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Alexandria Legacies
Oral History Program



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Interviewer: *Frimmel Smith*

Transcriber: *Valerie Davison*

Abstract: *Dorothy Joan Roland (known as Joan) was born on North Fairfax Street in Alexandria in 1932. She has lived most of her life in the 200 or 300 block of Queen Street. The interviewer is her neighbor. Miss Roland describes life in downtown Alexandria before, during, and after World War II. She talks about the farmer's market in Market Square, where she and her family shopped every Saturday, and the apartment buildings that are now the single-family homes of Old Town. She also talks about the small-town atmosphere of Alexandria while she was growing up and how much she has enjoyed living in the city.*

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Background	
Frimmel Smith:	My name is Frimmel Smith, and I'm conducting the interview with Joan Roland. And, Joan, if I could just ask you to, for the record, state your name, where you were born, and the year you were born.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	My name is Dorothy Joan Roland. I was born June 6, 1932, at 226 North Fairfax Street, Alexandria, Virginia.
F.S.:	Great. Well, a couple weeks ago we went on a wonderful walk, in about a nine-block area, and Joan was just fascinating to recreate how the streets...this northeast corner of Alexandria, pre-World War II. So I'm just going to have her start at City Hall, being the center of this area, and then we'll move to the other streets, I think.
City Hall Area	
Dorothy Joan Roland:	As I said, I was born in the downtown area. My cousin, Sonny Birkeneau—Sonny lived at 313 Cameron Street. We were all over downtown Alexandria but particularly City Hall. I remember that the Masons used to have a room that—George Washington was supposed to have been a member there, and his chair was still there. Sonny and I used to go up and sit in his chair all the time, then slide from the third floor down to the first floor of City Hall on the banister. No one ever stopped us. We had a wonderful time.
F.S.:	My, how things have changed. [Laughter]
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Then, on the Fairfax Street side of City Hall was the police station, and in the summertime they had chairs for the police to sit around under the trees, in the shade, because there was no air-conditioning. We used to go there and sit with the police, and enjoy ourselves. Then, on the corner of Cameron and Fairfax Streets there was a fountain. It was for birds, humans, horses, and dogs, always filled with water, and in hot weather Sonny and I used to go and splash in the fountain. So we had a wonderful childhood.
F.S.:	Were there horses still along the streets?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	No, there were no horses on the street at that time. Not that I remember anyway. But it was always filled with horses.
F.S.:	And the fountain was used before...
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Oh, yes. I think it was made out of cannon, I think from the

	Revolutionary War but I'm not certain. It might have been the Civil War.
F.S.:	That's really interesting. Too bad they don't keep it filled with water now...
Dorothy Joan Roland:	...so we could go splash. Right.
F.S.:	Then there was a country market, you said?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	<p>Yes. There was a country market that was in the recessed area of City Hall, that has now been filled in with the new part of City Hall. The farmers in the area brought all their produce in on Saturday morning, and we went every Saturday of the year. We went up in the morning and bought fresh produce for the week. They each had a little stall, and they had a hand pump there, so you could pump water if you needed it. There was, if I remember correctly, Galiatt's chicken place. They had a [unclear] in there for the chicken, and a place to sell fish; and, as I said, individual stalls, and all the flowers, and the cookies, and the cakes, and everything for the holidays, and the Christmas trees. So we enjoyed that.</p> <p>Then, from City Hall...excuse me...From Market Square to King Street there was an alleyway, a cobblestone alleyway, and the <i>Gazette</i> office—the <i>Gazette</i> office was the local newspaper—was in the alleyway. Of course, I wasn't born, but I've heard that during the 1918 flu epidemic, there were so many deaths that they stacked the bodies in the alley because it always stayed cold.</p>
F.S.:	That's really fascinating. I'm sure Market Square has had quite a history, over 200 years. When you were growing up the country market...was it open more than just Saturdays?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	No, just Saturdays only. And, if I remember correctly, it was only open a half day. Most people got up very early and went in. They sold buttermilk, and cottage cheese, meats. You name it, and it was sold.
F.S.:	And I think you had told me that there were also businesses that operated on the ground floor?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	In City Hall...On the south side of City Hall, on Royal Street, there was Chauncey's grocery store. I remember that the floor was always covered with sawdust. I don't ever remember seeing a floor in there except that it was covered with sawdust. And they were very, very busy there.
F.S.:	And they sold all kinds of groceries, or just...?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Oh, yes. It was a very big grocery store. They would deliver for you, and they knew all their customers by name, just an old-

