharf. The swelling of the river became very perceptible about two o’clock. The water soon gained the wharf, and overflowing it, rolled towards the booths and fish houses, and by five o’clock, the entire town was submerged. The few vessels in the neighborhood were kept off the wharf with difficulty; wood, wharf timbers and fish tubs were scattered about in wild confusion by the rolling waves. A fish house belonging to Mr. Horseman, was taken up by the rising tide and floated off some distance. The waves finally invaded the booths, whose light timbers seemed likely to yield to the joint assaults of wind and water. The occupants of some of the houses left in boats, while some of the boarders at ‘Robinson’s Hotel,’ made their way to terra firma over the roofs of adjacent houses. At night fall, Fish-Town was a ‘wast[e] of water,’ the Potomac dashing as freely through it as though it were the bed of the river.”

“The Queen Street dock overflowed into Union Street, and was much frequented by catchers of drift wood. The waves freely swept the foot of Queen Street, which is marked as two feet about high tide.”

“The wharf of the New York and Virginia Screw Steamship Company was covered, and much of the planking of the adjoining wharf disturbed by the tide. The steamer Monticello was too carefully moored, and guarded with too much skill and care to be in serious danger.”

“The intersection of Cameron and Queen Streets, three feet above water mark, was like the remainder of that section of Union Street and the Strand, the bed of a surging stream. Boats were in requisition in this section to move from one warehouse to another, for the transaction of business as was absolutely necessary, as well as to convey the occupants of the counting rooms to dry land. The Lumber Wharves in this vicinity were suffererd to a limited extent.”

“The lower end of King Street was navigable for good sized boats as far as Union Streets, while at one time, a light canoe might have safely reached the establishment of Mr. R. R. Sayers. The water stood some three feet deep at the intersection of King and Union Streets, which is two feet above [the] high water mark, marking the tide five feet above an ordinary high tide.”

“The lower end of Prince Street was submerged, and one of the reportorial corps of the Gazette did excellent service in his boat by furnishing some of the dealers with oakum to caulk the board dams which had been thrown across the doors to keep out the tide.”

“The foot of Duke Street was but slightly overflowed, but the waves threatened the old ‘Long Wharf’ with destruction.”

“The foot of Wolfe Street was submerged to a considerable extent, as were both the ship yards and Davis Point, the U.S. Light House, at the end of the latter, rising like Venice out of the waters and shedding after night a much needed light over the waves.”

“The Wharf and Union Street merchants suffered somewhat from the inundation but the rise taking place in daylight, they were enabled to a great extent to successfully guard against it. Articles likely to be injured were put out of reach of the water, boards were set tightly in doorways and caulked so as to be imperious to water, and by these and other means, little damage was done to the interior of stores, although the water was quite deep in many of them. The wood dealers, however, suffered considerably. Much wood floated off and of that which

came ashore no little was carried off by parties, who determined to verify the adage ‘it is an ill wind that blows nobody good.’”

“The submerged portion of the city presented a singular aspect from the upper windows of Pioneer Mills, boats rowing about, houses rising, as it were from the river, horses and cats only one half visible, wading men and floating timber spread out before the eye, in singular contrast to the ordinary appearance of the same vicinity.”

“This flood almost rivals that of 1847, falling but five inches below the highest tide of that year.” (*Alexandria Gazette*, April 10, 1861, p.3)



This 1861 illustration is specific to the Civil War in Alexandria and depicts the arrival of the Pawnee naval ship in the town. (Arrival of the Pawnee, 1861, Library of Congress.)

**Miller, Michael T., ed. “The War Years.” Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739-1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987, p. 207.**

**1861-** “Alexandria- There has been, we expect, few places more affected by the present war than Alexandria. Not six months ago, a thrifty growing city- with an energetic, prosperous, and happy population- unusually free from the crime and misery of cities generally, Alexandria occupied an enviable position, and in a social point of view, stood pre-eminently high. But a change- aye!- a sad change has come over the good old town. A large number of the oldest and most respected families are no longer ‘of us,’ having left their homes at the beginning of the war- their houses are closed or occupied by others, and their wonted life and cheerfulness has departed. The many pleasing promenades and places of familiar resort in the neighborhood are deserted, and the streets on which principally are residences of the citizens present a most desolate appearance. The wharves, too, where once were all was bustle and activity, are now, save when a transport or puny arrives, almost bare, and on our broad majestic river no ships appear, save those used in the service of the Federal Government. But very few warehouses on the wharves are open or occupied, and Union Street, next to King, the principal business street of the city, is now, except as a burthen train passes, as quiet as on Sundays. Prince, Duke, Cameron, and Queen Streets have lost their vitality, and King alone resembles what it was wont to be. The numerous carts and drays that traversed the thoroughfares, and preformed the carrying of the city trade, have given way to the ponderous army wagon and somber ambulance

and military costumes almost exclusively occupy the sidewalks. No loner in communication with the back country by three of the leading railroads in the State, the travel by rail is restricted to a jaunt from 'Ichthyopolis' to 'Necropolis.' The city government is no longer administered upon its chartered basis, the Mayor and police, night and day, having been deposed; and the sound of the watchman's horn heard in the town at ten o'clock at night- 'since time where of the memory of man runneth not to the contrary,' is now silenced, the bugle's signal and drum's tattoo have taken their time- honored place. 'Tempora mutantur'- but how sad the change!" (*The Local News*, October 12, 1861, p.2.)

**Miller, Michael T., ed. "Uptown Items." Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987, p. 208.**

**1861-** "Shuter's Hill has been shorn of many of its attractions- a greater portion of the beautiful trees have been felled, the fences destroyed, roads made in every direction, and the hill is fortified at various points. Mr. Ashby's residence, on the hill, has fared badly, having been despoiled of every moveable item it contained."

"Aspen Grove, formerly one of the most beautiful residences in the city, has likewise suffered, being very much defaced. Nearly all the trees in front of the Mansion have been killed, the bark being rubbed or cut off, and the main building and outbuildings completely gutted, and so mutilated that [it] will require a large outlay to repair the damage done."

"The Virginia House is in a shocking condition, being much defaced and very dirty.

Most of the vacant stores at the upper end of King Street, are now occupied mostly by blacks, who have opened eating houses, and a good business in this line is being done.

The office of the Provost Marshal, at the corner of King and Columbus Streets, looks rather the worse for use, and a little soap and water within, and some paint without would materially improve its appearance and conduce to comfort.

At the Court House, the Provost Judge holds his court, and dispenses justice in military style.

The jail contains a number of military prisoners, but Millan's slave jail is the place of confinement generally for offending soldiers. It is said to be in a very filthy condition."

