

EQUALLY THEIR DUE: FEMALE EDUCATION IN ANTEBELLUM ALEXANDRIA

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This article and the one that will follow are a preliminary investigation into female educational opportunities in Alexandria during the antebellum years. The research, drawn almost entirely from primary sources, supports the exhibition - "Equally Their Due: Female Education in Antebellum Alexandria," on view at The Lyceum until January 5, 1997.

PART TWO:

"THE BRANCHES PECULIAR TO THE FEMALE EDUCATION"¹

An Ornamental Education

Affluent Alexandria parents sent their daughters to specialized teachers who offered instruction in the various branches of an ornamental education. Girls, who had been instructed at home or in a dame school in reading and plain sewing, took lessons for varying periods and acquired some degree of competence in one or more of the genteel accomplishments - music, dancing, drawing, painting, penmanship, needlework, and French.

Alexandria newspapers are filled with advertisements placed by men and women who conducted classes or offered private tutoring in the student's home. Teachers moved frequently; some only maintained a school for a few months or a year. Mrs. Simson, who advertised as being from Philadelphia, New York, and Charleston, operated a needlework school in Baltimore in 1792, one in Alexandria in 1793, one in Richmond in 1794, and one in Fredericksburg in 1795. In addition to darning and plain sewing, she offered instruction in fancy needlework - tambouring and embroidery in silk and worsted. Evidently Simson was an artist as well; she taught drawing and painting and designed and executed the drawings on her students' needlework. Mrs. Tennent, from Norfolk, opened her needlework school in 1797. Under her tutelage, girls learned to do plain sewing, marking, tambouring, open work, and embroidery. They copied embroidery designs from a pattern book owned by their teacher. Mrs. Cooke conducted her Embroidery School between 1801 and 1803 at several locations in Alexandria. She offered instruction in literature in addition to the various branches of needlework.

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Sampler worked by Mary Muir, Alexandria, 1818.
The Lyceum Collection, purchased in tribute of
Mr. and Mrs. Harry A. Councilor.

Mary Lang Muir, wife of Alexandria cabinet maker John Muir, was left with five young children at her husband's death in 1815. Initially she carried on his cabinet making business. Later she opened her house on Royal Street to boarders and offered instruction in tambouring. She may have been the mother and embroidery instructor of Mary Muir who, at age twelve, worked an elaborate pictorial sampler. Two similar samplers were worked in the same year, 1818, under the guidance of an Alexandria instructor. Customarily teachers provided their students with patterns, prints and other designs to copy or they drew motifs directly on canvas. Therefore, groupings of samplers and embroidered pictures can be identified and the group occasionally attributed to a particular teacher or school. When a teacher moved from town to town, her designs and stylistic traits moved with her, thus disseminating an embroidery style across a broader region.

Good penmanship was a mark of gentility and one of the accomplishments desired by both young ladies and young gentlemen. Traditionally, when writing was a predominantly male job-related skill, girls did not learn to write at the same rate as boys. The ability to sew was a more relevant skill for women who were concerned only with housewifery. Quaker Benjamin Rush, an advocate of education for women, disagreed. In 1787, he wrote:

"Pleasure and interest conspire to make the writing of a fair and legible hand, a necessary branch of a lady's education. For this purpose she should be taught not only to shape every letter properly, but to pay the strictest regard to points and capitals....writing that is blotted, crooked, or illegible [is] a mark of vulgar education."²



Multiplication exercise from an unidentified
arithmetic book, ca. 1835.
Photograph courtesy of the Library of Congress.

By the nineteenth century learning to write legibly had become an essential part of female education, but many school dames, lacking the skill or the relatively expensive penmanship copy books, did not teach writing. In 1825, D. Easton leased a room in Mrs. Mary Muir's house where he offered instruction in the various popular styles of penmanship - swift running hand, recording hand, and Italian hand. He instructed male and female students at different hours and requested that students bring their own tables, seats, and writing paper. As late as 1850, teachers of penmanship still advertised their services. J. and B. French offered instruction in practical and ornamental writing, pen making, and stenography. They boasted that their:

"system of practical Penmanship will reform any handwriting, however bad, to a style of uniformity, ease and facility, in a few easy lessons; and that the hand, thus acquired is in no danger of being lost."³

During the antebellum period, drawing and painting gradually replaced fancy needlework as a desirable female accomplishment. Girls and grown women took lessons in landscape drawing and flower painting - leisurely and less labor-intensive pastimes with practical applications. By recording their surroundings in sketch books and on paper, amateur artists have left valuable records of people, places, and events that have been lost to time. Educator Erasmus Darwin noted in his *A Plan for the conduct of female education...* the importance of drawing in the female curriculum.

