

A Timeline of Alexandria History



1654 - 1699 ▼

1700 - 1799

1800 - 1899

1900 - 1999

1654

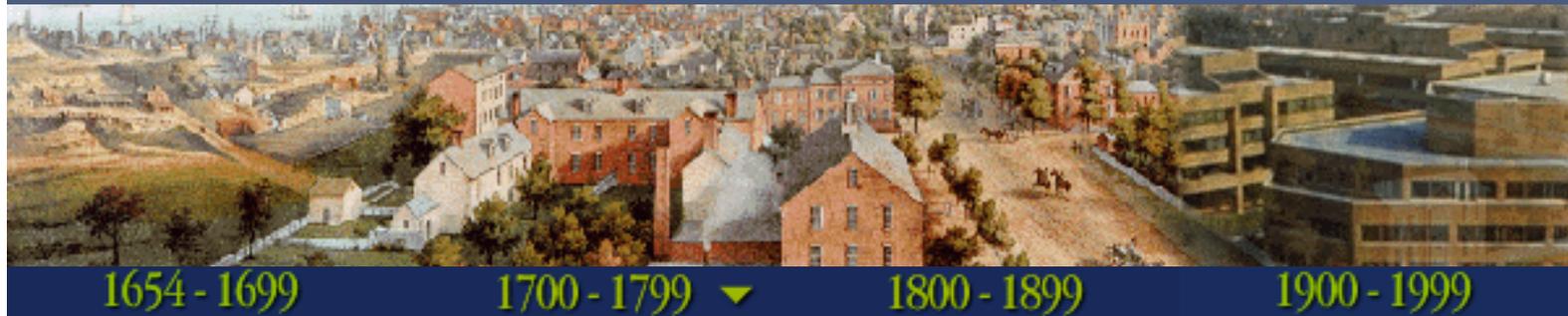
Lawyer Margaret Brent (Gent.) is issued 700 acres by Royal Governor Richard Bennett to bring settlers to Virginia; tract included much of what is now Old Town Alexandria.



1669

Governor William Berkeley issues a 6,000-acre patent, including the Brent property, to mariner Robert Howson, who would later sell the land to Stafford County planter John Alexander.

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**1740s**

Scottish merchants, including John Carlyle, John Dalton and William Ramsay, settle in what is now Alexandria, calling it Belhaven in 1749.

1749

Alexandria established on May 11 by an Act of the Virginia General Assembly; named after the Alexanders, who own the land. Boundaries extended from Oronoco to Duke Street and Royal Street to the Waterfront. A part of Fairfax County from 1749 to 1801. Governed by a board of trustees including George Mason, Lawrence Washington, his brother George Washington and headed by Lord Thomas Fairfax.

John West, Jr., assistant surveyor for Fairfax County, lays out the town; 60 acres divided into 84 half-acre lots, offered for public sale on July 13-14. 1752 Scottish merchants' petition to rename Alexandria "Belhaven" is denied.

1752

Fairfax County Courthouse moves to Alexandria, making it the political and economic center of Northern Virginia. Through Alexandria's thriving port, tobacco, grain, wheat and produce are shipped to England and the Caribbean.

John Carlyle, a founding trustee and first overseer of Alexandria, builds Carlyle House on Fairfax Street.

1753

Market Square occupies entire site of today's City Hall; George Washington drills his militia troops on the square.

1755

During the French and Indian War, General Edward Braddock and several thousand British soldiers camp in and around Alexandria. Five Royal Governors meet at John Carlyle's house to discuss war strategy.

1762

In November, the Virginia House of Burgesses authorizes Alexandria's expansion; population reaches 1,214.

1774

Upset over British taxation and the Boston Port Act, Alexandrians approve the Fairfax Resolves calling for an end to trade with England.

1775

Alexandrians volunteer for the siege of Boston and fight the British in battles at Trenton, Princeton, Brandywine and Monmouth.

1779

General Assembly passes the Act of Incorporation, giving Alexandria town status and instituting a system of self government, including an elected Common Council and a Board of Aldermen. The Mayor was chosen by the Common Council until 1843, when voters elected the Mayor.

1784

The Virginia Journal and Alexandria Advertiser, the City's first newspaper, would later become The Alexandria Gazette.

