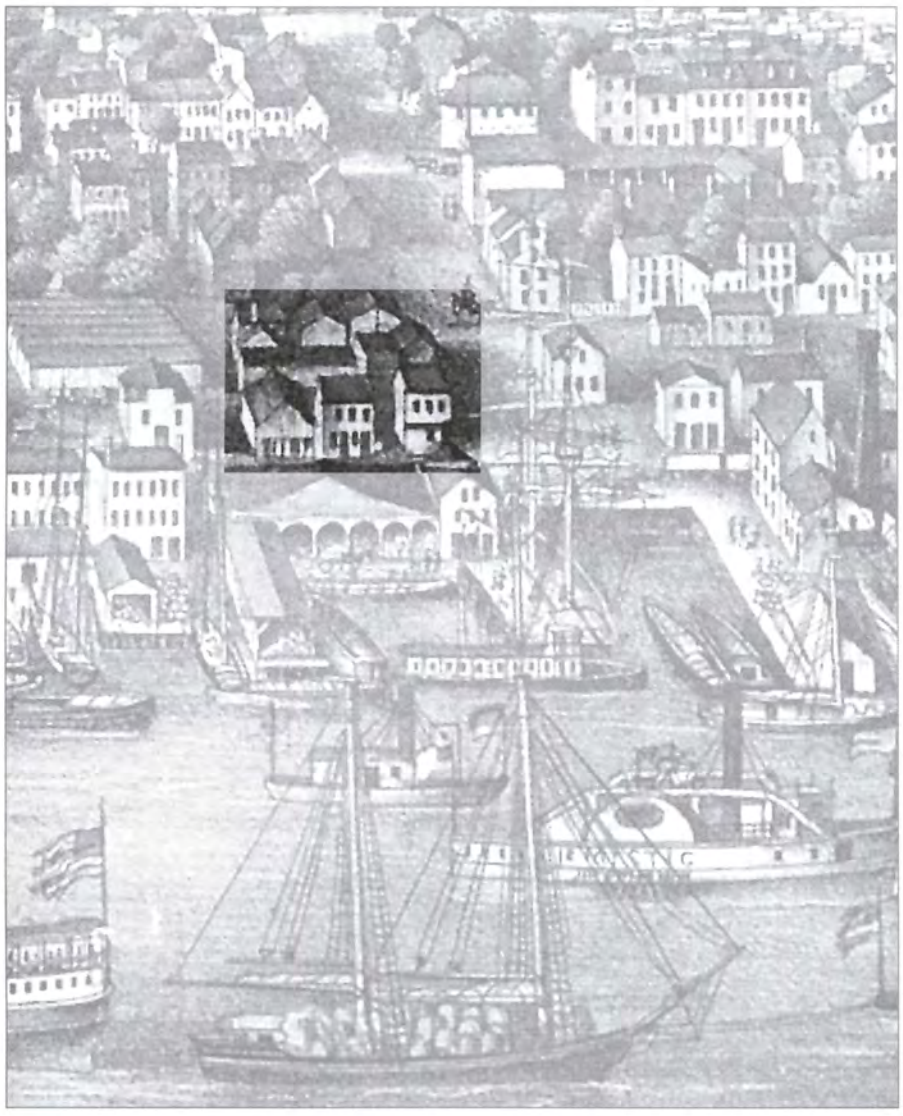
A Community Digs Its Past:
The Lee Street Site



Alexandria Archaeology Museum
Alexandria Archaeology Publication Number 122

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Excavations of the brick ovens at the Jamieson-Hill Bakery, 200 block of North Lee Street and Thompson's Alley

Introduction

Alexandria is a community rich in archaeology. The town has an abundance of archaeological sites and millions of artifacts still preserved under its parking lots, parks, backyards, and buildings. The City of Alexandria's archaeology collection totals over two million artifacts and associated records. Alexandria is also rich in its citizens' love of and involvement in the town's archaeology. There has been a long and deep community commitment for the preservation, exploration, excavation, conservation, study, exhibition, and curation of Alexandria's archaeological resources.

Archaeological excavations at the Lee Street Site, the half block bounded by North Lee Street, North Union Street, Queen Street, and Thompson's Alley, caught the attention of thousands of people for a six week period in August and September 1997. Long forgotten by most people, very tangible ruins and artifacts were revealed through a systematic archaeological excavation, as backhoes, shovels, and trowels peeled back layers of soil and layers of time. The town's history was literally unearthed before people's eyes.

Alexandria Archaeology volunteers used their trowels to uncover long-forgotten archaeological remains at the Lee Street Site

The Lee Street Site, a parking lot for more than 30 years, was investigated under a special type of partnership. The City, as owner of a new parking garage slated for construction, and the private developer of the garage and townhomes being built over the garage, entered into a unique agreement to share the preservation effort. City archaeologists joined with archaeologists from consulting firm Dames & Moore, Inc. to recover archaeological resources from the half block under development by Lawrence N. Brandt, Inc. A conservator from Alexandria Conservation Services, Ltd., developed a plan for the stabilization and treatment of fragile artifacts in the field and later in the laboratory.

The team of private and City archaeologists and the conservator were joined by volunteers in the field to expose features and recover artifacts from the Lee Street Site. Volunteers also worked alongside City archaeologists, City-funded interns, and the conservator in the Alexandria Archaeology Museum to process and preserve artifacts for display and future study. The following pages present a brief overview of findings from the Lee Street Site and the efforts undertaken to realize its extensive archaeological research potential.

