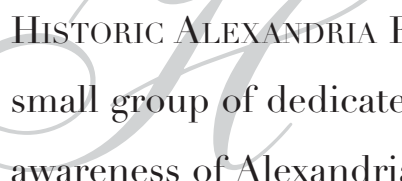


# **PARTNERS IN PRESERVATION:**

## A CELEBRATION OF RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA FOUNDATION (HAF) is now 50 years old! In its early years, a small group of dedicated preservationists focused mainly upon raising public awareness of Alexandria's rich built heritage by surveying and documenting the inventory of historic structures. Great effort was also expended upon dealing with the ever-evolving crises that threatened one major building after another with demolition, despite the city's adoption of an ordinance in 1946, specifically aimed at protecting structures within the "Old and Historic District."

In the last 20 years, the Foundation has developed an increasingly greater ability to bring preservation causes beyond crisis intervention to specific well-funded programs and financially viable projects that have strengthened the community and brought a wider audience to all preservation causes. There is a new resolve and a new group of citizens interested in preservation. The preservation ethic has been expanded by the Foundation to involve an active grants program through the Historic Alexandria Preservation Fund. And, as a notable singular achievement, there is the ownership, the renovation and restoration, and endowment of the historic Alexandria Academy.

The staff of the City's Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA), formed as a city agency in 1983, has been an interested participant in many of HAF's initiatives and has often been a direct beneficiary. As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Foundation, an excellent opportunity presents itself to reflect on the recent

accomplishments of the organization. It is readily evident from the review of our shared initiatives that the promise, vigor and determination of the small fledgling membership organization of 1954 has celebrated the strengths and tenacious efforts of the generation of the 1940's, and has at the same time brought the meaning of preservation to thousands more. This essay will outline just a few of the major accomplishments within the last 20 years.

### **THE HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA ANTIQUES SHOW**

The first Historic Alexandria Antiques Show was staged in 1992 under the sponsorship of the Office of Historic Alexandria. OHA staff asked Pru Montague to chair the first show. She graciously accepted the request and enlisted the support of many friends in the community. The next year, with the full blessings of OHA, HAF took over the show's sponsorship with the goal



The tidal lock of the Alexandria Canal, which lowered barges into the Potomac, is captured in this early photograph. The canal, with its four locks and basins, was completed in 1845. This waterway connected the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal at Georgetown with the port of Alexandria via an aqueduct bridge. The tidal lock was excavated by Alexandria Archaeology in 1979.

of involving a broader base of private support. OHA continued to assist, contributing especially to the production of the catalogue. Under HAF’s sponsorship, the Antiques Show has developed into a viable, annual fund-raising event. This community activity has raised awareness of HAF and provided funding for a wide variety of preservation efforts, including ownership, restoration and endowment of the Alexandria Academy.

### **PURCHASE OF THE ALEXANDRIA ACADEMY**

In 1993, a City ordinance was authorized to convey the Alexandria Academy to HAF. The Foundation agreed to restore the building at no cost to the City and to be responsible for all future maintenance. Although derelict, the Academy building had a rich and fascinating history. Constructed in 1785 and endowed by George Washington, it is recognized as one of the first public free schools in Virginia. HAF contracted with Oak Grove Restoration to complete the restoration of the Alexandria Academy, a costly venture for a small preservation organization; a major fund-raising drive was essential. At the outset, the City of Alexandria had suggested that the cost for restoration would be

\$500,000 to \$700,000. In fact, the costs were far more. Representative James P. Moran and Senator Charles S. Robb were instrumental in acquiring additional funding from the “Save America’s Treasures” program, with a matching grant in the amount of \$200,000. While funds are still needed to complete the endowment, this successful project put the Foundation in the important role of owner of an exceptional historic property which had been appropriately and carefully restored with public and private funding.

### **INITIATION OF THE PRESERVATION FUND—REVIEW OF A FEW PAST RECIPIENTS**

#### **Alexandria Canal**

The Alexandria Canal, with its four locks and basins, was completed in 1845, connecting the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal at Georgetown with the port of Alexandria on the Potomac River. The canal expanded the commercial horizons of Alexandria businessmen. The southern end of the canal ended in a large turning basin that spanned the city blocks between North Washington and North Pitt Streets. From this

basin, four locks running between First and Montgomery Streets lowered and raised boats approximately 38 feet in their journey to and from the large docks on the waterfront.

