

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS

1. STATE Virginia	2. THEME(S). IF ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE, WRITE "ARCH" BEFORE THEME NO. Theme XVII-b, Commerce and Industry
3. NAME(S) OF SITE Alexandria Historic District	4. APPROX. ACREAGE
5. EXACT LOCATION (County, township, roads, etc. If difficult to find, sketch on Supplementary Sheet) Alexandria (see map attached)	
6. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PRESENT OWNER (Also administrator if different from owner) Various public and private	
7. IMPORTANCE AND DESCRIPTION (Describe briefly what makes site important and what remains are extant)	

Alexandria had its beginnings in the first half of the eighteenth century as a tobacco port for Northern Virginia. Tobacco grown in a wide area was brought there for shipment, and the town became a flourishing port. In the year 1779, the Virginia General Assembly passed the first act of incorporation of the town of Alexandria, and in the same year it was made a Port of Entry. Alexandria became the leading port of Northern Virginia and enjoyed a period of expanding commerce.

The export of wheat through Alexandria eventually became even more important than tobacco. As Virginia pushed her settlement westward, grain growing increased and provided enough to make the colony self-sufficient in flour and meet the demands of an expanding market in England and the West Indies. By 1776 caravans of flour wagons were coming from as far as Winchester, and in 1781 Alexandria was first on Virginia's flour inspection list.

After the Revolutionary War, Alexandria grew in importance as a seaport with clipper ships from around the world loading and discharging cargoes on her wharves. Wealthy merchants and sea captains built gracious houses, schools, a library and churches, and the city became a center of commerce and culture. Alexandria continued as a flourishing port for over a century--until the beginning of the Civil War.

Condition of the Site: A number of residences, places of business and public buildings in the river front area of the city retain the character of the mid-eighteenth century. Prince Street in the 100 block is one of the most interesting of the streets running east to the river. The street is tree lined and has

8. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (Give best sources; give location of manuscripts and rare works)

Mary Lindsey, Historic Homes and Landmarks of Alexandria, Virginia (Alexandria, 1947); Matthew Page Andrews, Virginia, The Old Dominion (Garden City, New York, 1937); Virginia, A Guide to the Old Dominion, American Guide Series (New York, 1940); Bea Alexander, "Rambling Thru Alexandria, Virginia" (Alexandria, 1963); "Early History of Alexandria," Leaflet published by the Alexandria Chamber of

9. REPORTS AND STUDIES (Mention best reports and studies; see NPS Form 10-317, rev. 1-25-64)

Commerce (Alexandria, n.d.).

10. PHOTOGRAPHS* ATTACHED: YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	11. CONDITION Excellent	12. PRESENT USE (Museum, farm, etc.) Private residences & businesses	13. DATE OF VISIT 12/12-13/64
14. NAME OF RECORDER (Signature) Horace J. Sheely, Jr.	15. TITLE Survey Historian	16. DATE 11/8/66	

\* DRY MOUNT ON AN 8 X 10 1/2 SHEET OF FAIRLY HEAVY PAPER. IDENTIFY BY VIEW AND NAME OF THE SITE, DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH, AND NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER. GIVE LOCATION OF NEGATIVE. IF ATTACHED, ENCLOSE IN PROPER NEGATIVE ENVELOPES.

(IF ADDITIONAL SPACE IS NEEDED USE SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET, 10-317a, AND REFER TO ITEM NUMBER)

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SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET

This sheet is to be used for giving additional information or comments, for more space for any item on the regular form, and for recording pertinent data from future studies, visitations, etc. Be brief, but use as many Supplement Sheets as necessary. When items are continued they should be listed, if possible, in numerical order of the items. All information given should be headed by the item number, its name, and the word (cont'd), as, 6. Description and Importance (cont'd) . . .

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7. Importance and Description (cont'd)

groupings of many-hued old homes. Most of the houses are brick, but there are two quite distinctive clapboard houses. Many of these old row houses were homes of sea captains when Alexandria was a thriving port; thus, it is often called Captain's Row. The street has much of the appearance of English and Scottish seaport towns. Cobblestone paving, which tradition says was laid by Hessian prisoners of war, has been left in this final block of Prince Street.

