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The Mystery Surrounding G.W.P. Custis' Painting of George Washington at Yorktown

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Rescue of the Arlington House Furniture and Paintings

During the Federal invasion of Virginia in May 1861, Arlington House, the residence of Robert E. Lee and his family, was seized by the Union army. Constructed between 1802 and 1818 by George Washington Parke Custis, this neo-classical revival mansion was designed by architect George Hadfield and exhibits features reminiscent of a Greek temple. Beautifully situated, it commands a panoramic view of Washington City.

After the death of G.W.P. Custis in 1857, Arlington House was devised to Mary Anna Randolph Custis (Mrs. Robert E. Lee) for her lifetime and then entrusted to her son George Washington Custis Lee. Robert E. Lee, as executor, was in residence at Arlington settling the estate from November 1857 through February 1860 when he rejoined his cavalry regiment in Texas. In March 1861, Lee returned to Arlington when Texas withdrew from the Union and awaited Virginia's fateful decision on secession. Having resigned his U.S. Army commission

on April 20, 1861, Lee subsequently left Arlington and traveled by train to Richmond where he was offered command of Virginia forces by Governor Letcher on the 23th.

The Arlington estate suffered during the interim conflict. Many valuable Lee heirlooms and relics, formerly the property of George Washington, were vandalized and confiscated by Federal occupation troops. In 1863, Union authorities advertised the sale of Arlington for non-payment of taxes:

The Arlington estate, in this county, lately occupied by General Robert E. Lee and the Custis Mill property are advertised by John Hawxhurst, W.F. Bowman and C.F. Watson, Commissioners to be sold for unpaid taxes under the recent acts of the Congress of the U.S. The tax due on the Arlington Estate is \$92.07, penalty \$46.04, on the Mill property \$9.45.

Cassius Lee, (b. 1808; d. 1890), General Lee's favorite boyhood cousin and son of Edmund Jennings Lee, had emigrated to Canada after having been arrested by Federal authorities and charged with spying for the Confederacy. Cassius received an advertisement for the sale of Arlington while in Canada and wrote P.R. Fendall¹, his first cousin of Washington City

the following letter.

Guelph (Canada)
November 27, 1863

Dear Cousin,

I enclose you an advertisement cut, I presume from an Alexandria paper, as it was sent to me from that place--by which you will see that the property of one of our relatives, or rather his wife, for he has no legal interest in it--is advertised for sale for taxes. It may be well to pay the taxes for her--I have never seen the law--but if you will look at it-- & if you think it best, pay the taxes--or get someone to do it--if not convenient to you, I will see that they are refunded. I have no Federal money by now but expect some to be paid in Alexandria shortly when I can return you the money. If you enclose the amt. to R. Johnston² Alexandria--he will attend to paying the bill for you. Have you heard anything further about my Bro. Richard,³ & the prospect of his exchange?...

P.R. Fendall's notation

Ans'd 1 Dec. '63

It will not be convenient for me to advance the taxes. ...

For reasons not known, Philip R. Fendall informed Cassius Lee that he could not pay the back taxes on the Arlington Estate. Perhaps, his

taxes. The sale transpired at the corner of Prince and Washington Streets with the result that Arlington was bid in by the United States Government for \$26,800 and the mill was struck off to M.E. Flanagan for \$4,100.

After the war in 1865, Philip



Green's Furniture Factory
constructed circa 1836

decision may have been predicated on the fact that: (1) he did not have sufficient cash on hand or (2) he feared Federal reprisal if he interfered in the situation.

On January 11, 1864, the Arlington Estate including the Custis Mill in Alexandria County was placed on the auction block in Alexandria for non-payment of direct U.S.

Fendall did proffer his services to General and Mrs. Lee to regain possession of Arlington House. On September 11, 1866, Mary, R.E. Lee's oldest daughter, wrote her cousin P.R. Fendall as follows:

Lexington Sept. 11, 1866

My dear Cousin Philip:

I received your kind letter last night and hastened to answer it, and express my thanks for the kind interest you have taken in our affairs, and your offers of assistance. I am now so much out of the world, thirty six miles from a Rail Road, that I scarcely think I can undertake another trip to Washington especially as I think the matter can be arranged without me. Mama wishes the things removed to Green's Warehouse⁴ in 'Alexandria' & as Mr. Francis L. Smith,⁵ of that place, has been in the habit of attending to business for us, thinks that you had better send to him the 'list,' and official permission and let him make all the arrangements about having the things transported, stored, etc.

However, she is writing to you herself, & will write also to Mr. Smith on the subject. I should also be very much obliged if you would send me a copy of the list of articles. When at 'Arlington' last I made out a list myself of all that I saw, but I could not obtain access to all of the rooms. Of course, much is irretrievably gone, but what is left would be a sad satisfaction for us to recover.

We thought as Mr. Smith lives in 'Alexandria' and was

acquainted with the Greens, etc., it would be more convenient and save you much trouble for him to attend to it but at the same time it is needless to say how much we appreciate your kind efforts in our behalf, and offers of assistance.

A week later Mrs. Lee also corresponded with Fendall thanking him for his kind assistance. She stated that cousin Martha Williams,⁶ who had resided with them at Arlington for many years, would be leaving Lexington and would confer with him regarding the removal of Lee property at Arlington.

