
THE ALEXANDRIA CHRONICLE



Winter 1997/1998 Vol. VI, No. 4

Street Boundaries Moved--

Property Loss--

Deed Errors Ensue

by Gilman McDonald

This account is a product of research begun in the early 1980s by the author, resident and owner of the property at 207 S. Pitt Street since February 1959. His objective was to recover the detailed history of his property (which, until a 1958 subdivision, was the southern portion of the 504 Prince Street property). Michael Miller, while Research Historian at Lloyd House Library, and James Hartz, owner and resident of 510 Prince Street, both made significant contributions to

this research.

Statement

Old Town "squares," (blocks) were carefully mandated in the 18th century--246 ft. 10 inches east-to-west, 353 ft. 2 inches north to south. The seemingly arbitrary measurements had a purpose because each block comprised exactly two acres. The practice in the late 18th century was to auction or sell off the blocks in quarters--four smaller lots of one-half acre each. Those in turn were subdivided and sold off to

individuals who built houses.

Alexandria ordinances of the period required that all buyers build within a specified time a house of accepted dimensions. In addition, other laws required that the houses be built on the property lines fronting on the street. It is thanks to this requirement, violated in only a few instances, that we have today's soldierly march of facades in Old Town.

Houses were to be built exactly 12 feet from the curb line. The streets, from curb-to-curb were to be 42 feet wide. That added up to 66 feet--or one chain, a common measurement of the day but no longer used.

Sometime before February 1800, possibly earlier, it was discovered that some of the squares between Royal and Pitt Street had been extended too far westward, and that some of the squares between Prince and Duke Streets and between Duke and Wolfe Streets incorrectly extended too far southward.

By an enactment of 5 February 1800, the Alexandria City Council blessed the erroneous extensions by relocating the east boundary of Pitt Street westward and the north boundaries of Duke and Wolfe Streets southward. The north to south erroneous extensions were quantified--the Prince to Duke block was extended to 356' 8" and the Duke to Wolfe block was extended to 354' 3"--but the east to west extensions were not. The enactment also failed

to include other significant items.

There was no reference to the west boundary of Pitt Street or to any other boundaries to the west. Nor was there any reference to a re-survey, which surely occurred (at least between Pitt and St. Asaph Street).

Discovery

Discovery began in the early 1980s and continued intermittently until the fall of 1997.

When McDonald began research on the history of 207 S. Pitt Street, he had the December 1958 plat showing the subdivision of 504 Prince into 504 Prince and 207 S. Pitt. That plat showed the Prince Street frontage to be a tiny fraction under 68 feet. But he found that the 24 November 1958 deed (DB: 480, p. 363) for the sale of 504 Prince showed Prince Street frontage to be 75'5". Why the discrepancy?

Early in his research McDonald found two old deeds which reflected the same discrepancy. A 12 December 1796 deed recorded the subdivision of the corner lot (originally 51'5" x 100') into two lots. 500 Prince was 24' x 100'; 502 was 27'5" x 100 (DB: H, p. 270) Thirty-eight years later, 1 September 1834, 502 Prince Street was sold at auction. The lot was described as only 20' x 100'. (DB V-2, p. 507) Why the loss of the

7'5" strip of land, McDonald wondered? The late Mrs. McDonald stated categorically that the boundaries of Pitt Street had been moved westward, but she could not remember the source of her information. A search of several books about Alexandria, as well as inquiries at the Lloyd House, the library, and at City Hall were fruitless. The source of Mrs. McDonald's information has never been found, but research some ten years later proved that she was correct.

In October 1994, McDonald conferred with Michael Miller at Lloyd House to compare notes on their separate research on the history of the 504 Prince/207 S. Pitt Street properties. During the discussion McDonald related the story of the mysterious loss of the 7'5" x 100' strip of the 502 Prince property. Mrs. McDonald's contention that Pitt Street boundaries had been moved, and McDonald's observation that 501 Duke projected approximately 7'5" east of today's street boundary. Shortly, Miller found an 8 August 1873 Alexandria Gazette article about Alexandria streets which

stated that--

"the streets, as laid out in 1749 and 1763 are nearly identical with the streets as now existing but some mistakes or change led to the extension of the squares between Royal and Pitt streets too far to the west and those between Prince and Duke, and between Duke and Wolfe too far to the south; but the Council passed an act confirming these extensions but provided that none of the houses on the old street lines should be removed until the owners chose to change them. Hence, in going south on Pitt street, one or two old houses on the east side will be found

to set back from the street, and one or two on the west side project into the street. These houses stood on the old street lines."

