

Alexandria Times

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Alexandria
 COMMUNITY MEDIA

July 13: Alexandria's birthday

For centuries, Native Americans lived in and traveled through the land that now makes up Alexandria. Today's indigenous groups and state and federally recognized tribes and nations of Virginia include the Cheroenhaka (Nottoway), Chickahominy, Chickahominy Eastern Division, Mattaponi, Upper Mattaponi, Monacan, Nansemond, Nottoway, Pamunkey, Patawomeck and Rappahannock.

The English who colonized Virginia claimed ownership of that occupied land. In 1654, Dame Margaret Brent received a patent for 700 acres, including a large part of today's Alexandria. In May of 1749, the town received a charter from the House of Burgesses.

John West, the Fairfax County surveyor who was, by

tradition, assisted by a 17-year-old George Washington, laid out 60 acres of plots. The plots were auctioned off July 13 and 14, 1749, which led to the tradition of celebrating Alexandria's birthday on July 13.

Washington created a new map of the lots sold between July and September 1749. The map lists 58 lots and their owners on the right side of the map. Some of the prominent names on the map include Washington's brother Lawrence, John Carlyle and John Alexander.

Washington also listed the price paid for each lot. Interestingly, the prices were in Spanish "pistoles" rather than English currency. The pistole was a gold coin worth almost a pound, but common in Virginia before 1760. Since English colonists weren't allowed



PHOTO/CITY OF ALEXANDRIA

Fireworks at Alexandria's birthday celebration in 2025.

to mint their coins, Spanish currency was common on this side of the Atlantic.

This year's celebration in-

cludes an introduction by Master of Ceremonies NBC4 Washington Reporter Molette Green, a reading by Alexandria Poet Laureate Cristi Donoso and the traditional distribution of birthday cupcakes by members of City Council.

Part of this article was originally published July 13, 2023.

This year's Alexandria & USA Birthday Celebration is at Oronoco Bay Park, 100 Madison St. on Saturday from 6 to 9:45 p.m. Admission is free. For more information, please visit alexandriava.gov/Birthday. For more information on Alexandria events celebrating America's 250th birthday, please visit alexandriava.gov/America250.

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