We have a faithful woman still at Arlington who was left in charge of the house (Selina Gray Jones) who can give some information concerning all that is contained. ...I am particularly anxious to receive my family Bible...the frames of all my pictures which I left hanging on the walls of the rooms...and a small Mexican saddle mounted with silver left in the garret and a large package sewed up in livery containing a very handsome crimson silk brocade curtains and an old fashioned brocade dress of my grandmother (Martha Washington)...The General unites with me in kindest regards to yourself and

family.

During this interval, Fendall wasted no time in securing the remaining Lee possessions at Arlington. He hired John W. Green⁷ who acquired several wagons and proceeded to Arlington to retrieve the remaining furniture and pictures. Mr. Green encountered resistance from the Federal officer in charge at Arlington, but after an order was sent from the War Department, Green was given permission to transport the Lee effects to his warehouse in Alexandria. The Alexandria Gazette of October 3, 1866, announced the results of the expedition:

GEN. LEE'S FURNITURE--

Major John W. Green, in charge of a train of wagons and accompanied by Miss Williams of Georgetown and Mr. Fendall of Washington, went from this city yesterday to Arlington, for the purpose of identifying and removing to a place of safekeeping, such household articles, belonging to Gen. Lee as had been left there by the United States troops. The furniture is mostly in worthless and a dilapidated condition, and was receipted for as such. It is now stored in the warehouse of Green and Brother, in this city. Major Green made another trip to Arlington today

with his train, and, as the agent of P.R. Fendall, esq., who has the order for the restitution of the furniture, will bring away from there everything which can be identified as belonging to any of Gen. Lee's family.

Later the old frames, paintings and several pieces of the Lee's furniture were repaired at the Green Furniture factory on the S.E. corner of Fairfax and Prince Street.

Among the articles saved from the wreck at Arlington were many of the paintings that...adorned the walls of that then beautiful and hospitable mansion. Most of them are defaced--either by soldiers or by transportation ...Among them are a head and bust of G.W.P. Custis painted by G(ilbert) Stuart--an excellent likeness, portraying with vividness the bald head, the fair complexion, verging upon florid, the short side whiskers, extending from the top of ear to the angle of the jaw, and the light and kindly beaming eye of the 'child of Mount Vernon,' so well remembered by most of the middle aged and older residents of the city...

[In addition there were] portraits of six spirited and

original Revolutionary battle scenes, in which Washington participated--Battles of Trenton, Princeton, Germantown and Monmouth, Washington at Yorktown, and the Surrender at Yorktown, painted by Mr. Custis when he was more than eighty years old. Also there was a portrait of Martha Washington painted by Wollaston in 1757, and portraits of Col. Daniel Parke and John Custis. ...These and many other pictures representing either persons belonging to the Parke, Custis, Washington, Lewis, Lee and other illustrious families, or scenes in which they were actors, are being cleaned, varnished and reframed, and sent off to their owner, the widow of General Robert E. Lee, parcel by parcel, as rapidly as the work upon them is completed.⁸

For many years the Green family of Alexandria and Lees of Arlington had been good friends. Cabinetmaker James Green had manufactured a "handsome carved high poster bed as well as a butler's tray and stand" for Robert and Mary soon after the couple were married in 1831.⁹

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON PAINTING: One of the paintings saved from Arlington House depicted

Washington and his horse at Yorktown. In the 1870s, Mrs. Robert E. Lee decided to present this likeness which had been executed by her father George W.P. Custis to the Alexandria City Council.

On July 17, 1873, a notation concerning this donation was entered in the Alexandria Common Council minutes:

A communication from Green & Brother, addressed to George R. Shinn, esq., President of the Common Council, stating that they had in their possession an oil painting (50 x 72 inches) of General Washington, belonging to Mrs. Mary Custis Lee, painted by her father, the late G.W.P. Custis, and asking permission to hang the same over the President's chair, was read and the permission asked for was granted.¹⁰

The painting was accepted by the city and hung in Council Chambers for many years. The Alexandria Gazette of July 25, 1873 described the acquisition in this fashion:

PICTURE OF GENERAL WASHINGTON. --An oil painting, fifty by seventy-two inches, of General Washington and his horse, painted by the late George W.P. Custis, and presented to the Common

Council by Mrs. Gen. R.E. Lee, through Green & Bro. of this city, now adorns the Council Chamber, hanging on the wall over the President's chair.¹¹

The portrait of George Washington which presently hangs in City Council Chambers is a reproduction of the Gilbert Stuart painting of Washington, not the original picture by G.W.P. Custis. What happened to the valuable historic heirloom which Mrs. R.E. Lee donated to the City of Alexandria?

Evidence suggests that for many years the Washington portrait by Custis had been displayed in Council Chambers. Unfortunately, in the early 20th century, city officials were unaware of the provenance of the painting. Its association with G.W.P. Custis, Martha Washington's grandson, was unaccountably overlooked until Capt. L.A. Williams, assistant Superintendent of Arlington House, visited Charles Callahan¹² and brought proof of the painting's origin. The headline of the July 30, 1931 Alexandria Gazette reads: "Identity of Old Painting Established--Work of George Washington Parke Custis Adopted Son of Washington--From Arlington--**Mystery of How City Obtained Painting, Perhaps, Never will be Solved.**"

"The mystery of the origin of the painting of George Washington hanging in the south corridor of the city hall building which depicts Washington leaning on his horse at Yorktown watching the progress of the siege and showing the breastworks and cannon balls scattered in the distance, the English fleet, ... was solved today.

