

Alexandria Women's History Tour

The Women's History Tour covers many different sites in a one and a half mile loop. It begins at the Alexandria Visitor's Center at 221 King Street and ends on the Alexandria waterfront, just two short blocks from the tour's beginning.

This is a self-guided tour. A map of the tour is included at the end, along with descriptions of the sites.

In addition to the sites included in the one and a half mile tour loop, there are nearby sites that are also important to women's history. These sites are all within a short driving distance or could be added into your walking tour on an individual basis. The site addresses and descriptions can be found at the end of the tour site descriptions, but are not featured on the map.

The Women's History Tour is available as a podcast at: <http://alexandriava.gov/Podcasts>

We hope you enjoy your tour!

1. Ramsay House

221 King Street

Ramsay House was the home of William and Ann McCarthy Ramsay, two key figures in Alexandria history. William Ramsay was a Scottish merchant who settled here, and was one of the City's founders. Ann McCarthy was the daughter of Alexandria Mayor Dennis McCarthy and Sarah Ball (George Washington's cousin). Ann married Ramsay and had five daughters and three sons, and in her spare time became one of the most effective fundraisers for the Revolutionary War. She became Treasurer of Alexandria and Fairfax County and led a fundraising drive that collected more than \$75,000 (this would be millions today) to help support the Continental Army. Mrs. Ramsay did not have to raise her eight children in this small house, which is a replica of the original, and today serves as the Alexandria's Visitors Center. The Ramsays moved to larger quarters elsewhere in the City.

DIRECTIONS: Walk one block west on King Street, crossing N. Fairfax Street to Market Square.

2. Market Square

301 King Street

Market Square was part of the original design of the City of Alexandria, laid out in 1749. In those times, the Square was very different than today's clean and elegant site, but the purpose was similar in some ways. In Alexandria's early days, the Square was the site of small shanties from which townspeople and farmers sold merchandise and food - men and women alike. Slaves were also sometimes permitted to sell their products here, using the money to help buy their freedom and that of family members. Sophia Browning Bell was a slave who sold goods in Market Square, freeing her husband, George Bell, in 1801. Bell went on to help establish the first school for African-American children in the District of Columbia.

Then, as now, the Square was a gathering place for events. George Washington led his troops from here to fight in the French and Indian War, and both Confederate and Union soldiers and sympathizers held rallies here. Slaves were sold in Market Square, and at one time, the public whipping post stood here as well. The City's first City Hall was built on the Square - and when it burned in 1871, the new City Hall was rebuilt on the same site.

DIRECTIONS: Walk one block west on King Street to 421 King Street, the Alexandria Office on Women.

3. City of Alexandria's Office on Women

421 King Street

The Office on Women was created in the 1970s after a group of women, led by staffer Vola Lawson, created the Ad Hoc Commission on the Status of Women, which then persuaded City Council that a City department focused on women's concerns was needed. For decades, the Office on Women staffed City programs and services for domestic violence, Office also developed and organized the City's annual Walk to Fight Breast Cancer and supported the work of the Commission for Women. In 2010, the City of Alexandria reorganized several departments and the programs and services of the Office on Women moved under the newly created Department of Community and Human Services.

DIRECTIONS: Walk one block west on King Street, crossing King Street and Pitt Street, so that you are on the other side of the street. Walk west on King Street to 520 King Street, the Court House.

4. Alexandria Court House

520 King Street

Alexandria women have not always been part of the City's judiciary as they are today. The City's first woman judge in any court was the Honorable Irene Pancoast, who became a full-time judge at Alexandria's Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court in 1954 after she completed a distinguished career as a White House staffer and attorney. Pancoast served in Alexandria's "old" courthouse which was attached to City Hall before its remodeling. She retired in 1977. In 1997, the Honorable Becky Moore became the first woman judge of the General District Court, where she serves today.

Harriet Williams Home

The 500 block of King Street once included the home of Harriet Williams, a slave owned by Samuel Lindsay, who lived nearby. Alexandria Archeology, located in the Torpedo Factory, has artifacts from Williams' home.

DIRECTIONS: Walk west on King Street for one block, crossing S. St. Asaph Street and turning left on S. Washington Street. Walk south for three blocks. The Alexandria Academy is in the 400 block of S. Washington St.