Hundreds of adults and children participated in public programs on the Lee Street Site by screening earth to recover even the smallest artifacts

Museum Educator Ruth Reeder sorts artifacts from the screened soil

The Jamieson-Hill Bakery (center) during the Civil War

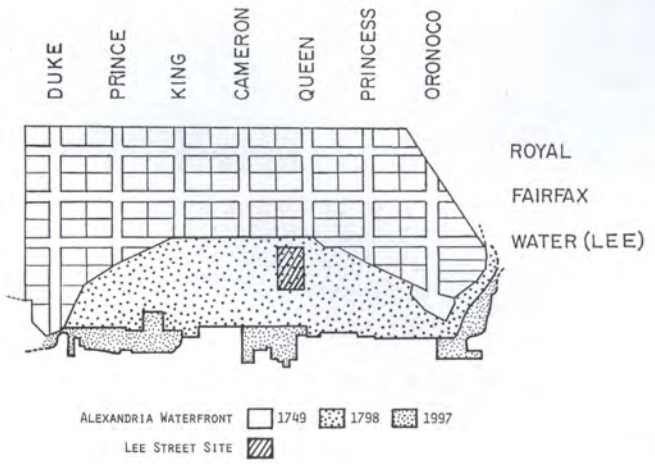
The Lee Street Site: A Microcosm of the City

In compliance with Alexandria's Archaeological Protection Code, developer Lawrence Brandt submitted plans to Alexandria Archaeology for review in the spring of 1997 for the construction of an underground garage for the City, capped by privately-owned town homes, at the corner of North Lee and Queen Streets. The staff immediately recognized that the project afforded a unique opportunity to study the development of one block within the context of the history of the City and its waterfront. A review of historical maps and documents indicated that evidence of activities from the time of Alexandria's founding to the twentieth century likely remained buried under the lot. Initial test excavations conducted by archaeological consultants from Dames & Moore confirmed that archaeological remains from various time periods were present. The full-scale investigation of the block uncovered significant information on the development of Alexandria, providing evidence of early wharves, nineteenth-century taverns, residences, and a bakery, as well as the Civil War occupation of the City and the later industrial/warehouse use of the property.

The Eighteenth Century

Banking Out, Wharves and Bulkhead

Settled by English and Scottish merchants intending to capitalize on the thriving tobacco economy, Alexandria was founded in 1749 on a bay that extended up to Water Street (renamed Lee Street in 1873) from the foot of Oronoco Street (Point West) to the foot of Duke Street (Point Lumley). The town, formally laid out with streets and lots in a grid pattern adjacent to the harbor, was developed near the location of Hugh West's Hunting Creek Tobacco Warehouse, which had been set up to facilitate inspection, packaging, and shipping of the area's cash crop from the colonies to Great Britain. The merchants constructed wharves into the bay to encourage international trade.



Bluffs rose to a height of about 30 feet above the edges of the bay. The water depth of the bay, which had been recorded as four or five feet in 1749, soon showed the effects of silting. As trading vessels more frequently ran aground or were not able to reach the wharves, merchants saw the need to fill in the bay and extend the wharves out toward the Potomac River. The steep banks were cut down and used in this process. Filling in the bay, or "banking out," proceeded in a somewhat haphazard manner; areas between wharves or docks were filled in at various rates by different landowners. By 1784, Union Street was laid out, and the Lee Street Site block emerged from the bay as commercial real estate.

Archaeologist Phil Hill photographing the timber wharf

Docks and Wharves Found at the Lee Street Site

Evidence of construction in the bay was found in two features uncovered during excavation. A section of stacked cut timbers, with driven cut uprights on what would have been the water side, was found six feet underground and 100 feet west of North Union Street. This structure may be a wooden supporting wall at the end of a wharf. A definite date cannot be assigned to the wharf's construction since no artifacts were found, but a pre-1784 date is probable.

The other feature discovered was the surface of a wharf. The area was covered with large stones which may have acted to support a heavy structure, such as a winch or a warehouse. However, the stones could merely have served as sturdy paving. The wharf undoubtedly bustled with waterfront activities--loading and unloading cargo, buying and selling merchandise, and carting goods to and from businesses and warehouses throughout the

Wharf surface covered with large, flat stones

town. Two interesting artifacts were found in this area: one was a large basket of woven strips of wood with handles, which could have served to carry goods, such as fresh vegetables, oysters, or fish sold or processed on the waterfront. Another artifact was found where it had fallen between the rocks. Called a "fid" or "marlinspike," it is a pointed wooden implement that was used to separate strands of line, a common tool of sailors and shipyard workers.

Remains of wooden carrying basket

Wooden fid, or marlinspike, used to separate rope strands

The Early Nineteenth Century

A Patchwork of Waterfront Residences, Shops, Taverns, and Warehouses

The mercantile economy and Alexandria's status as a port dictated its growth into the early decades of the nineteenth century. A patchwork of residences, shops, and manufacturing concerns associated with the waterfront sprang up and flourished on the properties parallel and adjacent to the river. This pattern of mixed land use began to emerge on the newly-created land of the Lee Street Site as it was subdivided into 12 lots for investment purposes in 1796. Situated on the waterfront just north of the developing town's core, the half block contained middle-class houses, a cracker bakery, taverns, and, for a short time, a sales lot for hearth stones and gravestones.