	fashioned store.
F.S.:	Oh. And they delivered too. Fancy. [Laughter] Right.
Fairfax Street	
F.S.:	All right. Well, why don't we move up North Fairfax Street, and we'll start with where you were born.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	I was born at 226 North Fairfax Street, front room, second floor [unclear]. I don't know how long we lived there, because I can't remember living anywhere except at 208 and 212 Queen Street, and here, except when I was at school. But, later, good friends of ours lived there, the Newmans, and she was my older sister's best friend. Her name was Madge...no, it wasn't Madge, excuse me. It was Margie, and they lived there for years, until the father died, and they moved out of Alexandria. The father owned a roofing business.
Grandparents	
F.S.:	And your grandparents?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	My grandparents lived on Pitt Street.
F.S.:	Oh, they lived on Pitt. Okay.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Yes. They lived on Cameron and Pitt Street, in an apartment house there, on the corner. It's the northwest corner. Grandmother and Granddaddy had the ground-floor apartment in back (I guess that's what you'd call it), and my grandfather died there. They lived there for about fifteen or twenty years before he died. Then my grandmother stayed there, with her two sons, until she died. Then someone bought the building, I understand, and renovated it into a single home.
Apartment Buildings	
F.S.:	There seem to have been a lot of apartment buildings, as we were walking around. You were pointing out so many.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Yes. There were three apartment buildings in the 200 block of Fairfax Street, on the east side. One, two, three...four. Excuse me. Four apartment buildings on North Fairfax Street, 200 block, east side. Then on Royal Street there were three apartment buildings that I know of, three on the west side. On Cameron Street...I'm trying to remember all of them...the one my grandmother and grandfather lived in, on the 200 block of North Pitt Street, Pitt and Cameron. Then, on the 400 block of Cameron Street there were three apartment houses. So there were quite a few apartment houses. All these places, now, are single homes.
F.S.:	Right. That must have been quite a changeover. When did that

	changeover take place?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	I think the changeover took place in the [19]50s. I would say the mid-[19]50s to the [19]60s, everything started changing. Places were being torn down and single-family homes being put up, renovated into single homes.
F.S.:	You were growing up on North Fairfax Street.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	No. Actually, I grew up on Queen Street, but I was born on Fairfax Street..
F.S.:	Okay. So around the corner, on Queen Street, 206 to 208?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	No, 206...They might as well have been family. People by the name of Dove lived there. As long as I can remember they lived there. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Dove, when I was, I guess, five or six years old, she had a problem seeing, and I made ten cents a week taking her up to country market every Saturday, and carrying her groceries back for her. It was my very first job. Then 208...my mother and father lived there for years; 210, family lived there. My aunt Mary McEwan lived there, and eventually Ethel...my cousin Ethel's brother and his wife lived there. Nanny, Ethel and I, and Ethel's husband lived at 212 Queen Street. Then after the [unclear] torn down, 214, which was supposed to be one of the oldest houses in Alexandria, belonged to my Aunt Laura and Uncle Will McEwan. They tore that down, which was a sad thing, because it was a beautiful old home, very old.
F.S.:	I think it's really interesting that you grew up in places [unclear], [Laughter] one of the few remaining houses, really, on the street. It's really interesting.
Grocery Stores	
F.S.:	One of the things that fascinated me when we were walking around was how many different grocery stores there were.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	For instance, right across the street from where we are now was Pullin's, and they were there for years. That was on the corner, and they lived overtop the store.
F.S.:	That's the corner of Queen and...
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Queen and Royal. I remember that Mrs. Pullin always stayed up in her front windows...not front windows, but the windows of her apartment...playing solitaire, and looking at the people on the street when she wasn't in the store. She could tell you everything that went on. Then up on the other corner of Fairfax and Queen was Cheshire store. It was very small. They used to keep

