



**CELEBRATING 50 YEARS**  
**OF**  
**ARCHAEOLOGY**  
**IN THE**  
**CITY OF ALEXANDRIA**  
**1961–2011**

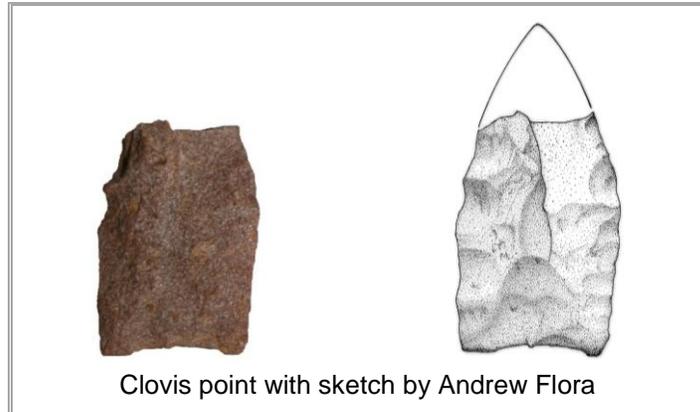
**Alexandria Archaeological Commission**  
**Presentation to City Council**  
**September 27, 2011**



AMERICAN INDIANS IN ALEXANDRIA



# FROM THE CITY OF ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGY COLLECTIONS AMERICAN INDIANS IN ALEXANDRIA



Clovis point with sketch by Andrew Flora

### **Artifact #1 Clovis Spear Point**

Quartzite

Paleoindian Period (11,000 B.C.–  
7,500 B.C.)

Excavated: Freedmen's Cemetery

This quartzite Clovis point is the oldest artifact found in Alexandria at up to 13,000 years old. It most likely was broken during manufacture as its maker attempted to form the tip. Clovis points, named for a New Mexican site, are identified by their concave base, bifacial blade, and fluted channel, which allowed the points to be attached to a wood-handled spear. During the Paleoindian Period, Indian hunter-gatherers moved frequently. This point is the first indication of their presence in Alexandria. Thousands of stone artifacts from Alexandria's pre-Colonial Indian occupants have been excavated at Freedmen's Cemetery, where this point was discovered. During the Civil War, graves at the cemetery were dug through the prehistoric tool-making site.

### **Artifact #2 Kirk Spear Point**

Quartzite

Early Archaic Period (8,000–6,500  
B.C.)

Excavated: Jones Point

This Kirk point is the second oldest artifact found in Alexandria. It is easily identified by its serrated edges. It dates to as early as 9,000 years ago, when the transient hunter-gatherer lifestyle continued while a warming climate changed floral and faunal species. As glaciers retreated and sea levels rose, widespread deciduous forests and smaller, more diverse game proliferated. This point was discovered on the banks of Great Hunting Creek.

### **Artifact #3 Triangular Point**

Quartz

Late Woodland Period (900–1,600  
A.D.)

Excavated: Jones Point

This small, triangular point emerged among the vestiges of Alexandria's first house—an oval-shaped structure defined by about 25 posts and several refuse pit features. Woodland Indians built the "house" by draping mats over bent saplings to form a 12-foot oval—small compared to others of the same period, when life became more sedentary. This size likely indicates a small group lived here to exploit the plant and animal resources of Great Hunting Creek.

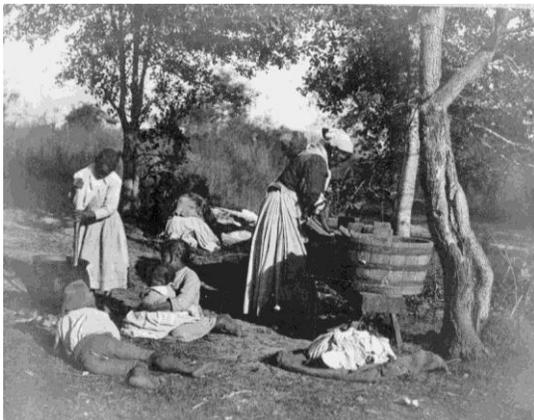
*Archaeologists recovered all three points during excavations for the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Improvement Project and Contrabands and Freedmen's Cemetery Memorial, funded by FHWA, VDOT, and the City of Alexandria.*



ENSLAVED ON A PLANTATION:

THE LIFE OF AN AFRICAN AMERICAN WASHERWOMAN

## ENSLAVED ON A PLANTATION: THE LIFE OF AN AFRICAN AMERICAN WASHERWOMAN



From left: washerwomen c. 1887 (National Archives); archaeological remnants of laundry at Shuter's Hill

**Artifact Group #1 Bale Seal,  
Buttons, Pins, Scissors, and  
Thimble**

**Group #2 Dinner/Serving Ware  
Sherds and Pipe Fragments**

Late 18<sup>th</sup>/Early 19<sup>th</sup> century

Excavated: Shuter's Hill, George  
Washington Masonic National  
Memorial

The George Washington Masonic National Memorial stands on what was known from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century as Shuter's Hill. American Indians first traversed the site more than 5,000 years ago. Then, from the 1780s until the 1840s, the Mills, Lee, and Dulany families successively operated a plantation here. At the onset of the Civil War, Union troops built two forts on the hill and occupied the plantation house.