This was the second visit of Capt. Williams here in connection with this mission. Capt. Williams is engaged in the task of restoring Arlington Mansion and this motive promoted him to come here and examine the painting which is 5 feet tall and 4 feet wide.

The painting was removed from the wall and the name of the painter, George Washington Parke Custis, adopted son of Washington, was found printed on the back of the canvass.

The principal interest attached to the canvass is its association with the Custis and Lee families. ... There is no record of it ever b e i n g presented to the city.

[ABSOLUTELY FALSE]

The painting for many years hung on the south wall of the

city hall which was at that time the chamber of the old Common Council." ¹³

After the publication of this article, Brigadier General L.W. Bash, Assistant to the Quartermaster General of the Army, wrote a letter to Mayor Edmund Ticer which requested that the City of Alexandria return the Custis painting to Arlington House. "Members of City Council decided to defer action pending a further investigation of how it came into the possession of the Washington painting. The letter set forth that if the painting was returned to Arlington, it would be credited with a suitable marker and also so recorded in the catalogue. Mayor Ticer explained to government officials some weeks ago that in examining the painting it was found marked on the back 'G.W.P. Custice.' It is assumed that the person marking it did not know how to spell the name which is 'Custis.'" ¹⁴

One week later Mayor Ticer received an anonymous letter which purported that the Custis painting of Washington originally belonged to the Alexandria Washington Lodge. It read:

Honorable Sir: The oil painting depicting General Washington standing beside a horse which adorns a wall in the City Hall corridor, was given to the

Masonic Lodge by a very old gentleman named Parke Custis, who lived in the old colonial mansion, 607 Oronoco Street. It was moved from there to the lodge room in the old market house, Cameron, Fairfax and Royal Streets in 1866 and was there until the night of the fire which destroyed the old building. The picture was salvaged about 11:45 p.m. May 19, 1871, by Major George W. Duffey, John Cogan, Richard Latham and Arthur C. Kell. It was carried to Mr. Frank Creighton's drugstore and it remained there a few days; was hauled to the residence of Mrs. Smith, corner of Wolfe and St. Asaph Street [510 Wolfe Street]. Mrs. Smith had two sons who lived with her, Courtland H. Smith and Capt. Francis L. Smith. It remained there until 1875 when it was placed in the corridor of the new market house (City Hall). The writer saw the picture in the year 1870, 1871, 1875 and again in the year 1930. ...It is a valuable painting, the frame alone has a considerable commercial value of \$10,000. The consensus here is that it should be hung in the George Washington Masonic Memorial on Shooter's Hill.

This letter may describe another painting that was saved from the City Hall fire of 1871, but not the Custis painting of Washington. First, George Washington Parke Custis never resided at 607 Oronoco Street as purported by the author. Mrs. Robert E. Lee had the Arlington furniture and paintings transported to Green's furniture factory in 1866. In addition, official City Council minutes document that Green and Brothers were requested by Mrs. Lee to donate the painting to the **CITY OF ALEXANDRIA**, not to the George Washington Lodge. The painting was subsequently donated to the City in 1873 and did not remain at 510 Wolfe Street until 1875 as stated. And, the Alexandria Gazette verifies the Custis painting was mounted in Council Chambers by July 25, 1873.

On January 1, 1932, City Manager Wallace Lawrence submitted communications relative "to a recent letter from Brigadier General L.H. Nash, requesting that the painting by George Washington Parke Custis be presented to the mansion at Arlington. Communication was received and placed on file."

"Mayor Ticer informed Council Mr. Williams, Custodian of the Lee Mansion at Arlington, had asked permission to have this painting copied. Upon motion by Councilman

Lamond, supported by Councilman Weil, permission was granted, Mr. Williams to have the painting copied provided the work is done in City Hall."¹⁵

Presently the Custis portrait of Washington and his horse hangs in the ante-room of the George Washington Lodge. After searching city documents and contacting officials of the Alexandria Washington Lodge, no evidence has been found to date which records that the City of Alexandria officially transferred the portrait to the Lodge.

How the Alexandria Washington Lodge obtained possession of the Custis painting which Mrs. R.E. Lee donated to the City of Alexandria and its citizenry remains a mystery. Perhaps, City Council felt the painting would be more secure if it were housed in the new George Washington Masonic Memorial. Was the portrait deaccessioned by municipal authorities and presented to the Lodge? Any additional information which the public might have regarding this mystery would be greatly appreciated.