Tavern Discoveries on the Lee Street Site

Although most evidence of the early nineteenth-century homes and businesses was destroyed by later activities, two of the block's taverns were preserved near the corner of North Union Street and Thompson's Alley. The remains of these two establishments provided archaeologists with a glimpse of tavern life for the common people. One of these taverns had opened its doors under the proprietorship of Bennet & Jarbo in 1810, while the other, which began operation in 1815, was owned and operated by John Gemeny throughout much of the first half of the nineteenth century. With their proximity to the City's waterfront, the taverns, which faced North Union Street, most likely attracted an international crowd of sailors, dockhands and other itinerants.

Wood remains of tavern floor and joists

The archaeological excavations revealed the foundations of a small duplex, which probably was associated with the Bennet & Jarbo tavern. In the soil layers surrounding the building, hand-painted pearlware and other ceramics that would have been expected at table settings in a modest tavern establishment were discovered. Separated from the duplex by a brick walkway, excavations on the site of Gemeny's tavern at the corner of North Union Street and Thompson's Alley uncovered portions of the brick foundations of a small building with several rooms. At least two collapsed wooden floor levels were found; they had been supported in some areas by brick pillars and in others by pillars made of schist, a stone commonly used in building foundations in Alexandria until 1830.

Blue shell-edged plate, in the ground at the tavern site

The soil layers above, below, and between the collapsed wooden floor levels were composed of fine-grained sands and silts, which were deposited by water. These soil layers contained numerous artifacts, many indicative of tavern-related activities, such as a blue shell-edged pearlware plate, broken in half but otherwise nearly complete. This plate certainly could have been used to set the tavern table. The recovery of a fife's mouthpiece suggests that music was part of the entertainment provided by the tavern. Other activities that may have taken place in the tavern may have included the sewing or mending of clothes, as thimbles, needles and pins were discovered in this area, along with a wooden needle case found nearby.

Mouthpiece of a fife that may have been used to entertain tavern visitors

Thimbles, needles, pins, and buttons

Immediately to the south of this room, archaeologists uncovered bricks from a floor, patio, or walkway that were laid in a fine sand. The sand contained a large cache of coins, including numerous Liberty pennies with dates ranging from 1818 to 1838 and a coin with the Germanic inscription "90 Einen Thaler," probably brought to Gemeny's tavern by a sailor from a European port.

Part of a cache of coins found in sand below the brick floor

The two floors, the water-deposited sands and silts, and perhaps even the cache of coins hidden in the sand may provide clues to the demise of the tavern. It is tempting to speculate that the water-lain soil levels were carried onto the site during periods of flooding by the Potomac River, since buildings at the foot of King Street are still flooded today. The *Alexandria Gazette* reports floods at the foot of Queen and Cameron Streets in 1847 and again on April 10, 1861. Perhaps the multiple floors reflect repairs necessitated by periodic inundation, which carried the sands and silts into the building. Indeed, damage done by the 1861 flood could have been so destructive that the building was not repaired. By the time of the Civil War, hospital stables were constructed on this property. Fortunately for the archaeologists, silts, sands, and flood waters carried and deposited numerous artifacts which seem to offer a glimpse of early nineteenth-century tavern life.

Excavations in the area of the Jamieson-Hill Bakery

The Jamieson Steam Bakery

The baking industry represented one of the main businesses in eighteenth-century Alexandria. From 1780 to 1820, there were over 63 bakers who advertised in the *Alexandria Gazette* or offered their services to the public. Fueled by a strong demand for sea biscuits or ship's bread, the industry developed from a necessity to feed sailors who worked on the barques, schooners and ships which docked at the town's wharves. Made of flour and water with no leavening agent, ship's bread lasted for an extended period of time when properly manufactured.

In 1832, Robert Jamieson built a three-story bakery at the corner of North Water (Lee) Street and Thompson's Alley. To expand his business in 1843, Jamieson bought a lot to the north and built an addition to the bakery. From 1832 to 1865, Jamieson's Bakery ranked as Alexandria's fifth largest business. Sometime around mid-century, the baking business in Alexandria began to mechanize, and Jamieson followed suit, installing a 12 horse-power steam engine at the bakery by 1850. Innovations included the use of steam carried through pipes around the baking chambers to allow for more even heating of the ovens. It was during this period that the Jamieson Bakery became known as the supplier of crackers for Queen Victoria's court. A report in the February 19, 1873 *Alexandria Gazette* noted that "It used to be said that Queen Victoria had Mr. Jamieson's name in her mouth every day, because she ate crackers made at his bakery and stamped with his name..."

Advertisement for the George R. Hill & Co. Bakery

In 1869, entrepreneur George R. Hill from Baltimore assumed the operation of the cracker bakery and purchased the business in 1873. According to a nineteenth-century advertisement, Hill & Co. sold a variety of crackers and cakes, including water crackers, soda crackers, lemon crackers, ginger snaps, jumbles, lady fingers, and ginger cakes. By 1870, Hill had apparently improved the facility, installing state-of-the-art mechanized baking equipment. Additional renovations followed in 1873 and 1876, making it, according to the *Alexandria Gazette*, "one of the most complete establishments of its kind in the country."