	[unclear] on the floor all the time, to keep it clean. He had a [unclear] box up front and all the boys used to gather there. They'd shove one another down on the [unclear] box and sit on it, so they couldn't get out. Or they'd put a firecracker in it and let the firecracker go off...all sorts of devilment.
F.S.:	When did Pullin's grocery close? Because now it's a single-family home.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	I think Pullin's went out of business. They sold to...it's been sold several time. The last people I remember...I think they were...it was Pullin, then it was sold, then sold again to the Weinbergers, and they stayed there about ten to fifteen years. Then it was sold eventually to a Mr. Randall, who ran it as an antique shop. Then it was sold as a private home.
F.S.:	Quite a life for a building.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Yes.
Cameron Street	
F.S.:	You had relatives that lived on Cameron Street, too?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	My Aunt Virginia lived with Mrs. Ballinger, who was her great aunt. Mrs. Ballinger owned 313 Cameron Street, and that was practically my second home, because, as I said, my cousin Sonny and I were inseparable, when we were growing up. I was there constantly. But that's right across from City Hall.
F.S.:	So that was a good escape from City Hall...down the banister and [unclear]. [Laughter] And there was a hotel?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Yes. The [Unclear] was a hotel. I don't remember too much about it. I just remember that one of the girls, or women I should say, was a schoolteacher. She was always so good to me. She taught high school as a substitute teacher. Her name was Jane. When she saw me walking home from school when I went to [unclear], she would always pick me up and bring me home, and was very, very kind to me. A very nice person.
F.S.:	Yes, she was. You can walk down Cameron Street with me, again. At 501 Cameron...that was where your grandparents lived.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	My grandparents, yes.
F.S.:	Then walking on the 400-block...
Dorothy Joan Roland:	On the 400-block, under Gadsby's Tavern, was the American Legion. But Gadsby's Tavern was vacant for years. There wasn't anything in there. Because I remember, when I was a young

	child, they used to X-ray all the children in town. They set up the X-ray equipment at Gadsby's Tavern, and they'd bring the schoolchildren down there, on the school bus from school, to be X-rayed, to have a chest X-ray.
F.S.:	Was that for tuberculosis?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	For tuberculosis. I guess it was so prominent then. But they would just bring whole classrooms of children. Then the AB&W Bus Company [Alexandria, Barcroft & Washington Rapid Transit] was on the north—excuse me—the southeast corner of Cameron Street. That was there for years, the garage and everything. As a matter of fact, my Uncle Milton, Milton Burke, who lived at 313 Cameron Street, worked there for years. Then on the northeast corner was Landon's grocery store. Then coming east there were a series of apartment buildings. Everything's been torn down now.
Furniture Stores	
F.S.:	What also interested me—from the corner of Royal and Cameron, moving toward Fairfax Street, you said there were a number of furniture stores.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Yes. Mrs. Schwartz owned several buildings there. Let me back up. On the northeast corner there was...after country market [unclear] Galiatt's chicken place was there for years. Then you had the next place, which is now a kitchen-supply store, I should say. From there, up to 313 Cameron Street, were furniture stores. Mrs. Schwartz owned all of those buildings, and had second-hand furniture. She rented one out to an Italian family, and they repaired furniture. But I remember that...I can't remember if it was the Second World War or just prior to the Second World War...but the father could not speak English at all, but the whole family worked there, and it was very busy.
F.S.:	So when did it change from chicken shop and furniture stores?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	I would say all this downtown area started changing in the [19]60s. It really did.
F.S.:	So it's fairly recent, then, that it turned over.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Yes. Yes.
F.S.:	Then, if we make it all the way down to Lee Street, there was lots of industry along Lee Street, I recall you said.
Industry	
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Yes. Let's see. First of all, on the 100 block you have the torpedo plant, which was on the east side of the 200-block of King Street.