ENDNOTES --

1. Philip Richard Fendall (b. December 18, 1794; d. February 16, 1867) was the son of Philip R. and Mary Lee Fendall of 614 Oronoco Street [the Lee-Fendall House]. As a

young man he attended Princeton University where he graduated with honors and later worked for his uncle Richard Bland Lee, Northern Virginia's first Congressman, in the project to rebuild Washington City after the British invasion of August 1814. Fendall served as editor of the National Journal in Washington, clerked for his good friend Henry Clay, Secretary of State, in the 1820s, and was appointed District Attorney for the City of Washington by Presidents Tyler and Fillmore from 1841-1845 and 1849-1853. A scholar and bibliophile, Fendall wrote the constitution and served as secretary of the American Colonization Society, an organization whose goal it was to extirpate slavery and resettle Blacks in Liberia. Furthermore, Fendall was a prominent attorney and edited the papers of President James Madison for the Library of Congress. A first cousin of Robert E. Lee, Philip Fendall worked as an ombudsman for the Lee family. During the Civil War two of Fendall's sons, Philip and James R. Y. Fendall, both served in the military, one in the Confederate and the other in the U.S. Marine Corps.

2. Reuben Johnston was an Alexandria attorney.

3. Judge Richard Lee (d. 1888) was reared in Alexandria and was Cassius F. Lee's brother. During the Civil War he entered the Confederate service and was captured twice. He was incarcerated at Johnson's Island, a Union prison on Lake Erie.

4. James Green's warehouse

and furniture factory was situated on the S.E. corner of Prince and Fairfax Streets.

5. While Fendall's role in the Arlington saga came to a close in 1866, Francis L. Smith, the Lee's family attorney, pressed for the return of Arlington to Mary Anna Custis Lee. After the death of General Lee in 1870 and his wife's demise in 1873, George Washington Custis Lee, their son, was finally indemnified \$150,000 in 1883 by the U.S. Government for the ILLEGAL seizure of Arlington. Ironically, it was not until 1901 that President McKinley signed an executive order returning the Lee heirlooms and furniture to Mary Lee, General Lee's daughter, acting agent for her brother G.W.C. Lee. She received a telegraph message informing her of McKinley's actions while visiting her cousin Mary Lloyd at 220 N. Washington Street, now the Lloyd House Library.

Francis Smith resided in a palatial mansion at 510 Wolfe Street. "On July 15, 1870, Robert E. Lee wrote his wife from Alexandria: 'I have seen Mr. Smith...this morning and had with him a long business talk...The prospect is not promising.' The unpromising prospect was the return of the Arlington estate by the Federal government, on which Smith, Lee's lawyer, was advising him." [Ethelyn Cox, Historic Alexandria Virginia -- Street by Street (Historic Alexandria Foundation, 1976), p. 199.

6. Martha Williams was the orphaned daughter of Mrs. R.E. Lee's first cousin America Peter of Tudor

Place Georgetown who married William George Williams. "Markie" as she was known to the Lee family was a frequent guest and resident at Arlington House before the Civil War.

7. John W. Green (b. 1827; d. 1906) was James Green's oldest son who joined his father in business in 1850. He was also an active member of the Relief Fire Company.

8. Alexandria Gazette: November 18, 1872

9. Green had also made a table for Wilbur McLean, an Alexandrian in whose parlor General Lee surrendered to U.S. Grant at Appomattox Courthouse, Virginia on April 9, 1865. The surrender documents ending the Civil War in Virginia were signed on the table manufactured by Green.

10. Alexandria Gazette: July 18, 1873

11. Alexandria Gazette: July 25, 1873

12. Charles Callahan was a prominent member of the George Washington Masonic Lodge who wrote a volume on George Washington entitled: Washington the Man and the Mason.

13. Alexandria Gazette: July 30, 1931

14. Alexandria Gazette: Sept. 4, 1931

15. Minutes of Alexandria City

Council: January 21, 1932

Vignettes from the Pages of the ALEXANDRIA GAZETTE:

March 25, 1784 -- "On Thursday Evening last the Anniversary of Sheelah, the sons of St. Patrick activated by that generous principle that ever distinguished them, gave a ball at Mr. Lomax's Tavern [south side of Princess between Fairfax and Lee Streets] that afforded universal satisfaction." [Virginia Journal & Alexandria Advertiser]

Crime & Punishment:

December 23, 1784 -- The inhabitants of the town are cautioned to guard against thieves -- several houses and warehouses having been broke open by them in the course of a few nights past. (VJAA)

May 26, 1785: Last Friday Francis Johnson and John Montgomery were convicted of Petty Larceny, and ordered to receive Thirty Lashes at the Public Whipping-Post. On the afternoon of the same day a cart with dry goods, was robbed on the road to Colchester of a trunk. Johnson and Montgomery are both taken up and committed to Gaol here as Perpetrators of the Robbery. A great part of the goods were found on Montgomery. (VJAA)

November 10, 1785: Last Monday Evening the tobacco warehouse in this town was broke open by some villains and a large quantity

of loose tobacco stolen therefrom.
(VJAA)

June 8, 1786 -- Last Monday
(June 5) afternoon, a number of
disorderly people assembled near
Cameron, [near the intersection of
Telegraph Road & Route 95] where
they attacked and unmercifully beat
with clubs all who came in their way.
They were with difficulty quelled but
not till they had been fired on and
several of them badly wounded. The
principal ringleaders were brought to
this town and committed to prison.
(VJAA)