In 1878, Hill moved much of his extensive baking business and office to a newly-purchased building and lot across the street from the Lee Street Site. By 1885, the old Jamieson-Hill Bakery building was vacant; it was torn down in 1888 to make way for the grocery warehouses of Charles King & Son.

Overview of the bakery foundations and cistern

Buried Remains of the Bakery

The archaeological investigation yielded extensive information on the workings of the Jamieson-Hill Bakery. Constructed from schist, the foundations of the two original buildings were intact. The stones for the foundations were set on wooden boards, perhaps to stabilize them on the wet fill soil of the banked-out level. Large French drains filled with broken brick fragments lined the interior walls of the building. These were probably necessitated by the extensive use of water in the baking process and to aid drainage of the building.

The main building facing North Water (Lee) Street contained: the foundations of four ovens; the firebox; and, a brick shaft, which may have served as a water source. It is likely that the structure would have had a brick floor; all that remained, however, was the sand which would have served as the base. An iron pipe, surrounded by bricks and embedded in the sand, extended from the firebox to the steam engine area (which was outside of the original buildings). Most likely related to Jamieson's and Hill's attempts to keep the factory up-to-date with the latest in baking technology, the pipe carried steam to operate machinery on the

Iron steam pipe line under bakery floor

property. A poorly understood feature, perhaps associated with steam mechanization, was unearthed near the firebox. It consisted of a perforated barrel, buried in the ground, with a wooden conduit leading into it from the firebox area.

Large cistern divided into four compartments

The rear building contained a large brick cistern with a pump resting on the floor level. Remnants of a domed cover were visible near the top edge. The structure was divided into four compartments, which probably served as filtration chambers. Water in the cistern may have been used in the baking process, for fire protection, or it may have been associated with the steam mechanization. The entire area surrounding the cistern was filled with broken brick fragments, apparently to provide adequate drainage required in the cistern room.

Platforms for the boiler and steam engine, additional remains from Jamieson's and Hill's renovations, were located outside of the original buildings near the northeast corner of the main structure. One platform was made of large capstones surrounded

Brick platforms for steam engine and boiler

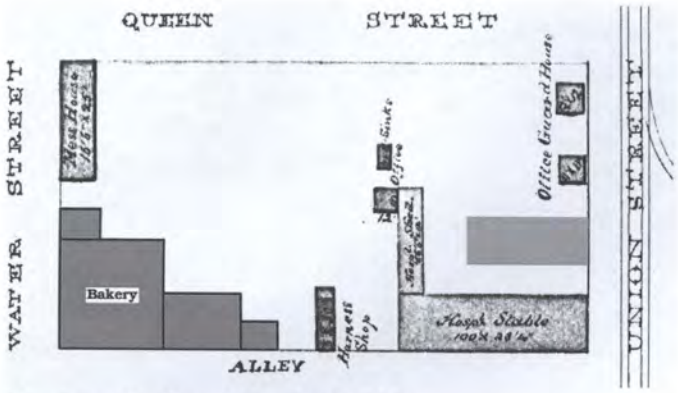
by bricks covering the top of a brick shaft. When these heavy stones were removed, a lead pipe, with holes in one end (for steam to escape), was visible extending over the rim of the shaft and down into it about three feet. The shaft was likely a water source associated with steam mechanization.

Another shaft associated with the bakery was situated in the central lot facing Lee Street on the property Jamieson bought in 1843 for a small addition. It is possible that this brick shaft was present on the site prior to Jamieson's acquisition and that he merely incorporated it into the structure, perhaps using it as a supplemental water source. The cistern and wells were filled primarily with construction debris and trash from the 1880s after the bakery closed, but they did contain a few artifacts dating to the Civil War.

Civil War Occupation

On May 23, 1861, Virginians ratified the ordinance of secession from the United States. Because of the potential threat Northern Virginia posed to Washington, D.C., Alexandria was captured by federal forces the following day. For the remainder of the War, the city was held under military occupation. Alexandria became a major supply depot with active wharves and a large railroad command complex, a busy thoroughfare for troops moving to and from the field of battle, and a hospital and convalescent center for tens of thousands of Union soldiers.

Most of the Lee Street Site block and the waterfront were confiscated by the Union Army for the war effort. Federal troops constructed temporary frame buildings on the waterfront block bounded by Union, Queen and Lee Streets. These buildings served as support structures for hospitals in the area and consisted of a hospital stable, hospital supply shed and office, "sinks" (outhouses), harness shop, mess house, office, and guard house. No remains of the buildings in the northern corners of the property were found. The harness shop, hospital stables, shed and office were built with timber post foundations. Of these

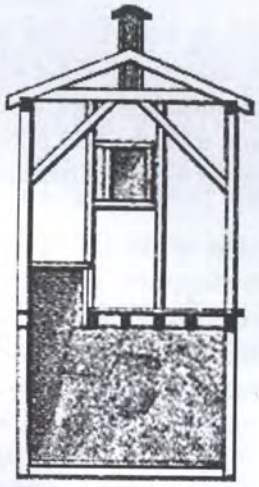


Structures standing during the Civil War

structures, only two postholes to hold the stable's supporting timbers were identified. These had been dug through the brick walkways associated with the taverns on Thompson's Alley. One below-ground structure, however, was well preserved. This was the outhouse, or privy, which is traditionally one of the archaeologist's favorite features because of the abundance of artifacts they usually contain and their excellent preservation.