Miller continued to search and

shortly found the text of the 5 February 1800 enactment which relocated the east boundary of Pitt and the north boundaries of Duke and Wolfe. Again, east to west distances were not quantified, but the reason for the 7'5" loss at 502 Prince had been documented.

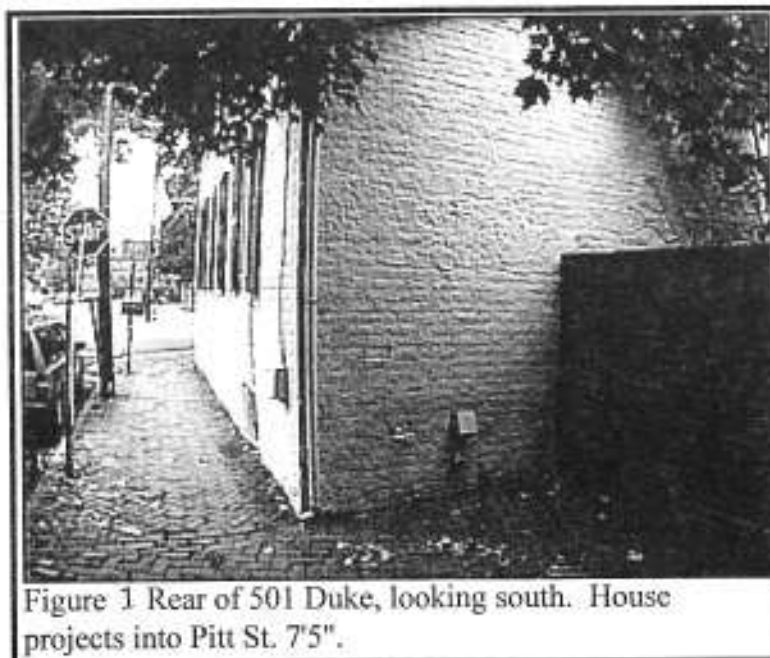


Figure 1 Rear of 501 Duke, looking south. House projects into Pitt St. 7'5\".

An 1885 Sanborn Insurance map of the block shows not just the 501 Duke houses projecting east of the Pitt boundary, but another house at what would be today's 219-221 S. Pitt Street projecting the same as well. That house was razed and replaced by the present row houses on the post 1800 street line. The map also shows the 212 S. Pitt Street setback.

On the same Sanborn map, McDonald observed a setback on S. St. Asaph, namely a 2-story structure at 216, which was on the northern half of the original 523 Duke Street

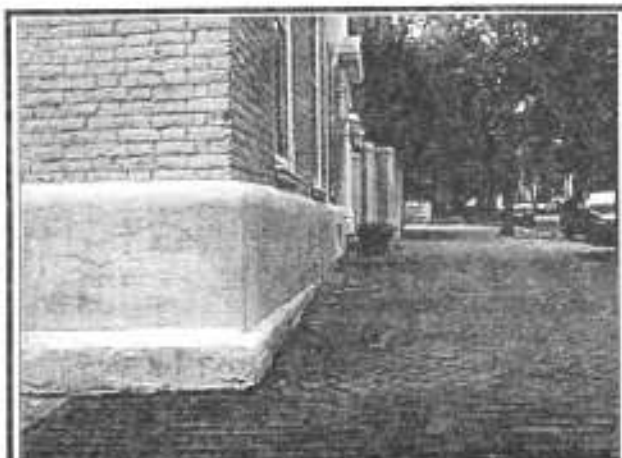


Figure 2 Corner of 520 Prince/202 S. St. Asaph looking south. House is set back from correct street boundary.

property. (In 1796, the owner of the 28' x 100' property, Dennis Foley, subdivided it into two 28' x 50' lots and placed the northern half --216 S. St. Asaph Street in a trust for his wife's separate support.) Several Sanborn maps show a 24'x 19' brick dwelling on this site for much of the 19th century. Presumably, it

was a residential structure which has been replaced by a 20th century house of a completely different configuration. Also, the map shows the setback of the 520 Prince/202 St. Asaph house, and it shows that the 523 Duke house on the corner is not set back from St. Asaph.