1785

Alexandria Academy established as one of the first free schools in Northern Virginia; trustees include George Washington.



1789

In Philadelphia, George Washington inaugurated as first President of the U.S. 1789 Maryland and Virginia donate land for a new federal city, eventually to be named Washington, D.C. Alexandria included in the federal district, which in 1791 is marked by boundary stones.



1794

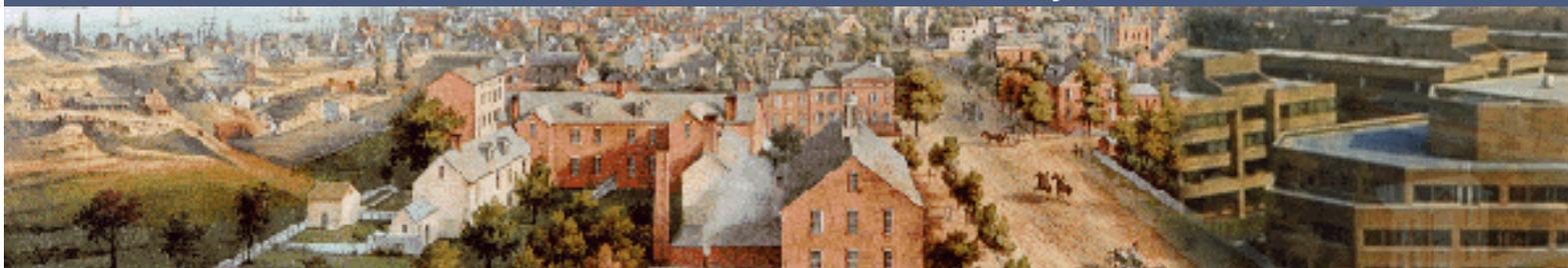
Alexandria Library Company established.

1799

George Washington dies at Mount Vernon.



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1801

Alexandria becomes part of the newly organized District of Columbia.

1810

Family of Robert E. Lee settles in Alexandria.



1814

During the War of 1812, City surrenders to British naval force and is occupied. To spare the town, Alexandrians pay ransom of tobacco, flour, cotton, and sugar.

1824

Lafayette visits Alexandria on a two-year tour of the United States.



1827

A morning fire breaks out on January 18, destroying 40 houses, stores and warehouses.

1828

Slave dealers Franklin and Armfield establish office and slave pen at 1315 Duke Street.



1834

The Lyceum Company founded by Quaker schoolmaster Benjamin Hallowell to promote public lectures and discussions. Joined with Library Company to build The Lyceum in 1839.



1847

Alexandria retroceded to Virginia. Local citizens are disenchanted with being part of the District of Columbia; Alexandria received little financial aid and citizens were not allowed to vote.

1848

The Orange and Alexandria Railroad is chartered.

1852

Alexandria chartered as a city.

1861

Occupation of Alexandria by Union troops begins May 24, 41 days after Ft. Sumter, SC, falls to Confederate forces. The first fatality was Col. Elmer Ellsworth, shot by James W. Jackson, proprietor of the Marshall House Hotel, as Ellsworth tries to retrieve a Confederate flag flying atop the building. Alexandria suffers the longest military occupation of any town during the Civil War. Railroads used as a Union supply depot.

Alexandria is a haven to slaves traveling north in search of freedom. Many die in the City and are buried at Freedmen's Contraband Cemetery on South Washington St.

1863

Alexandria was selected by Acting Governor Francis Harrison Pierpont as the capital of the loyalist "Restored Government of Virginia," remaining so until the end of the war. Defenses of Washington include Fort Ward.

1871

City Hall and Market House burn; City Hall rebuilt (below) by 1873.



1872

Alexandria Infirmary organized by Julia Johns. Becomes Alexandria Hospital in 1917.

1881

First telephone usage in Alexandria.

