

Alexandria Times

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Alexandria Archaeology Museum's new look

The city's archaeology museum has been in the Torpedo Factory Art Center for nearly 40 years. The museum studies and interprets archaeological sites from across the city, holding the past in trust for residents and visitors.

The Alexandria Archaeology program and its associated Archaeological Protection Code are part of the bedrock of historic preservation in Alexandria – preserving history from the ground up. The new Lee Street Site permanent archaeology exhibit is a milestone for the award-winning program and marks one of the most impactful changes to the space in the last two decades.

The exhibition was made possible by a grant from Historic Alexandria Foundation and is the cornerstone of the museum, seen by more than 45,000 visitors annually. Cases and panels display artifacts and reveal the archaeological process and the history of Alexandria as seen through the lens of the Lee Street Site, which is archaeological site number 44AX180, and several other waterfront sites. The exhibit answers questions like: What is urban archaeology? What did Alexandria look like in the past? What do archaeologists do?

Alexandria Archaeology partnered with local graphic design firm StudioA to create a more modern, visually pleasing exhibit. StudioA has previously worked with The Jewish Museum of Maryland and the National Museum of African American History and Culture. The Alexandria Archaeological Commission and Friends of Alexandria Archaeology provided much-needed volunteer support by reviewing drafts.

Museum staff redeveloped the content of the exhibit to be more accessible to visitors and to tell a more inclusive history of the port city, while effectively explaining the archaeological process to the public. The newly designed exhibit re-centers the experiences of free and enslaved African Americans.

One exhibit case explores the remains of a bakery at the site operated by Robert Jamieson, an enslaver who began to free some of his enslaved people as baking became industrialized in the 19th century. This document from 1828 records the manumission of Jane Turley and her four children, Maria Ann, Thomas, John and George. Documents like this provide a glimpse into Alexandria's complex and sometimes difficult history.

New findings from Robin-



PHOTO/ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGY

New exhibit panel explores how archaeologists learn about Alexandria's history.

son Landing – site 44AX235 – and Hotel Indigo – site 44AX229 – help contextualize what is known from the Lee Street site. The redeveloped exhibit uses these more recent archaeological discoveries along the waterfront, including four historic ships and numerous remnants of businesses and homes and associated artifacts, to interpret the port city's diverse past.

May is National Preserva-

tion Month. Find out more about what Historic Alexandria is doing to celebrate at alexandriava.gov/news-oha/2023-05-01/preservation-month-in-historic-alexandria. Visit the Archaeology Museum's new Lee Street Site exhibit as you continue to celebrate historic preservation month throughout the year.

Out of the Attic is provided by The Office of Historic Alexandria.