"The traffic carried on by the colored population with the soldiers, in pies, cakes, small beer, is considerable, the average profits of each seller being about five dollars per day- many make four or five times that much. Horses and wagons are in great requisition for the transport of edibles to the camps; and any morning long trains of these wagons may be seen wending their way out to the different roads, to the camps of the Federal Soldiers."

"Notwithstanding the orders prohibiting the sale of liquor to the soldiers, many persons are engaged in the sale of this forbidden article, and large quantities of bad liquors are disposed of daily to the troops, and its effects are often visible in the streets."

"Duke Street is not the principal thoroughfare for travel and transportation; the exceedingly rough condition of King Street rendering it difficult of passage."

"The Orange and Alexandria Depot is being fitted up with gas, and is to be used by the Federal Government for their purposes. Trains are kept constantly running on the road for some distance up."



“The residences of many of our citizens are closed but some are being opened and reoccupied. Those of our population who spend the summer and fall months in the surrounding country, are returning to their city homes.”

“The bell of the Friendship Engine House has been tolled for several nights for the purpose of attracting a sufficient number of the members to hold a meeting, but a quorum, we believe, cannot be obtained. The president of the company and a number of its members are absent from the city.”

“The lot of the Virginia House is now used as a cattle yard, where the cattle for the use of the Federal army are kept at night. Most of the cattle are very fine, and it is a sight to see them gathered in this yard at nights.” (*The Local News*, October 16, 1861, p.2.)

**From America through British Eyes, edited by Allan Nevins, p.279.**

**Spring 1862-** Edward Dicey, a reporter from England, commented: “Alexandria like most old Virginia and Maryland towns, has a very English air about it; the red brick houses, the broad sleepy streets, the long straggling wharves, might have been imported direct from Norfolk or Linconshire. The town itself was crammed with troops; but neither then nor on the other occasions when I visited it was there anything to be seen of the inhabitants. Closely connected as the little town in with Washington, it was bitterly ‘secesh’ and the citizens of Alexandria showed their dislike of the Federal Army of Occupation by every means in their power.”

**Kaye, Ruth Lincoln. *The History of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church Alexandria, Virginia: November 12, 1809- November 12, 1984.* Virginia: the Goetz Printing Company, 1984.**

**1862-** (January 26 and 27) “Search for Quarters- Much excitement was occasioned in portions of this city of Saturday night and yesterday, by files of soldiers in search of quarters. In many instances, persons were notified to leave residences which they had occupied for years...”

“The Illinois Cavalry are now quartered in this city. They occupy as quarters, besides the buildings mentioned in our issue of Saturday, the following places...” There follows a list of homes taken, including that of a vestryman of St. Paul’s, David Funsten, who by that date had become an officer of the Confederacy.

“Sanctuary Open for Service- In January of 1862, on a warm spring like day such as occasionally occurs in Virginia in January, causing forsythia to bloom early, the Church sanctuary was opened for service, with the Reverends Smith and Stewart in charge. The sermon, appropriately enough, was taken from Psalm 9, verse 9: ‘The Lord, also, will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.’ The congregation was said to be large.”

(In the Gazette of January 15, 1962, in the ‘100 Years Ago’ column, it was reported that Christ Church was open in the afternoon for the usual service by the U.S. Army Chaplains, Mr. Bitting preached morning and evening at the Baptist Church, Mr. Tuffer at St. Mary’s in absence of the Reverend P.P. Kroes, and Reverend Elias Harrison at First Presbyterian. This account brings to

light a little- known fact, that many other churches than St. Paul's had re-opened their doors, at least temporarily.)

“At St. Paul's Church that Sunday Moring, the political prayers, such as that for the President, were omitted purposefully by the rectors. Rumors of this omission reaching Alexandria's Military Governor, General Montgomery, he summoned the two ministers for an explanation. After a ‘free and friendly conversation’ the General took the position that ‘while for any seditious language tending to prove disaffection to the government he would cause a church to be closed, he did no think the present case called for official notice on his part.’”

“There occurred shortly afterwards, however, one of the most dramatic and unusual events recorded in the annals of church history. Minister Arrested- At Sunday morning service, February 9, 1862, Mr. Stewart was arrested for omitting the prayer for the President and was escorted out of the Church to the provost's marshal's office at the point of a gun. The same issue of the paper that reported General Montgomery's advance knowledge of the omission devoted almost its entire issue to the event. Since copies of this paper are rare, the columns, written in eloquent fashion, are here repeated word for word, in one continuous paragraph like the original.”

**Brown, William Adrian. The History of Andrew Jackson Lodge No. 120: First 125 Years with Andrew Jackson 120, A.F. and A.M., 1853-1978.**

**April 20, 1865-** “I would like to digress from the History of Andrew Jackson Lodge 120 to enlighten the brothers of the future as to what our early brothers of 1861 to 1865 had to contend with. I will quote from an article written by George Alfred Townsend, a Yankee reporter, who walked the streets of Alexandria during those years. He was the Richard Harding Davis of the Civil War. He traveled with the Union Army to Richmond and then crossed over to the Confederate Army, leaving the Unions Army to see how things were in the south. He was fired from his paper because of articles he had written about actions of the Union Army. He then became a free-lance writer and worked out of a Baltimore paper. I quote from two sources, ‘On the Road to Richmond’ and ‘Rustics in Rebellion,’ out of context to conserve time.”

“Many Hamlets and towns have been destroyed during the war. But of all that in some form survived, Alexandria has suffered the most. It has been in the uninterrupted possession of the Federals for twenty-two months, and has become essentially a military city. Its streets, its docks, its warehouses, its dwellings, and its suburbs have been absorbed to the thousand uses of war. I was challenged thrice on Long Bridge, and five times on the road, before reaching the city. I rode under the shadows of five earthworks and saw lines of white tents sweeping to the horizon. Gaily caparisoned officers passed me. Trains laden with troops sped along the line of railway, toward Alexandria. I passed a wagoner, looking forlornly at his splintered wheel, and a guard sleeping at his post on some bales of hay he was guarding. The Potomac below me was dotted with streamers and shipping. The Grand Movement for which the people waited so long, and which General George B. McClellan had promised so often, was at length to be made. The army of the Potomac was to be transferred to Fort Monroe. I rode through Washington Street and found it lined with freshly arrived troops. The grave slabs on a fine old churchyard were strewn with weary cavalry-men, and they lay in some side yards, soundly sleeping. Some

artillery men were chatting with some idle house girls. A group of coarse engineers in red trimmings, were reining their horses to leer at some ladies, who were taking air in their gardens. A Provost Major was moving some companies through the streets. There was much drunkenness showing among the troops walking the streets. The people of Alexandria were, in many cases, crushed and demoralized by reason of their trouble. One man of this sort led me to a sawmill, now run by Union Government, and pointed to the implements. 'I bought 'em and earned 'em,' he said. 'My labor and enterprise set them there; and while my mill and machinery are ruined to fill the pockets of Federal sharpers, I go ragged and poor about the streets of my native town. My daughter starved in Richmond; God knows I can't get to her. I wish to hell I was dead.' Further inquiry of this poor man developed the following facts. He had been a thriving builder and he tool contracts from the confederate government to build barracks at Richmond and Manassa junction. Returning to Alexandria at the wrong time he was taken prisoner, and kept for some time in the Capitol Hill Prison. He refused to take the Oath of Allegiance, and consequently he could not obtain recompense for the loss of his mill property. Alexandria is filled with like ruined people; they walk as strangers through their ancient streets, and their property is no longer theirs to possess, but has passed into the hands of the dominant nationalists..."