A Privy Filled with Civil War Artifacts

On the U.S. Army Quartermaster map made at the end of the War, the outhouse is labeled "Sinks" and its size is given as "5 x 12" feet. Although the map does show a cross-section of the hospital stables, there is no drawing of the outhouse other than its footprint. Another Quartermaster map of a barracks complex farther up Queen Street shows a cross-section of an outhouse which was probably similar to the one on this property. The line drawing shows a frame structure with one entrance, two small windows at either end, and six or seven toilet seats along one wall. The waste material collected in a large wood-lined pit below the floor. This pit was found during excavation. It first appeared as a rectangular area of dark soil with the edges of broken boards sticking up in a rough line. The pit measured about four feet wide and about 12 feet long. It had been lined with planks of various sizes around the inside, but had a dirt floor. As the feature was excavated, it became apparent that the upper part of the building had been pushed over during demolition, collapsing the planks along one wall of the pit inward. Many of the planks bore evidence of reuse from other structures. Some boards showed traces of paint and one had a stain possibly left by a horseshoe that had once been attached to the board, perhaps for good luck. The locations and dimensions of all the planks were carefully recorded both photographically and by drawings.



Quartermaster map drawing of a Union military privy

The water content of soil in the privy pit facilitated the preservation of items made of leather and wood. Many artifacts were found that had been accidentally dropped or purposely discarded in the outhouse pit. These included: leather shoes; brass buckles; bone, metal and mother-of-pearl buttons; lead bullets; a man's gold ring; an iron key; wooden brush handles; a broken metal spoon; brass kerosene lamp mechanisms; a variety of glass alcohol and medicine bottles; a crushed metal canteen; and, a tin cup.

Collapsed wooden remains of the privy pit

Lead bullets, including one flattened after firing

Fragment of a tourniquet buckle

Tin drinking cup

Union bullseye canteen

After the Civil War

From Warehouses to Residences

After the end of the War, the government auctioned off the structures built by Union troops in Alexandria. Usable items, like wood, copper, iron, etc., were recovered and sold for salvage. No longer required for defensive purposes, the Lee Street Site block reverted to its pre-War state, and its use reflects the changing character of the waterfront during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Even in the 1840s and 1850s before the War, many aspects of the Lee Street Site block had begun to change. Fires destroyed some of the residences and entrepreneur Henry Daingerfield purchased more than half the property, building warehouses and leasing them to various Alexandria businessmen for the storage of groceries, guano, pressed hay and other articles. After the War, the trend begun by Daingerfield continued, and warehouses, coal yards and lumber yards sprouted on the Lee Street Site block. The bakery, a pre-cursor to this late nineteenth-century industrialization, continued in operation until the 1880s. By 1885, the last, lingering evidence of the early residential occupation, a small duplex near the corner of Union Street and Thompson's Alley, was gone. By the first decade of the twentieth century, the entire block was covered with grocery warehouses.

Archaeological Evidence of the Lee Street Site Warehouses

In the 1870s, T.J. Mehaffey & Co. established a wood and coal yard on the Queen Street side of the property. This operation was superseded in the 1880s by the J.R. Zimmerman Coal Yard. This yard had a long, partitioned wooden shed where the different grades of coal were stored. Evidence of this roughly-made structure was uncovered in the form of a line of posts with boards nailed horizontally to them. About this same time, a large fertilizer warehouse was constructed in the southeast portion of the property over the site where the taverns and hospital stables had stood, and a salt warehouse was built in the center lot facing Union Street. Broken upright posts were found in the ground which would have formed the walls of these structures.

Remains of wooden coal storage shed

The most dramatic changes to the block occurred following its purchase by Charles King & Son in 1887. Charles King, Sr., had been a major in the U.S. Army during the Civil War and was stationed in Alexandria with the Quartermaster Department. He returned to Alexandria after the War and founded a large wholesale grocery firm. He bought the vacant Jamieson Bakery property and demolished the bakery building. King then built a large complex of massive brick warehouses that by the turn of the century covered nearly the entire property. One of these warehouses, designed by Adolph Cluss, the architect of City Hall, incorporated the foundations of the original Jamieson Bakery into its structure. It is possible that the cistern was converted for use as storage space by King at this time. A square opening appeared to have been created in the main partition wall between the chambers of the cistern. The fill within the structure, apparently deposited when the King warehouses were torn down, contained wooden boards which may have served as shelving. The foundations of the King warehouses were very evident during the archaeological excavations. While some evidence of earlier occupation on the site was destroyed by their construction, these late nineteenth- and twentieth-century structures fortunately did only limited damage to the earlier remains of the taverns, bakery, and Civil War privy.

The Late Twentieth Century

Despite its ambitions, Alexandria never achieved the industrial success of its neighbors, Baltimore to the north and Richmond to the south. While this may have proved a disappointment to the businessmen of the past, it certainly contributed to the city's development into the attractive residential and commercial community with the historical ambiance that it has today. During the second half of the twentieth century, the waterfront blocks became a focus for the development of parks and fine residences. The grocery warehouses were used by the U.S. Government into the 1960s and then were torn down to be replaced by a parking lot to service nearby shops and restaurants. Plans were made to convert the surface parking lot into townhouses with an underground garage, thus maintaining the city's need for commercial parking while allowing for the construction of new residences near the waterfront.

