

A LEGACY OF SHOEMAKERS: William Morgan, Peyton Ballinger, and Philip Bradshaw (508-512 King Street)



Fig. 1: 508-512 King St., 1967 (ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGY COLLECTION)

While strolling past Bradshaw's shoe store in the early 1960's, few people would have known that that very location had been used for the purpose of selling shoes for more than a hundred years.

William Morgan

The story begins with William Morgan, an Irish-born shoemaker who opened a store at this location in 1822. Morgan had been in the business of selling ladies' shoes since 1815 and after moving store location four times in Alexandria, he finally settled at 508-512 King Street and remained in business until the 1840's (Magid 1985). By 1832 Morgan owned the lot and was living there along with his family and three slaves (Mitchell, Alexandria Archaeology Files; Terrie 1979).

During the 1977 excavations, archaeologists discovered another brick-lined shaft on this property (a well/privy associated with [William Halley](#), the former occupant, was also found on the lot). Used as a trash pit, it contained artifacts that were most likely discarded by the Morgan family.

Among these artifacts were the shattered remains of at least one transfer-printed pearlware chamber pot (the pieces may in fact belong to two different vessels). At a time when indoor plumbing did not exist and privies were either communal or situated in backyards, a chamber pot was a necessary bedroom commodity. This chamber pot in particular was manufactured in England by Ralph Stevenson ca. 1836-1840 (Magid, AAF).



Fig 2: Chamber pot fragment depicting the Deaf and Dumb Asylum in Hartford, CT, AX 93-Surface 67.2028 (ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGY COLLECTION)



Fig. 3: Chamber pot fragment depicting the Deaf and Dumb Asylum in Hartford, CT, AX 1 Ft. FF (ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGY COLLECTION)

The fragments in the pictures above all have depictions of the Deaf and Dumb Asylum in Hartford, Connecticut. The fragment shown in Fig.2 was found on another archaeological site just one block away but illustrates well what the full design would have looked like for our fragment in Fig.3. The print on which the pattern is based was published in 1836 in the



Fig. 4: Chamber pot fragments depicting the Capitol in Washington D.C., AX 1 Ft. FF (ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGY COLLECTION)

Connecticut Historical Connections. The Asylum itself was built in 1821 and founded by Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, the man after whom Gallaudet University in Washington D.C. is named. Magid states that “In the early 19th century asylums were impressive public buildings and were among the country’s noted tourist attractions. English travelers and writers including Charles Dickens described these American institutions, and several were depicted on Staffordshire pottery.” (Magid, AAF).

The fragments in Figure 4 were originally part of the base of the chamber pot. The transferred print depicts the Capitol in Washington D.C.. The particular engraving on which it was based was published in 1831 and showed the Capitol with a Bullfinch dome which was later replaced by a larger one (Magid, AAF).

Peyton Ballinger

In 1850, William Morgan sold the lot to Peyton Ballinger. Ballinger learned his trade as a shoemaker at Dean’s Shoe Factory in Alexandria. In his King Street store, Ballinger manufactured custom fitted boots and shoes until he retired in 1888 (Magid 1985).



Fig. 5: The privy in the backyard of 508-512 King St., AX1 Ft.KK (ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGY COLLECTION)

Within it, archaeologists found two fine examples of the leather shoes that Peyton Ballinger must have sold in his store (Fig.6).

On the left is a man's boot, produced sometime after 1862, with a low heel and a squared toe. To the right is a child's shoe, also with a low heel and squared toe as well as a nailed sole. The latter was produced sometime around 1860 (Magid 1985: 19).

Philip Bradshaw

Fortunately for Alexandria archaeologists, yet another brick-lined structure was found in the backyard of the 508-512 King Street house (Fig.5). This one contained artifacts that had been deposited at the time of Peyton Ballinger's occupation of the site. The shaft had been disturbed and only a little over 11 ft of the well's original length were left to excavate. This, however, was enough to determine that the well had been converted into a privy.



Fig. 6: A man's boot and a child's shoe found in the privy, AX 1 Ft.KK (ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGY COLLECTION)



Fig. 7: 500-512 King Street, 1967 (ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGY COLLECTION)

In 1880, Peyton Ballinger was joined in his venture by Philip Bradshaw. When Ballinger retired in 1888, Bradshaw took over.

His store lined the main street of Alexandria until it was demolished along with the rest of the block during the [Urban Renewal Project](#)

Bradshaw's shoe store continues even today at other Alexandria and Northern Virginia locations.

References

Unless otherwise indicated, all artifact identifications were made by Barbara H. Magid, Alexandria Archaeology. Historical information was extracted from the Alexandria Archaeology Files (AAF), mostly compiled by Ruth Sinberg Baker, Vivienne Mitchell, and Nancy Sennewald.

Magid, Barbara H. "Artifacts, Advertisements and Archaeology, Catalogue of an Exhibition." Alexandria Archaeology. City of Alexandria, 1985.

Terrie, Phillip. "Alexandria's Main Street Residents: A Social History of the 500 Block of King Street." Alexandria Archaeology Manuscript, 1979.