	Ethel's father helped build that. Then, on the 300 block, you had Smoot's lumberyard, which took about half the block. Then from Lee Street to Union Street...again, my cousin Sonny and I were always in trouble there. We used to go and climb the lumber, and they would have to chase us off. Then there was King's Warehouse and Office Building. That was all on that block.
F.S.:	And then if we were to move down Lee Street, there was the Lee Street market. Well, today's it's called the Lee Street Market. Was it the Lee Street Market then?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	I'm trying to place that, in my mind.
F.S.:	It's where the bakery was.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Oh. Yes. I had to stop and think what it was. Yes, there was a bakery there. It was very old. My mother used to go in there when she was a child. She said she would skate through there on her skates, and grab up a hand of raisins and keep on skating. [Laughter] We come from a very good family.
Underground Passages	
F.S.:	Also, next to that building, there was another building, that you said had an underground passage?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Yes. As I said earlier, Aunt Laura and Uncle Will lived at 214 Queen Street. We didn't know it until years later, when they were tearing it down...they found an underground passage that came from the back of that house, went through the yard, went down the alley next to the office...or the warehouse, next to the warehouse, toward the river. It was just big enough for one person to stoop over and get through at a time. So we don't know what that was used for.
F.S.:	Curious. I wonder if it was for shanghaiing.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	It could have been, with my family. [Laughter]
F.S.:	I didn't mean it was from your family. You had mentioned that there was another place that had an underground passage. That intrigued me.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	It was on the 200 block of Fairfax Street, east side. There were two apartment buildings. They were called the Three Sisters Apartments, if I remember correctly. There was a passageway that went underground, that connected the smaller building to the larger building; that would be the south building to the north building.
F.S.:	That's 207 and 209.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Yes. It would go from 207 to 209.

F.S.:	And you knew that because...
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Because, again, my cousin Sonny and I were all over the place. We knew everything about downtown. [Laughter]
F.S.:	And your parents...They lived nearby for a while, too?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Oh, yes. My mother and father lived in the basement apartment at 207 North Fairfax Street, and that's where my sister Shirley was born. She's a bit older than I, and has since passed away. But that was where she was born. Because in those days people didn't go to the hospital to have children; they stayed home and had a midwife.
F.S.:	Right. If we went to the back at Cameron Street, at 201 North Fairfax...that was a retirement home for women?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Yes. It was called the Anna Lee Memorial Home. I guess they had, at the most, ten women who lived there at any one time, ten older women who lived there. I remember one they put out because she was so mean to everyone there, and she went to live with Aunt Laura. Even Aunt Laura couldn't have her. So she was a very unhappy person. I don't know what happened to her.
F.S.:	Well, we'll just retrace back down Fairfax Street, and get to the mattress factory?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Yes. The 300 block of North Fairfax Street...First of all, that used to be a lumberyard called Pullin's Lumber Yard. It was there for years. It was on the 300 block of Fairfax, and ran down onto the 200 block of Queen. Then that was torn down, and a building put up that was...what was that? It was a mattress factory. I can't think of the first name. It caught on fire one night and just burned out of control. Just a minute. Let me find out what the name of it is. [Interruption] Yes. I remember now. It was Truman Mattress Factory. It caught on fire and just burned. They couldn't control the fire. It didn't destroy anything else, but it completely destroyed the building.
F.S.:	Was it ever rebuilt?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	No. The mattress factory never came back there. It eventually became office buildings.
F.S.:	The ones that are there now?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Yes.
F.S.:	And across the street from that...
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Across the street from that were two houses. They were either owned or rented by colored people, very nice people who lived