The remains of the foundations and other archaeological features on the site were destroyed by construction of town houses on the Lee Street Site, with the possible exception of the deeply buried wharf structures which may still remain intact under the garage. The site lives on, however, in the archaeological records and in the artifacts themselves.

Students Amy Tyson and Alex Rockwell clean leather artifacts in the laboratory of the Alexandria Archaeology Museum

Archaeologists at Work in the Laboratory

At the Alexandria Archaeology Museum, the Lee Street project helped to bring Alexandria's past to life for tourists, Alexandria residents and school groups. Archaeologists, conservators and volunteers who worked on the Lee Street Site collection were a central feature of the Alexandria Archaeology Museum throughout the year following excavation. On a typical afternoon, Museum visitors might see and talk with volunteers searching for artifacts amidst the wet, pebbly mix brought in from the water screens; a conservator meticulously cleaning metal buttons with the aid of a teenage summer camper; an archaeologist cataloguing ceramics; volunteers creating detailed scale drawings of artifacts; and a school group learning about the steps of archaeology through a hands-on *Archaeology Adventure Lesson*.

Eighty boxes, containing thousands of individual artifacts, were brought from the Lee Street Site to the Alexandria Archaeology Museum's laboratory. Laboratory processing of artifacts involves many steps, from cleaning, sorting, and labeling to cataloguing, conservation and storage. These steps prepare the collection for exhibition and publication, provide information for analyzing the site, and preserve the collection for future generations.

The Lee Street Site presented a special challenge to the laboratory. Because the site was near the river, some wood and leather were preserved. Preservation was especially good in the Civil War privy and in the bakery's cistern and wells. Organic materials such as wood and leather hold their shape when they remain continually submerged in water or wet soil over time, but immediately begin to shrink, warp and crack if allowed to dry. In addition, there was a high level of soluble salts in the privy and wells. Because of these conditions, all of the artifacts from the privy, wells, and cistern, and organic materials from other parts of the site, needed to be stored in water from the time of excavation and through the various stages of artifact processing.

Water-screening and Sorting

On site, volunteers and staff water-screened the excavated soil to recover all of the artifacts from the heavy mud. To save time in the field, they washed out the mud and then bagged huge quantities of the remaining wet pebbly matrix, which still contained the artifacts.

In the laboratory, volunteers worked with artifacts from one provenience at a time to recover the artifacts from the pebbly matrix. They placed handfuls of the material on fine mesh screens and ran them under the tap until the water was clear. Then they sorted the artifacts into bins of water, each labeled with an artifact category--leather, wood, textile, iron, copper alloy, lead, bone, shell, seeds, ceramics, glass, etc. The artifacts were stored in labeled containers of water by material and provenience, awaiting further treatment.

Cataloguing and Identification

Next, the artifacts were catalogued and identified, while still wet. Specialists identified animal bones, seeds, and the species of trees used to make wooden artifacts. The cataloguers selected artifacts for conservation based on their condition and significance.

Ethnobotanist Justine Woodard McKnight identifies the species of wood prior to conservation of wooden artifacts

Cleaning and Conservation

After all of the artifacts were sorted, the volunteers carefully cleaned the sturdier artifacts like ceramics, glass, and bone with toothbrushes. They also received special training so that they could help the conservation team with initial cleaning of some of the leather, wood and metal.

Amy Tyson, a high school intern, carefully cleans a leather shoe according to the conservator's directions

Assistant Collections Manager Bernard Means desalinates the waterlogged artifacts

Removing Salts

Because of the high salt levels, artifacts were not simply placed out to dry after they were cleaned. If they were allowed to dry naturally, salt crystals could eventually cause glaze to pop off and artifacts to crack and split. Instead, salts were removed from artifacts, in a process called desalination, by soaking them in successive baths of de-ionized water. Salt levels were measured with a conductivity meter each time the water was changed, until a reading of zero was obtained.

Slow Drying

Next, the artifacts were ready for either conservation or slow drying. Ceramics, such as ironstone dishes and clay pipes, were dried in a humidity chamber using a drying agent called silica gel. Glass bottles and drinking glasses were dried in a series of baths containing a solution of acetone and water.

Museum Studies Intern Christen Runge documents pieces of a Civil War water keg

Documentation

Documentation is a very important step in conservation. Artifacts must be thoroughly recorded before and after treatment so that any change to them can be noted. Recording included written documentation, photography, and tracing organic materials on mylar for later comparison with the conserved artifacts. Volunteers and student interns helped the conservator with this process.

