

ALEXANDRIA WOMEN'S HISTORY WALK

A Project of the Alexandria Commission for Women & Friends of the Commission

ONE & ONE-HALF-MILE TOUR

Welcome to the Women's History Walk! Your tour covers four miles and 19 different sites. This is a self-guided tour. Simply follow the directions below, which will take you from site to site. Timing is up to you - proceed at your own comfortable pace.

Please know that there is MUCH more to women's history in Alexandria than can be covered in any one tour. This is just a sampling.

SITE ONE: LYLES-CROUCH SCHOOL, at 530 S. St. Asaph St. -- your starting place. Lyles-Crouch Traditional Academy, serving children in kindergarten through Grade 5, was built in 1958 and is named for two African-American educators, Mr. Rozier Lyles and Mrs. Carrie Crouch. Mrs. Crouch followed in the tradition of other African-American women educators who worked hard to ensure education for African-American children at a time when Alexandria public schools were segregated. Others include Sylvia Morris, an African-American woman who opened a dame school for African-American children in her home in the 1780s. Jane A. Crouch and Sarah Gray (1861) were two free African American women, born in Alexandria, who co-founded the Saint Rose Institute to educate African-American children, offering day and evening classes. They also worked to help escaping slaves learn to read and write. Gray later helped open the First Select Colored School in 1862, and she eventually became principal of the Hallowell School for Girls.

DIRECTIONS: Walk north 1 block to Wilkes St., turn right, and walk 2 blocks to St. Royal St. Turn right.

SITE TWO: HANNAH JACKSON HOME, the east side of S. Royal between Wilkes and Wolfe Streets. The home is gone, but what occurred remains a part of our history. Hannah Jackson was a free African-American laundress who lived here in the early 1800s. She saved her pennies and in 1815 had enough saved to pay \$135 - a great deal of money then - to buy "A man Slave by the name of Solomon." Solomon was Hannah Jackson's son. In the years after, she used her money from doing other people's laundry to buy her sister, Esther, Esther's four children and her own granddaughter, Ann Weaver. All became free, and their names are recorded in court records. "Free Blacks," as people like Hannah Jackson were called, were often self-employed in towns like Alexandria, working as seamstresses, laundresses and at other tasks. Many, like Hannah, worked to buy their family members out of slavery and into freedom.

THE SEATON HOME: 404 S. Royal St., was, in the 1870s, the home of George Seaton, a free African-American carpenter. He was responsible for construction of the first public schools for African-American children, including the Hallowell School for Girls.

DIRECTIONS: Walk north to Wolfe St. and turn left. Walk 3 blocks to S. Washington St. and turn left. Walk half a block to the Campagna Center.

SITE THREE: THE CAMPAGNA CENTER. Campagna Center is named for Elizabeth Ann Campagna, a woman who spent her professional life working for needy women and children in Alexandria. She began her work in this building in 1960 - it was then a YWCA - and over the

years she developed dozens of innovative programs for women and their families that formed a vital safety net. In 25 years of work as the YWCA's executive director, Campagna transformed the nature of this assistance the City gave to those in need, developing preschool programs, help for latch-key kids, tutoring, crisis assistance and much more - all funded through the creative use of city, state and federal funds. Today's Campagna Center, named in her honor, continues her work.

DIRECTIONS: Walk back toward Wolfe St. on St. Washington for half a block, and stop.

SITE FOUR: ALEXANDRIA ACADEMY. This restored school building, established in 1786 by donations from George Washington and others of wealth, was originally for poor male orphans. The school also accepted girls - but only at the ratio of four boys to one girl. In 1812, the trustees of Alexandria Academy opened the Washington Free School for Girls, which was located at 218 N. Columbus Street. Also in 1812, this school was taken over to serve free African-American children. The school continued to operate until 1847, when Virginia state law at the time forbade the education of African-Americans. The Academy, recently restored, is open for tours.

DIRECTIONS: Walk north on S. Washington S. three blocks to King St. and turn right on King. Walk two blocks to the 500 block of King St.

SITE SIX: ALEXANDRIA COURT HOUSE Alexandria women have not always been part of the City's judiciary, as they are today. The City's first woman judge in any court was the Honorable Irene Pancoast, who became a full-time judge at Alexandria's Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court in 1954, after she completed a distinguished career as a White House staffer and attorney. Pancoast, who served in Alexandria's "old" courthouse, attached to City Hall before its remodeling, retired in 1977. In 1997, the Honorable Becky Moore became the first woman judge of the General District Court, where she serves today.

HARRIET WILLIAMS HOME. Gone now, the 500 block of King Street was once the home of Harriet Williams, a slave owned by Samuel Lindsay, who lived nearby. Alexandria Archeology, in the Torpedo Factory, has artifacts from Williams' home.