	there for years and years. It caught on fire one night...or early morning, I should say, when my father was on his way to work and happened to see it. He couldn't get the people to wake up, so he had to climb up between the two buildings, to get them out. But everyone got out and was fine, and the buildings were saved.
F.S.:	Oh! Well, now your family's a hero.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	My father is. [Laughter]
Newspaper	
F.S.:	Then there were newspaper offices?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Yes. Where China Gate is now...not China Gate. That's been torn down. There are townhouses there now. That general area there was a newspaper office, and it was called the <i>Alexandria Journal</i> . People who lived on the 400 block of Queen Street owned that and several other journals. Their name was Wright.
F.S.:	Were they right?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Oh, yes. Very much so. [Laughter]
Train Station	
F.S.:	We're going to make our way to Princess Street here. One of the stories you told...there was a train station?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	On the 200 block of Princess Street there was a platform that had trains come in. It was an old platform, and trains used to back up in there but they didn't have passengers, as they probably had previously. But they would deliver chemicals to a chemical plant, and to the fertilizer plant on the 100 block of Queen Street. The chemical plant was on Oronoco Street.
F.S.:	So there was a lot of industry [unclear]...fertilizer, mattresses, and...
Dorothy Joan Roland:	They could get to them by train, and they could get to them by riverboat. So that's the reason why everything was industry along that waterfront.
Boat Dock	
F.S.:	Where was the dock, for most of the boats that came in?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	There was Robinson's Dock, which is just at the foot of Queen Street...or Prince Street. Excuse me. Actually, between...excuse me...Princess and Queen was Robinson's Wharf. Then there was another one up further. It must have been around Prince Street. There was another dock up in that area. I don't remember that too well, but I do remember the Norfolk boat used to dock there.

Vegetable Garden	
F.S.:	Then if you went back the other way, toward Royal Street, on Princess...you had mentioned about a large vegetable garden.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Yes. There was a black man. His name was Joseph but everybody called him Rabbit. On the southwest corner, he had a beautiful garden every year. He worked very hard at it, and sold the produce to people who wanted to buy fresh vegetables. Prior to that, there had been a house there that they tore down because they found a lady in there who had been murdered. Some of the children in the neighborhood found her. We never knew the children, and it was just as well we didn't. But they found her, and she'd been dead for some time. So they tore the house down, so it would never happen again.
F.S.:	This is the house where the vegetable garden...
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Yes. The house was eventually part of the garden.
F.S.:	Okay. And this was across from the Royal Market, where the Royal Market is today?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	No. It was in back of it.
F.S.:	It was in the back of the Royal Market.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Yes. It would be on the 300 block. There are townhouses there now, on the corner.
F.S.:	Okay. Now I understand where we are. But in between that site and where the Royal Market is today, there's this dry-cleaning...
Dorothy Joan Roland:	There's a dry-cleaning. It used to be that, I think, people by the name of Knowles, George Knowles, owned that. There were just like two-room apartments that they would rent out to colored people.
F.S.:	So it was a rooming house?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Yes. It was separate units. Almost like a motel-type thing.
F.S.:	Okay. And then it probably became a dry-cleaner later?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Much later.
School	
F.S.:	Well, one of the things we didn't cover on our walk was, where did you go to school?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	My whole family went to school at the Washington Street School. Then we went to Jefferson School. Then we went to GW [George Washington High School].