Another Sanborn map shows both the 200 and 300 blocks on the west side of South St. Asaph Street. The eastward projections of the Dulany house, 601 Duke Street and the 305 and 307 S. St. Asaph houses appear to be equal, and the 1929 survey maps at City Hall confirm that they are within inches of being at the same eastward projection.

McDonald and Hartz have made careful measurements of the blocks and properties in question. They determined the erroneous southward extensions on a few houses along Duke between Pitt and St. Asaph. And, they also documented the setbacks and projections on St. Asaph Street.

The questions of interest are whether and by how much St. Asaph Street was moved as a result of the movement of Pitt, and how various property boundaries were affected? The projections and setbacks of several houses--520 Prince/202 S. St. Asaph, 601 Duke, 305 and 307 S. St. Asaph would indicate that St. Asaph Street was moved westward by approximately 4 feet. Of course, this is about half the distance Pitt Street was moved. McDonald believes this occurred because the block

between Pitt and St. Asaph Street, like the one between Royal and Pitt, was already erroneously laid out. He believes the Pitt to St. Asaph Square was approximately 3'5" too wide, so the movement of St. Asaph Street needed to be only approximately 4' to accommodate the 7'5" shift of Pitt Street.

Meanwhile, McDonald and Hartz found independently an additional factor that fits into the picture. The house and land on the northeast corner of Duke and St. Asaph (523 Duke) is today wider than its original deed. In 1788, the first recorded sale of the property, it was described as extending 28' east from St. Asaph Street (Hustings Deed Book: C, p. 244) but that property now extends 32' eastward along Duke Street.

Hartz believes the answer is more complicated and that, perhaps, the boundaries and measurements along Prince, and those along Duke Street, are not related, and that development of the streets proceeded separately until a new survey, prior to 1800, unified the blocks. Unfortunately neither the 1873 newspaper column nor the 1800

enactment makes any reference to houses or boundaries on St. Asaph, and has been noted, doesn't quantify the movement of Pitt Street. Further research is needed.

McDonald notes that the setback of 520 Prince, and the projections of 601 Duke, 305 and 307 S. St. Asaph Street were all observed by Hartz early in their collaboration, which is true. McDonald asks, quite rightly, what is the explanation of the location of these pre-1800 houses, all approximately 4' east of our modern street boundaries? Is

it accidental or is it causal? McDonald is convinced that it is causal and that each of the four houses was built at the existing street boundaries and that those boundaries were later shifted by approximately four feet.



Figure 3 523 Duke, approximately 4' wider than original 1788 deed.

Hartz believes that the boundaries were moved in some cases, but notes that the quarter blocks along St. Asaph were developed privately by several different individuals. It is possible, according to Hartz, that each quarter block was laid out separately without close co-ordination and only squared up sometime between

1795 and 1800. Hartz points out that two other pre-1800 buildings still stand on the west side of St. Asaph between King and Prince--113 and 115. They also project east of the modern boundary line--but not by 3'8", rather by only 18 inches. To be correct about it, St. Asaph Street between King and Wolfe Street looks today like it was laid out by a drunken sailor 200 years ago. Very few of today's houses are exactly 12' from the curb line. Some are off by a few inches; others by a few feet.

Hartz believes the 18th century developers of the quarter block at the southeast corner of Prince and St. Asaph knew where the new boundaries were going to be by 1782, and the new owner and his heirs, especially, may have profited from that knowledge.

Despite many discussions of pertinent factors, Hartz and McDonald are unable to reach agreement about the Pitt and St. Asaph Street boundary quandary.

Fallout --

Results from the street boundary movements fall into at least three categories.

- *Surviving buildings which sit back from or project beyond current street lines.

- *Questionable/disputed boundaries between properties.

- *Erroneous measurement figures cited in deeds.

Setbacks & Projections

1) The most prominent building in the first category is the 501 Duke (N.W. corner of Duke and Pitt Streets). That house projects approximately 7'5" eastward from the houses to the north. Current deeds merely state that the city council has granted an easement for the projection. Some people have assumed that the builder had erred in placing the house at that location. We now know that it was built at the existing west boundary of Pitt prior to 8 April 1795 and that the 5 February 1800 enactment provided for it's preservation at that location..

The house at 501 Duke, having been built before 8 April 1795, was thus protected. (Were the three surviving houses on the west side of St. Asaph similarly protected?)