"[It] would not accord with the chaste pages of this narrative to tell how some of the noblest residences in Alexandria had been desecrated to licentious purposes; nor how, by night, the parlors of cozy homes flamed with riot and orgy. A woman on the street was fair game to any man, be he soldier or government man. I was told there were husbands who were jailed for protecting their wives and daughters. There was a case pending in the Provost Marshal's office at that time, a court-martial of six soldiers who had drank too much and while in their cups, had entered the house of a citizen, killed the husband and the father, and taken the wife and two daughters in their own home. I stayed but a little time in Alexandria that trip having an indiscreet paragraph in the *Washington Chronicle*, for which I was pursued by the War Department, and the management of my paper from which I was dismissed. I left Alexandria at six in the morning, and with several other journalists proceeded to Fort Munroe to join with General George B. McClellan."

**Miller, Michael T., ed. "Alexandria Canal." Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739-1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987, p. 340.**

**1865** – "It is the sincere desire of every friend of our good old town that measures be at once instituted having for their objet the immediate resumption of navigation on the Alexandria Canal. Four years ago, when the Government took possession of this arm of the State's internal improvement system, it was in excellent condition; fleets of boats arriving and departing daily; the canal wharves, at the northern end of the city, were lined with vessels and the many coal yards presented a scene of busy animation; but now owing to long disuse and exposure to sunshine and wind the banks of the canal have become cracked and the aqueduct decayed, the coal boats have rotted or been used for other purposes, the vessels have long since gone from the wharves, the coal agents have moved their depots to other cities and an occasional cart, hauling a load of Philadelphia coal, is the only evidence of life about the once active coal yards. The debt of the Canal is so large that but little benefit is expected ever to accrue to the stockholders, but

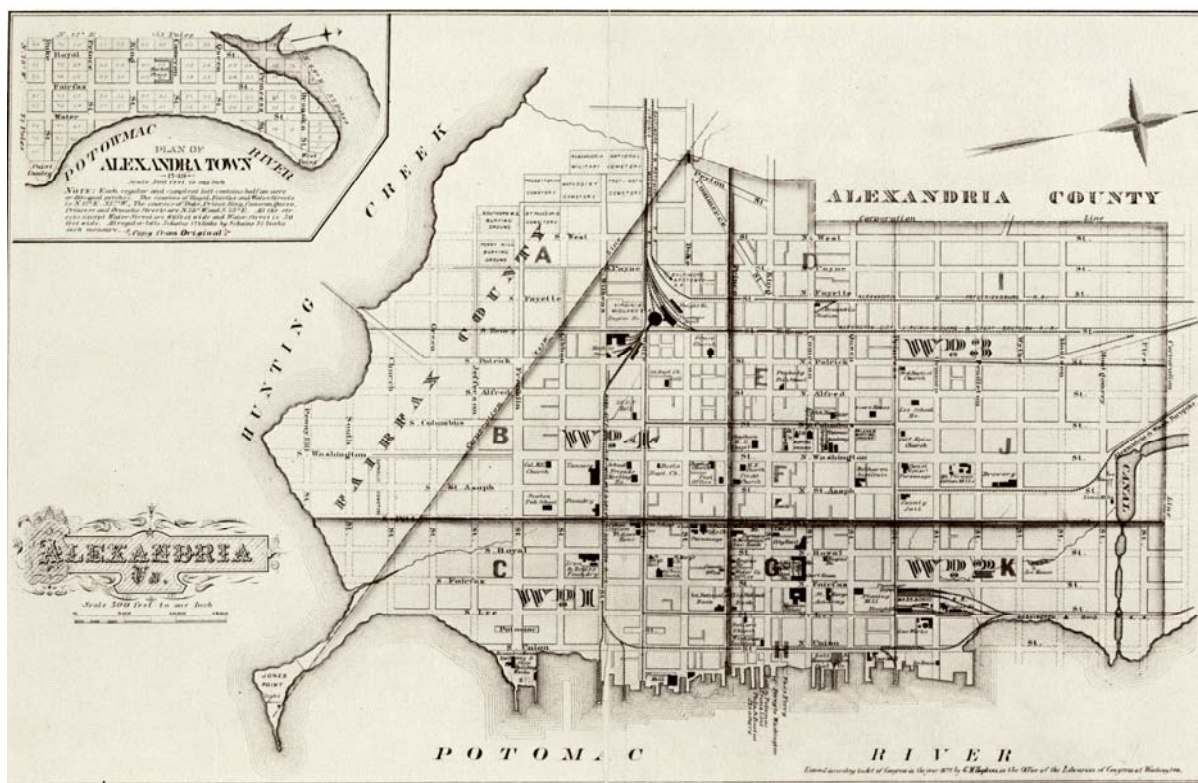
the city can be immediately affected by a resumption of trade on this work.” (*Alexandria Gazette*, July 12, 1865, p. 3.)

*Consult Ewing’s 1845 or Hopkins’ 1877 map of Alexandria for view of canal.*

**Miller, Michael T., ed. “Skating.” Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987, p. 340.**

**1868** – “The skating carnival of the past three or four days was enjoyed to its fullest extent by those fond of the sport and the canal basin was the scene during its continuance of much youthful recreation.” (*Alexandria Gazette*, Jan. 14, 1868, p. 3.)

## *1870s: Recovery and Improvements*



The 1877 Hopkins City Atlas of Alexandria depicts property lines, houses, commercial and public buildings as well as the names of some of the local land owners. (Griffith M. Hopkins, *City Atlas of Alexandria, Va. From official Records, Private plans and Actual Surveys, Based upon Plans deposited in the Department of Surveys*, Philadelphia, 1877, twelve maps, colored, each 15 ½ by 26 in., Library of Congress, G1294 .A3H6 1877.)