"Drawing as an elegant art belongs to the education of young ladies, and generally facilitates the acquirement of Taste...Drawing...consists in using the pencil as a language to express the forms of all visible objects...which can not in words alone be conveyed to others with sufficient accuracy."⁴

Ls. PISE,

PAINTER & DRAWING MASTER,

RESPECTFULLY informs the ladies and gentlemen of Alexandria and its vicinity, that he will open a **DRAWING SCHOOL** upon a subscription of 12 months, and as soon as twelve scholars are found he will begin. The terms are *Eight Dollars* per quarter, at the school, and *twelve* for private lessons. He will teach them drawing as it is taught in Italy.

The half quarter paid successively in advance.

The young ladies shall take their lessons together, and also the young gentlemen, at different hours.

He will also take a few scholars for the *French Language*. The terms of tuition will be *Six Dollars* per quarter, if a number of 6 or 8 are found, and *Nine Dollars* for private lessons. He flatters himself that he will give ample satisfaction to those who will give him their confidence.

He will then take a more convenient house for the accommodation of his pupils.

N. B. The French tuition will be also by a subscription of 12 months.

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During the early decades of the nineteenth century, two accomplished artists, working in very different styles, offered lessons to young ladies in Alexandria. Frederick Kemmelmeyer, the European immigrant and decorative painter, opened a school in 1803 for instruction in "Drawing and Painting in water colours and crayons." His advertisement also stated that he would "punctually attend on ladies who wish patterns drawn for Tambouring, Embroidery, Toilet Tables & other Needle work." Kemmelmeyer's artistic services included everything from portraits, to sign painting, to decorating Masonic aprons.⁵

Lewis Pise, an Italian immigrant and miniature painter lately from Baltimore, offered lessons in oil and water color painting in Alexandria between 1810 and 1811, before moving on to Georgetown. Young ladies could attend classes for a twelve-month period or take private lessons. Pise promised to "teach them drawing as it is taught in Italy."⁶ People of lesser ability also conducted classes in drawing and painting. Two teachers received students at Miss Ashton's at the corner of Duke and Washington between 1829 and 1835. Mr. Seager, from England, taught all the branches of drawing, water and oil coloring, and Mrs. Fowler, in six lessons, offered to teach "bird, flower, and fruit painting on paper."

When no instructor was available, girls had to improvise by copying other work. Ann Collins, who lived with her aunt and uncle in Alexandria and at Sully Plantation, wrote to her father requesting that he send her the pictures she had painted in Philadelphia under the tutelage of Mr. Neance.

"I wish to amuse myself this winter by painting, and want something done under the direction of Mr. Neance, to assist me. You promised Aunt Betsy the piece I drew, I wish also the other piece on a board frame to copy. Please to send brushes, pencils & lake."

Four days later, Ann's aunt wrote to Ann's father:

"She has just completed a Drawing much beyond what she has attempted before and says if she gets pieces she wrote for directed by her Master she can go on, as she is at a loss in rocks, clouds etc."⁷

Alexandria musicians offered instruction on a wide variety of musical instruments, however most young ladies took lessons on the piano, and occasionally on the harp and guitar. John Jacob Frobel, a native of Amsterdam who first came to Virginia in the 1780s, was one of the more influential music teachers. In 1804, Julia Ann Blackburn Washington (Mrs. Bushrod Washington) persuaded her former teacher to relocate from Richmond to Alexandria. Frobel lived with the Bushrod Washington family at Mount Vernon until 1809, and afterwards gave music lessons in Alexandria and played the organ at Christ Church. His students included Julia Ann Washington, her nieces and nephews, and other children of prominent families. Not all of Frobel's pupils were receptive to his instruction. Sixteen-year-old Ann Collins lived with her aunt and uncle, Elizabeth and Richard Bland Lee, in Alexandria during 1811. Her letters and those of her Aunt Elizabeth to her father, Zaccheus Collins, chronicle Ann's resistance and failure in learning to play the piano.