2) The house at 212 S. Pitt is a prominent example of a setback. Although the front part of the house is not a pre-1795, the location of the house is surely not accidental. It is reasonable to believe that it stands at the pre-1800 street boundary and may be resting on the footings of a pre-1800 building.

3) As discussed in the Discover section, on St. Asaph Street, the houses at 601 Duke, 305 and 307 S. St. Asaph project across the west boundary and the 520 Prince house sits back from the east line.

Through document and deed research, empirical observations, and physical measurements the following

facts have been established.

1. The square from Royal to Pitt Street along Prince is more than nine feet wider than the prescribed 246 ft. 10 inches.

2. The house at 212 S. Pitt sits back approximately 8 to 9 ft. from the current east boundary, whereas 501 Duke at the corner of Pitt projects approximately 7'5" eastward of the current west boundary of Pitt. The setback and projection both stem from the pre-1800 boundaries.

3. The west boundary of Pitt Street was moved westward approximately 7'5" and Pitt Street today is the correct width--66 feet.

4. The 502 Prince Street lot (now part of the east garden of 504 Prince and 207 S. Pitt) was reduced from 27'5" x 100' to only 20' x 100' as a result of the movement of the west boundary of Pitt Street. (And that reduced the distance between Pitt Street and the 504 Prince house from 51'5" to only 44 feet.) The shift also altered the widths of other properties in the block.

5. The Dulany House (northwest corner of St. Asaph and Duke Street (601 Duke) as well as the houses at 305 and 307 S. St. Asaph, all project eastward across the current west boundary by the same approximate distance. Those projections are approximately the same as the setback of the house at 520 Prince/202 S. St. Asaph.

6. The 5 February 1800 enactment was not entered into the land records, nor can we find any contemporary mention of it in newspapers of the period.

7. Many of the post-1800 deeds for properties on the block between Pitt and St. Asaph contain erroneous measurements. Deed writers ignored the 1800 street boundary changes; they simply copied and recopied figures from the pre-1800 deeds.

Photographs, 1997;
courtesy of James Hartz

Biography

Colonel S. King Shay

"We chronicle today the death of Col. S. King Shay who died at his residence on Pitt Street, just before midnight last night [January 8, 1874]. He had been in failing health for several years, and having reached the three score and ten year fixed by the psalmist as the term of man's life, passed away from the natural decay of physical powers. Col. Shay was a native of this city having been born here while his father, a Baptist minister, was in charge of the Baptist Church. He was removed while quite an infant to the Eastern Shore of Maryland and there lost both parents, and was left to the care of his uncle. At the militia musters during his boyhood, there he first developed a taste for military parade, and he often in latter years told his friends what pleasure it gave him when but ten

years of age to be selected to beat the drum at the general musters during the war with Great Britain. Soon after that he was engaged in the tobacco business in Baltimore, and in 1824 raised and commanded a volunteer company in that city. After some time spent on the Eastern Shore of Maryland in teaching school, he again returned to Baltimore, whence he went to Washington at the solicitation of some prominent Jackson men. There he was for a short time engaged in the tobacco business. Soon afterwards, he came here, married an Alexandria lady, and after engaging for some time in the tobacco trade in connection with the late John Grubb, he was appointed principal of the Alexandria Free School, a position held by him until 1855. During Buchanan's administration he was appointed Surveyor of Customs for this port and held that office until the Civil War; during which he was again appointed principal of the Alexandria Free School and continued in charge until that school was merged into the public school system of the State. Always devoted to military affairs, he became soon after his residence here a captain of militia in the old District Regiment, and upon the reorganization of our militia system under the laws of Virginia in 1847, Shay was again chosen to the command of a company whence he advanced to command of the One Hundred and Seventy-fifth Regiment. An industrious speculative Mason from his connection with that order in early life, he gave much of his time and attention to its concerns and became deeply versed in its love, filling at different times the office of Worshipful Master of Andrew Jackson

Lodge and High Priest of Mount Vernon Chapter and being employed on some of the most important Masonic commissions in the State; for politics from his youth to manhood a warm Democrat, he was long a local leader in the old Democracy here and showed the confidence of the leading men of that party. While his strength lasted, he was an active citizen; but for many years age has touched his locks and bent his form, wasted his frame and withdrawn him from all public duty. His funeral will take place under charge of the Masonic fraternity here." [Source: Alexandria Gazette; January 9, 1874]

Jefferson Tacey

Born in Kilham, Yorkshire, England, on the 20th of January, 1830, Jefferson Tacey married very early in life and in 1849 came to America. The Tacey's initially resided in Washington, City before moving to Harper's Ferry, Virginia. From Harper's Ferry Mr. Tacey came to Alexandria, where he worked as a paper hanger and upholsterer. He resided on Shuter's Hill, on the north side of the Alexandria and Leesburg Turnpike [Route #7].