**Miller, Michael T., ed. “Building Improvements.” Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987, p. 265.**

**1872-** “The Alexandria correspondent of the *Washington Chronicle* says: our manufactories consist of two planing mills, a brass and iron foundry, machine shops of the Orange, Alexandria and Manassas and Washington and Ohio railroads, two plaster mills, two flour mills and several small wheat and corn mills, the Mount Vernon Cotton Factory, three cabinet factories, a shipyard, a large tannery occupying half a square of ground, a pottery, several brick and lime kilns, one of the best cracker factories in the country, two distilleries, two cigar factories, and several coach and wagon factories.”

“Another source of employment to labor is the coal companies. The American, represented by Captain Boothe, the Baltimore and Hampshire represented by George P. Hutton, Esq., and MR. J. P. Agnew, who represents several companies. These agencies employ between 220 and 300 laborers the greater part of the year, to say nothing of the trade brought here by vessels that come to carry away the coal and the large trade with the canal men, who nearly all purchase their supplies in our city. There are several hundred of this class of persons to be supplied with food and clothing and it amounts to a pretty large sum in the course of year.”

“Among the buildings erected since the war, first and foremost stands our new Market House. It was designed by Architect Adolf Cluss, of your city and cost the city \$50,000 without counting extras and finishing touches. The steeple and town clock were presented by an esteemed fellow townsman. Washington Lodge No. 22, Masons, also has a room in this building, which costs between \$5,000 and \$8,000. All this added to the cost of furnishing the courtroom, council chamber, etc., will amount to about \$75,000. The present rental of the market amounts to between \$3,500 and \$4,000 a year. The money received from these rents is placed in a sinking fund to liquidate a debt incurred by the corporation in aid of the Orange, Alexandria and Manassas railroad of \$100,000. As an evidence of our prosperity it may be well to say that floating debt of \$40,000, or thereabouts, has been paid off during the year, and that our Corporation taxed next year will not exceed \$1.50 on the \$100.”

“Another fine building, costing about \$10,000, is the Corn Exchange, which I do not hesitate to pronounce the finest building of the in the state, and is situated on the corner of King and Union Streets, giving a very good appearance to the lower portion of our principal street. The building is owned by the Commercial Exchange Association the members of which are our merchants. It was built upon the site of the old custom house, which was sold to the present owned by the Government for about \$5,000. The building and grounds cost Uncle Sam in the neighborhood of \$30,000.” (*Alexandria Gazette*, December 6, 1872, p.1.)



This photo from the 1890s shows the Corn Exchange Building which was built on the southwest corner of King and Union Streets in 1871. (Corn Exchange Building Circa 1890: Alexandria Library, Special Collections, William F. Smith Collection)

**[Alexandria] Gazette, July 29, 1873. (Courtesy of T. Michael Miller)**

**1873-** “The [houses] have never been modernized, [they] stand back from public observation and show their age. One or two old cabins on St. Asaph Street, between Princess and Oronoko Streets, nearly opposite the jail, also date beyond the Revolutionary War. One of them was built in 1764 and was then just beyond the city limits. This house with a number of others situated then in what was the suburbs were brought within the city limits by a subsequent act of the legislature which provided that ‘every lot adjoining the town on which there was built a dwelling

house of sixteen feet square or equal thereto in size, with a brick or stone chimney, shall be incorporated with the town of Alexandria, and considered as part thereof.' The northeasterly portion of the second ward, however, was in early times the most thickly settled for the commerce of the town centered at Hunting Creek Tobacco Warehouse which stood upon the hill top at an elevation of some twenty feet above where the city gas works now stand. All large vessels landed at the county wharf (Point West) below the hill, and the hill top, now cut away much of it within twenty years, was a century ago dotted with stores and dwellings. The large old frame building which stood on the corner of Oronoko and Water Streets was to the town what King Street from Washington to Fairfax now is. The first newspaper was issued little less than a century ago from the corner opposite where the Washington and Ohio depot now stands. Of course the change in grade occasioned the demolition of nearly all these houses, but until the war there stood on Fairfax Street, between Queen and Princess Streets, half a dozen houses of date anterior to the Revolution. Some of them had the first stories yet unfinished and full of clay remnants of the old hill, the second stories only being occupied. A tall frame yet standing on the east side of Fairfax, near the Loudoun depot, belongs to that era, as does a half frame and half brick on the corner of Royal and Queen Streets, the cellar of which has been opened to the light and made a lower story by the grading of Royal Street nearly a century since. Some of the frames on the west side of Fairfax Street, between Cameron and Queen belong to the class of centenarians as did all the old gable-end houses which were torn down to make way for Lawson's, May's and the other new bricks on that square, and the old King George hotel (so-called) on the corner of Royal and Cameron Streets which recently gave way to Harlow's building. A recollection of the buildings in the whole of that portion of the town from the market house to the fish wharf, which may be called 'old town of Alexandria,' will show that from thence the town took its rise. Of course Christ Church is a centenarian, having been built in 1763, but at that date it stood in the fields beyond the limits of the town."

**Miller, Michael T., ed. "Burning of the Marshall House." Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987, p. 266.**

**1873-** "One by one the old landmarks of Alexandria are disappearing at the fell touch of the incendiary's torch. The Market House and the old Theatre have been swept away within the last two years, and today it is the Gazette's melancholy province to chronicle the destruction of the Marshall House- that house made ever memorable by the death of Ellsworth shot by Jackson at the commencement of the war for tearing down the Confederate flag that was flying over it, and by the blood Jackson shed while defending his own property. It was one of the most ancient buildings in the city, and when the present City Hotel was known as Gadsby's Tavern, the Marshall House was a famous hostelry call the Washington Tavern. For the last few years it has been unoccupied, but ever since the events that occurred there at the beginning of the war, it has been the principal object of attention to all the strangers who visited the city. The flames were discovered about twelve o'clock last night by officers Jones and Christopher Lyles of the city police force, who were walking down King Street at that time, and who instantly sounded the alarm. The fire department was speedily on the ground- the steamer Columbia being a little behind time in consequence of having been misled by one of the alarm bells which had struck the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward. The steamer Hydraulion took position at the plug at the intersection of King and Pitt Street, and the Columbia [on] that intersection of Pitt and Prince, and soon such an avalanche of