F.S.:	And Washington Street School was at...
Dorothy Joan Roland:	...on the 400 block of South Washington Street. There was the old school there, which was the endowed school by George Washington. As a matter of fact, Washington Street School became so crowded that my younger sister went to school in the endowed school.
F.S.:	Spread out. I didn't know there was a school down there.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Yes, yes. I can't think of the name of the center.
F.S.:	The Campagna Center is down there.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Yes. That's Washington Street School, the Campagna Center.
F.S.:	Oh, it is? That's where you went to school?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	That's where I went to school. I think it had eight rooms in it, and we stayed there until we were in the fifth grade, if I remember correctly, then went to Jefferson School, and we went from there to GW. So we walked to everything.
F.S.:	And Jefferson School was...
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Jefferson School was right straight up Queen Street. Up at Queen and West.
F.S.:	Oh. Where it is still.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Yes. Right into it. Yes.
F.S.:	So is that a junior high?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	No, it was all just seventh and eighth grades. Sixth, seventh, and eighth, I should say. Then from there we went to GW. But you took the AB&W bus to school, or you walked. We were fortunate that we could walk all the time.
F.S.:	Even in the snow.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Even in the snow. [Laughter] When it blew and we had the blizzards, we still went.
F.S.:	And what kind of mischief did you get into on South Washington Street?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	I sound like a terrible person.
F.S.:	No. I'll vouch for you. [Laughter]
Dorothy Joan Roland:	I didn't get into too much mischief at school. My first year of school I got hepatitis, full hepatitis, and was out almost the whole year. So I had to repeat the first grade. I was out from October to late April. So I actually only went to school about two months that year, and repeated the first grade. I then went into the second

	grade, and I had wonderful teachers, all very nice. But I can't remember anything bad I ever did at school. I was probably too afraid of being punished.
F.S.:	Well, I know you're an avid reader today.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Oh, yes. I'm an avid reader. I remember going to school... Quite a few of my teachers were from Virginia, and you know how Virginians are with history. So they were all interested in history and got me interested in history and reading. So I still enjoy it very much.
Queen Street	
F.S.:	Well, in case it hasn't been clear in this interview, I'd like you to tell how many years you have lived on Queen Street.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	I've lived on Queen Street seventy-two years. I went away for two years, and I was at school for three, away, but I was home every day so I don't consider that living away. I just didn't spend the nights on Queen Street. But of my seventy-four years, seventy-two of them have been spent on Queen Street, on two blocks of Queen Street, the 200 and the 300.
F.S.:	And in just two houses, too.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Yes. Just two houses.
F.S.:	Absolutely amazing. And you live, today, with...
Dorothy Joan Roland:	I live today with my cousin. She was Ethel Studds. She's Ethel Studds Levanas. [Begin Side 2] As I was about to say... I live with my cousin, Ethel Studds Levanas. Most of my life I've spent with Ethel and her mother. But, there again, it's misleading, because everybody was always related to one another, and we were always in and out of one another's houses. If we wanted to spend the night with Aunt Laura, or Manny, or any of them, we spent the night with them, and went home the next morning. We were lucky in the fact that my entire family lived in downtown Alexandria, so we were very fortunate that way... cousins, uncles, aunts, grandparents. So we were very lucky.
F.S.:	Yes, you've had a terrific life here. And it's amazing how many relatives live within, maybe, six blocks from you.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Uncle Clarence and Aunt Hilda lived with Grandmother and Granddaddy years ago. Before they moved to Pitt Street they lived on the 600 block of South Washington Street. That's still within walking distance, but they lived the furthest of anyone. Everyone else lived in just this general area.