"In 1861, Mr. Tacey was appointed clerk to the County and Circuit Courts of Alexandria City and County in which position he won an enviable reputation. To his great fitness for this position, he had few equals and no superiors. He was successively elected to the clerkship for nine years. After the death of Mr. V.P. Corbett, Treasurer of Alexandria County, Mr. Tacey was appointed to

fill his unexpired term. At the expiration of that term, he was elected Treasurer of Alexandria County, and was re-elected in May, 1879. Here, again, he was known as a faithful public servant; a guardian over the money and business interests of the people who had thus honored him."

"He was also, during the time of his treasurership, engaged as a clerk to the President of the Farmers' and Mechanics' Saving's Bank, at the disastrous suspension of which institution his character as an honest, faithful and upright man was unimpeached."

"He has been in declining health for several years, but with occasional confinements to his room, he kept up until Thursday, January 8, 1880, when he took to bed. On Monday he sank into a state of comma; on Tuesday his right side was paralyzed, and without waking, quietly slept down into the "valley of silence," breathing his last without a pain or a struggle."

Mr. Tacey was a charter member of the Old Dominion Commandery of Knights Templar.

His funeral was held at the Methodist Protestant Church on January 16, 1880, and he was subsequently interred at Ivy Hill Cemetery. [Alexandria Gazette: January 15, 1880]

Vignettes from the Pages of the Alexandria Gazette

DOG IN A FURNACE.--A dog got into a furnace on Royal Street near the market last night soon after a fire had been kindled in it, and while it was only just warm enough to be comfortable, and fixed himself for a nap. No one being aware that the furnace had an occupant, the door was closed and towards morning when the heat was rising, the residents of that neighborhood heard music in the air, not of the most dulcet strains, however, but ear piercing, and so continuous as to bring the almost cooked animal relief in time to save his life. [AG: 2/3/1874]

NEW CLUB. --A club, called the Whiskey Drinking Society was organized and officers elected, at the grocery of Martin Lawler, near the Bridge Pump, on Thursday night, one of the by-laws of which was as follows: Each member shall pay a fee of ten cent a week, and no member shall receive anything from the club for sickness unless said sickness shall result from one week's drunkenness, in which case he shall then be recompensed with two drinks a day for ten days. [AG: 2/14/1874]

CAVING IN OF A WELL. -- The top of the well of the street pump at the corner of Water and Wilkes Streets, fell in this morning, while a boy was drawing water, but the little

fellow held on to the handle of the pump, and so saved himself from a fall that would most probably have resulted in his death. [AG: 2/14/1874]

DANGEROUS WELLS. -- The covering of an old pump well in front of the planing mill of Mr. T. V. Rishiell, at the corner of Queen and Fairfax Streets, fell in on Saturday night, leaving a dangerous hole in the sidewalk. Fortunately no one was passing over it at the time, although the spot is one frequently crossed by both vehicles and pedestrians.

There are numbers of these old covered wells on nearly every street in the city, and many of them are in a sunken and dangerous condition. In many cases, it is understood, that when the pumps were removed, only wooden coverings were put over the wells and then the pavement replaced. The matter is a very important one concerning the safety of life and limb of every citizen, and should receive the immediate attention of the proper authorities. The wells might be made to act as cisterns in time of fire by the introduction of iron pipes and caps, thus increasing our water supply. [AG: 8/18/1879]

MARY CUSTIS LEE IN ITALY -- Miss Lee, [the oldest] daughter of General Robert E. Lee, has been having an adventure in Italy. While stopping at the Hotel Royal des Strangers in Naples she accidentally ignited the mosquito bar in her room, destroyed all the curtains in the room and came near setting the hotel on fire. She offered

to pay for the damage. The landlord demanded 2,000 francs for what was liberally estimated to be only worth \$70. The American Consul was called in. The landlord reflected in some way on the character of Miss Lee and was immediately struck by Mr. Clark, of South Carolina. A general row followed, which was participated in by Judge Melton, Col. John T. Sloan, Jr., Mr. D.A.P. Jordan, of South Carolina and Dr. I.B. Roberts of Georgia, on one side, and all the hotel clerks, waiters and citizens of Naples on the other. Colonel Sloan challenged the landlord to meet him in the garden with sword or pistol. The landlord compromised on \$70 and didn't fight. [AG: 8/3/1878]