water was thrown upon the flames that they were confined to the building in which they originated and the one adjoining it, and with which communication was effected by numerous doors. The relief Hook and Ladder Company rendered efficient service in pulling down the back building, which was of framed [wood], and in assisting the pipemen of both steamers. The whole of the back building and the entire interior of the third story of the main building, with the roof, were destroyed, and the first and second stories were badly damaged. The back building of the house adjoining, occupied by T. E. Dulany as a barber's shop and A. J. Wedderburn as a printing establishment, was burnt, and the interior of the main building was flooded. The wind was blowing a gale from the northwest at the time, and sparks, cinders, and burning shingles were borne to the distance of several blocks, covering the roofs of the buildings that lay in their course, and setting fire to some of them. The excitement caused by the fear of a general conflagration was great, and the tops of the houses in the line of the wind were filled by people sweeping off the falling sparks and throwing water upon spots as had caught fire. The cold was intense, and the water froze as fast as it ran off from the immediate heat of the fire. The roofs of as many as seven buildings- those occupied by Charles Shirley, Mrs. Junius, A. C. Kell and Rudolph Massey, on Royal Street, between King and Prince, Mrs. Green and Orlando Wood, on Fairfax Street, near Prince, and Charles Whittlesey on Prince Street between Fairfax and Water- were on fire at one time, but details from the Relief Hook and Ladder Command extinguished the flames before any damage had been occasioned. Too much praise cannot be bestowed upon the firemen who certainly upon this occasion proved their efficiency to the entire satisfaction, not alone of all who saw them at work, but of those who have since witnessed the scene of the fire."

"The fire was undoubtedly the work of an incendiary, and a man named Robert Manley was arrested, soon after it commenced on suspicion. He was brought before Justice May this morning and committed to jail until Saturday, when he will be re-examined. At the investigation this morning, officers Jones and Lyles testified that as they reached Pitt St. on their way down King before an alarm had been sounded, Manley approached them from the direction of the Marshall House and asked them if that place was not on fire and when they raised an alarm he ran off down the street." (*Alexandria Gazette*, February 25, 1873, p.3.)



### *1880s: The Railroad comes to Alexandria*

#### **Weems Line, started about 1880 (No further source information available.)**

**Circa 1880-** “A family corporation owned by the Weems.”

“Had between twenty and thirty ships operating along the entire eastern shore between Baltimore and along the Potomac River to Alexandria and Washington. The ships plies the Patuxent and Rappahannock Rivers, also.”

“The Potomac River line was the Weems’ biggest money-maker as it carried the most freight. It made stops at 26 landings on the Potomac.”

“Commodities carried from Baltimore to the various Potomac River ports included canned goods, staples, building materials, farm machinery and meats.”

“The ships picked up from the Potomac wharves perishable foods in season including crabs, oysters, tomatoes and fruit. There was an extensive commerce in cantaloupes from the Potomac region.”

“However, there was by comparison little freight going out from the Potomac landings. The ships came loaded from Baltimore but were only half-filled with cargo to make the return trip.”

“The Weems line brought the ‘Armenia’ from New York to the Potomac in 1883. She was built in 1847. Disaster struck in less than three years. On January 5, 1886, the ‘Armenia’ burned at the foot of Wolfe Street in Alexandria.”

“The ‘Sue’ and the ‘Express’ were two sidewheelers of the Weems Line. The loss of the ‘Express’ in August, 1878 shows that the Weems Line must have been in operation prior to 1880. The ‘Express’ foundered off New Point near Point Lookout in the Chesapeake with great loss of life.”

“The ‘Middlesex’ replaces the ‘Express’ in the Weems Line Fleet.”

“The ‘Potomac’ was built in Philadelphia for the Weems Line in 1894. It was operated by propeller, was 176 feet long, had 450 horsepower and had a steel hull. The steel hull was a novelty and a source of some fear to many people who were shouldered with doubt. They didn’t think it could float. The ‘Potomac’ operated on the Potomac River for many years.”

“The Northumberland’ was built in 1900, was 194 feet long and had 1500 horsepower. It was sold to the Buxton Line which operated at Richmond, Norfolk and in Albemarle Sound, N.C.”

#### **Brian Brown in his research article covering the period from 1781- 1883, taken from the Dorothy Kabler File, Lloyd House.**

**Circa 1880-** “The last large canvas-carrying craft to be built in Alexandria came from the Agnew yard just a few years later [from 1876]. She was the three-mastered schooner Henry S. Culver, of 753 gross tons, commanded, and owned in part, by Captain John G. Crowley. As the Culver slid down the ways on October 27, 1883, the story of Alexandria’s sailing days came to an end.”

**From an Old Virginia Town, by F. H. Lungren and R. Blum. Scribner's Monthly, February 1881.**

**1881-** “Seen from the river, the town presents an appearance at once striking and quaint; black roofs, gabled, hipped, and gambreled, their shingles, which were laid before the century was born, now warped and moss grown, are pierced by innumerable smoke stacks. These chimneys, tall or short, slender or massive, and of all colors- red, yellow, gray or white- line themselves against the clear blue sky...with its iron-stained, dark red brick walls, the place looks dim and rusty. The town, stretching up and back from the river shore, which is bordered by a fringe of rotting wharves, makes with its queer gables and chimneys, showing themselves among the sycamores and lindens, exceedingly picturesque and artistic sky-lines...the low lap, lap of the water among the stones and timbers, with the sun of high noon shining strongly all over, suggests...that the place has fallen asleep and will know no awakening, but will die as it sleeps peacefully. Alexandria, though dead commercially, harbors a genial life, which retains much warm cordiality and quiet, unostentatious, hereditary refinement...on going away from the river, the houses on the streets through which we passed, though old, did not jar upon the feeling as old houses of a later date so often do. In fact, they possess that imposing look which these once grand mansions seem to retain.

**Norfolk and Washington Steamboat Company, Organized in the late 1880's (No further source information available.)**

**Circa 1885-1890-** “It brought out a number of lines which were competitors.”

“The Norfolk and Washington succeeded the line of the early 1880's, the Washington and Norfolk Line.”

“The Washington and Norfolk owned the ‘George Leary’ and the ‘Excelsior.’”

“‘Excelsior’ never made a trip as a railway ferry. The Pennsylvania Railway served notice on the R.F. and P. that if it went ahead with construction of such a ferry, the Pennsylvania would re-route its business through the Orange railway. It would not stand for the commerce with the B. & C. When the R. F. & P. went ahead with the ‘Excelsior,’ the Pennsylvania carried out its threat. The ‘Excelsior’ remained at Quantico for some months without making a trip. Then she was sold by the R. F. & P. and converted into a passenger and cargo ship. It was necessary to remove the rails and rebuild the ship.”

“There were two lines running from Washington to Alexandria to Norfolk, carrying passengers and freight. One was the large Norfolk and Washington Steamboat Company mentioned here, and the other was its competitor: The Inland Seaboard and Coasting Company...This line ran until the early 1890's when it was bought out by the Norfolk and Washington.”

“The Inland Seaboard and Coasting Company operated two sidewheelers, “the Lady of the Lake’ and the ‘Jane Mosley.’”