DIRECTIONS: Cross King St. and walk one block east to 421 King St.

SITE SEVEN: 421 KING STREET, ALEXANDRIA OFFICE ON WOMEN The Office on Women was created in the 1970s after a group of women led by staffer Vola Lawson created the Ad Hoc Commission on the Status of Women, which then persuaded City Council that a City department focused on women's concerns was needed. Today's Office on Women, directed by Lisa Baker, has extensive programs on issues like domestic violence, sexual assault, teen pregnancy and more. The Office also oversees Alexandria's Women's Shelter, conducts the City's annual Breast Cancer Walk and supports the work of the Commission for Women.

DIRECTIONS: Walk 1 ½ blocks east on King St. to Market Square.

SITE EIGHT: MARKET SQUARE Market Square was part of the original design of the City of Alexandria, laid out in 1749. In those times, the Square was very different than today's clean and elegant site - but the purpose was, in some ways, similar. In Alexandria's early days, the Square was the site of small shanties from which townspeople and farmers sold merchandise and food - men and women alike. Slaves were also sometimes permitted to sell their products here, using the money to help buy their freedom and that of family members. Sophia Browning Bell was a slave who did this in Market Square, freeing her husband, George Bell, in 1801. Bell went on to help establish the first school for African-American children in the District of Columbia.

Then, as now, the Square was a gathering place for events. George Washington led his troops from here to fight in the French and Indian War, and both Confederates and Union soldiers and sympathizers held rallies here. Slaves were sold in Market Square, and at one time, the public whipping post stood here as well. The City's first City Hall was build on the Square - and when it burned in 1871, the new City Hall was rebuilt on the same site.

DIRECTIONS: Walk through Market Square and in the back door of City Hall. Proceed down the hall into the Vola Lawson Library.

SITE NINE: VOLA LAWSON LOBBY, ALEXANDRIA CITY HALL City Hall is important to women's history as the representative site of Alexandria women's leadership in government.

Alexandria's first woman to serve in the Virginia House of Delegates was civic activist Marion Galland, who was elected in 1963. Women began serving on Alexandria's City Council for the first time in 1973, when two women, Beverly Beidler and Nora Lamborne, were elected. . Ellen Pickering was elected in 1976, stayed in office until 1979 and has continued to play an active leadership role in Alexandria today. Marlee Inman was elected to Council in 1979, and was the City's first woman Vice Mayor, in 1985-86. Lois Walker served two terms on the Council, beginning in 1994, and today chairs Agenda Alexandria. Claire Eberwein was elected in 2000 and served one term. Today's Council includes two women: Redella S. (Del) Pepper was first elected to Council in 1985, and has served continuously since then. Joyce Woodson, the first African-American woman to serve on Council, was elected to her first term in 2000, and continues to serve today.

Patsy Ticer was elected to serve as Alexandria's first woman Mayor in 1991. She served two full terms and in 1995 was elected the first woman from Alexandria to serve in the Virginia Senate, where she continues to serve today. Marian Van Landingham has represented Alexandria in the Virginia House of Delegates since 1982.

The Vola Lawson Lobby was named to celebrate the work of Alexandria's first woman to serve as City Council, Vola Lawson. Lawson began working for the City in the 1970s and in 1985 was named City Manager, a position she held until 2001. Her many accomplishments include creating the Office of Women and encouraging the work of the Commission for Women, as well as extraordinary fiscal leadership, improving child care and early childhood education, economic development, housing, and much more. She was inducted into the Virginia Women's Hall of Fame in 1993, and has received many national awards for her work.

DIRECTIONS: Exit the City Hall onto Cameron St; turn left and cross N. Royal St. to Gadsby's Tavern.

SITE TEN: GADSBY'S TAVERN In the 1770s, Mary Hawkins was the proprietor of a tavern on Royal Street in the oldest of the buildings that have been preserved and restored as Gadsby's Tavern. This site, always a tavern, was the heart of Alexandria's social, political and business life during the time Mrs. Hawkins owned it. Its convenient location, near Market Square, ensured a good business. We know that George Washington frequented the tavern, as he noted in his diary for January 17, 1774, "Went up to Alexandria to Court...Suppd at Mrs. Hawkins and came home afterward." While no one is certain, it is likely that Mrs. Hawkins took over the tavern, which served food and drink primarily to the upper classes, from her husband at his death. She ran the tavern with the help of her daughter, sons and several male and female slaves. There were a numgber of other women who ran taverns in the mid- to late-18th century in Alexandria, among them Mary Bloxham, Elizabeth Bray, Ann Mason and Ann McMahan.

DIRECTIONS: Cross Market Square walking east to N. Fairfax St. The large stone mansion there is Carlyle House.