SUIT AGAINST THE CITY -- Edmund Burke, esq. counsel for Mr. Thomas Huntington, has entered suit against the city in the Circuit Court, for \$3,000 damages, for injuries sustained by being thrown from a sleigh on King street, last winter. It will be remembered that Mr. Huntington and his daughter were thrown out of their sleigh by reason of a pile of dirt, under the snow near the corner of King and Alfred streets, and that the former was seriously cut and bruised on the head and face. [AG: 2/27/1878]

THE MARKET HOUSE VANE. -- Clarence Ward, a sailor, from Albany, N.Y., this morning ascended the spire of the Market House steeple and regulated the turning of the vane thereon. He made the ascent about ten o'clock, going

up, hand over hand, by a rope reeved through the pulleys in the top of the spire, then throwing ropes over the balls, by which he pulled himself up. He worked on the vane until about half past twelve o'clock, when he descended in the same manner by which he had gone up. His movements were closely watched by a large number of people. He will be paid by the Committee on Public Property. [AG: 3/13/1878]

FORBIDDEN--The Mayor has instructed the policemen to break up the practice of boys playing baseball in the streets and vacant lots of the city. Hereafter they will be compelled to use the commons on the outskirts for that purpose. The practice of rolling wheelbarrows on the sidewalks will also be stopped, and a persistence therein will subject the offender to arrest and punishment, as the law directs. Much complaint has been made by ladies and others in regard to this latter nuisance, and also to the carrying of hog slops on the sidewalks. [AG: 3/28/1878]

THE VICTORIOUS COW -- A wild cow created considerable excitement at the foot of King Street, last evening. She broke away from her owner, who was trying to drive her into the Potomac Ferry Company's enclosure [foot of King Street], and made an attempt to enter Petty's restaurant, [Seaport Inn] but was driven off by the employees. The cow, which was evidently of a boisterous nature, then took a bee line across the street, and bolted into the dining room of

Schneider's restaurant, and not finding anything to suit her there, continued her trip to the bar room. In that room were two gallant ex-Confederates who were recounting their many hardships and tribulations during "the times that tried men's souls." The cow made a sudden break for them, head down, and they immediately "went back" on their war records and ingloriously fled. The more agile of the two mounted into a high window while his companion, who suffers from weak ankles, was only able to reach a tall stool. Meanwhile, the bartender drove off the animal with a broom, and after paying her respects to the place, she went peaceably out of doors. The "gallant captains that they are" then descended from their perches, and are very weary today when anybody says "cow" to them. [AG: 8/22/1879]

DANGEROUS NUISANCE -- Complaint is made that many persons are in the habit of leaving the coal trays in the pavements fronting their residences unfastened. The practice is an exceedingly dangerous one and should be stopped at once. Last night a young gentleman walking along south Fairfax Street between Duke and Wolfe fell into one of these pitfalls and was severely bruised and cut, barely escaping a broken leg. [AG: 12/5/1877]

TIGHT ROPE WALKER -- An individual calling himself Professor Dare gave an exhibition of tight rope walking at the corner of King and Pitt Street today. The

rope was stretched from the Marshall House building [S.E. corner of Pitt & King Street] to Brashear's store, opposite, and the performer exhibited numerous wonderful feats upon the rope in the presence of a large crowd, and apparently at the imminent danger of breaking his neck. [AG: 10/24/1879]

BI-CYCLE--Alexandria has a bicycle at last. Mr. F.E. Corbot, deputy collector of customs has on exhibition at the Custom house, an improved bi-cycle. A bi-cycle ride must be splendid but the uninitiated might just as well try to ride a fiery, untamed steed, as a bi-cycle. All the old impressions of the first attempt at skating are brought up at looking at them--how, when standing on the ice, the feet gradually sliding apart, the distance between them widening, until they can't go any further, and then the crash. Awful! [AG: 12/17/1879]

Businesses of Yesteryear

A King Street Jewel Box --

The Alexandria National Bank by T. Michael Miller

One of the most elegant buildings to be constructed in pre-Civil War Alexandria was a four-story Italianate structure located at the N.E. corner of King and Royal Streets. Erected during the early months

of 1860 by Witmer & Co., and Baldwin & Co. [shoemakers], this new edifice was exhaustively described by the Alexandria Gazette in its January 28, 1860 edition:

"The new building will front forty feet on King Street and extend along Royal Street sixty feet, with a short two-story projection to the east ward on its rear, and extending behind the house now occupied by Mr. William Buckingham. It will reach a height of fifty five feet, and will consist of four high airy stories and a commodious basement.

