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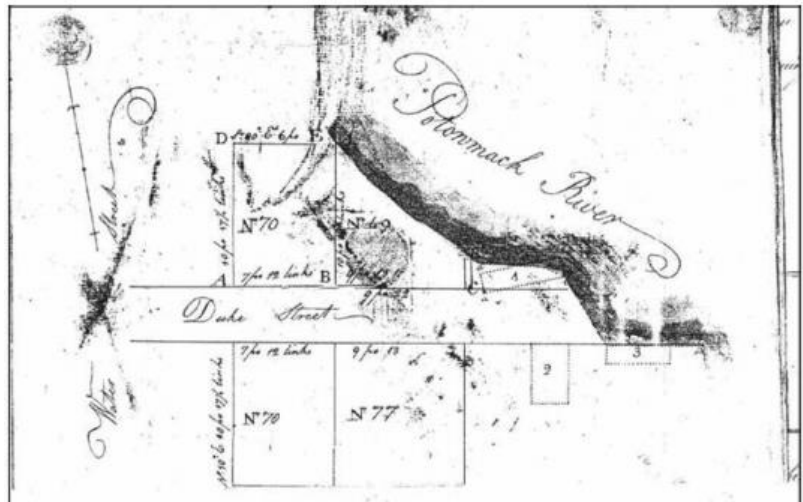
Out of the Attic

Robert Townsend Hooe Warehouse and Store

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Image: Mutual Assurance map, Office of Historic Alexandria.

As archaeology continues at the future site of Robinson Landing, we are excited to review what archaeologists have located, including Robert Townsend Hooe's 18th-century warehouse and store. Keen-eyed observers may have seen this approximately 64-foot-long by 12-foot-wide partial stone foundation lying just west of the standing structure at 2 Duke St. Built between May 1782 and June 1783, the warehouse that stood on top of these foundations played an important role in Alexandria's early history of trade and commerce.



Archaeologists from Thunderbird Archaeology have uncovered the still-surviving foundations, and one of the next steps will be to excavate beneath this level in order to see how many more courses of stone exist underground, if the foundation continues underneath 2 Duke St. or if there are any material remains associated with the use of this building. So far, they have already answered one of their original research questions: whether the current building at 2 Duke St. rested partially on the foundation of Hooe's warehouse.

A Mutual Assurance Society fire insurance policy taken out by Hooe in 1796 reveals that his warehouse was 72 feet long by 44 feet wide, was insured for \$9,000 and stood on the spot where these stone foundations were uncovered. Confusingly, the policy states that while the first two stories were built of stone, the second and third stories were built of wood. Additional research may be able to clarify this confusion about the material of the second story.

Robert Townsend Hooe, originally from Charles County, Maryland, was a wealthy merchant in Alexandria and was elected mayor in 1780. Together with several business partners, Hooe used this warehouse to import, store and sell items imported from all over the world, including German steel, Congo teas, English and Dutch cordage, Grenada rum and Italian marble slabs, as well as more common commercial goods like twine, yarn, glasses, muskets, porter and stout, cloth, blankets and clothing. Hooe used this warehouse from the time of its completion in 1783 until his death in 1809.

The warehouse was eventually demolished and replaced by the current structure at 2 Duke St. sometime in the 19th century. This "new" building may actually be more than 100 years old. There is



Office of Historic Alexandria City of Alexandria, Virginia

some architectural evidence that suggests it survived the 1897 fire that burned down Pioneer Mill and much of the surrounding area. It also appears to be the same size and in the same location as a building depicted on a Civil War map. It is a little unclear exactly what year Hooe's warehouse was taken down and what year the current structure was built, but further archaeological investigation may be able to help answer that question.

Archaeologists also discovered what appears to be the burial remains of two individuals on May 18. The burials date to the 1700s and 1800s, a period when the deceased were not always buried in cemeteries. After the archaeologists discovered the features, the developer obtained a permit from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources to allow for investigation. The preliminary investigation yielded human remains (not in situ, or in place), evidence of a coffin burial within a wooden vault and probable coffin hardware (latches or hinges). The developer is currently following the state process to determine next steps with oversight by the city, and all will ensure that the remains are treated with respect. Historical research is ongoing to try to determine who the individuals may have been. The developer has erected a fence to ensure safety and security of the burials.

“Out of the Attic” is published each week in the Alexandria Times newspaper. The column began in September 2007 as “Marking Time” and explored Alexandria’s history through collection items, historical images and architectural representations. Within the first year, it evolved into “Out of the Attic” and featured historical photographs of Alexandria.

These articles appear with the permission of the Alexandria Times and were authored by Amy Bertsch, former Public Information Officer, and Lance Mallamo, Director, on behalf of the Office of Historic Alexandria.