5. Alexandria Academy

400 S. Washington Street

This restored school building, established in 1786 by donations from George Washington and others of wealth, was originally for poor male orphans. The school also accepted girls, but only at the ratio of four boys to one girl. In 1812, the trustees of Alexandria Academy opened the Washington Free School for Girls, which was located at 218 N. Columbus Street. Also in 1812, this school was taken over to serve free African American children. The school continued to operate until 1847 when Virginia state law forbade the education of African Americans. The recently restored Academy is open for tours.

DIRECTIONS: The Campagna Center is south of the Alexandria Academy at 418 S. Washington Street.

6. The Campagna Center

418 S. Washington Street

The Campagna Center is named for Elizabeth Ann Campagna, a woman who spent her professional life working for needy women and children in Alexandria. She began her work in this building in 1960 - it was then a YWCA - and over the years she developed dozens of innovative programs for women and their families that formed a vital safety net. In 25 years of work as the YWCA's executive director, Campagna transformed the nature of the assistance the City gave to those in need, developing preschool programs, after school programs for kids, tutoring, crisis assistance, and much more, all funded through the resourceful use of City, state and federal funds. Today's Campagna Center, named in her honor, continues her work.

DIRECTIONS: Walk south on S. Washington St. for one and a half blocks. Turn left onto Gibbon Street. Walk one block to 530 S. St. Asaph Street, the Lyles Crouch Traditional Academy.

7. The Lyles-Crouch Traditional Academy

530 S. Saint Asaph Street

The Lyles- Crouch Traditional Academy, at 530 S. St. Asaph Street, which currently serves children in kindergarten through grade 5, was built in 1958 and is named for two African American educators, Mr. Rozier Lyles and Mrs. Carrie Crouch. Mrs. Crouch followed in the tradition of other African American women educators who worked hard to ensure education for African American children at a time when Alexandria public schools were segregated. Others include Sylvia Morris, an African American woman who opened a dance school for African American children in her home in the 1780s.

Jane A. Crouch and Sarah Gray (1861) were two free African American women, born in Alexandria, who co-founded the Saint Rose Institute to educate African American children, offering day and evening classes. They also worked to help escaping slaves learn to read and write. Gray later helped open the

First Select Colored School in 1862, and she eventually became principal of the Hallowell School for Girls.

DIRECTIONS: Return to Gibbon Street. Walk two blocks, crossing Pitt Street to S. Royal Street. Turn left onto S. Royal Street. You are now between Wilkes and Wolfe Street, which is where the Hannah Jackson Home used to be. Proceed to 404 S. Royal Street, the Seaton Home.

8. Hannah Jackson Home

On the east side of S. Royal Street between Wilkes and Wolfe Streets, the Hannah Jackson Home is gone, but what occurred remains a part of our history. Hannah Jackson was a free African American laundress who lived here in the early 1800s. She saved her pennies and in 1815 had enough saved to pay \$135 - a great deal of money then - to buy "A man Slave by the name of Solomon." Solomon was Hannah Jackson's son. In the years after, she used her money from doing other people's laundry to buy her sister, Esther, Esther's four children and her own granddaughter, Ann Weaver. All became free, and their names are recorded in court records. "Free Blacks," as people like Hannah Jackson were called, were often self-employed in towns like Alexandria, working as seamstresses, laundresses and at other jobs. Many like Hannah worked to buy their family members out of slavery and into freedom.

The Seaton Home

404 S. Royal Street was, in the 1870s, the home of George Seaton, a free African American carpenter. He was responsible for construction of the first public schools for African American children, including the Hallowell School for Girls.

DIRECTIONS: Walk north on S. Royal Street for four blocks, crossing Wolfe Street, Duke Street, Prince Street, and King Street, to 134 N. Royal Street, which is Gadsby's Tavern. Gadsby's Tavern will be on your left (corner of N. Royal Street and Cameron Street).