Conservator Lisa Young mechanically cleans a metal artifact

Brass lamp before and after conservation

Conserving Metals

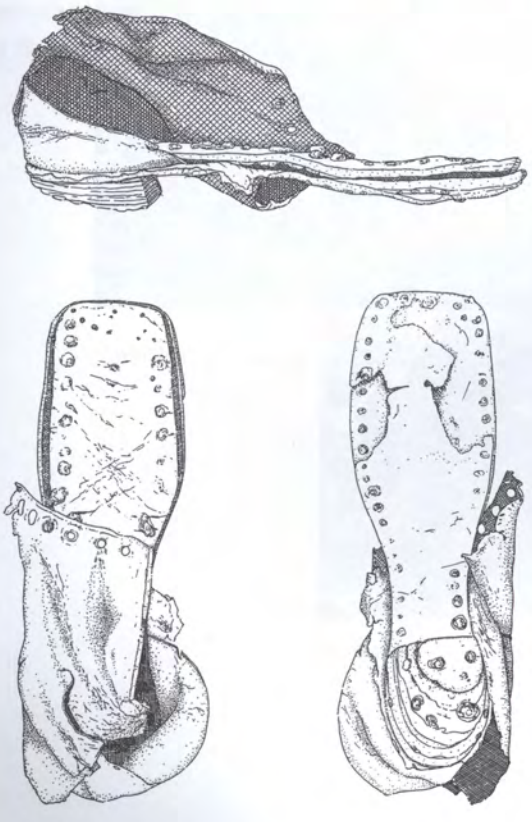
A conservator cleaned metal artifacts mechanically under a microscope. Different methods were needed for different types of metal, such as lead musket balls, a silver spoon, brass buckles, copper coins, and a tin canteen. Fortunately, a layer of black sulfide corrosion protected lead, silver and copper alloy artifacts found in the privy from further corrosion. After conservation many of the artifacts were bright and shiny, and their original metallic color was often restored. This is unusual for archaeological metals, which rarely regain their luster.

A scale drawing of an Eagle button from a Union uniform (Illustrated by volunteer Andrew Flora)

Volunteer Adele Dunn illustrates a shoe from the Civil War privy

Conserving Leather and Wood

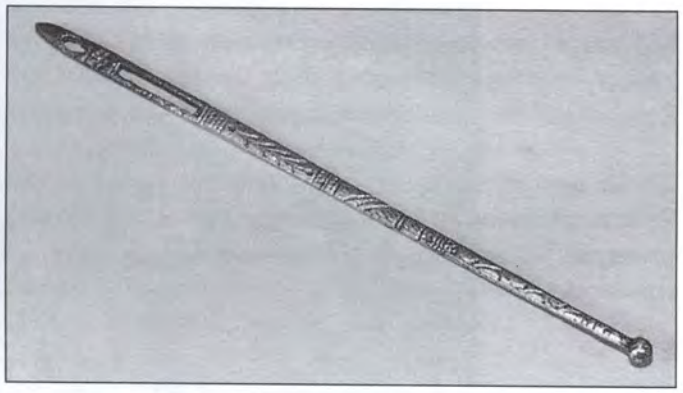
The conservator and her team cleaned the leather shoes and straps, chemically treated them to remove iron salts, and soaked them in Polyethylene Glycol (PEG), a waxy substance. Then the objects were shaped, wrapped, frozen, and freeze dried. Wooden objects, such as an eighteenth-century rope-splicing tool and the ends of a Civil War water keg, were cleaned and soaked in PEG for a year prior to freeze drying.



Scale drawing of a Civil War shoe
(Illustrated by volunteer Adele Dunn)

The Alexandria Archaeology Museum's Collection

The artifacts from the Lee Street Site were donated to the City of Alexandria by developer Lawrence N. Brandt, Inc., to become part of the Alexandria Archaeology Museum's collection. The collection, containing over two million artifacts from 150 sites, is stored in archival materials and kept in a climate-controlled storage facility, where it will be available for study and display by future generations of Alexandrians. Selected artifacts from the Lee Street collection can be seen in exhibitions in the Alexandria Archaeology Museum and on the Museum's web site.



Engraved bodkin, used as part of a hair ornament or to thread ribbon through lace

The site was the scene of active citizen involvement during each stage of the archaeological investigations

Additional Readings

Barber, James G.
1988 *Alexandria in the Civil War.* H.E. Howard, Inc., Lynchburg, Virginia.

Friedman, Janet, Phillip Hill, Kevin Mack, Heather Crowl, and Cynthia Pfanstiehl
1998 *The North Lee Street Project: A Phase I, II, and III Archeological Investigation of 221 North Lee Street, Alexandria, Virginia, Site 44AX180.* Report prepared by Dames and Moore.

Miller, T. Michael
1989 Wandering Along the Waterfront--Queen to Cameron Street--Part III. *Fireside Sentinel* 3 (1):6-11.

1989 Wandering Along the Waterfront: Queen to Cameron Streets (Concluded). *Fireside Sentinel* 3 (2):29-36.

1999 *"Crackers for the Queen" — A History of the Block Bounded by Thompson's Alley, Lee, Queen, and Union Streets.* Unpublished manuscript on file at the Alexandria Archaeology Museum, Alexandria, Virginia.

Robinson, Wendy
1998 *First Aid for Underwater Finds.* Archetype Publications, Ltd. and the Nautical Archaeology Society, London.

Shephard, Steven J. and Pamela J. Cressey
1985 *Alexandria Antiquity 1984.* Alexandria Archaeology, Alexandria, Virginia.

Smith, William F. and T. Michael Miller
1989 *A Seaport Saga, Portrait of Old Alexandria, Virginia.* The Donning Company, Norfolk, Virginia.

Young, Lisa A.
1997 *44AX180 Conservation Treatment Proposal for the Artifacts Recovered from a Waterlogged Context.* Prepared by Alexandria Conservation Services, Ltd. for the Alexandria Archaeology Museum. Manuscript on file at the Alexandria Archaeology Museum, Alexandria, Virginia.