The City of Alexandria has excavated the property since 1995. Work has uncovered the laundry outbuilding (pictured above), dating to the late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Finds include buttons, thimbles, needles, pins (pictured below, left), and scissors—associated with laundry activities—and thousands of unmatched ceramics for food storage and serving, plant and animal remains, and pipe fragments. These finds document that enslaved African Americans lived and worked in the structure.



Lead bale seal for bolt of cloth

The plantation owners relied on slaves to sew, mend, and clean their clothes. A 19<sup>th</sup>-century account describes doing laundry as an "Herculean task." Washerwomen (pictured at top) carried at least 50 gallons of water, weighing about 400 pounds, to wash, rinse, and boil just one load of clothes. According to historical documents, Esther may have been one of these women. She was enslaved to Benjamin Dulany. Esther received her freedom shortly before her death when Hannah, her sister, bought her and her three children for \$1,000. The story of Esther provides a glimpse into the hard work and perseverance that led to freedom for many enslaved African Americans, whose relatives often spent years saving to purchase family members in order to free them.

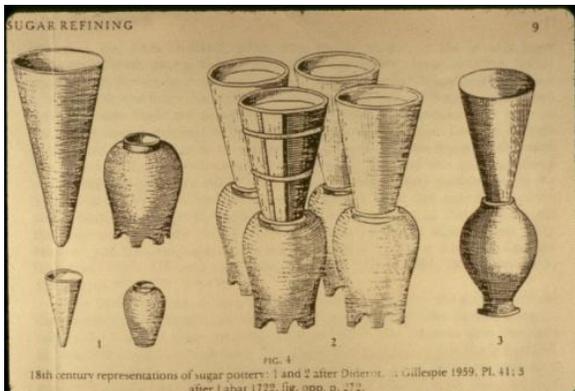


SUGAR REFINING IN 19<sup>TH</sup>-C. ALEXANDRIA &  
THE ROLE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN LABOR

# FROM THE CITY OF ALEXANDRIA

## ARCHAEOLOGY COLLECTIONS

### SUGAR REFINING IN 19<sup>TH</sup>-C. ALEXANDRIA & THE ROLE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN LABOR



From left: sugar molds inside syrup jars; sugar refinery “claying” room (Denis Diderot, *Encyclopédie*, 18<sup>th</sup> c.)

#### **Artifact Group #1 Syrup Jar and Sugar Mold Sherds**

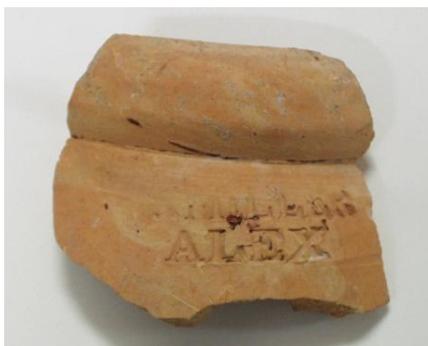
Earthenware

Early 19<sup>th</sup> century

Excavated: Moore-McLean Sugar House, 111 N. Alfred Street; 900 King Street

The Moore-McLean Sugar House was one of two sugar refineries operating in Alexandria in the early 1800s. Alexandria ranked third nationally for volume of sugar produced.

Seven slaves—five men and two boys—using “one pan, one cooler, and one cistern and about five thousand molds, and the same quantity of pots” labored at the Sugar House. Sugar production—from field to factory—was accomplished with enslaved labor. In Alexandria, African Americans toiled to refine sugar in oppressive and dangerous working conditions.



“J. MILLER / ALEX” stamp on syrup jar (matches mark on box’s bottom sherd)



Imported raw sugar and water boiled in huge vats. The syrup was poured into cone-shaped molds placed on large jars (pictured at top). Wet clay topped the sugar. Water in the clay percolated through the sugar, washing the syrup and leaving a cap of dried clay on top. The syrup filtered down through the sugar as it hardened and trickled out into the jars (pictured above). After several days the sugar was removed from the molds and left to dry. Cakes of the refined white sugar were wrapped in paper and sold. The end product was expensive and used mainly for special occasions. Other sweeteners, such as honey, molasses, and brown sugar, were more common.

Excavations at the Sugar House were the first at any sugar refinery in the U.S. City archaeologists found over 10,000 sugar mold fragments. Then, archaeologists discovered hundreds of syrup jar fragments in a brick-lined cellar a half-block away from the Sugar House, at 900 King Street.