January 11 [Ann Collins] - "I go on but slowly in music, it requires much time, before it is interesting or amusing."

February 9 [Ann Collins] - "Mr. Frobald has just brought me two new pieces of music--Mrs. Madison's waltz, & a march. I think them very difficult, but Mr. Frobald says that when I have learnt them, I shall be surprised at myself for thinking them hard."

April 8 [Elizabeth Lee] - "She [has] for a time found some excuse for not practicing her music as much as she ought...the practice is [tedious] and requires more labour and time than she likes. She still wishes to pursue it and promises to be more industrious."

September 9 [Elizabeth Lee] - "I therefore have felt some disappointment that my dear Ann has not been able to go on with her music in the way I expected and wished...In the first place I found great application was necessary. I also soon found Ann could not bring herself to this...It prov'd however that she disliked drudgery necessary to get her lessons which has no tune or music for her ear. To try further Froble gave her little songs which if she could attain quickly pleas'd her tho she did not yet practice her two hours a day complaining of her eyes etc. etc. Froble found that however this might amuse her it would never as he said even teach her to play songs perfectly as she took every opportunity of trying new ones with the right hand which entirely turned her attention from the true principles of music...I at length advised her to get rid of what gave her so much trouble and chagrin by giving up the thing [piano lessons]...She said she would still go on hoping to play enough to please herself at least - on my representing to her when Froble produced his second quarters Bill that Froble said himself nothing had been done in that time for 38 dollars and that the sum would increase without her improvement. She observed she was very tired of it and wish'd never to see Froble again - begging I would discharge him."⁸

"PARENTS WHO WISH THEIR DAUGHTERS TO POSSESS WHAT IS USEFUL AND ORNAMENTED..."⁹

A Useful and Ornamental Education

In Alexandria, a number of small schools offered instruction to young women in a limited selection of academic subjects, or higher branches, in addition to the ornamental accomplishments, or inferior branches. Known as the English curriculum, it was gender-based and went well beyond reading and needlework taught in dame schools. Instructors were, for the most part, well educated and capable of teaching in a variety of subjects. One, James Wilson, advertised in 1796 that he would emphasize a practical female education by offering instruction in grammar, composition - especially letter writing, spelling, geography, and "a plain system of arithmetic and keeping accounts, as is particularly suited to housewifery."¹⁰

Reverend James Muir, president of the board of trustees of the Washington Free School and later pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Alexandria, opened a female academy in 1790 that had as its objective "the cultivation of the mind." Muir's academic curriculum was challenging and included English grammar and composition, reading and writing, arithmetic, geography, history, moral philosophy, and astronomy. Astronomy was the first of the sciences to be introduced into the female curriculum and would continue to be included throughout the antebellum

Mrs. Edmonds opened a school on Prince Street in 1810 that advertised a curriculum very similar to that of Mrs. O'Reilly's. Her husband, Edmund Edmonds had been teaching in the Alexandria area since 1785 and may have assisted her in the academic subjects. In December 1813, Mrs. Edmonds held a public examination and exhibition and boasted that:

"The proficiency of the young ladies reflects equal honor on the teacher and her pupils.--They read with propriety, emphasis & spirit; they discovered an acquaintance with grammar far beyond what is common; their attainments in Geography are great; they are familiar with the common rules of Arithmetic, and write a legible and elegant hand. Specimens of drawing and needle-work were pronounced excellent."¹⁴

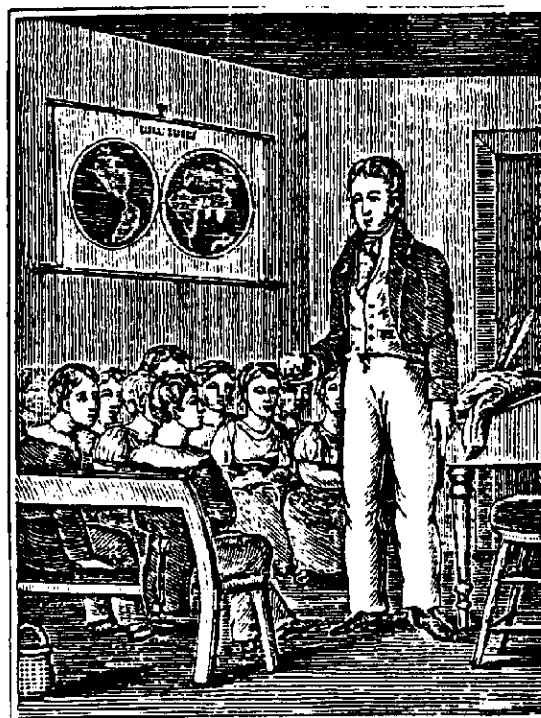
"A SCHOOL IN THE HIGHER BRANCHES OF EDUCATION AND OBTAINING THE NECESSITY OF PARENTS SENDING THEIR CHILDREN TO THE NORTHERN STATES FOR THE COMPLETION OF THEIR STUDIES."¹⁵