The old port section on the eastern end of King Street down to the Potomac River strongly suggests Alexandria's past mercantile interests. Chequire House at 202 King Street and Gilpin House, 208 King Street, are typical 18th century merchant's houses where shops were located on the ground floor and living quarters were above. Bernard Chequire came from France and built his place in 1797. The lower floor was an office and warehouse while the upper floors were beautifully paneled and furnished family quarters. Colonel George Gilpin came to Alexandria from Maryland before the Revolution to handle the shipping business of the family. The Gilpin House was built in 1798.

John Fitzgerald's warehouses on the southeast corner of King and Union Streets are still in use. There are three early warehouses on the north side of the 100 block of King Street which have been little altered.

The Ramsay House at 221 King Street is the oldest house in Alexandria. It was built by William Ramsay, an influential Scotch merchant, who took a prominent part in the early period of the town. He was a founder, one of the first Trustees, and the first Mayor of Alexandria in 1749.

The Carlyle Mansion at 121 North Fairfax Street was built in the mid-eighteenth century by John Carlyle of Dumfries, Scotland. Carlyle was one of Alexandria's first Trustees and was in charge of the Commissary and Supplies for General Braddock's expedition in the French and Indian War. John Carlyle was a Scotch merchant and ship owner; the original house and its furnishings are today an unusual example of the home life of a well-to-do merchant of the 18th century.

Gadsby's Tavern at 128 North Royal Street was built at a time when Alexandria was a busy port and a center of social and political prominence. Gadsby's Tavern

