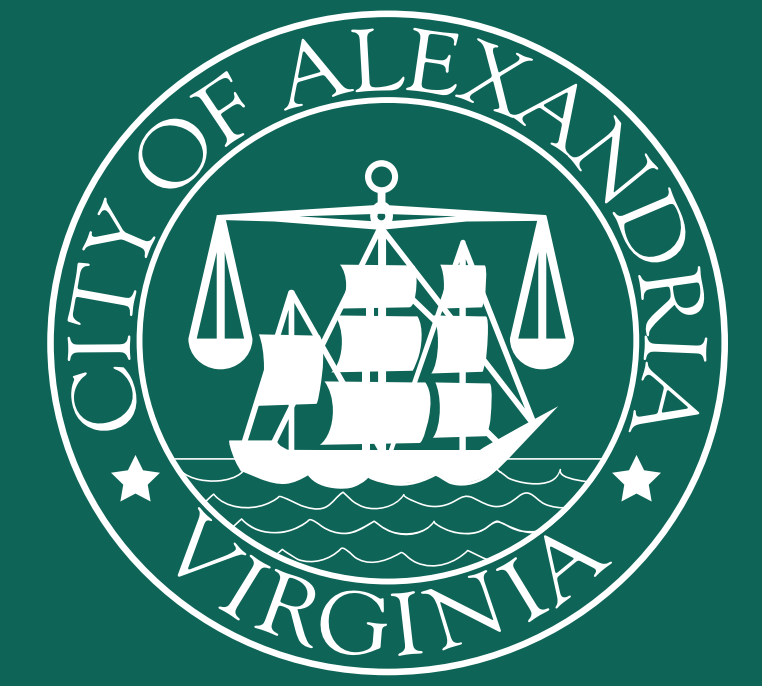


The Tale of Spa Spring



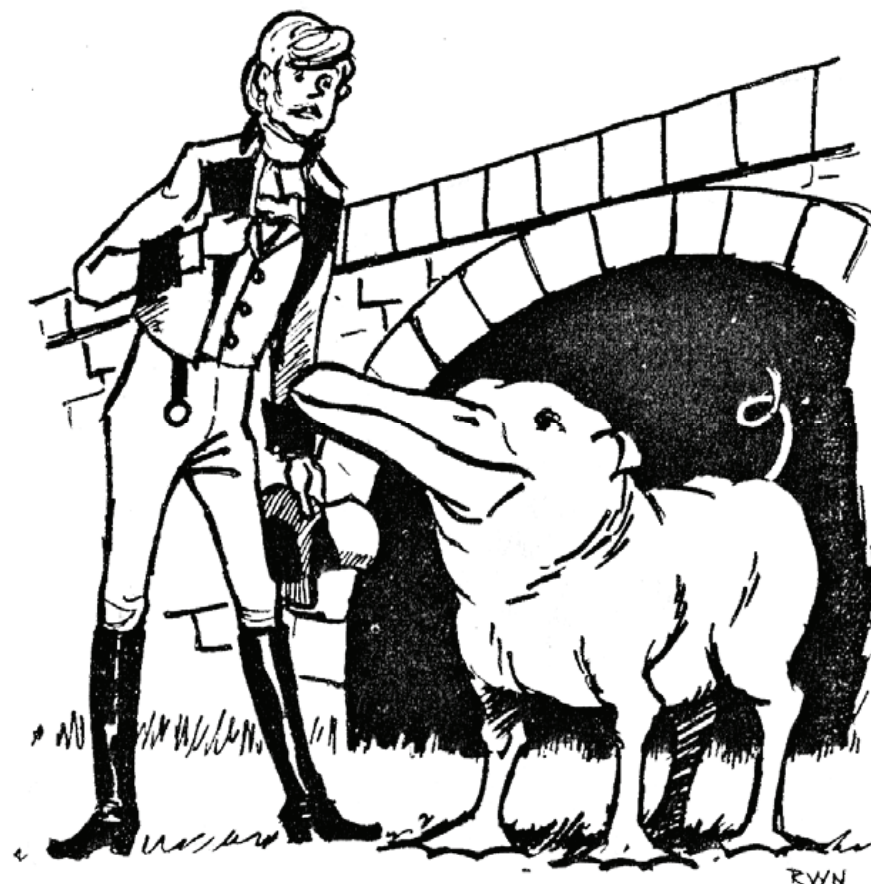
“Mr. A.C. made a daily visit to the spring, and attributed much of his usual good health to the Spa” (Alexandria Gazette 1862).