1889

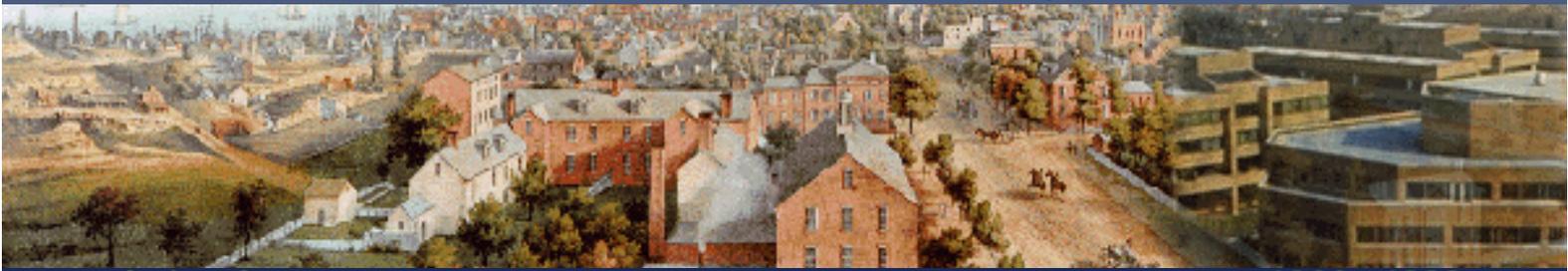
First use of electricity in Alexandria.

1892

Electric streetcars begin operation.



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1905

Alexandria's Union Station opens as part of the Washington and Southern Railroad.

1907

Residents of Del Ray and St. Elmo's petition the General Assembly to incorporate into the Town of Potomac; charter granted in 1908.

1909

Orville Wright's demonstration flight for the federal government takes him from Fort Myer to Shuter's Hill and back.



1919

Torpedo Factory built as a munitions factory.

1920

Parker-Gray elementary school is built for African Americans; named for African American educators John F. Parker and Sarah J. Gray. Became a four-year high school in 1932. School moved to a new building on Madison Street in 1950. Became a middle school in 1965 during desegregation, and closed in 1979.



1922

Alexandrians vote by referendum to implement a Council-Manager form of city government. Five at-large councilmen elected; Wilder Rich hired as Alexandria's first City Manager.

1930

City of Alexandria annexes Town of Potomac despite opposition. Town records reportedly were destroyed rather than turn them over to the City.

1930s

Old Town revitalization efforts begin.

1932

City voters approve change to Charter providing for a nine-member City Council, six elected from wards and three at-large.

George Washington Memorial Parkway opens.

1937

Library on Queen Street is built and named in honor of Kate W. Barrett, one of the first women medical doctors in the U.S.



1939

“Sit down” at segregated Barrett Library by five young African American men: Otto L. Tucker, Edward Gaddis, Morris L. Murray, William Evans, and Clarence Strange. The protest led the City to open Alexandria's first library for African Americans, Robert Robinson Library, in 1940. Today, the building houses the Black History Resource Center.



1941

General Assembly authorizes the creation of the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority to build and operate public housing in Alexandria.

1946

City Council creates a Board of Architectural Review. The Old and Historic District becomes the third historic district in the United States.

1948

City Charter is amended to provide for a seven-member Council elected at-large.

1952

Alexandria annexes land west of Quaker Lane from Fairfax County.

1956

City Charter amended to provide that the Mayor be elected separately from the other six members of Council.

1959

Five years after the U.S. Supreme Court rules segregated schools unconstitutional, Alexandria integrates its first public schools.

1960

Construction of Capital Beltway begins.

1961

Woodrow Wilson Bridge dedicated.



1964

Fort Ward Museum and Park opens. Restoration of the Civil War fort was the City's first museum project.

1972

First class graduates from T.C. Williams High School.

1973

Northern Virginia Community College opens in Alexandria.

1974

The Torpedo Factory becomes an arts center.



1983

King Street, Braddock Road and Eisenhower Avenue Metro Stations open, the first of four.

1984

City Council creates the Parker Gray Historic District.

Alexandria's DASH bus system begins operation.

1992

Alexandria defeats plans by Redskins owner Jack Kent Cooke and Governor Douglas Wilder to build a 76,000-seat football stadium at Potomac Yard.

1994

City voters approve change to an elected school board; nine-member School Board takes office in July 1995.

1995

U.S. Army closes Cameron Station, clearing the way for residential development and parks.

City Government launches Internet web site.

1998

Construction begins on new central library on Duke Street. Named for former Mayor Charles E. Beatley, the library will open in 1999.