The Seminary Movement

During the late 1820s, educational opportunities for young women in Alexandria expanded considerably with the opening of seminaries. The change came about as writers in local newspapers debated the need to devote more attention to the education of women and outlined plans for "the diffusion of knowledge among the female sex."

Improvement in the education of women was seen as forming the basis for "the gradual improvement of the whole human race."¹⁶

The female seminary, generally of a more permanent nature, offered a two to four year curriculum with emphasis on the superior or higher branches of learning rather than on the inferior or ornamental branches. Buildings, libraries, and scientific apparatuses were acquired, and teachers trained in specific subjects were hired. Girls could remain in Alexandria and receive an education comparable in many respects to their brothers.' They could study the sciences - astronomy, chemistry, botany, and natural philosophy (physical sciences); ancient and modern history; rhetoric, criticism, composition and parsing; metaphysics and moral philosophy; advanced arithmetic and bookkeeping; Italian,



Frontispiece from *The Child's Guide*, 1833.
Photograph courtesy of the Library of Congress.

YOUNG LADIES' INSTITUTE,
AT THE CORNER OF PRINCE AND ST. ASAPH STREETS
ALEXANDRIA, VA.

THIS INSTITUTION has for its design the thorough instruction of YOUNG LADIES in all those branches which are deemed essential to their future well being as individuals and as members of Society. With the acquisition of knowledge from books and from oral instruction will be improved, at all times, upon the minds of the pupils, the importance of thinking for themselves, and of thinking accurately. The Principal and his wife, who always in the management and instruction of the School, have been through a thorough course of training for the Profession of Teaching by one of the best Teachers/Instructors in New England, and their experience in teaching and love for the employment render them, they trust and hope, suitable advisers of the young.

The executive and domestic arrangements of the Institute, are such as to insure the harmonious development of the physical, mental and moral powers of the pupils. The Bible is made the ground of all religious instruction.

A Cabinet has been arranged for the use of the pupils, and apparatus for any department of Natural Science will be generally provided. The Institute will be supplied from time to time with new articles of Paper, Cloth, Maps, &c., all complete sets are prepared for the full and profitable illustration of the several branches of study. Lectures will be given upon the branches pursued, also upon other topics of Interest.

The next Session will consist of one Session, commencing Sept. 26, and ending July 26 following.

Announcement for Sylvester Scott's Young Ladies' Institute, Alexandria, ca. 1850. Collection of the Virginia State Library.

Spanish, and "Latin and Greek if desired." In many cases, female principals ran the seminaries and continued to teach the traditional subjects of an English curriculum - reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, music, drawing, and needlework. For instruction in the sciences, they sought the assistance of qualified male teachers. Ann Wilmer advertised in the spring of 1841 that her Alexandria High School for Young Ladies offered "lectures on natural philosophy and chemistry with experiments to be given by a scientific gentleman."¹⁷ Eliza Porter and Rachel Waugh also provided their students with special instruction in the sciences. They called upon Alexandria's most eminent scientist and mathematician, Benjamin Hallowell, to give weekly lectures and demonstrations. Thomas Hagarty and his wife relocated from Georgetown and opened their male and female schools separately during the fall of 1828. Their respective advertisements illustrate that although the curriculum for female students had expanded, there were still important differences. Young men had the opportunity to study Greek, Latin, logic, elocution, and mathematics in addition to their regular course of instruction. Young ladies, did not have a choice of those

PUBLISHED.

FOR BOARD, including Writing and Printing to the amount of one dollar, please month, and Lectures in English, Russian, \$100 per year, payable semi-annually in advance.

