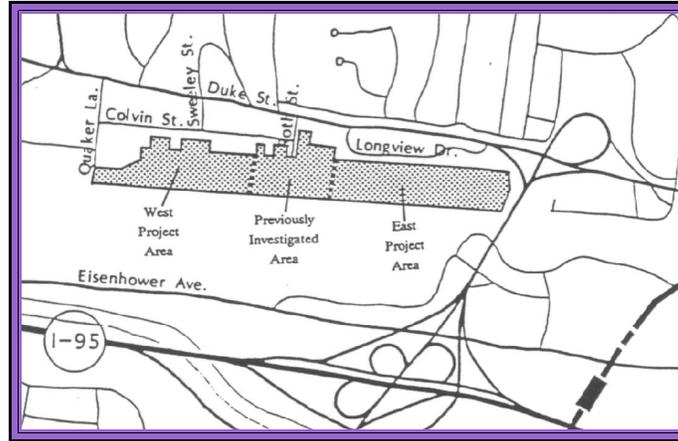


**ALEXANDRIA BUSINESS CENTER  
(44AX127, 44AX128)**

*Report Summary by Shirley Scalley*



**INTRODUCTION**

The Alexandria Business Center site consists of two noncontiguous parcels of land on 22 acres. It is bounded on the south by the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad right of way, on the east by Telegraph Road, on the north by an irregular property line roughly following Colvin Street and Longview Drive, and on the west by a property line extending as far as South Quaker Lane. The parcel of land that separates the East and West Project Areas was the subject of archaeological investigation in the summer of 1989.

The site is situated along Taylor Run and Cameron Run, an environment favorable for prehistoric occupation. In addition, research determined that a nineteenth and twentieth century cemetery, belonging to the Bloxham and Whaley families, was located in a portion of the project area. In view of the property's archaeological potential and in compliance with a City of Alexandria ordinance, the site was targeted for investigation before development

commenced to determine whether any prehistoric or historic sites existed in the area. Engineering Science, Inc. conducted an archaeological survey in May of 1990.

**ENVIRONMENT**

About 12,000 years ago, concurrent with the final retreat of the Wisconsin polar ice cap, the climate in the Middle Atlantic region became increasingly favorable for human occupation. The earliest evidence of such occupation dates to about 9500 B.C. The original warming trend culminated in an extremely hot and dry period during the Halifax Phase of the late Middle Archaic, around 3600-2500 B.C. By late prehistoric and historic times, however, the climate in the Alexandria region had ameliorated and was much as it is today.

During the warming trend, the runoff from the melting glaciers resulted in the creation of the Chesapeake Bay and Potomac River, with its tributary streams, and the deposition of terraces of gravel, sand, silt, and clay. Quartz and

quartzite cobbles left on the terraces and in local streambeds were a major source of lithic materials for prehistoric man. Chert and jasper pebbles, other favorite raw materials, were sometimes washed down from the Piedmont and deposited on local terraces. The Piedmont uplands also provided primary lithic sources.

The easy availability of lithic materials and the proximity of rich marine food sources made the Cameron Run Valley ideal for prehistoric occupation. Its physical location assured historic occupation as well.

## **HISTORY**

### ***Prehistory***

The prehistory of the Middle Atlantic region is traditionally divided into three major periods: the Paleo-Indian (c. 10000 B.C.-7500 B.C.), the Archaic (c. 7500 B.C.-1000 B.C.), and the Woodland (c. 1000 B.C.-A.D. 1600). These divisions reflect changes in the environment, material culture, technology, and subsistence strategies of the early inhabitants and provide a useful tool for archaeologists to judge the likelihood of finding sites in areas slated for development.

### ***The Historic Project Area***

By the late 1600s, the Native American population had been replaced by the Europeans who began to settle the area after 1608 when Capt. John Smith sailed into the Chesapeake Bay and up the Potomac River. Other explorers, traders, and fur trappers followed hoping to discover large deposits of minerals and/or the Northwest Passage. It soon became apparent, however, that fortunes could be made selling locally grown tobacco on the new English and European markets.

The tobacco industry influenced settlement and development along the Chesapeake Bay and Potomac River during the seventeenth century. Warehouses and wharves were built along the river, and "rolling roads" served as connections

with the trade centers. The present Little River Turnpike and Telegraph Road were two of the more important roads and lie north and east of the project area. In 1749, the Alexandria Assembly selected the site of the inn, ferry, and tobacco inspection station established by Hugh West on the Potomac River as the new town of Alexandria. In fact, two major port towns, Alexandria and Georgetown, developed as a result of being key tobacco inspection stations.