The King Street front has been designed with great taste and skill, and when completed, will be one of the finest ornaments of the thoroughfare that passes before it. The first story will exhibit three tastefully molded doors, and as many windows, the latter of a single plate glass. The moldings and other ornaments which are designed for this portion of the building are neat and elegant and will afford a chaste and fine finish. Iron railings beneath the windows will protect ground lights, that will serve to light the basement. The three upper stories, each with a tier of three windows handsomely ornamented, will be of pressed brick and are to be adorned with quoins of mastic projecting at the corners and between the windows. The whole to be surmounted by a finely paneled cornice five feet in height, rising in the center and capped by handsome ornaments.

The Royal Street elevation on its first story consists of one plate glass window at the King Street end, four half blind windows, the lower portions being bricked up so that the light shall only be admitted through the upper portions, and only shine over the shelving,--and a handsome door at the northern end which is intended to communicate with the counting room. The three other stories are lighted on the Royal Street side by five windows of a similar character with those on King Street, and are to have similar quoins. The whole of this elevation to be of pressed brick, save the quoins which are to be of mastic, corresponding with the King Street front. This elevation is also to be surmounted with a handsome cornice and ornaments. The Royal Street pavement is to be vaulted for cellars, and the basement kept dry by the most approved modern methods. The upper portions of the building will be reached by a stairway from the eastern door on King Street.

The whole building, which will bear a marked resemblance to the new store of Perry Brothers in Washington, will be an ornament to King Street, and a valuable addition to the real estate of the city.

The contractors for the building are: for the joiner's work, Stephen Swain; and for the brick work, the Messrs. Javins."

In 1879, Isaac Eichberg purchased the edifice from H.C. Slaymaker and Company. Both

men operated very successful clothing wholesale and retail dry goods stores here.

Isaac Eichberg, at the time of his death in November 1914, was one of Alexandria's oldest and best known merchants. He was born in Bavaria around 1831, and came to Alexandria in the early 1850s where he was the proprietor of a clothing and furnishing goods business on the northwest corner of King and Royal Streets. "He continued in the clothing business up to the close of the Civil War, after which he engaged in other occupations, having been associated in banking institutions and building associations. For several years he represented the Third Ward in the Common Council and was for a time President of the Board." In the 1880s, Eichberg, in partnership with Henry Schwartz, again opened a dry goods and merchant tailors business in the Italianate building at 325-329 King Street. The firm remained viable until the turn of the 20th century when it closed. [Alexandria Gazette: 11/7/1914]

Prior to its occupancy by the Alexandria National Bank in 1904, the Eichberg building was remodeled by local contractor and builder Joseph Rodgers in November 1903. It was agreed that the new bank would be capitalized at \$100,000, of which Alexandrians supplied 40% of the funds. On March 9, 1904, the Alexandria National Bank opened its doors and its officers and directors included

Judge C.E. Nicol of Manassas, president; W.B. Smoot of Alexandria, first vice president; S. Russell Smith, of Culpeper, second vice president. The directors of the bank were Messrs. S.J. Johnston of Leesburg; John A. Marshall, James W. Roberts, E.L. Cockrell, of Washington; W.A. Smoot, jr., C.T. Martz, Henry F. Robertson, J.W. Yates, George R. Hill, S.J. Johnston and T.C. Smith.

A fire erupted at the bank on February 12, 1908, and "was extinguished before any serious damage had resulted, although some woodwork was burned and plastering knocked from the wall."

The Alexandria National Bank occupied the Italianate building until 1961, when City Council allocated \$135,000 to purchase it under the Urban Renewal Program. It was subsequently razed and replaced by an underground parking building and a portion of City Hall Plaza.