For Latin, French, Music, Drawing, &c., the usual rates charges will be made.

Pupils should have their articles of Clothing made with the names of the owner in full; they are expected to come provided with work-covers and an umbrella.

SYLVESTER SCOTT, Principal.

REFERENCES.

Rev. J. N. DANFORTH, Alexandria, Va.	Rev. H. R. SARRIS, Leesburg, Va.
W. C. PAER, Esq., " "	Gen. JI. MARK, M. C.
ROWLEY BELL, " "	E. DAVIS, D. D. Westfield, Mass.
Mrs. N. L. ELIASON, Fredericksburg, Va.	D. B. JONES, Pr. Mass. State Normal School, at Westfield.
Rev. J. T. HANRAVE, Agent American Tract Society.	

subjects, but they could study mythology and useful and ornamental needlework. Seminaries reinforced the separate roles for women with their underlying emphasis on preparation for house-keeping, motherhood, and teaching.¹⁸

Although seminaries became more permanent fixtures in the Alexandria landscape, attendance was haphazard. Girls in their early teens entered at any time during the school year and attended for a few months or longer. Day students, who interrupted the school day by returning home at mid-day for dinner, were especially casual in attendance. Minor illnesses or family activities frequently kept them at home. It was not unusual for a young woman to attend a succession of schools, even attending several different ones in one year.

Mrs. Fitz John Porter (Eliza) opened Mrs. Porter's Seminary at the south-east corner of Prince and Washington Streets in 1827. A year later she promoted the success of her venture in the *Alexandria Phenix Gazette* with a long essay on her philosophy of teaching. Eliza Porter had taught previously at the Female Lancasterian School, established for poor girls in 1812. Her experience was in

basic instruction of reading, writing, and arithmetic, but she hired masters to teach French and the sciences. Porter's objective was to provide her students with the principles of learning and virtue by seeing to it that the mind was disciplined, the memory improved, and the moral sense purified, quickened, and intellectually awakened. She employed the inductive system - to cultivate "the active use of powers of the mind before those of the memory." Porter also gave short lectures in what we might now describe as women's history "showing instances wherein women have been distinguished for their talents, attainments, and virtue of the heart." Young ladies were encouraged to develop "habits of neatness and good order" and to take daily exercise in order to maintain a sound mind and body. Each student was given a small amount of spending money and a pass book in which to record all expenditures. Mrs. Porter theorized that the pass book "produced a valuable effect on some who expended all their allowances in cakes, candy, etc.,...a book filled with such expenditures... so surprised and mortified their good sense that they... voluntarily abandoned the indulgence."¹⁹

Most of the girls who attended Mrs. Porter's Seminary were boarding students. They brought to school their own bedstead, mattress, and bedding, six towels, a tablespoon, a teaspoon, and a silver tumbler. Eliza Porter charged \$100 per year for board and \$5 to \$12 for tuition, depending on the class level. Girls wishing instruction in the ornamental branches of French, drawing, dancing, and music, paid extra fees.

Thomson F. Mason sent his three oldest daughters as day students to Mrs. Porter's in 1830 and 1831. Ten-year-old Ann

entered in the youngest class, and Matilda and Sarah in the next youngest. Their father paid additional sums for their French and drawing lessons, and for writing books and stationery. He also rented a carriage horse at fifty cents a month to pull the cabriolet that carried his daughters to and from school.²⁰

Margaret Stone, a boarding student from Port Tobacco, Maryland, attended Margaret Coleman's Seminary in 1839 and 1840. Although little is known of the school, it appears to have been similar to Mrs. Porter's Seminary. Margaret described the curriculum in a letter written to her father shortly after she entered school.

"...I have commenced to study very hard. I learn every day Grammar with parsing or exercises, Geography with Maps, Arithmetic and Tables, Reading, Writing and Spelling. I also write Compositions, and I have a Bible lesson to learn for Monday. Next week, I shall commence the history of the United States: you may suppose I am very busy."

Evidently Margaret had not brought a bedstead to school, and her father expressed concern about her sleeping arrangements. Margaret replied in her letter of February 10, 1840,

"Miss Coleman says you wrote to know if I want a bed of my own. Father, the girl that used to sleep with me is confined at home by sickness, and I sleep with a girl that is very agreeable and I asked her if she wished to sleep with me and she said that she did and I do not wish a bed."²¹

Sharing beds was not uncommon. Erasmus Darwin, in his *Plan for the conduct of female education in Boarding Schools...* (Philadelphia, 1798), advocated placing younger or smaller girls in beds with older girls.