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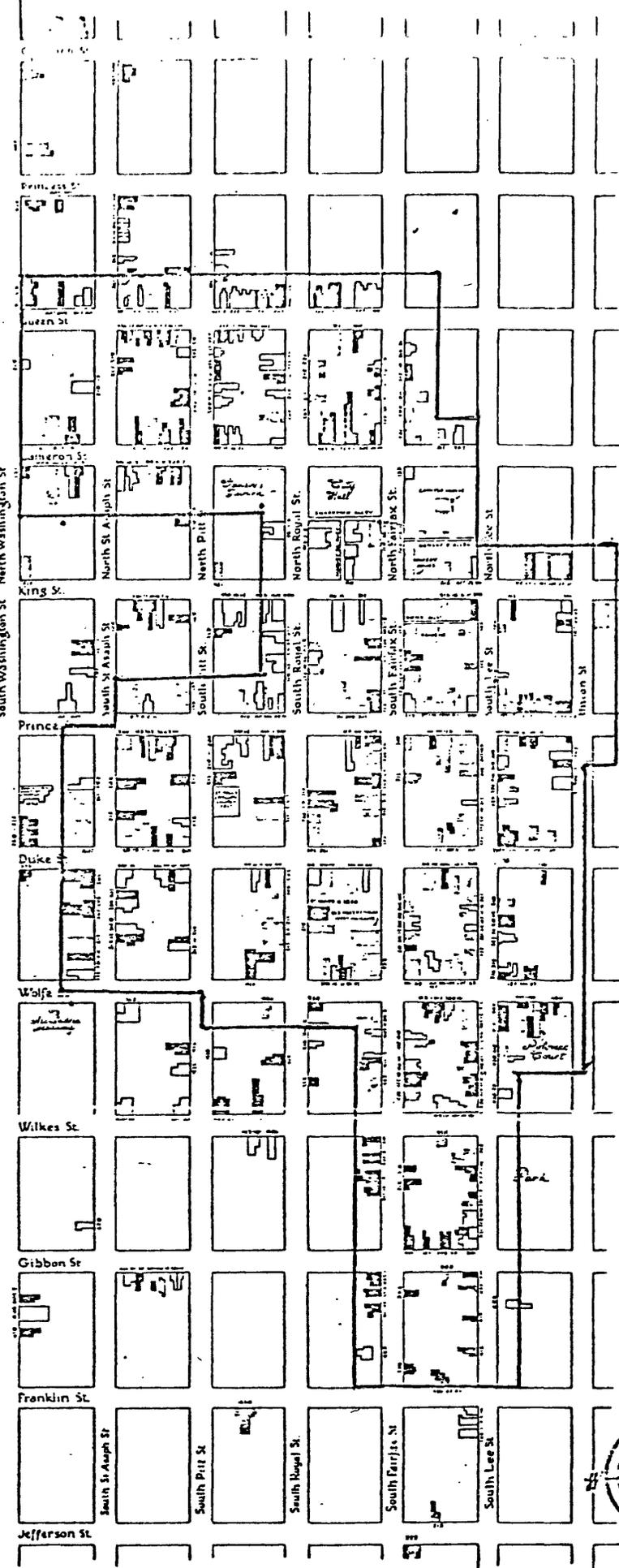
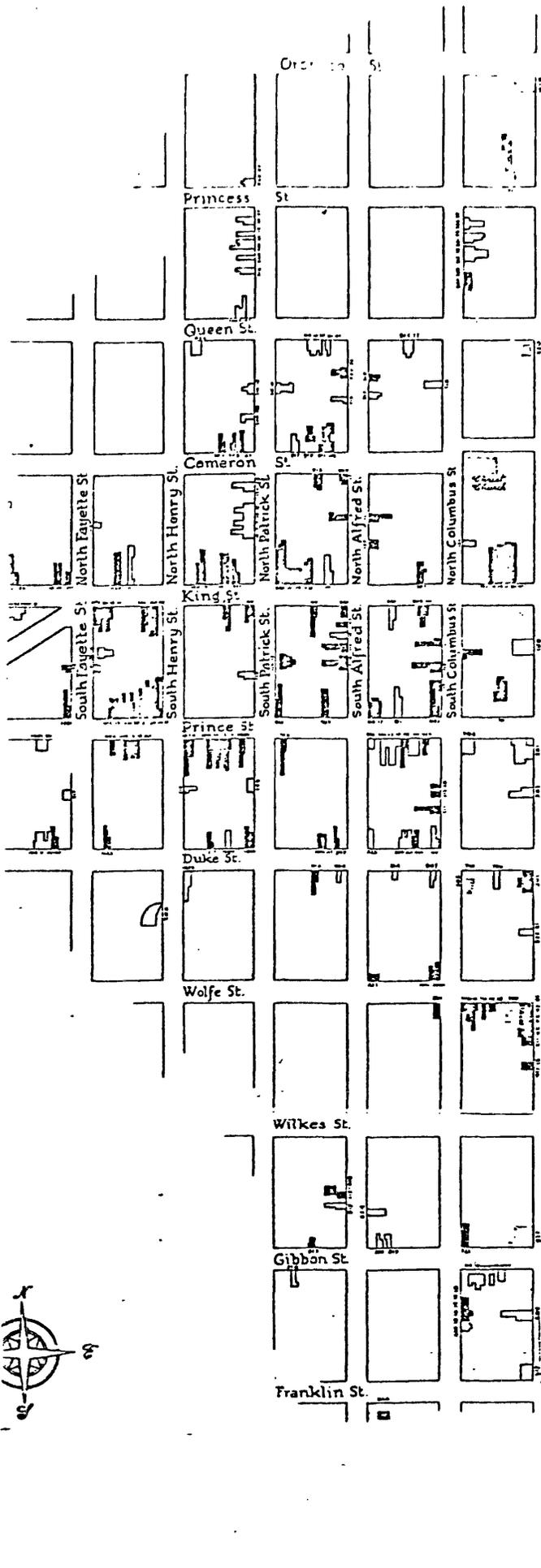
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comprised two adjoining tavern buildings, the first of which was built in 1752. In the larger, three-story addition which was built in 1792; Alexandria architecture reached its highest expression. The two taverns were operated as one under John Gadsby, who spread the fame of its comfort and cooking throughout the country. These taverns played a central role in Virginia life of the 18th century.

Many other early and well-preserved structures can be found in the eastern river-front section of Alexandria. South Fairfax Street, South Lee Street and the intersecting east-west streets are particularly rich in early structures. The boundaries of the district within which most of the 18th century buildings are contained are outlined on the accompanying map. Alexandria provides a fine example of a colonial seaport town in its architecture and many of the port activities are suggested by surviving structures.



ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA



Green designates early 1850