(Alexandria Canal Company 1835)

Mineral springs are popular places to visit and Alexandria’s Spa Spring was no exception. Nestled in a stream valley north of the city, Spa Spring was renowned during the early-mid 1800s for its pleasant-tasting waters, which were described as “an excellent tonic.” The spring waters had a low iron content that was distinct from the iron-rich water drawn from city wells. Spa Spring emptied into the Potomac River near the present-day intersection of Lee and Pendleton Streets. There it was known as Ralph’s Gut.

Goosepigs at Spa Spring

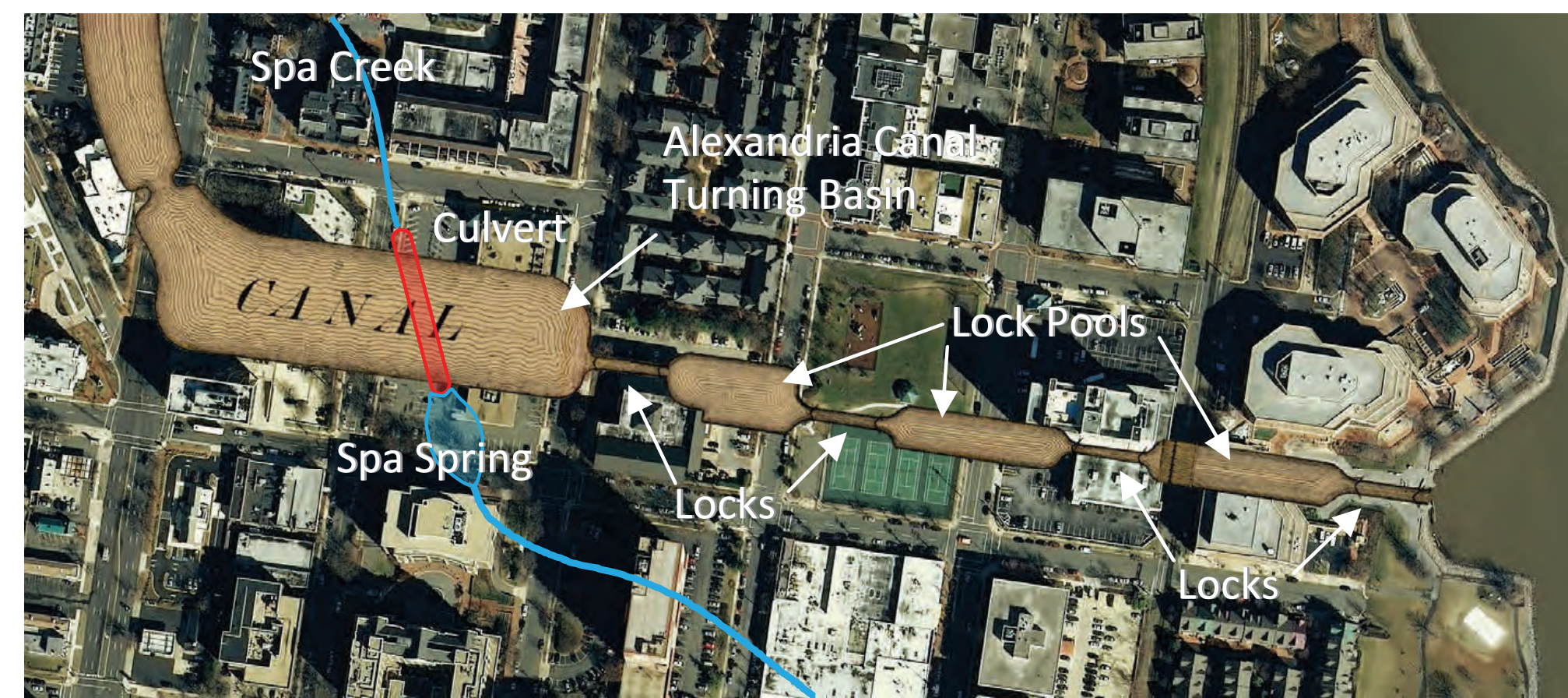


(Alexandria Public Library)

A fanciful children’s story retold by Dickman and Nicholson (1972) in their book *Pets in Old Alexandria* tells the legend of “Goosepigs at Spa Spring.”