9. Gadsby's Tavern

134 N. Royal Street

In the 1770s, Mary Hawkins was the proprietor of this tavern on Royal Street. Gadsby's Tavern is in the oldest of the buildings that have been preserved and restored. This site, always a tavern, was the heart of Alexandria's social, political and business life during the time Mrs. Hawkins owned it. Its convenient location near Market Square ensured good business. We know that George Washington frequented the tavern, as he noted in his diary for January 17, 1774, "Went up to Alexandria to Court...Suppd at Mrs. Hawkins and came home afterward." While no one is certain, it is likely that Mrs. Hawkins took over the tavern, which served food and drink primarily to the upper classes, from her husband at his death. She ran the tavern with the help of her daughter, sons, and several male and female slaves. There were a number of other women who ran taverns in the mid- to late-18th century in Alexandria, among them Mary Bloxham, Elizabeth Bray, Ann Mason and Ann McMahon.

DIRECTIONS: Walk east on Cameron Street, crossing N. Royal Street and proceeding half way down the block, to the Vola Lawson Lobby of Alexandria City Hall. The entrance will be on your right.

10. Vola Lawson Lobby, Alexandria City Hall

301 King Street

City Hall is important to women's history as the representative site of Alexandria women's leadership in government.

Alexandria's first woman to serve in the Virginia House of Delegates was civic activist Marion Galland, who was elected in 1963. Women began serving on Alexandria's City Council for the first time in 1973, when two women, Beverly Beidler and Nora Lamborne, were elected.

Patsy Ticer was elected to serve as Alexandria's first woman Mayor in 1991. She served two full terms and in 1995 was elected the first woman from Alexandria to serve in the Virginia Senate, from which she retired in 2011.

The Vola Lawson Lobby was named to celebrate the work of Alexandria's first woman to serve as City Manager, Vola Lawson. Lawson began working for the City in the 1970s and in 1985 was named City Manager, a position she held until 2001. Her many accomplishments include creating the Office of Women and encouraging the work of the Commission for Women, as well as extraordinary fiscal leadership, improving child care and early childhood education, economic development, housing, and much more. She was inducted into the Virginia Women's Hall of Fame in 1993, and has

received many national awards for her work.

DIRECTIONS: Walk east on Cameron Street for a half block to N. Fairfax Street. Turn right onto N. Fairfax Street and proceed to 121 N. Fairfax Street, the Carlyle House.

11. Carlyle House

121 N. Fairfax Street

The lives of two women - Sally Fairfax Carlyle and Sibyl West Carlyle - were, compared to the lives of many women in the City, relatively comfortable. But the reality of their lives, compared to today's women's lives in America, was difficult. Carlyle House is, even by today's standards, a large and splendid home. It was so in 1747, when nineteen-year-old Sally Fairfax married John Carlyle, a successful merchant at that time. At this young age, she was responsible for overseeing not only Carlyle House but also the family plantation in Fairfax County. She and John had seven children in the 11 short years of their marriage - only two of whom survived childhood. Sally Fairfax died in childbirth at age 30.

Sibyl West Carlyle was John's second wife. She had four children in six years - three of whom survived - but she too died in childbirth in 1769.

DIRECTIONS: Return to Cameron Street (walk a half block north on N. Fairfax Street) and turn right onto Cameron Street. Walk east on Cameron Street for two blocks, crossing Lee Street, to N. Union Street. Turn right onto N. Union Street and walk south to 105 N. Union Street, the Torpedo Factory.

12. The Torpedo Factory

105 N. Union Street

The Torpedo Factory Art Center, which attracts thousands of visitors each year, was once what the name implies, a torpedo factory, active in World War II. Today it is an exceptional art center, thanks to the vision and hard work of two remarkable women - Marge Alderson and Marian Van Landingham.

Both professional artists, they began working with the City and a group of other artists to convert the derelict old torpedo factory into today's art center. It took years, but today the Torpedo Factory houses 84 working art studios, several group studios, galleries and the offices and gallery of the Art League. Van Landingham served as the Center's first director, and Marge Alderson was director during the 1980s renovation of the site to today's design. Both women continue their art careers and have working studios in the Torpedo Factory that you may visit. Van Landingham also served in the Virginia House of Delegates from 1982-2005.

DIRECTIONS: Walk into the main entrance of the Torpedo Factory and through the atrium. Doors on the east side of the building will lead you to the waterfront. If the Torpedo Factory is not open, walk south on N. Union Street for a half block to King Street. Turn left and walk through the archway of the Torpedo Factory to get to the Waterfront.