“In 1891 the Norfolk and Washington Steamboat Company built the ‘Norfolk,’ a very fine looking boat and that same year the ‘Washington’ was built. Both were 248 feet long and had tremendous power, 2300 horsepower, more than was necessary for transporting passengers overnight from Washington and Alexandria to Norfolk. They made the run in 10 or 11 hours at 17 or 18 knots which was a convenient schedule.”

**Miller, Michael T., ed. “Alexandria Canal- the Canal to be Sold.” Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987**

**1888-** “It will be seen by an advertisement published elsewhere in the Gazette that Judge R. W. Hughes of the U.S. Circuit Court has ordered a sale of the property of the Alexandria Canal to take place in this city on the 7<sup>th</sup> of June next.” (*Alexandria Gazette*, May 11, 1888, p.3.)

*Consult Ewing’s 1845 or Hopkins’ 1877 map of Alexandria for view of canal.*

**Miller, Michael T., ed. “The Great Flood of 1889.” Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987, p. 308.**

**1889-** “It is generally conceded that the freshet of the past two days has been the heaviest that has been prevailed here within the recollection of the oldest inhabitant, the water having extended further into the city than ever before. The flood of 1856 had always been regarded as the heaviest ever known in this city, but the high water marks made at that time on buildings on the Strand were covered ten inches yesterday. Some, however, persisted in asserting that the water had on former occasions extended to Lee Street on King, while yesterday it strayed on the latter street midway between Union and Lee. The fact, however, that both King and Union have been raised several times in the past quarter of a century has been lost sight of by a large number of people. The tide made very high Friday, and Saturday night had extended still further, but yesterday about one o’clock it reached its greatest height, at which time many of the wharves were completely hidden, while only the tops of the piles of others were visible. All along the Strand from the lower shipyard to the old American Coal Company’s wharves several feet of water were on the first floors of every building, while Union Street from Prince to the cove above Fishtown was an unbroken canal, suggestive of a scene in Venice, lacking only the gondola to enable one to imagine himself in the city of the Adriatic. That street and the Strand were alive with boats from early in the morning until late in the evening and the water was filled with everything that could float in the way of planks, barrels, cord wood, broom corn, etc., which had drifted from wharves and stores while anxious storekeepers encased in rubber suits were wading about in their stores endeavoring to move perishable goods to places of safety. The scene attracted nearly everybody in town to the river front, and the eastern terminus of each street was thronged with people from daylight till dark, while the hills and shores in the southern section were packed with sight-seers, almost as thick as those collected to watch the regattas of the last two years. Jones’s Point has become an island and nothing but the railing of Hunting Creek Bridge was visible. In the northern part of the city the scene was equally exciting, ‘Petersburg’ bottom being submerged and lakes formed by the rush of waters through the culverts on the W. & O. R. R. In some cases the yards of residences were covered with several

feet of water, and houses had to be propped up to prevent them from being floated from their foundations. The scene on the river was thrilling, the resistless current hurling past the city as a rapid gait, carrying with it trees, timber, plank, barrels, boxes, household utensils, and in some cases small houses. Nearly everyone who owned or could procure a boat was out in the river intercepting and towing to the shore everything valuable and in many cases timber, which was readily sold at good prices was pulled to the shore, while rails, ties, and other driftwood were stacked along the shore by enterprising watermen. As stated above, the water had reached its greatest height about one o'clock, and in about an hour's time had visibly receded from the streets and by sundown had fallen several feet. It was feared, however, that the next flood tide would again bring the waters up to the old mark, but, contrary to such apprehensions, no such thing occurred, and this morning the Potomac had almost relapsed into its normal state. During the prevalence of the high tide it was impossible to land people on the wharves from steamboats, and those arriving during the day had to transfer passengers by means of row boats. The Washington ferry boats were unable to make any trips, nor could trains be run between here and the capital city; hence the usual number of Sunday visitors from the latter place were among the missing. The damage to property on the river front has been by no means light, through much loss was averted by the removal of goods Saturday to places of safety. Boats were rowed in and out many stores on the east side of Union Street, while the first floors of nearly all the buildings facing the river were navigable for small boats. The streamer *John W. Thompson* was anchored in the stream to escape damage. Hunting Creek Bridge is said to have suffered no material damage, but the spanning Cameron Run was destroyed. The loss in Cameron Run Valley is very heavy, the torrent of water rushing through it having swept away nearly all vegetation. The bridge over the run is being replaced. The flood swept away every house and shed except the hotel at Jackson City. A quantity of coal, belonging to the brick works, was also washed away. Almost the entire southwestern portion of Washington was under water, and from the south side of the avenue in a southwesterly direction to the river people had to be ferried from street to street in boats at five cents per head. The Richmond and Danville building on Pennsylvania Avenue was flooded and the printing materials ruined."

"The Damage: Commencing at the northern end of Alexandria and going south, the damages were as follows: The American Coal wharf, the city's property was considerably damaged, much of the earth being washed out which will require a considerable outlay to repair. The first wharf was not much damaged and the stock of fish in the houses, being all barreled, sustained no injury."

"Messrs. W. A. Smoot and Co. sustained but little damage.

Mr. J. R. Zimmerman lost a considerable quantity of salt and he puts his loss at \$500.

Captain H. Bryant had a quantity of bulk fertilizer wet but his loss will not exceed \$500.

Mr. Prescott had some of his spoke timber damaged, but \$50 will cover his loss.

Messrs. Smoot and Perry and J. H. D. Smoot had much of their lumber blackened by the water and some sash and blinds were injured. Their loss will be about \$250 each.

Mr. H. Kirk's loss will not exceed \$25 as he had elevated his stock of goods.

Mr. W. S. Towson estimates his loss at \$100. The water was two feet deep in his store and damaged some of his stock.

Mr. W. J. Brodbeck sustained but little loss, though his restaurant was covered with water.

Mr. S. C. Boush has a small portion of his stock slightly damaged; loss not over \$50.

Mr. J. H. Crilly's loss is considerable. The water in his store was about three feet deep and damaged his stock of flour, sugar, salt, soap; loss about \$500.

Mr. F. S. Harper's store had about one foot of water on the floor. About 100 barrels of flour, some soap, and some bacon were damaged, but the loss will not be over \$200.

Mr. Joseph Broders thinks his loss will not exceed \$50, only some soap and sugar getting wet.

Mr. N. Lindsey lost some salt, etc.

The Powhatan House sustained no loss other than the suspension of business and a deposit of mud on lower floors.

In Mr. J. Schneider's restaurant the water was two feet four inches deep and his loss will reach about \$100.

Mr. Driefus loses about \$300, a quantity of paper and other articles having been damaged.

Messrs. F. A. Reed and Co. lose a quantity of ice, etc., but don't think their losses will exceed \$300.