January 4, 1787 -- Last Tuesday
(January 2) night two sailors called at a
tippling house in this town for grog, but
being refused, they turned about to go
away when some one in the house
immediately opened the door and
discharged a gun at them, the contents
of which was lodged in the shoulder of
Thomas Hindbough, carpenter of the
Besty (Capt. Story) who expired soon
after. A jury of inquest being
summoned on the body, brought in
their verdict "Willful Murder." The
supposed perpetrator of this horrid
deed has absconded, yet it is hoped he
will soon meet the just rewards of a
Murderer. (VJAA)

March 1, 1787 -- Last Monday a
noted Villain by the name of Perill
was convicted of breaking open a
house and stealing of Meat for which
he was sentenced to be whipped and
pilloried and the Sentence was
immediately executed. (VJAA)

March 29, 1787 -- Yesterday

Robert Little and Michael Fitzgerald
were publicly whipped, 39 lashes each,
at the whipping post in this town--They
were punished under the vagrant act;
but supposed to have been concerned
in many robberies. (VJAA)

May 17, 1787 -- Last evening
Hugh Taylor and Daniel Henness
(runaway servants belonging to the
Potomack Company) were sentenced to
receive 39 lashes each, for stealing
which sentence was immediately
executed. (VJAA)

June 14, 1787 -- A few days
since one Fitzgerald, who has
frequently been whipped here, again
received his Allowance at the whipping
post. (VJAA)

October 25, 1787 --On Monday
evening as a barber was walking in one
of the streets near the Water, when he
was stopped by several villains,
one of whom clapped a pistol to his
breast and demanded his money, which
they took from him. They then struck
him several times on the head with the
butt of the pistol and bruised him
very much. The same night a wagoner
was stopped near the Church by some
footmen and robbed of what money he
had about him, his hat.

Alexandria, Feb. 5, 1788

Last Week, between the hours of eight
and nine o'clock in the evening, two
daring villains on horseback, rode up to
the house of Mr. Hunter, shipwright, on
the lower end of Fairfax Street, one of
whom dismounted and entered a room
in which Mrs. Hunter was sitting with a
young child, and asked if her husband

negative, he said it made no difference as he wanted the money, and peremptorily demanded it, when Mrs. Hunter being much frightened gave a Shriek; the Villain instantly drew a dagger, threatening if she uttered another word he would plunge it in her breast.--At the same time the rascal who was mounted called out if she hesitates kill the child.--Luckily the maid heard her mistress scream, and came in a hurry into the room, which so alarmed the Villain that he mounted his horse and they both rode off. (VJAA)

Carlyle House struck by Lightning: July 11, 1785: Last Monday Afternoon there were frequent heavy gusts of thunder here, accompanied with hail and much rain, during which the lightning struck the conductor affixed to the house of William Herbert, esq; which it followed, without any further damage than breaking some of the windows, although the shock was so great as to tear the conductor down. The great quantity of rain which fell, did considerable damage to several new buildings, particularly a new brick building which is entirely destroyed. We hear from the Country, that much damage has been done by the hail, which was so amazingly large as to cut down fields of corn... (VJAA: July 14, 1785)

Alexandria Academy Foundation Stone Laid: September 7, 1785: On Wednesday, the 7th Instant, the Worshipful Master of Lodge No. 39, attended by the Brethren in procession, laid the Foundation stone of the

a plate with the following inscription: "The Foundation of the Alexandria Academy (S.E. corner of Wolfe & S. Washington Street) was laid the 7th of September, 1785, in the ninth year of the independence of the United States of North American, By Robert Adam, Esq. Master of Lodge No. 39, Ancient York Masons, attended by the Brethren; and as a monument of the generosity of the inhabitants, stands dedicated to them and all lovers of literature. (VJAA: 9/15/1785)

November 23, 1786 -- Last Tuesday as a flatman was assisting in hoisting tobacco on board the Charlotte, loading there, unfortunately a hogshead slipped out of the cann-hooks and crushed him instantly to death. (VJAA)

On Tuesday evening a blind Negro fellow named Wilkes, belonging to Mr. Andrew Wales, brewer, fell into the copper which had boiling water in it and so scalded him that he died the next morning. (VJAA:)

February 11, 1790 - On Friday last the inhabitants of this town and neighborhood enjoyed once more the heartfelt satisfaction of celebrating the Anniversary of the Savior of his Country, by an elegant Ball at Mr. Wise's Tavern. The meeting was numerous and brilliant. Joy beamed in every countenance. Sparkling eyes--dimpled cheeks dressed in smiles, prompted by the occasion with all the various graces of female beauty, contributed to heighten the pleasure of the scene. At an interesting moment,

a portrait of the President, a striking likeness, was suddenly exhibited. The illustrious original had been often seen in the same room, in the mild character of a friend, a neighbor, a pleased and pleasing guest. The song of "God Bless GREAT WASHINGTON!--Long live GREAT WASHINGTON!" succeeded. In this vocal prayer many voices and all Hearts united. May it not be breathed in vain. (Virginia Gazette & Alexandria Advertiser)

The SILVER GREYS:

George Washington described this organization in a private letter to James M. Henry on July 27, 1798:

"...The Greyheads of Alexandria, pretty numerous it seems and composed of all the respectable old people of the place having formed themselves into a company for the defence of the Town and its Vicinity, are in want of Colors and it being intimated that the presentation of them, I take the liberty of requesting the favor of you to have made and sent to me as soon as it is convenient such as will be appropriated to the occasion. [Writings of George Washington, Vol. 36, p. 368.]