The Alexandria Archaeological Commission believed that excavation of at least part of the Canal was a priority for the redevelopment of the north waterfront. The City archaeologists rediscovered Lift Lock No. 1 (the tidal lock at the river) in 1979. Following excavation, this historic structure was protected underground, and a replica of the tidal lock was reconstructed in 1986 as part of the Trans-Potomac Canal Center office complex, and a feature of Tide Lock Park at the foot of First Street.

For years, the reconstructed Alexandria Canal Tide Lock and park added to the character of the north waterfront, but its history and significance were little known. In 1991, OHA dedicated an interpretive panel sign, funded by the Foundation. The marker introduces the hundreds of people who pass along this busy walking and jogging path to the significant maritime heritage of the north waterfront.

### Hooff's Run Bridge

The Hooff's Run Bridge, standing to the east of Holland Lane and south of Duke Street, is a remnant of the early days of Alexandria's railroad history. It was built by the Orange and Alexandria Railroad (O&ARR) to carry tracks across Hooff's Run. The O&ARR, established in 1851, was the first railroad to serve Northern Virginia. The first section of the stone bridge dates to 1856, and is the oldest extant bridge in the city. The O&ARR played an important role in supporting Alexandria's commerce as a port city in the mid-nineteenth century. At the beginning of the Civil War, the O&ARR was incorporated into the United States Military Railroad and was the major means of transportation to move supplies and troops to the fields of battle and return thousands of

wounded to Alexandria for treatment in its over 30 hospitals. The Hooff's Run Bridge and the Wilkes Street railroad tunnel are the only remaining structures in Alexandria of this early railroad.

The Hooff's Run Bridge was an unrecognized historic resource and was slated for destruction. Members of the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission called attention to the need to save what had been called simply "a culvert." HAF provided funding to OHA to nominate the bridge to the National Register of Historic Places. It was determined eligible and is now on the National Register.

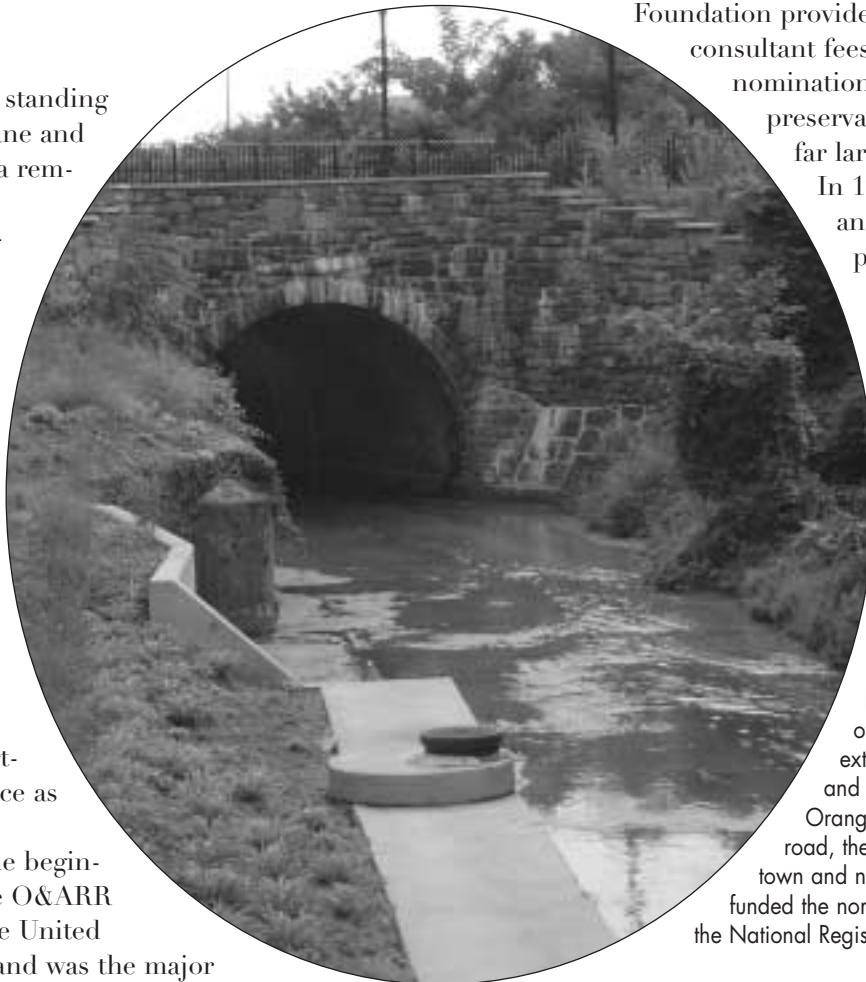
## NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATIONS FOR ROSEMONT AND TOWN OF POTOMAC

Citizens groups in both Rosemont and Delray (originally named the Town of Potomac) worked closely with OHA to initiate listings on the National Register of Historic Places. The Historic Alexandria

Foundation provided funding for the consultant fees to write both nominations, thus extending a preservation ethic among a far larger constituency.