13. The Waterfront

Alexandria came into existence, in large part, because of its waterfront area, which was a good natural port that made it possible for big ships to offload and load merchandise and produce. This port was one of the key shipping ports designated by the British for shipping tobacco from Virginia's plantations - and this made the City a hub for other kinds of business and commerce as well. Settled initially by Scottish and British merchants, the City was also a base for the sale and transportation of slaves throughout the South.

But in the beginning, all of the land on which Old Town Alexandria is sited once belonged to a remarkable woman, Margaret Brent, considered the first woman lawyer in America and the first woman to seek the right to vote. Born in England in 1601, she and her sister moved to colonial Maryland to find religious freedom. She held a patent (a land grant) from Cecil Calvert, proprietary Governor of Maryland, which gave her land in her own name. She and her sister developed their property well, working with indentured female and male servants. She became active in the Maryland colony's affairs, and sometimes lent money to other colonists.

Her business and her representation of the Calvert family matters made it necessary for her to appear in court - inspiring, much later, the American Bar Association to dub her the nation's "first woman lawyer."

A single woman, Brent was legally able to own her property and represent herself and others, but she could not vote in the Maryland Assembly, a right she needed to do her work. She asked for the right to vote and was turned down. She then left Maryland entirely and moved to Virginia, purchasing 11,000 acres, where she lived from 1651 to 1671. The property included a 700-acre tract that is now the heart of Old Town Alexandria. She lived on her plantation, called "Peace," in what is now Fairfax County until her death. Her heirs later sold the property.

Remote Site Locations

Freedom House Museum

1315 Duke Street

The description of this site is from the Alexandria Convention & Visitors Association publication, "A Remarkable and Courageous Journey": "This building served as headquarters for the slave trade operations of Isaac Franklin and John Armfield, a partnership formed in 1828. Exporting thousands of enslaved people south, this was one of the largest slave trading companies in the country. Enslaved African Americans were housed in "pens," large walled areas with males to the west and females to the east. In January 1834, J. Leavitt, editor of the New York Evangelist, visited the slave pens. Leavitt wrote: 'We were first taken out to a paved yard 40 or 50 feet square, with a very high brick wall and about half of it covered with a roof...He (Armfield) ordered the men to be called out from the cellar where they slept...they soon came up...50 or 60. While they were standing, he ordered the girls to be called out...About 50 women and small children came in...and I thought I saw in the faces of these mothers some indication of irrepressible feeling. It seemed to me that they hugged their little ones more closely, and that a cold perspiration stood on their foreheads...' "The slave dealing businesses were all but abandoned by the time of the Civil War. Early in the War, President Lincoln held out hope of reuniting the Union without total war and respected the federal and state laws that kept most African Americans in slavery, although runaway and freed slaves were increasingly put to work for the Union war effort. During the federal occupation of Alexandria, the building became a jail for captured Confederate soldiers and rowdy Union soldiers, as well as housing and a hospital for 'contraband,' escaped or freed slaves. In 1870, the slave pen walls were torn down." Today 1315 Duke Street is the office of the Northern Virginia Urban League, houses the Freedom House Museum, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Sites.

Edmonson Plaza

1701 Duke Street

Edmonson Plaza, dedicated on June 25, 2010, is named for sisters Emily and Mary Edmonson. Centerpiece to the plaza, sculptor Erik Blome created a 10-foot high bronze statue of the Edmonson sisters to commemorate their lives and the lives of others who were enslaved at the Bruin Slave Jail, which had been located at 1707 Duke Street.

Emily Edmonson (1835 – 1895) and Mary Edmonson (1832 – 1853) were African American slaves who became well known for their daring attempt to escape to freedom on April 14, 1848. Along with seventy-five other slaves, they attempted to flee to freedom to New Jersey from Washington, DC, on the schooner *The Pearl*. The young women were captured and taken to the Bruin Slave Jail where they remained under the control of slave trader Joseph Bruin, while their father tried to raise money to buy their freedom. The sisters were sent to New Orleans, but providentially were brought back to Alexandria and became a cause celebre. The renowned abolitionist, Dr. Henry Ward Beecher as well as his daughter Harriet Beecher Stowe, the author, joined their cause. They were freed November 4, 1848. The young women attended several educational institutions including Oberlin College and spent the rest of their lives fighting against slavery.