The Alexandria National Bank
N.E. corner of King
& Royal Streets

Photograph -- Courtesy of

William Francis Smith

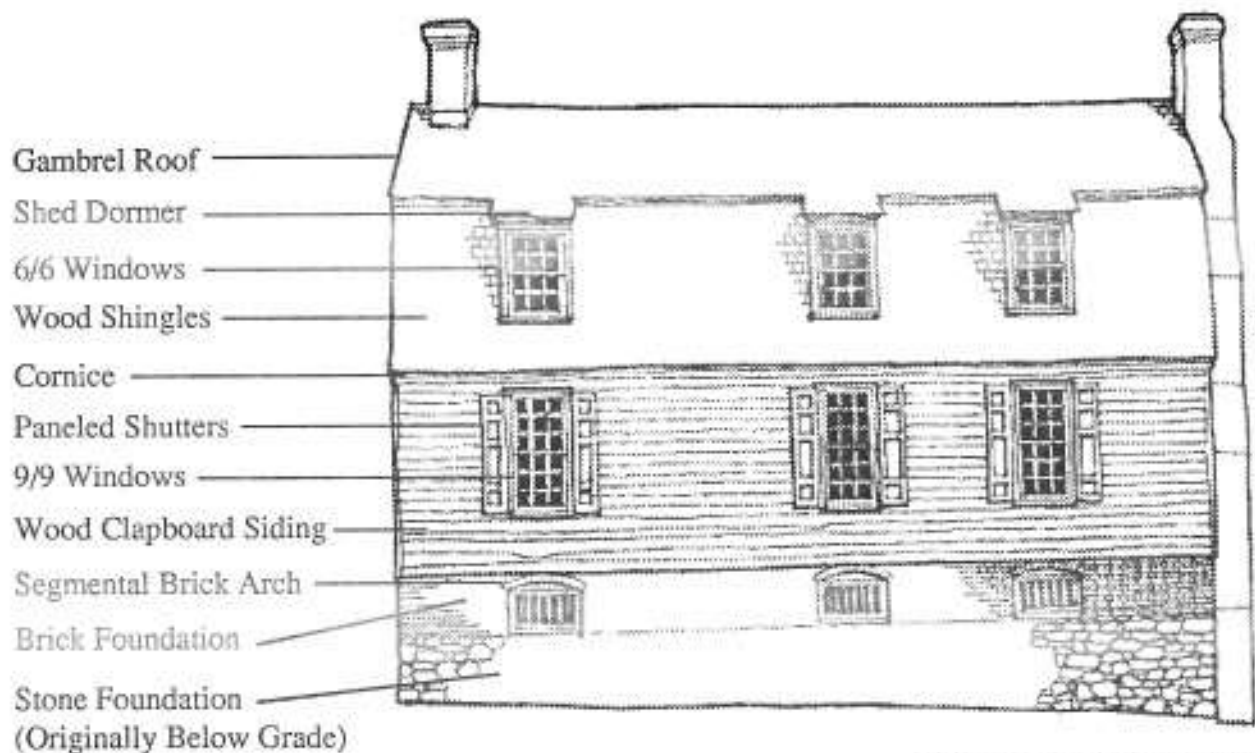
A Seaport Saga

Portrait of Old Alexandria

Virginia

Common Architectural Terms

by Peter Smith, Ph.D.
& Al Cox, A.I.A.



Drawing by Al Cox, AIA

Ramsay House, 221 King Street (North Fairfax Street elevation).
Mid-18th century, reconstructed 1956.

Ramsay House located at 221 King Street is a cultural icon in Alexandria and is generally referred to as the oldest house in the city. Today its distinctive outline is a symbol of the historic heritage of Alexandria. It currently is the city's visitor center and offices for the Alexandria

Convention and Visitors Bureau. The route to becoming a cultural icon took more than ten years and was a torturous path that was filled with numerous threats to demolish the building.

Beginning in 1946 Milton Grigg, an Alexandria native and one of

the original band of architects that restored Colonial Williamsburg, was the architect responsible for the restoration of the Ramsay House at the corner of King and North Fairfax Streets. Grigg was associated with the restoration of the house over a ten year period. The restoration was plagued with multitudes of problems and architectural plans were reformulated a number of times to reflect the realities of the private fund raising efforts as well as changes in the proposed use of the restored building. Eventually the work was completed and the house dedicated in 1956.

The Alexandria Chronicle is happy to announce that architectural historians Peter Smith and Al Cox will write a quarterly column which will

highlight Alexandria's rich architectural heritage.

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The publication of the Alexandria Chronicle is made possible by the support of the J. Patten Abshire Fund.

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