ALEXANDRIAN STONEWARE



# FROM THE CITY OF ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGY COLLECTIONS



## ALEXANDRIAN STONEWARE: “WELL KNOWN THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY”



From left: “H. Smith & Co.” maker’s mark on stoneware cake pot (matches marks on box’s smaller, insufficiently-fired sherds), made by Hugh Smith of Wilkes Street Pottery 1825–1841, found at Courthouse site (Gavin Ashworth); archaeological remnants of Tildon Easton kiln

### Artifact Group #1 Vessel Sherds (one of pitcher)

Stoneware

1825–1867

Small sherds excavated: Wilkes Street Pottery, 621 Wilkes St.;  
pitcher: Coleman site, 412–418 S. Royal and 417 S. Fairfax Sts.

*“Its wares are well known throughout the country, and considered the very best of their kind.”*



Crock with ship design attributed to Wilkes Street Pottery, found in 400 King Street block (Ashworth)



Pitcher made by Benedict C. Milburn of Wilkes Street Pottery 1847–1867 (similar to box’s Milburn pitcher piece), found in 300 King Street block (Ashworth)

The Wilkes Street Pottery received the above praise from the *Alexandria Gazette* (April 10, 1867) for its beautiful decorative ceramics. Wilkes Street Pottery is the modern name given to Alexandria’s most successful stoneware factory, which operated on the 600 block of Wilkes Street from around 1810 to 1876. The Virginia Research Center for Archaeology conducted rescue excavations for the City on this site in 1977, recovering thousands of pottery fragments, pieces of kiln furniture used to stack the pots, and part of a brick interior arch from a kiln, where the pots were fired.

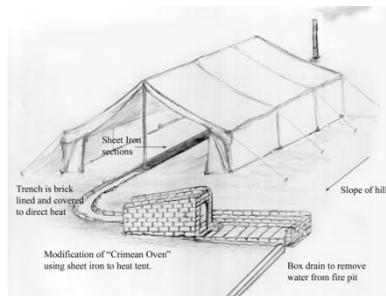
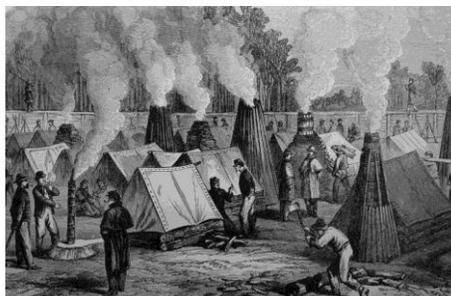
Tildon Easton manufactured stoneware for a very short time, between 1841 and 1843. His kiln, on the 1400 block of King Street, was excavated in 1985 (pictured at top). Over 5,000 sherds were recovered. He may have worked at the Wilkes Street Pottery before opening his own.

*Note the finger-sized void in the blue decoration on the small, orange sherd. It is possible that the potter touched the cobalt oxide pigment before it was dry, leaving a nearly 200-year-old impression.*

CIVIL WAR SOLDIER LIFE



## CIVIL WAR SOLDIER LIFE



From left: Union camp scene with chimney architecture (Leslie, *Famous Leaders and Battles in the Civil War*, 1896); archaeological remnants of Crimean oven at Quaker Ridge site; mechanics of tent oven (Wally Owen)

### **Artifact Group #1 Minié Balls**

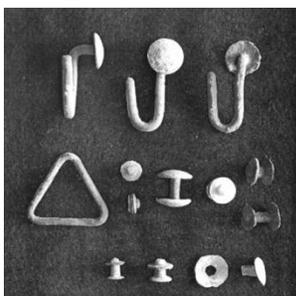
Lead

### **Group #2 Knapsack Hardware**

Metal

Civil War, 1861–1865

Excavated: Quaker Ridge, 3517–  
3543 Duke Street



Excavations at the site of a Civil War Union encampment and hospital in Alexandria's West End revealed a well-preserved brick Crimean oven (pictured at top), which likely would have heated the camp hospital tents. This oven, and a second one nearby, are the only archaeological examples of Crimean ovens to be discovered in the United States.

Minié balls were found at the site. The 38<sup>th</sup> New York infantry regiment likely occupied the militia camp in the fall of 1861. In 1849, French military officer Claude Minié invented the conical-shaped projectiles that bear his name. The bullets revolutionized warfare, increasing a rifle's accuracy, range, and velocity.

This knapsack hardware (pictured at left) belonged to a standard-issue canvas pack used between 1853 and 1872. It would have included buckles, hooks, studs, and triangular fittings. Enlisted men found the knapsacks of limited use, often discarding them, preferring to store items in blanket rolls.