SITE ELEVEN: CARLYLE HOUSE The lives of two women - Sally Fairfax Carlyle and Sibyl West Carlyle - were, compared to the lives of many women in the City, relatively comfortable. But the reality of their lives, compared to today's women's lives in America, was difficult. Carlyle House is, even by today's standards, a large and splendid home. It was so in 1747, when nineteen-year-old Sally Fairfax married John Carlyle, a successful merchant at that time.

At this young age, she was responsible for overseeing not only Carlyle House but also the family plantation in Fairfax County. She and John had seven children in the 11 short years of their marriage - only two of whom survived childhood. Sally Fairfax died in childbirth at age 30. Sibyl West Carlyle was John's second wife. She had four children in six years - three of whom survived - but she too died in childbirth in 1769. Carlyle House is open for public tours.

DIRECTIONS: Walk one block south on N. Fairfax St. to King St. Turn left on King St. into the next block.

SITE TWELVE: RAMSAY HOUSE Ramsay House was the home of William and Ann McCarthy Ramsay, two key figures in Alexandria history. William Ramsay was a Scottish merchant who settled here, and was one of the City's founders. Ann McCarthy was the daughter of Alexandria Mayor Dennis McCarthy and Sarah Ball (George Washington's cousin). Ann married Ramsay and bore him five daughters and three sons...and in her spare time became one of the most effective fundraisers for the Revolutionary War. She became Treasurer of Alexandria and Fairfax County and led a fundraising drive that collected more than \$75,000 (this would be millions today) to help support our Continental Army. Mrs. Ramsay did not have to raise her eight children in this small house - today a replica of the original, and Alexandria's Visitors Center. The Ramsays moved to larger quarters elsewhere in the City.

DIRECTIONS: Walk down King St. to Union St. and the waterfront.

SITE THIRTEEN: THE WATERFRONT Alexandria came into existence, in large part, because of its waterfront area, which was a good natural port that made it possible for big ships to offload and load merchandise and produce. This port was one of the key shipping ports designated by the British for shipping tobacco from Virginia's plantations - and this made the City a hub for other kinds of business and commerce as well. Settled initially by Scottish and British merchants, the City was also a base for the sale and transportation of slaves throughout the South.

But in the beginning, all of the land on which Old Town Alexandria is sited once belonged to a remarkable woman, Margaret Brent, considered the first woman lawyer in America and the first woman to seek the right to vote. Born in England in 1601, she and her sister moved to colonial Maryland to find religious freedom. She held a patent (a land grant) from Cecil Calvert which gave her land in her own name. She and her sister developed their property well, working with indentured female and male servants. She became active in the Maryland colony's affairs, and sometimes lent money to other colonists. Her business and her representation of the Calvert family matters made it necessary for her to appear in court - inspiring, much later, the American Bar Association to dub her the nation's "first woman lawyer." A single woman, Brent was legally able to own her own property and represent herself and others - but she could not vote in the Maryland Assembly, a right she needed to do her work. She asked for the right to vote - and was turned down. She then left Maryland entirely and moved to Virginia, purchasing 11,000 acres, where she lived from 1651 to 1671. The property included a 700-acre tract that is now the heart of Old Town Alexandria. She lived on her plantation, called "Peace," in what is now Fairfax County until her death. Her heirs later sold the property.

DIRECTIONS: Return to Union St. and turn right toward the Torpedo Factory.

SITE FOURTEEN: THE TORPEDO FACTORY The Torpedo Factory Art Center, which attracts many thousands of visitors each year, was once what the name implies - a torpedo factory, active in World War II. Today it is an exceptional art center, thanks to the vision and hard work of two remarkable women -- Marge Alderson and Marian Van Landingham.

Both professional artists, they began working with the City and a group of other artists to convert the derelict old torpedo factory into today's art center. It took years - but today the Torpedo Factory houses 84 working art studios, several group studios, galleries and the offices and gallery of the Art League. Van Landingham served as the Center's first director, and Marge Alderson was director during the 1980s renovation of the site to today's design. Both women continue their art careers and have working studios in the Torpedo Factory that you may visit. Van Landingham also serves in the Virginia House of Delegates.

TO RETURN TO LYLES-CROUCH SCHOOL: Walk back up King St. (west) to St. Asaph St. Turn left on St. Asaph and walk 4 blocks to Lyles-Crouch.

FOR OTHER TOURS, look on this website for the Alexandria Women's History Tours at one-mile lengths and four-mile lengths.

THANK YOU for learning about some of Alexandria's wonderful women. We are grateful for the assistance provided by Alexandria Archeology, Alexandria Black History Resource Center, the Office of Historic Alexandria, the Lloyd House Library and the individuals who helped conduct the research about the lives of the women of Alexandria.

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