F.S.:	Amazing. Most of the tour... We haven't talked about your house, though—oh, go ahead.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	I just wanted to say that she has since died, but one of our best friends lived at 209 North Royal Street. Maureen McDermott. Her father had been injured over at National Airport when she was a child, when they were building National Airport, and he spent the rest of his life in a nursing home. Mrs. McDermott converted that house into...it wasn't apartments...rooms for rent, I guess. That's how she kept her family together. She had two daughters who lived with her.
F.S.:	Is 209 Royal the old firehouse?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Yes. That's the old firehouse. I don't remember it being a firehouse. Just hearsay on that.
F.S.:	But right. That is part of the folklore. Your house is an amazing house, here.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Well, thank you.
F.S.:	It's absolutely one of the treasures I think we have, because you have preserved it.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Thank you very much.
F.S.:	It's always a joy to walk in here, and see this fantastic house. If you would like to talk about the history...
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Well, as I said, we've lived here all of our lives, except for two years, and those two years we lived in Gore, Virginia. We decided it was time to come back home, so in 1959 we moved back to Alexandria, and we rented this house from Mrs. Cheshire. We paid all of \$65 a month rent, and we told her if she ever decided to sell the house, we would like to buy it. Eventually, she had to go live with her son, in Fairfax County, and she decided she wanted to sell the house. In 1975 we bought the house, and then started renovating the house. But we kept everything as close to the original as possible, because we like old things, and we like to live with old things. So we do not have a real modern house, in the sense that some of the houses are now, but we like it.
F.S.:	Well, living next door to you, I can tell you...I do not have original woodwork in a lot of places in our house, and I envy it; that you have been able to preserve everything.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Well, [unclear] fireplace there...I like natural wood, number one. We took the paint off the fireplace. Ethel would do that, quite often, when I was at work. She found out that the fireplace was

	<p>painted jet black, and supposedly that was in remembrance of George Washington, who had died. But, again, we took the black paint off, and left it natural wood. We kept the original floors. We took down a couple of doors, but left the original doorways. We took down a couple of the doors to have air flow and open up the rooms a little bit, but we did not remove any walls or anything.</p>
F.S.:	<p>As we both have the same type of house, you were the one who told me about the staircase that would have been in the back of the house. Was it back here, when you moved in?</p>
Dorothy Joan Roland:	<p>No. That's how come we got this house. People by the name of Brock...and I went to school with the youngest boy...they lived here. Then Mrs. Brock moved away, and when she came back she wanted this house. In the meantime, Mrs. Cheshire had found out that she took the original staircase that was in the kitchen, that went up to the back bedroom...she had taken that out and put a closet...a cupboard, I should say...in there, and never told Mrs. Cheshire. She got angry, and wouldn't let her rent the house again. So that's how come we were able to rent the house.</p>
F.S.:	<p>Oh, wow. Now there's a story I hadn't heard before. That's a good one. These houses are unique, because they're probably some of the only ones in Old Town Alexandria that are duplex [unclear].</p>
Dorothy Joan Roland:	<p>Yes. I said I didn't replace any of the floor...I got to thinking...I did. I had to replace the kitchen floor, because when we bought the house and we took up the linoleum, the kitchen floor, the wooden part of it, was bad, very bad, so we had to put a new floor down in the kitchen. Under that floor I found a low brick wall that ran east to west, that had nothing to do with the foundation of this house or anything else. So I don't know what was here prior to these houses.</p>
F.S.:	<p>The back of the house was built around 1790.</p>
Dorothy Joan Roland:	<p>I think so, yes. Also, I did quite a bit of work here, myself. I was pulling up the brick wall, the flounder¹ part of the house, and I found something round. At first I thought it was what the electricians call a knock-out, which is a round piece of material that looks like a quarter or a dime or in between. I was going to throw it away, and something said, "No. Don't." I looked at it and</p>

1 A two- or three-story house that is one room deep and several rooms wide; its roof is in the shape of an inclined plane that runs the full length of the house, giving it the appearance of one-half of a gable roof. One side has no windows, which gives it the appearance of a flounder.