### **Artifact #3 Horn Insignia for Hat**

Brass

### **Artifact #4 U.S. Plate for Cartridge Box**

Brass

Excavated: Smucker Property, 108  
N. Quaker Lane

### **Artifact #5 Eagle Plate for Cartridge Box Strap**

Brass

Excavated: 1400 Janney's Lane  
All Civil War, 1861–1865

This "looped" horn insignia (pictured below) was the symbol for Civil War Union Army infantry hats issued with the full dress uniform. Soldiers often removed the horns from their dress hats and put them on their forager hats, known as kepis.



This U.S. plate (pictured above), which matches one dug at Fort Ward Historical Park in 2010–2011, once was attached to a leather ammunition box cover worn at a soldier's waist. The eagle plate attached to the box's strap, which was slung over the shoulder and across the chest. Soldiers often removed these accoutrements in battle, as the shiny brass plates provided targets for enemy sharpshooters.

BREWING (& DRINKING) BEER IN  
HISTORIC WEST END VILLAGE







HEALTH & BEAUTY IN OLD ALEXANDRIA

# FROM THE CITY OF ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGY COLLECTIONS

## HEALTH & BEAUTY IN OLD ALEXANDRIA



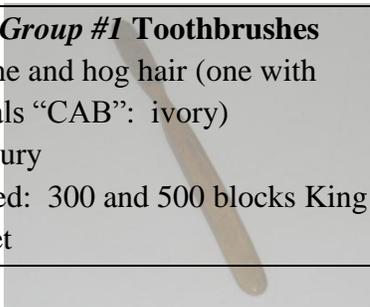
From left: call for hog bristles by brush maker (*Alexandria Gazette*, 1810); early 1900s photograph of Downham family, including famous Mai (Lee-Fendall House)

### **Artifact Group #1 Toothbrushes**

Cow bone and hog hair (one with initials “CAB”: ivory)

19<sup>th</sup> century

Excavated: 300 and 500 blocks King Street



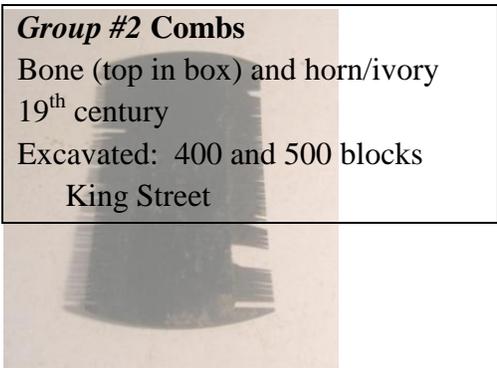
Until the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, dentistry in the U.S. lagged behind Europe—to put it mildly. Barbers routinely performed extractions. Prior to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, quack “toothdrawers” pulled teeth in the street. In 1840, the scene of American dentistry changed when the first dental college opened in Baltimore. Dentistry in Alexandria firmly established itself shortly after. From the plethora of toothbrushes at sites of a wide socio-economic range, it appears that most people at the time were concerned about the health of their teeth. Handles were carved from the upper leg bones of cows. Hog bristles (see above) came from northern China and Russia, principally Siberia.

### **Group #2 Combs**

Bone (top in box) and horn/ivory

19<sup>th</sup> century

Excavated: 400 and 500 blocks King Street



Standards of cleanliness were different in the 19<sup>th</sup> century than today. Many people washed their hair only twice a year even though they slept on mattresses stuffed with insect-ridden straw. Combing one’s hair was a necessity not an exercise in vanity. Double-edged lice combs often had fine teeth for removing insects and dirt and wide teeth to separate hair strands (bottom in box). While the most common comb materials by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century were bone and vulcanized rubber, factories like Thomas Mount’s Fancy Hardware Store and Comb Manufactory in Alexandria also dealt in horn, ivory, and tortoise shell. Mount’s opened next to Gadsby’s Tavern in 1809. He moved to King Street in 1816 and operated through 1838. The box’s top comb was found in the vicinity of the Mount factory.

### **Group #3 Cold Cream Jar and “Peerless’ Color Restorer for the Hair” Bottle**

Glass

Late 19<sup>th</sup>/Early 20<sup>th</sup> century

Excavated: Lee-Fendall House, 614 Oronoco Street

Cosmetic bottles and jars discovered in a Lee-Fendall House privy speak to the make-up of the home: wealthy women. Mary Elizabeth Lee Fleming, direct descendant of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee, lived in the house in the 1870–1880s. Her three sisters lived there until 1905, followed by the Downham women (pictured above) until 1931. It appears most of the artifacts date to this last period, making it likely that some of these cosmetic containers belonged to the famous Mai Downham. Before her marriage, Mai toured America, singing in musicals and operettas. The *Gazette* said she had a “voice of rare quality.” She was a celebrity in her day.