They took up their abode at Spa Spring, under the arch of the canal basin. There they cross-bred, retaining the legs of the pig and the webbed feet and bill of the goose.

The tale of Spa Spring nearly ended in 1843, when construction of the Alexandria Canal turning basin began. Over 25 feet of soil was dumped into the Spa Creek valley to create the 190-foot wide, 650-foot long turning basin for the canal. A brick and stone-lined culvert was built to carry the creek under the new turning basin.

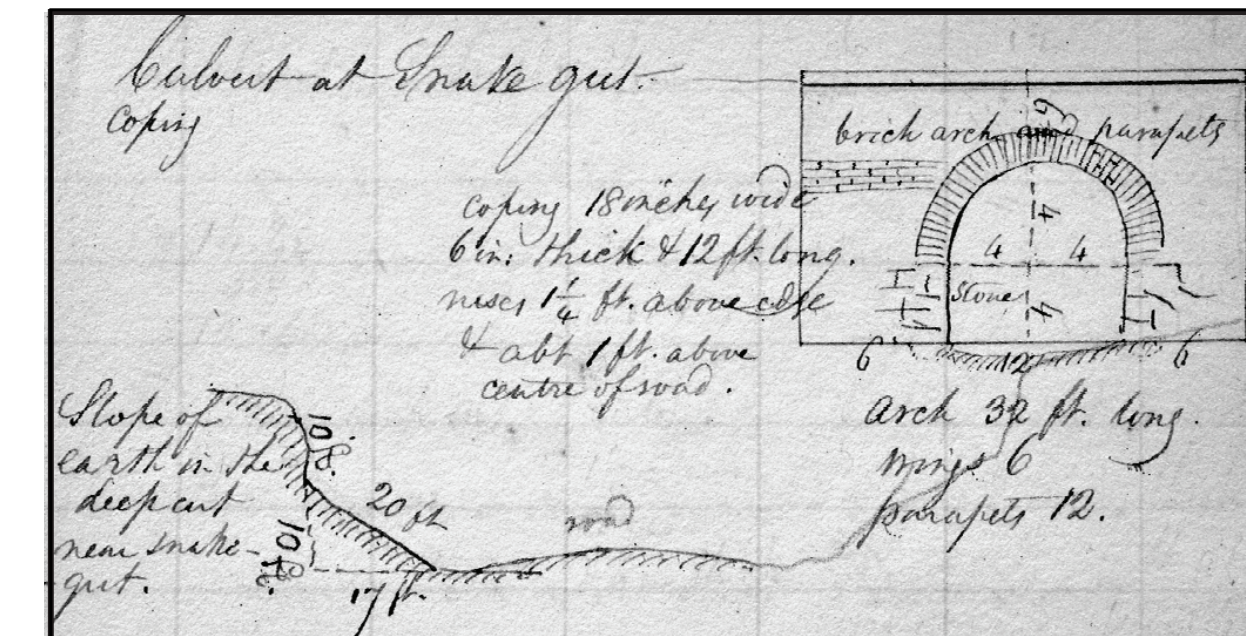


(Hopkins 1877; USGS 2011)



(RCGA 2017)