Mr. Walter Roberts had some corn and oats damaged.

Mr. W. A. Moore lost about \$35 by damage to grain.

The broom factory lost between \$50 and \$100 by damage to stock.

Captain P. B. Hooe's damage is about \$25.

There was a quantity of grain in Pioneer Mills, but the water did not reach the floors on which it was stored.

Messrs. Agnew at the ship yard sustained no serious damage, though the yard was completely submerged.

Jones's Pointe was almost submerged and communication with the light house was by boat." (*Alexandria Gazette*, June 3, 1889, p.3.)

### *1890s: Preparing for the Turn of the Century*

**Miller, Michael T., ed. “The Alexandria Canal- The Canal to be Sold.” Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987, p. 341.**

**1890-** “The old landmarks about the canal basin are being removed one by one. Mr. E. Francis has commenced to tear down his lime kiln.” (*Alexandria Gazette*, February 19, 1890, p.3.)

“The old Alexandria Canal is fast disappearing. The outlet locks down below the railroad bridge are gradually being filled up while all along in the vicinity of the double bridge the banks have been plowed down and seeded.” (*Alexandria Gazette*, August 6, 1890, p.3.)

*Consult Ewing’s 1845 or Hopkins’ 1877 map of Alexandria for view of canal.*

**Miller, Michael T., ed. “Business Houses, From the *Richmond Times.*” Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987, p. 313.**

**1890-** “Alexandria has always been known for her conservative policy, rather than for what some term goaheadativeness. Many say she is slow, and even dead. Washington is to Alexandria very much what Richmond is to Manchester, while in this instance Manchester has an advantage over Alexandria by being not six miles, but only one mile distant. Such Alexandrians as John P. Agnew & Co., Frank Hume, Colonel D. A. Windsor, Harry Stanford, Alfred G. Uhler, F. A. Reed & Co., Francis Hufty, Glenn Brown and Wash Danenhower comprise some of Washington’s principal business firms and the several thousands others who are engaged at the navy yard, in the manufacturing concerns, general and government offices, banks and works in various trades, tinsmith and iron workers, painters and printers, etc., must make themselves felt there instead of at home, and they must spend something there as well as in Alexandria, their people profiting now while they would not if Alexandria were distant. Alexandria, however, holds her own. Her people may seek their fortunes elsewhere and find them, and records have it that in some time or other drift back. No gigantic enterprises have struck Alexandria lately. Recent industries completed here are the large tannery of Messrs. C. C. Smoot & Sons, which gave employment to upwards of 100 men. It was destroyed by fire a years or so ago, and owing to their having a branch tannery at Sperryville, Rappahannock County, was not rebuilt, but has been improved considerably lately, all the vats being now in use and new machinery is being put up as fast as their needs demand it. Their annual output is several hundred thousand hides of oak, slaughtered leather of a superior quality, per annum. Sixty odd men are now employed by this concern, which is composed entirely of Alexandrians, C. C. Smoot & Sons, grandfather of the present owners, starting the place in 1820. The Capital Brick concern, with works on Hunting Creek at ‘Broomlaw,’ was closed a couple of years ago, and owing to the financial complications, the owners, Northern men headed by Senator Sawyer of Michigan, ceased work. Messrs. Park Agnew and M. B. Harlow purchased it a week or so ago, and have about fifty men at work at their writing, and four machines going. This is to be increased. The works at the outlet locks of the old canal have recently started up again. Messrs. Miller & Roate having purchased the plant. They had thirty-five men and boys at work yesterday. These works have machines. I think 12,000 is the number a machine turns out per working day. The brick works

of Colonel Windsor at Fort Runyan are being improved, about \$50,000 is being expended in this work. It is understood that General Mahone is interested in this. The National Compress Brick Company, and Columbia Company, just below, are working steadily, giving employment to hundreds, principally negroes, who live around Arlington township. Messrs. Corbett & Yohe, who have a brick yard out near the Catholic burying ground near Hunting Creek, have recently put in machinery of improved pattern and are working a good many hands. Building in Alexandria and the suburbs since last fall has been steady, and during the year there have been more tenement houses erected for speculative purposes than in any other period since the war. Rents here are cheaper than in Washington and the costs of living are said to be less. Commutative rates between Alexandria and Washington by train are ten cents each way with reductions for school tickets and family cards; and by ferry ten cents each way. Boats run hourly during the day, and there are twenty four passenger trains on week days. The Alexandria Fertilizer and Chemical Company has started last year, running the old Lee plaster mill on Princess Street and the brick mill on Union Streets, turning out about one hundred tones of fertilizers and plaster per day. They are now erecting an annex 108 x 86 feet on Princess Street near the Midland freight yards. It will be 45 feet high and of three stories when completed, and will doubtless increase their business considerably. They get their material principally from Charleston and the West. The plaster comes to this city direct from Nova Scotia. Messrs. William H. May & Son have increased their facilities for manufacturing plows and castings of late, and Messrs. Curtin & Butts have purchased the old Jamieson & Collins foundry for their purposed. They run the old Leatherland foundry. The proposed railroad and street car lines between here and Washington and Mount Vernon are as yet only on paper. The Isaac Harter Milling Company of Fosteria, Ohio, had a representative here some time ago, and recently one of the firm wrote here for further particulars regarding inducements for locating here. The citizens will do their part in the matter when the time comes. Some months ago the Board of Trade, which formed last fall with a membership of 150 and patterned after the Richmond Chamber of Commerce, sent a committee to Massachusetts to try and get some Lynn shoe men to locate here, several of whom had been looking around here for suitable sites. Mr. G. Powell Hill, formerly of Richmond, has been active in this matter. He recently offered to take \$5,000 worth of stock in a shoe factory if the citizens would pony up, too, and have Mr. R. Paff take charge of the concern. The freight traffic of the Midland road so increased last year as to require the removal of the freight yards to the Loudoun yards and two large sheds in addition to the large freight house of the old road, are now going up. The new freight house and platforms of the A and F road has been mentioned. Some more street improvements are being considered by the council committees. A fire alarm system on the plan of the Gamewell Company is being pushed by the fire department and many citizens. The company offers to put up a small affair for \$2,300. The electric light plant is comparatively a new addition. City and suburban real estate is gradually increasing in value. Some suburban lots that last spring sold for \$100 cannot be had now for less than \$300. Mt. Vernon Avenue and the projected railroad will help in this respect. The Postal Telegraph Co. now has a fair patronage. It has evidently come to stay. The shipyard has had more work during the month last than for some time. Several boats are being built or rebuilt now, and the repairing force is busily engaged on others. The large railway will accommodate the larger schooners. The Midland Road is widening its yards at the Duke Street depot, having recently laid four new tracks and grading for the same. The shops have been kept running 12 to 14 hours daily for several months past." (*Alexandria Gazette*, February 20, 1890, p.1.)