The Silver Greys participated in many public celebrations in Alexandria and were afforded a special place of honor. As the years progressed the "Greyheads" who were once numerous in 1798, precipitately declined as many had become infirm. With the death of their commander, Col. Simms on August 29, 1819, the organization dissolved.

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE PUMPS--One by one the old pumps go and the wells are being gradually filled up. The one at the corner of Prince and Lee Streets which was arched over some years ago caved in last week and was filled in by Superintendent of Police Dobie. The water was never drinkable, was too hard for soapsuds, and the pump had been non-serviceable for some time. This pump well is not as old as most of the wells on Fairfax street, because the hill there was, until 1796, upon the bank of the river, it had abundance of water; but after the coves were filled into make land and the river banked out for a square or more east of the hill-top a pump became necessary, and the well now filled up dates from early in the present century. Most of the Lee street pumps from Fishtown [Oronoco to Queen Street] to the Tunnel [Wilkes Street] have now ben abandoned and many of them removed. [Alexandria Gazette: 8/22/1887]

AN ANCIENT GRAVE --While the workmen were engaged in digging clay from the bank near the canal, between this city and Washington, for the National Brick Works a few days ago, they came upon the perfect outline of a coffin, the only remnant of which that had not succumbed to the inexorable law of disintegration. Both the coffin and body were found to be one mass of clay. [AG: 9/2/1887] Could this have been an interment from the lost Philip R. Fendall graveyard (father of P.R. Fendall, Jr. in the Washington portrait story) which was situated near Route #1 and the present day Monroe Street Bridge? Fendall, the former clerk of the

Charles County Court came to Alexandria in 1784 and subsequently constructed the Lee-Fendall House at 614 Oronoco Street in 1785. A member of the Lee family, Fendall served as the first President of the Bank of Alexandria in 1793. Upon his death in 1805, Fendall and later his wife Mary (b. 1775; d. 1827) were both buried in a private, walled family cemetery on their farm adjacent to Alexandria. This cemetery disappeared about the time of the Civil War and may have been disturbed by Federal soldiers who bivouacked in this region during the conflict.

SAW JOHN WILKES BOOTH KILLED--Rev. Dr. R.B. Garrett, pastor of the Court Street Baptist Church, Norfolk, says that there can be no doubt that John Wilkes Booth was killed by Sergeant Boston Corbett and that the identification of the remarks of a man named George in Oklahoma those of the assassin of President Lincoln cannot be other than a mistake. "The slayer of President Lincoln died in my father's barn. His remains were most thoroughly identified from a photograph and the printed description that was possessed by the soldiers," said Rev. Dr. Garrett. There is not the shadow of a doubt but that his wild life was ended by Sergeant Corbett's bullet. I was there and was present at the identification. I know how thorough it was because it was the first intimation that my father had entertained for two days as his guest--as an injured stranger in need--the slayer of President Lincoln. I know how surprised we all were when it dawned upon us that the man lying

dead before us could be no other than Booth. There were the tattoo marks of his initials on the arm, and the comparison with the picture was perfect. God never made two men exactly alike as that dead man and the one whose photograph there could be no doubt was Booth's. Point by point the printed description held in the detective's hand was followed out. Height, color of hair and eyes, every scar and mark tallied exactly. The crowning evidence of course, was the name of the actor done in india ink on his arm. As the man shot in father's barn was dying he exclaimed: "Tell my mother I died for my country; I did what I thought was right!" Turning his eyes toward the burning barn, the property of the people who had befriended the lame and sick wayfarer, he said: "Captain, it is hard that these good people should be made to suffer for what I have done. They do not even know who I am." Some question has been raised in an effort to substantiate all the myths about Booth's subsequent escape, as to the secrecy employed with regard to the body. Well, if you had lived near Washington in those troublous times and known the wild rage of the people this would be answer enough. Two other reasons suggest themselves to me: One a petty spite that refused to the assassin a decent burial and the other not so generally known was that the body had been horribly mutilated. The brain and the backbone were removed and may be seen in the Medical Museum in Washington. As to the Oklahoma story, I do not see how anyone can believe it. I was present at the death of Booth, and what I have

said is my recollection of the event--a recollection impressed indelibly upon my mind. I know K.E. Bates, the Memphis man who claims to have represented George, or Booth, for 40 years. As to the identification which is said to have been made, I prefer not to speak. It cannot be corrected. **JOHN WILKES BOOTH** died at my father's farm, in Virginia on April 26, 1865. [AG: 6/8/1903] Garrett's farm was located about three miles south of Port Royal.