	cleaned it off, and it was a coin that had been in the cement, that was dated 1782...1772. I still have it at the house here, somewhere.
F.S.:	So it was a British coin?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	No. Spanish.
F.S.:	Oh. Spanish?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	It was a Spanish coin.
F.S.:	Oh. Interesting. Wow.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	I don't know how the hell that got in the mortar, but it was there.
F.S.:	So what you're saying is there was a house, or some kind of building, before 1790, even.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Yes, particularly the back part. That's where I found the footing, and it had nothing to do with these houses.
F.S.:	Interesting. Well, I do just want to point out there, here, we know that these four houses, the first four houses, 325 down to 319—the rears of the houses were built like full-gabled flounders.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Yes, they were.
F.S.:	Duplex units. I think they're very unique in Alexandria. They may be the only examples of that type of design.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Well, you remember, just last...early last spring, in June, I guess, after we had all that heavy rain for ten days, I found that well out by the back, where I park my car now. We have the flower garden next to where I park my car. I filled it in because it was so dangerous. So that must have been the original well to these houses.
F.S.:	That's interesting. I've only found coal deposits. [Laughter][Unclear]
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Shall we mine it? Well, Alexandria used to be a very interesting place. The dairy was down here. The coal yard was on Princess and Royal Street, the 300 block, on the corner. So much went on down here, all the time. It was a wonderful place to grow up. Alexandria was a wonderful place to grow up in. We were never afraid to go out. We could do anything we wanted.
F.S.:	It's pretty interesting that, in this nine- or twelve-block area, that we've been walking through, that you could sustain life. Everything took place from City Hall, to the dairy, to the lumber mill, to whatever. You could get it, right in this little [unclear].
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Yes. And you were always safe. You could walk around, any

	<p>hour of the day or night and feel completely safe. I never felt insecure. Let's put it that way. Nowadays...as you've probably determined, my cousin Sonny and I were all over the place. One of the few spankings I got...we were down at Acheson's coal and sand place on Union Street, Sonny and I, playing in this huge sand pile that could really have buried us alive. Someone saw me, went home and told my mother; my mother came and got us, and she said, "Sonny, you go on home." She was so frightened that every step I took, the other buttock was spanked, all the way home. So I never went back to the Acheson sand pile again. [Laughter]</p>
F.S.:	No, I wouldn't either.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Because our family stayed here for generations. Your playmates, their parents and their grandparents, they knew you.
F.S.:	I remember one day...it was a summer day and it was quite hot, and Ethel was telling me that, "It used to be that everybody would sit out on the front stoops, on the summer nights."
Dorothy Joan Roland:	They did. On the front steps. Some of them had chairs and they would sit in the chairs. If you had to go on an errand somewhere, it would take you hours because you had to stop and talk to everyone, all the way up King Street and all the way back. Wherever you went, you had to stop and speak to every family, and find out what was going on.
F.S.:	Is that where you did most of your shopping, on King Street?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Oh, yes. Yes. It was King Street up. If my mother [unclear] told me I could have a new dress or something, I would go up to Rosenberg's clothing store. I would pick out what I wanted, they would put them in a box, they'd say, "Take them home and see what your parents want, what they'll let you have." I took them home and they'd say, "You can have this dress," or "this one." You put everything back in the box and took it back up to Rosenberg's, and paid them for it. That's the way business was done. And Uncle Will, who used to own a fish market...he was a wonderful person. Everyone knew Uncle Will McEwan.
F.S.:	Where was his fish market?
Dorothy Joan Roland:	It used to be down where the new torpedo plant is, right on the river. I think there's a restaurant there now. I remember one time he went up to Penney's, which was in the 600 block of King Street, and picked out all these clothes. The man wrapped them up for him, and he just picked them up and walked out. And the young salesman didn't know Uncle Will, got excited and started running after him, and the manager said, "Don't worry. When he

	gets home and remembers he hasn't paid, he'll be right back." And that's exactly what Uncle Will did. So everyone knew everyone else. [Laughs]
F.S.:	That's marvelous.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	It is. It was good living. Small-town living.
F.S.:	Even though it's changed a lot and it's more suburban, it's still good living.
Dorothy Joan Roland:	Yes, it is. Alexandria is a good place.
F.S.:	Well, thank you so much for your time...
Dorothy Joan Roland:	I hope you enjoyed doing it.
F.S.:	...and this interview. I will do the transcription, I'll give it to you to read, and you can make additions, or we can do another chat if I want. [End]