**Miller, Michael T., ed. "Extensive Fire- 1896." Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739-1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987, p. 328.**

**1896-** "About 11:30 o'clock last night people who had fallen asleep were awakened by cries of fire, the shrill sound of the police whistles and the ringing of bells. Upon going to the windows, they were rather startled to see the entire northeast section of the city brilliantly illuminated. In a few minutes hundreds had repaired to the scene of the conflagration- the interior of the square bounded by Union, Lee, Princess and Oronoco Streets. In an incredibly short time the flames were licking everything combustible from that point to the river, embracing an area of a square and a half. W. A. Smoot & Co's large frame structure, that of the Alexandria Chemical Company and about a dozen small frame houses were all in a roaring flame in a few minutes time. W. A. Smoot & Co's building and that of the fertilizer company were stored with fertilizers and chemicals most of which were destroyed. The building in which the fire originated was just south of the Alexandria gas works, and so close to the latter that it required constant efforts to save the property. It was known as the McCleish building (frame) and was stored with non- combustible material. Some think the fire was the work of an incendiary, but others have a theory that it was caused by spontaneous combustion, but the officers of the fertilizer company do not entertain this belief. A breeze urged on the fire with great rapidity and before it was arrested by the river, about fifteen buildings were destroyed. In its progress to the river front it passed over Union Street, on which are the tracks of the Southern Railway. The tracks were lined with cars, twelve of which were consumed, six with their contents of various merchandise. All of the houses burned, except one, the old distillery, were wooden structures. They were as dry as tinder and the fire made quick and easy work of them. Fishtown was completely wiped out again. On the railroad track a car loaded with oil was standing, and when it was ignited huge columns of white flame leaped up to an enormous height. For some time there was practically no resistance to the progress of the flames by the fire engines. The Columbia and the auxiliary engine William A. Smoot were in service, but unfortunately, two stud bolts blew out of the Columbia and it was disabled for further use. The fight was, however, kept up with streams from the plugs, but later the hydraulion was gotten in service. Practical firemen are of the opinion that a dozen fire engines could not have stayed the progress of the flames. The houses in which the blaze was first seen was less than fifty feet from the gas works. Streams from the fire plugs within and out of that building were kept playing until the danger of firing and exploding it has passed. During the progress of the destruction of the warehouses of Smoot & Co. and the fertilizer company, explosions startled the city. They were caused by the explosion of tanks or nitrate of soda. The loss on the river front was on the fish wharves, which are not in use at this season."

"The loss to the Southern Railway is about \$8,000. Twelve cars were burned and one damaged- four were loaded, two partially loaded and six empty."

"W. A. Smoot & Co. and the Fertilizer Company, \$15,000; insurance & 13,100."

"Jonathan Matthews, fish merchant, building and about 100 barrels of fish, \$500."

"William Javins, fish merchant, one building, \$150."

"G. E. Price & Co., fish merchants, \$500."

"Theophilus Ballenger, fish merchant, building and lumber, \$150."

"Hickman & Bitzer, fish merchants, building, \$300."

"Mrs. Annie Knight, building, \$400."



“Charles King and Sons, carload of flour, 150 barrels.”

“F. S. Harper, carload of oil.”

“Cotton Seed Oil Company, one tank of oil damaged.”

“Smoot & Co’s buildings and most of the others were insured. The total loss will not exceed \$30,000.”

“The only accident was to Joseph Smith who was badly burned while endeavoring to save a boat which had caught fire.”

“The fire did most of its work in about an hour and a half, but the flames were not extinguished till nearly three o’clock this morning.”

“A stiff northwest wind had been blowing most of the day and during the early part of the night. At the time of the fire it had veered more to the west and had lulled perceptibly. Had the fire occurred two or three hours earlier there is no telling how great the damage would have resulted. Probably the entire river front and shopping would have been destroyed.”

“Large crowds of persons today visited the scene of the fire. Before the fire had been entirely extinguished they were preparing plans to be submitting to builders for the immediate erection of buildings on a more elaborate scale than those destroyed and in a few weeks time things will be in a better shape for the prosecution of business than ever before.” (*Alexandria Gazette*, October 19, 1896, p.2.)



William Smoot owned the majority of the waterfront property between Queen and Oronoco Streets including some wharfs and a coal and lumber yard. Pictured here is William A. Smoot Co. which was located between Oronoco and Princess Streets. (William A. Smoot Co., Ca. 1890, Alexandria Library, Special Collections.)

## TRAVELER'S ACCOUNTS OF ALEXANDRIA- 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

### *1900s: Change in the New Century*

**Miller, Michael T., ed. "The Strand: An extensive Conflagration." Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987, p. 370.**

**1900-** "People whose recollections can go back to ante bellum time and who walk around the wharves of old Alexandria today are doubtless cast into reveries when they contrast the past [and] the present existence of things both on the Strand and on Union Street. Alexandria could be as great a commercial centre today as in days gone by and the facilities are far better, but the enterprise is not here. In the ante bellum days 'John Jones' who had a few hundred dollars, put up his cash, bought supplies of every kind, and shipped and traded with other countries, as well as with his own people and hired men to load and unload boats of every description as well as steam cars, and thus this city became an exchange. Money and work at that time were plentiful as the older inhabitants can testify. Today what is the case? Go down on the Strand and find out how long it will take one to get employment. Men made money in trading in Alexandria and left snug fortunes behind for their children and grandchildren. That money is sealed up in cash boxes in the vaults of some banking institution or in some stock to bleed the poor and suffering. Ask them to start an industry to help suffering humanity; why they will give you the 'cold stare.' Then ask what are the trusts doing. Look around and open your eyes. A good clerk cannot get within 40 % of the wages he received fifteen years ago and the salaries are diminishing every year. By the look of things, in a few years the man will be what the horse will be (only to a certain extent) - a thing of the past." (*Alexandria Gazette*, July 2, 1900, p.1.)

**Miller, Michael T., ed. "The Alexandria Canal- The Canal to be Sold." Pen Portraits of Alexandria, Virginia, 1739- 1900. Maryland: Heritage Books Inc., 1987, p. 341.**

**1900-** "The cornerstone of the Alexandria Canal, bearing the date 1844, from which time it had faced the river in the front of the W. & O. Railroad bridge at the outlet to the Potomac, was removed today and placed as a curb at the northwest corner of Cameron and Union Streets. Like the pillars of the temple of Diana, put to baser uses in modern cities, this reminiscence of Alexandria's better days and a reminder of a debt we are now bearing...has been placed in a position to be trodden under the feet of men." (*Alexandria Gazette*, June 18, 1900.)