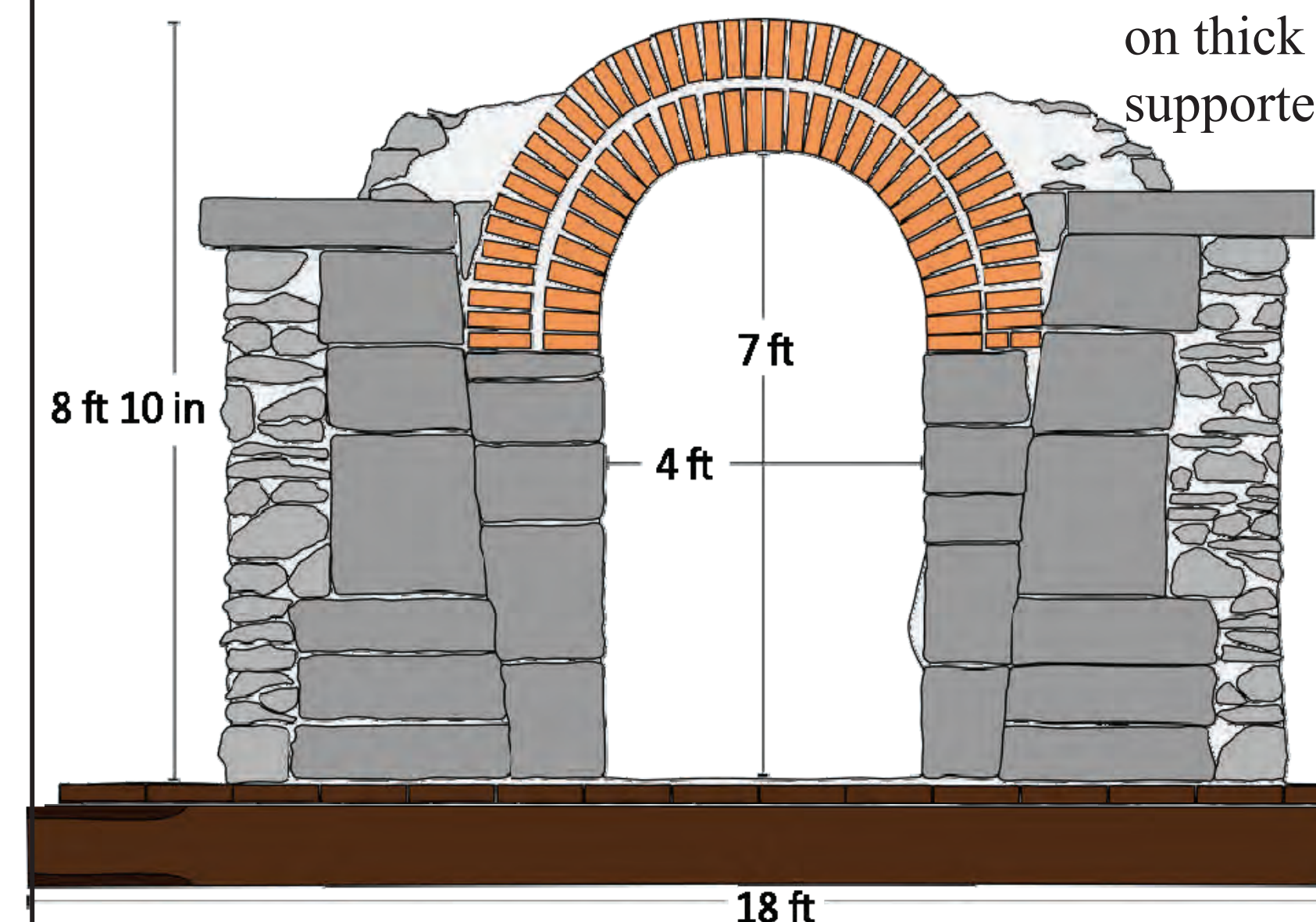
The culvert built in 1843 to convey Spa Creek beneath the canal turning basin was discovered during construction. Sadly, no evidence of goosepigs was found.



(The Library of Virginia, Special Collections)

Wilson M.C. Fairfax surveyed the proposed route of the canal for the Alexandria Canal Company in 1831. His survey log includes drawings such as this culvert near Four Mile Creek, virtually identical to the culvert found by archaeologists beneath the turning basin.

The culvert was so well-built that it never collapsed and water continued to flow through it long after it was abandoned. The cut stone foundation rested on thick wooden cribbing and supported a brick barrel-style roof. A protective layer of stone rubble covered the outside of the culvert, while stone wing walls framed the culvert opening as it spilled into the Spa Spring.



GABLES.
OLD TOWN NORTH