The project area is 2 miles northwest of Great Hunting Creek and the Alexandria waterfront, two focal points of early eighteenth century trade. In 1678, the project area was part of a 627-acre patent granted to John Carr and John Simpson. In 1698, half of this land was sold to John West, and in 1753, the remaining half was sold to Hugh West.

In 1790, Hugh's grandson, Thomas West, acquired the entire 627 acres of the West family holdings. Soon thereafter, he sold 9 acres in the eastern section of the East Project Area to William Ward and the rest to Ludvick Trisler. The Trisler land, site of the family cemetery, was sold to David Watkins in 1870 and to the Fruit Grower's Express (FGE) in 1926. As its name suggests, FGE specialized in the transport of perishables in railroad refrigerator cars east of the Mississippi.

In 1790, West sold 40 acres that included a parcel in the western section of the East Project Area to Alexander Smith. Smith sold to James Bloxham shortly thereafter, and it became the site of the family cemetery.

In 1858, Bloxham's son James owned the 10½-acre lot containing the graveyard, as well as a parcel on the north side of the turnpike where his house was located and a parcel in Georgetown. James had four children, including John T. and Jane Eliza. Jane married William H. Whaley, a stage coach owner. When James died intestate in 1858, his property was sold at auction at Catts's Tavern, and the proceeds were divided among the

heirs. John T. purchased the lot containing the graveyard, and Lawrence B. Taylor held it in trust until paid in full. John T. did not make all the payments, and the property was resold in 1860 to Rozier Catts, the tavern owner. John T. attempted to retrieve the property by filing suit against the trustee for selling it for less than its value. Testimony revealed that railroad tracks ran through the property and that there were no improvements, such as a house, on it. John T. lost the case and the land. However, Catts reserved the 1/4-acre graveyard lot for the Bloxham family. He sold the property in 1893, and it passed through several owners until it was purchased by FGE in 1926.

Thomas West also sold portions of the West Project Area at various times. In 1821, Philip Grimes purchased from Moss and Peyton a parcel that included a graveyard. In 1847, William Grimes sold to Richard Windsor, but reserved use of the graveyard, which later deed research showed to lie just outside the project area. Windsor owned a lot of land in the area and was an owner of the Accotink and Cameron mills. During the Civil War, two forts were built across the turnpike, and soldiers camped on the property, which was then owned by the Studds family. The Studds testified in court that the soldiers took crops from others without paying and took control of the Cameron distillery just south of the project area.

In 1913, a portion of the land was sold to John Nash, who kept a dairy on the property until 1920, when Early Saums purchased the land and the dairy. Saums sold portions of the property in small lots that were eventually united and purchased by FGE in 1926.

## ARCHAEOLOGY

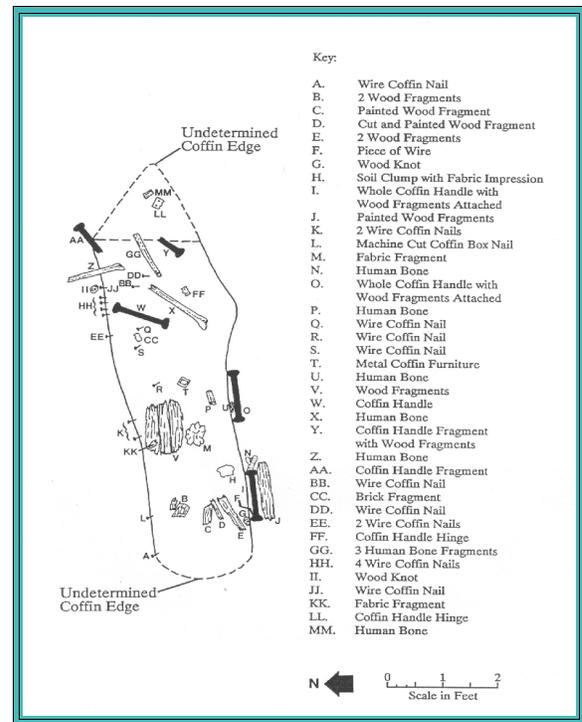
### *Prehistoric*

Prehistoric artifacts were found at or below the lawn surface along the banks of Taylor Run, a favorable location for aboriginal activity. Unfortunately, the artifacts are not diagnostic.

Eighteen flake fragments, one possible flake fragment, and two chips were recovered along with 19 pieces of heated stone. Two of the flake fragments and the possible flake fragment were quartzite; the remainder were quartz. Of the 19 pieces of heated stone, eight were quartzite.