Annie B. Rose House

309 Pendleton Street

Annie B. Rose was born in 1893, the daughter of a slave who had been sold from the slave pens at 1315 Duke Street. She received an education, taught school in the area and worked for many years at the U.S. Bureau of Printing and Engraving until she retired in 1945. She then devoted the rest of her long life to the Alexandria community, improving housing and home nursing for the elderly, educating Alexandria young people about Black history and slavery, and

preserving Black history. In the 1940s, Rose worked to encourage African Americans to register and vote and to take active roles in the community. She helped establish the City's first Commission on Aging, and was a founding member of the Senior Citizens Employment Services of Alexandria. She worked to help establish the Black History Resource Center on N. Alfred Street. She gave more than 40 years of her life to help the City and received many awards for her efforts. Rose House is perhaps her greatest honor, where aging, low-income Alexandrians are cared for.

Black History Resource Center

638 N. Alfred Street

At the Center, staff and volunteers provide information about the contributions of African Americans to the City's history and culture. Originally this site was the Robinson Library, built in 1940 as the City's first public library for African Americans. After desegregation in the 1960s, the building became a site for community programs. In 1983, restored and renovated, the Black History Resource Center opened; an addition was added in 1989. The Center is open to visitors Tuesday through Saturday.

Alexandria Free School For Girls

218 N. Columbus Street

In 1812, the first floor of this historic building was the Alexandria Free School for Girls. It was funded with monies from the Washington Society and Elizabeth Washington of Hayfield, VA, who dedicated her funds for girls only, saying, "I confine this donation to my own sex, because I believe that human happiness has material dependence upon our moral and religious worth." The school ceased operations during the Civil War.

Before the building was constructed the land was owned by several people including Margaret Brent.

Kate Waller Barrett Library

717 Queen Street

Kate Waller Barrett was born in Alexandria in the 1850s, and became the wife of a genteel clergyman. She learned about the impact of poverty and tragedy on women's lives firsthand when an unwed mother and her starving baby came to the Barrett family rectory, begging. Angered by society's treatment of such women, Kate Barrett became a reformer. She enrolled in medical school, earning her M.D. in 1892. With funds from philanthropist Charles Crittenden, she opened the Florence Crittenden Home for unwed mothers, providing sanctuary and help for mothers and their babies. Soon more Crittenden homes were opened across the nation with 90 by the turn of the century. Barrett was widowed in 1896 and raised her six children alone. She continued her activism, taking additional leadership roles in the Daughters of the American Revolution and the League of Women Voters, among other organizations. Her home at 408 Duke Street has a historical marker honoring her, and in 1937, Alexandria's main library was named in her honor.

Lloyd House

220 N. Washington Street

Lloyd House, today the offices of Historic Alexandria and home of extensive historical resources about Alexandria, was once the home of an especially interesting woman, Carolyn Hallowell Miller. She became a suffragist leader, passionately supporting women's right to vote, and in January 1883, she was introduced by Susan B. Anthony to address the National Women's Suffrage Convention. Her remarks, as reported in the Alexandria Gazette, said this about Alexandria: "I was born and reared in a town noted for its slave pens and intense conservatism, whose women inhabitants, if of social rank sufficient to be considered ladies, were treated with all respect...but yet (I) had also seen women of lower social classes there stripped to the waist and brutally beaten in public by order of the law, their only offense was impertinence to the young snipes of dry goods clerks whose own conduct provoked this impertinence." Hallowell Miller also said of Susan B. Anthony and other leaders seeking women's right to vote, "Coming generations would rise up and call them blessed... man would rise to a higher plane when he acknowledges equal rights for women before the law." And so it came to pass...

City of Alexandria Women's History Tour Map

Legend

-  Tour Sites
-  Tour Route
-  Return Route
-  City Boundary
-  Buildings
-  Parking Lots
-  Parks



This map was produced by the GIS
Division of the Department of Planning
and Zoning, City of Alexandria, Virginia.
Mapping Standards: MapInfo Professional
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Map Units: Feet



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