Volunteer Lillie Finklea assists an archaeologist with water-screening at the Lee Street Site

Acknowledgments

The Lee Street Site project and this publication were made possible by support from Lawrence N. Brandt, Inc., the Alexandria City Council, and City Manager's Office. City archaeologists, archaeologists from Dames and Moore, Inc., and Lisa Young, conservator with Alexandria Conservation Services, Ltd. provided the professional expertise needed to carry out the archaeological investigations. T. Michael Miller, Research Historian, Office of Historic Alexandria, conducted historical research as new discoveries were made. The Friends of Alexandria Archaeology and the Alexandria Archaeological Commission provided critical support that ensured the success of the project. Hundreds of volunteers participated in both field and laboratory work, without which the Lee Street Site project could not have been conducted. Nearby residents provided water needed to wash artifacts in the field. Finally, several local businesses helped by providing food and drink, including Firehook Bakery, Bugsy's, Ben and Jerry's, Jack's Place, Ecco's, and Picca Deli.

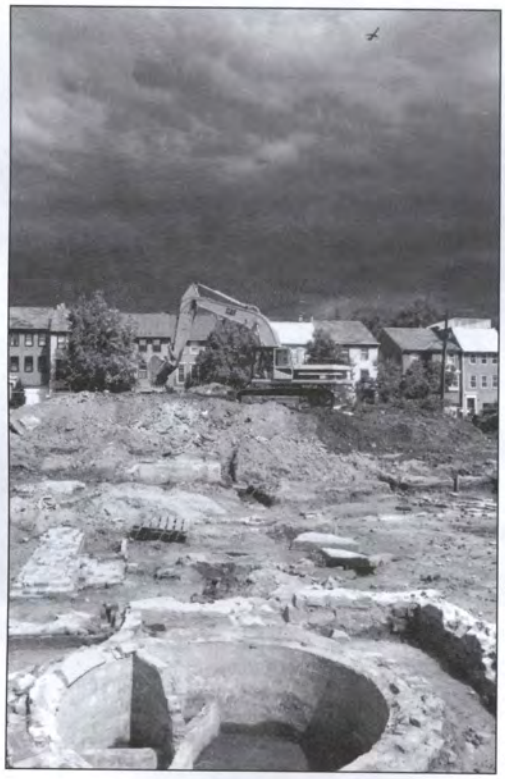


Photo by Ann McDowell

About the Alexandria Archaeology Museum

Alexandria Archaeology reviews all development projects in the City to insure that significant archaeological resources are scientifically excavated, analyzed, interpreted, and preserved in perpetuity for public knowledge and interpretation. Community participation and involvement remain the cornerstone of the City's program. Volunteers and student interns help excavate sites, process artifacts, conduct archival research, and assist with educational programs. In addition to volunteering, the public supports the Alexandria Archaeology Museum by becoming members of the Friends of Alexandria Archaeology, which publishes a monthly newsletter. Other avenues of involvement include: visiting the museum; helping fund professional archaeological conservation through the Adopt-an-Artifact program; taking part in an Adventure Lesson designed for school children to demonstrate the processes of archaeology; touring the city's sites on bike or by foot; joining in a Dig Day to gain an opportunity to screen soil to recover the artifacts from an excavation; participating in the summer camp for junior high and high school students; attending the field session in historical archaeology offered for college students jointly with The George Washington University; or, exploring the Museum's website. Through the programs of Alexandria Archaeology, with the continued support of the City, the developers, and the citizens, the knowledge and lessons of the past continue to live on and enrich the community.

Museum hours Tuesday – Friday 10 – 3
Saturday 10 – 5
Sunday 1 – 5

Website address ci.alexandria.va.us/oha/archaeology

Educational Programs

Archaeology Adventure Lessons

The lessons demonstrate the step-by-step process of archaeology through hands-on activities using artifacts from the Alexandria Archaeology collection. Suitable for school classes, scout groups, birthdays, summer camps, adult and senior groups. Call the archaeology educator at least two weeks in advance to schedule a lesson.

Summer Camp

Students ages 12 – 15 "dig the past," learning excavation techniques, identifying historic artifacts and working in the Alexandria Archaeology Museum laboratory. Camps are held in July.

Summer Field School in Historical Archaeology

The George Washington University's summer session field school teaches college students survey, excavation and lab techniques. For registration and tuition information, contact the Summer Session Office at 202/994-6360.

Family Dig Days

The public is invited to help archaeologists screen dirt for artifacts at an archaeological excavation. Reservations are required. Children under 16 years must be accompanied by a participating adult. Available seasonally.

Friends of Alexandria Archaeology

The Friends of Alexandria Archaeology is a not-for-profit organization formed to support Alexandria Archaeology and to provide opportunities to participate in the excitement of uncovering the past. FOAA members receive the monthly newsletter, Volunteer News, which lists upcoming events and activities. You will also receive advance notice of field trips, seminars and special events and have use of Alexandria Archaeology's library for research.

Alexandria Archaeological Commission

The fourteen-member commission, appointed by the City Council, develops goals and priorities for the study of Alexandria's archaeological heritage. The commission works closely with citizens, government agencies, developers and teachers to promote archaeology in the city.

Alexandria Archaeology Publications

Community Preservation ... The Alexandria Canal ... Free Black Neighborhoods ... Urban Development ... Education ... Quakers ... Waterfront. Information on more than 100 Alexandria Archaeology publications is available on our website or call 703/838-4399 for a brochure.

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Alexandria Archaeology Museum

Office of Historic Alexandria
City of Alexandria, Virginia