FOOTBALL--The first game of football ever played in Alexandria (that is the first of the new style now so fashionable) took place on the field just east of Colross [1100 block of Oronoco Street] yesterday between 3:30 and 5 p.m., the contestants being the cadet eleven of St. John's Academy and the third eleven of Georgetown University, reinforced, it is said, by substitutes from the first and second. There was a crowd to witness it, including a number of ladies, and those who had seen such games before, though did not profess to understand all the mysteries, said it was very well played. The Georgetown team won by 2 1/2 to 0, the St. John's boys never having played a regular game before and being, besides, somewhat lighter weight. To our reporter it seemed that football is a decided misnomer for the new style of game, as the ball was kicked only two or three times; the prominent feature, as far as he could observe, being attempts to get hold of the ball by two crowds on a sort of squatting position opposite to each other; passing it from one to another between the legs of the players, and running with it which the

opposite party almost invariably ended by throwing down the runners and piling up on him about six or eight deep. Several of the players on both sides were rendered hors de combat, but the only accident which seemed to be serious was what was at first thought to be a broken leg of Lane, a son of Representative Lane, of Illinois, of the St. John's team, but which Dr. Klipstein pronounced only the strain of a muscle, which would probably be all right in twenty-four hours. [AG: 12/3/1891]

A DANGEROUS FORD -- FOUR MILE RUN -- The stream known as Four-Mile Run, a few miles distance from this city, in the county, was very high this morning, caused by the heavy rain last night. There is no bridge over it for teams anywhere in the county except at the old toll gate, and, consequently, it has to be forded by those wishing to cross. This morning several parties desiring to cross were baffled by the angry look of the stream; but Mr. J.E. Clements, not being well acquainted with the treacherousness of the stream, drove his horse and buggy in, when he was immediately swept about sixty feet down, but managing to keep his horse's head up the stream his buggy did not overturn nor his horse trip, and several plunges forward of the animal brought him safely, though wet to the waist, across. A substantial bridge over this run is an absolute necessity. Many people who would deal in this city go to Washington from the county and do their trading business at this ford risk injury in fording this run after a storm. It is understood that the authorities of the

county will consider the question of putting a bridge over this stream at an early day. [AG: 10/21/1885]

REPARTEE--The persons furnishing this interesting news to your reporter are evidently comparative strangers in our county, or they would have known of the existence of at least one other bridge crossing the stream in question besides the one at the old tollgate. About one mile west of the old tollgate, and possibly a few hundred yards east of the above mentioned "dangerous ford," located on the old telegraph or gravel road, a very solid, substantial stone bridge crosses the run. It is a two-arched structure, and has successfully resisted the freshets of the stream for over three-quarters of a century. The road leading north from this bridge, for the distance of half a mile or so, has been allowed to fall into disuse, but could be repaired and made passable for teams at less than half the expense it would cost to build a wooden bridge at some other point and would reopen to public travel on one of the finest roads in the country. [AG: 10/23/1885]

A RECKLESS RIDER--Considerable excitement was created on King Street about half past nine o'clock Saturday night by the reckless, dangerous riding of a drunken man. He was without hat or coat, and flourishing a large knife, which many mistook for a pistol, dashed down the street at full speed, the crowds on the corners, and the people returning from market scattering in every direction. When he reached the corner of Royal Street he was arrested in his mad

career and taken to the station house by Officers Goodrich and Nightingill followed by a large crowd, where it was found that the horse he was riding had been stabbed twice in the neck, without any serious injury, however, to the animal. The man was locked up, and released yesterday on bail until this morning. He made his appearance today, and, after hearing the evidence, the Mayor fined him \$7, which was promptly paid, and the reckless rider departed a sadder, but it is to be hoped a wiser man. [AG: 8/2/1880]

RUNAWAY TRAIN CAR--A box car was detached from a train in the yard of the Midland depot [Duke & Henry Street] yesterday evening and given a "shove" to be stopped near Smoot's tan yard--[S.E. corner of Wilkes & S. Washington St.] The car rolled smoothly on till it came to the spot where it was intended to be stopped when the brakeman applied the brakes, but the chain broke and the car kept on down Wilkes Street toward the wharf. Velocity was gained when it reached the heavy grade at the intersection of Pitt and Wilkes streets, and the brakeman, fearing for his life, jumped off and let the car take its course. Its speed continued to be accelerated and in a few seconds it was bounding through the tunnel at the rate of an express train, emerging from the east end of which it continued its wild course up Union Street till it arrived at the intersection with King Street. The switch at that point being open the car jumped the track and ran a short distance over the cobble stones before it finally stopped. Later an engine pulled it on the track and took it

to the depot. But little damage was done, but if the switch at the east end of the tunnel had been open the car would have run out on the transfer barge and into the river. [AG: 5/17/1888]

SCARRED BY A GHOST.--

Though scientific people have urged various theories in explanation of specters or apparitions, and notwithstanding the belief in ghosts grows less as the years of this century glide by, occasionally people of undoubtedly well balanced minds undergo experiences hard to explain and which serve to increase the credulity of those who believe in the super natural. Some months ago one of our citizens living on north Washington Street, in a fit of despondency placed a pistol to his head and thus ended his earthly career. The family having later vacated the premises, the house was rented by a gentleman from Washington, but the gentleman and his family had not been long in their new home before curious noises, the origin of which it seemed impossible to ascertain, began to be heard, and the belief that the house was haunted soon manifested itself among the inmates. This belief was strengthened about one hundred per cent night before last by the appearance from the spirit world of the former tenant. The gentleman and his wife, positively affirm that they saw the deceased, and yesterday the family moved out, saying they would not pass another night in the house for the price of it. [AG: 4/18/1888]