In 1992, both Rosemont and the Delray were placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The establishment of two new preservation districts cannot be overemphasized.



The Hooff's Run Bridge, standing to the east of Holland Lane and south of Duke Street is the oldest extant bridge in Alexandria and a reminder of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, the first railroad to serve the town and northern Virginia. HAF funded the nomination of the bridge to the National Register of Historic Places.

*Rosemont, located northwest of the Old and Historic District of Alexandria, Virginia, adjacent to Alexandria's Union Station, is an unusually intact example of an early-twentieth-century middle-class trolley suburb. The original street layout of the subdivision survives, reflecting the suburban planning ideals of the 'City beautiful' movement.*

(Excerpt from National Register Nomination, Rosemont)

*The Town of Potomac was a planned community located to take advantage of the railroad and trolley lines for commuting to work for the growing federal government. The Potomac Yards, a major railroad switching facility, provided employment for nearly a third of the residents.*

(Excerpt from National Register Nomination, Town of Potomac)

## ROLE OF HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA FOUNDATION IN PROMOTING AND PRESERVING AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

### Placement of African American Sites on the National Register of Historic Places

In 1995, the Historic Alexandria Foundation provided funding to the Office of Historic Alexandria to begin the process of nominating African American sites in the City for listing on the National Register for Historic Places. The nominations, prepared by consultants and City staff members, took eight years to complete, and includes seven sites associated with African American Heritage in Alexandria. There are relatively few African American sites on the National Register of Historic Places. This is perhaps the most significant and far-reaching support that the Foundation has provided. It immediately involved a large group in our community, often overlooked. It allowed for celebration of preservation of these important buildings which share a long and historic past.

The African American Historic Resources of Alexandria, Virginia listing includes the following properties:

**Alfred Street Baptist Church** is the oldest congregation in Alexandria and one of the oldest in the Washington area. The two-story brick building, located at the southwest corner of Duke and South Alfred



Beulah Baptist Church, built in 1863 at 320 South Washington Street, was the first church organized in Alexandria after the city's occupation by Federal troops in 1861. It was one of the first churches in the city founded, led, and operated by African Americans. HAF funded a survey of African American sites in the City for listing on the National Register for Historic Places.

Streets, was built in 1855. The church has been associated with its current site since 1818, but it is believed the congregation is much older, having been formed in 1803, with the earlier meetings held in the homes of its members or along the banks of the Potomac River. Except for use as a hospital during the Civil War, the building has been in continuous use for religious purposes since 1855.

**Beulah Baptist Church**, built in 1863, is a freestanding two-story brick structure located at 320 South Washington Street. With the beginning of the Civil War and the occupation of the city by Federal troops, education was once again open to all African Americans, and Beulah Baptist was specifically founded to provide educational services.



**Roberts Memorial United Methodist Church**, constructed in 1834, is located in the 600 block of South Washington Street in the African American neighborhood referred to as “the Bottoms.” It is the oldest African American church structure in Alexandria, and is also the site of one of the oldest existing schools in the city. Roberts Chapel, as it is known locally, began in 1830 when a small group of men, both white and black, purchased a parcel of land for the African American members of Trinity Methodist Church, a predominantly white church in Alexandria. The black members of Trinity’s congregation numbered almost 400, and it was felt by many that these members should have their own church. The site was located between two emerging neighborhoods, “the Bottoms” and “Hayti.”

The **Dr. Albert Johnson House**, located at 814 Duke Street, is an Italianate-style rowhouse built in the mid-19th century. The property was occupied from 1896 to 1940 by Dr. Albert Johnson, one of the city’s first licensed African American physicians. Dr. Johnson graduated from Howard University in one of the early classes and practiced medicine in Alexandria for 46 years. His medical office was in the lower level of the property. Dr. Johnson sold the property to Annie B. Rose in 1941, another important person in Alexandria’s African American history.