### *Historic*

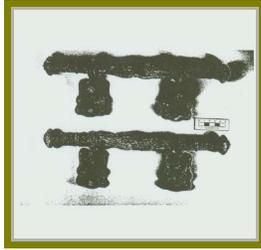
A marble gravestone with the letters "W.H.B." carved into it was discovered beneath the lawn surface within the boundaries of the Bloxham family cemetery. The grave itself lay several inches below the gravestone. The grave contained the remains of a wooden coffin and the large bones of a human skeleton.



Schematic of the Grave

Artifacts removed from the grave in the course of its initial discovery included gilt coffin handles, nails, a metal coffin plate embossed "AT REST," a gilt coffin hinge, and several pieces of wood. Among the human skeletal remains recovered were a cranium, a mandible, and long bones from the arms and legs.

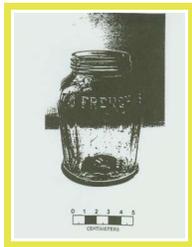
From the arrangement of the items in the grave, they were recovered *in situ*. The south side wall of the coffin had collapsed inward and one handle lay on top of the right arm bone. Around the



Coffin Handles

perimeter were coffin nails, many evenly spaced at 2 inches apart. The coffin was made of wood and was at least partly painted. It apparently had four identical gilt handles, two on each long side. The earth in the feature was damp, and some clods bore visible impressions of fabric. Several different varieties of fabric, not all of which could be identified, were present. Some light canvas and a piece of coarse cloth similar to Hessian were recovered.

Historic material found outside the grave included pottery, glass, nails (both wire and machine cut), screws, slag, wood, and coal. The 22 pieces of pottery recovered included pearlware, ironstone, whiteware, other refined earthenwares, including a possible blue shell-edged piece, and one piece each of porcelain and grey stoneware. The glass included bottle, vessel, lamp, and window glass and a mustard jar embossed on the shoulder with the words "IT'S FRENCH'S" and on the base with "DESIGN PAT'D FEB. 23-15." A jumble of bricks found in a nearby pit had sandy mortar adhering to them and so had probably been used sometime before the turn of the twentieth century.



Mustard Jar

"DESIGN PAT'D FEB. 23-15." A jumble of bricks found in a nearby pit had sandy mortar adhering to them and so had probably been used sometime before the turn of the twentieth century.

## CONCLUSION

The prehistoric artifacts suggest projectile point and tool manufacture at the site, but do not permit identification of the specific type of implement, so the period of site use cannot be established. The heated stones suggest that the natives built fires to provide warmth, but tell us nothing about the permanence of the site.

Most of the historic pottery recovered was manufactured during the nineteenth century and is still being manufactured today.

In accordance with the instructions of the Alexandria City Archaeologist, Dr. Pamela Cressey, the excavated human skeletal remains were analyzed by physical anthropologists Douglas W. Owsley, Ph.D., and Robert W. Mann, M.A. Their examination supports the conclusion drawn from the initials "W.H.W." on the gravestone that the burial was that of William H. Whaley, husband of Jane Eliza Bloxham Whaley.

Comparative skeletal evidence indicates that the skeleton is likely that of a Caucasian male more than 50 years old. In addition, William H. Whaley was a stage coach driver, and the osteological analysis suggests that the deceased could have engaged in this occupation. A cortical defect on the upper portion of the left humerus is consistent with prolonged and strenuous physical activity involving the upper arm. Handling reins would have resulted in pulling stresses on the upper arms that could have produced this defect.

The artifacts recovered from the grave were typical of mass-produced casket hardware of the nineteenth century. The body had been laid out with the head to the west in accordance with the common custom.

After the exposed skeletal remains were identified and removed, excavation of the grave was halted. Therefore, it is not possible to say whether more bones remain in the burial or whether skeletal preservation was poor, which was common for nineteenth century interments.

As a result of these investigations, Engineering Science recommended that the eastern section of the East Project Area be set aside for further discovery. This includes the prehistoric/historic

site (44AX127), the Bloxham family cemetery (44AX128), and the area east of Taylor Run where the Trisler cemetery may be located. Because of historic disturbances, no further work was recommended for the other portions of the project area.

*This summary is based upon a 1993 report by Michael D. Petraglia, Ph.D., Catharine B. Toulmin, M.Sc., and Madeleine Pappas, M.A., with a contribution by Douglas W. Owsley, Ph.D., and Robert W. Mann, M.A.*