OLD FRIEND'S MEETING HOUSE COLLAPSES--About eleven o'clock last night [July 11, 1888], while the lodge of True Reformers, a colored organization was in session in the second story of the old Friends Meeting House, southwest corner of Wolfe and St. Asaph streets, and just as the Rev. Graham was closing the exercises, the floor or a portion of it gave way with a crash. Seventy-five to one hundred members of the lodge in the room at the time of the collapse, most of whom were precipitated to the lower floor and more or less hurt by splinters and debris. ...When the news of the accident was circulated a relief party was organized who repaired to the scene and soon extricated the injured persons from the rubbish, and removed them to the yard on the window shutters of the building which had been unhinged for the purpose. Drs. Smith, Purvis, Powell and Klipstein were summoned, who performed all the medical services required while neighbors lent such other aid as was needed. The room in which the lodge met had been portioned off but recently, or since the building has been utilized as a home for aged colored people, and the partitions had been constructed of old materials which failed to bear the weight of the assembled party. [AG: 7/12/1888] Unsafe, the building was subsequently razed.

BUSINESSES OF YESTERYEAR--

NEW FLOUR MILL --We called ... at Hewett's old bakehouse on Water

Street [west side of the 200 block of N. Lee Street near Cameron] to see one of Edwin & Jas. M. Clark's patent Flouring Mills, which has just been put in operation by two gentlemen of this city. We found the mill at work in the third story, driven by an engine of eight horse power, built by Mr. Thomas S. Jamieson, of this city. The mill, and all the apparatus belonging thereto, stands on the same floor, and occupies a space about four feet wide and twenty-four feet long. The grinding part of the apparatus consists of a pair of 36 inch French burrs, (the under stone being the runner,) inclosed in, and supported on a substantial cast iron frame. The bolt, which is twenty feet in length, is geared directly to, and driven by the spindle of the mill, and is inclosed in a wooden chest about twenty feet long by four feet wide.

We cannot explain, fully, the whole management of this apparatus, so as to be entirely understood, nor can we properly convey an idea how the different parts are arranged, so as to produce the results we witnessed in its operation. We saw the grain, from the loft above, descend into a small hopper immediately above the mill; from thence, it descends through a glass tube into the hollow spindle to which the running stone is attached; being received by the stones and ground, it is discharged into an elevator box, about nine feet high, and is thrown from thence into a conveyor on the top of the bolting chest, which conveys the ground grain to the end most remote from where it was ground; it here enters the bolt, from which the flour falls into a receptacle at the bottom of

the chest, through which passes another conveyer, which carries the flour, etc. to openings from whence it passes through tin spouts, and is received in barrels in the second story.

The mill was turning out two grades of flour, and two of offal, at the same operation whilst, the middlings, were returned through another spout into the eye of the stone, and reground. By a change, which requires but a moment to make in the apparatus, the middlings are discharged entirely from the mill or re-ground, or re-bolted, as the miller may desire. We understand that a mill of this kind is capable of grinding from eight to ten bushels of wheat per hour, and will turn out, at a single operation, extra, superfine and fine flour, ships stuff, shorts and bran.

This mill is owned by Messrs. Lewis McKenzie and I. Louis Kinzer, of this city, who, we are informed, have purchased the patent for this and several counties in the State, with the District of Columbia.

To those who are interested or curious in matters of this kind, we would say, that this mill is well worth being seen, and would repay the trouble of a visit. [AG: 12/24/1855]

An OLD-TIME INDUSTRY--
William Dean's Shoe Factory--In yesterday's Gazette a notice of the death in Baltimore of Mr. William Dean appeared. The deceased was in his 86th year and will be remembered by many of our older citizens as a member of the long extinct firm of Dean, Harmon & Smith, shoe manufacturers,

who commenced business in an old sugar house on the [east side of the 100 block of] N. Alfred Street. The factory was put in operation in the year 1836; and employed a number of journeymen and about fifty apprentices. In a year or so the business of the factory assumed such proportions that the proprietors deemed the sugar house too contracted for their trade and determined to build an edifice peculiarly adapted to their wants, and the erection of the building now occupied by Mr. B. Wheatley as an undertaker's establishment [near the N.E. corner of King & Alfred St.] was the result, to which place the enterprise was removed and the business successfully prosecuted until the year 1841, when from Northern competition or other causes the Alexandria manufacturers found their products unremunerative, and the city's "peg factory" went to decay. Nearly three score youngsters had gained an insight into shoe making by this time, and some stuck to the last, but the majority drifted into other occupations, and though half a century has elapsed since this corps of peggers plied their occupation, death has dealt very leniently with them, and in

bringing to mind those still in the land of the living we were rather surprised at being able to name so many. Among those who formerly were apprentices may be mentioned John G. Philips, John Payne, Thomas Cross, Wm. Darley, Chap Hall, Lemuel Robey, Henry Holt, George Brooke, Lemuel Cook, Alfred Jacobs, John L. Boyer and George Daniels, the latter of Fairfax County, besides several who worked in the factory as journeymen who are still living. Mr. Dean, we believe, went to St. Louis after the closing of the factory, where he resided for a number of years, and the news of his death has brought to mind many reminiscences of the good old days gone by. [Alexandria Gazette: April 20, 1886]

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