The **Moses Hepburn Rowhouses** are four brick rowhouses, located at 206–212 North Pitt Street, built by Moses Hepburn, a prominent African American businessman, sometime after he purchased the property in 1850. Born a slave in 1809 and freed seven years later, Hepburn became a successful entrepreneur in the antebellum city through his ownership and development of various residential and commercial properties. It is noteworthy that these houses were constructed after Alexandria was retroceded by the District of Columbia to the state of Virginia, an event that led to many restrictive laws against African Americans.

The **Odd Fellows Hall**, a two-and-a-half-story, rectangular, brick building, is located at 411 South Columbus Street in “the Bottoms.” It is the largest secular structure built by an African American. The Odd Fellows Hall began as a one-story brick building constructed in 1864. The existing building was enlarged in 1870 by George Seaton, a local master carpenter and politician. It is one of the only surviving structures for the period 1790–1951 associated with African American communal organizations. Recently, it

underwent extensive interior changes for conversion into five separate apartments.

“The **George Lewis Seaton House** is located at 404 South Royal Street in the heart of “Hayti.” The house is a two-story brick rowhouse likely constructed between 1861 and 1866, just before its purchase by George Seaton on April 14, 1866. George Lewis Seaton was a successful African American entrepreneur and property owner as well as a civic and political leader in Alexandria. The property has yielded a sequence of archaeological deposits which reflects the development of the community once known as “Hayti.” The Hayti (pronounced hay-tie) neighborhood was established in the early 1800’s around the 400 block of South Royal Street and was the home of many black leaders. Haiti, site of the only successful



Another property on the African American Historic Resources listing is this Italianate rowhouse at 814 Duke Street. It was the home of Dr. Albert Johnson from 1896 to 1940. He was one of the city’s first licensed African American physicians. Dr. Johnson sold the property to Annie B. Rose in 1941; she was another important figure in Alexandria’s African American history.



The small tavern building of Gadsby's Tavern Museum, once thought to date from 1752, is now known to have been built between 1782-1785. HAF funded a comprehensive architectural survey by noted architectural historian Mark Wenger. Dendrochronology (dating of wood samples), paint analysis, and a re-examination of primary source materials contributed to this reattribution.

slave uprising in the western hemisphere, inspired the name for this free African American neighborhood.

Two additional sites are currently in preparation for the National Register nomination process: the Barrett Library and the Robinson Library. In 1939, five young African American men staged a 'sit-in' strike at the Barrett Library, a segregated library on Queen Street. The men were arrested for their civil disobedience, but the City responded to the African American citizens' demands for more access to educational opportunities by building the Robert Robinson Library in 1940. This segregated library was used until desegregation in the 1960's. Today, the Robinson library is part of the Alexandria Black History Museum. HAF awarded a grant to support the consultant work to place these sites on the National Register of Historic Places.

### **SUPPORT FOR THE ALEXANDRIA BLACK HISTORY MUSEUM AND AN EXHIBITION ON SLAVERY IN ALEXANDRIA**

HAF has been very generous in awarding two grants to the Alexandria Black History Museum for expenses

related to the development of a permanent exhibition, "Securing the Blessings of Liberty." The exhibition, which will explore the issue of slavery in Alexandria, has been in development for more than three years and is scheduled to open to the public in November 2004. HAF is to be commended for taking the lead in demonstrating to the local community their support of this original research project dedicated to slavery in Alexandria. The museum staff is extremely gratified to count HAF as a financial partner, for their contributions totaling \$9,000 over a two-year period in the development of the exhibition project.

### **RESEARCH TO DETERMINE THE CORRECT CONSTRUCTION DATE FOR GADSBY'S TAVERN**

In 2002, the Historic Alexandria Foundation generously supported Gadsby's Tavern Museum's re-interpretation efforts by funding a comprehensive architectural survey by noted architectural historian Mark Wenger to determine the original construction date of the smaller tavern building. While the museum's larger tavern building, the City Tavern & Hotel, is known to have been constructed in 1792 by John Wise, the date of the smaller building had been in question. For much of the early 20th century, the building was thought to have been built in 1752. Mr. Wenger determined that the smaller tavern building was built by John Wise between 1782 and 1785. This study, along with dendrochronology, paint analysis, and a re-examination of primary source materials, has made a lasting impact on the museum's interpretation and has shaped its vision of the future.

The Office of Historic Alexandria salutes the Historic Alexandria Foundation on its fifty years of commitment to preservation, with all best wishes for our continued partnership.