“The feet and knees and hands of weaker children are liable to become cold in bed in winter, on which account it is more salutary for them to sleep with a bed-fellow, rather than alone; as they naturally put their cold knees or hands to their companion in bed, and thus frequently prevent rheumatic, and other inflammatory diseases of fatal event.”

Daily exercise was part of seminary routine and reflective of growing awareness of the relationship between a sound mind and sound body. Exercise replaced dance, one of the ornamental branches that was gradually excluded from the curriculum to make room for the superior branches.

Eliza Porter included her views on exercise in her treatise on female education, published in the *Phenix Gazette*, August 19, 1828.

“Considering sound health as one of the greatest blessings to be bestowed upon man or woman--that while the mental faculties are cultivated, a due regard to bodily vigor should be kept in view; and who does not know from experience how much the mind sympathizes with the condition of the body--that it is cheerful when the body is strong and healthy, and depressed when the body is unhealthy. Maternal solicitude watches over the health of the pupils and by early rising,

plain diet, and regular hours of exercise, the strength of the constitution is strikingly promoted.”

Erasmus Darwin, writing twenty years earlier, clearly saw the connection between exercise and good health.

“The acquirements of literature, and of many arts, make the lives of young people too sedentary: which impairs their strength, makes their countenance pale and bloated, and lays the foundation of many diseases; hence some hours should every day be appropriated to bodily exercise, and to relaxation of the mind.”²²

For some students, physical exercise was a new experience. Margaret Stone, a boarding student in 1839, wrote home to her father:

“We walk out every fair afternoon. We have been one day to Yeates’s Garden, and I was delighted with it...This will be our usual walk in the Summer. We jump the rope, before breakfast, every morning. I expect that I shall have to take more exercise than I did at home.”²³

By 1841 there was sufficient interest in physical education for females to encourage Miss Morphy to open a Callisthenics Academy at Brooke Lodge on St. Asaph Street. She received an enthusiastic testimonial from her medical friends in Philadelphia and Washington City as to the value of her exercises.

“[We] earnestly recommend to the consideration of parents and teachers and others the advantage of such physical education for young females as will develop more fully the arms and chest, which, according to the present usages of

society, receive an inadequate share of muscular exercise. Beauty of form, as well as what is far more important, healthfulness of frame is seriously affected by the unequal and irregular exercise of the muscular system."²⁴

Catholic girls had the opportunity to receive a more advanced education from the Academy for Young Ladies, also known as St. Francis Xavier's Academy, a boarding school established in 1832 by four Sisters of Charity from St. Joseph's Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Reverend John Smith, S. J., the pastor in charge of St. Mary's Church, was responsible for bringing the Sisters to Alexandria. A feature of the Academy, as well as of other Catholic female schools, was its French curriculum. An advertisement announcing the opening of the school stated that: "The Sister who will attend to the French department, will use every exertion to communicate to the pupils, an accurate and correct pronunciation of the language, and introduce the practice of speaking the language, during class and recreation."²⁵

The school offered the usual female curriculum in English, arithmetic, and the sciences, but it also retained instruction in many of the ornamental branches that St. Joseph's Academy was known for - drawing, painting, embroidery, and music. St. Francis Xavier's Academy attracted girls from northern Virginia and southern Maryland, but remained open for only seven years. During that period, Mary Elizabeth Jenkins was a student. She would be remembered in later years by her married name - Mary Surratt.²⁶

For young women of color, there were few opportunities to obtain an education, even the rudiments of reading and sewing. The evidence is sparse, but it appears that one girl did receive sufficient education in Alexandria to allow her to become a gifted teacher in Hampton, Virginia. Mary Smith Kelsey, later known as Mary Peake, was the daughter of a free mulatto woman and a white English man. She came to Alexandria from Norfolk at about age six and lived in the town between 1829 and 1839 under the guardianship of her aunt and uncle. During her stay in Alexandria she initially attended a "select colored school taught by a colored woman," probably Sylvia Morris who kept a dame school in her home on Washington Street for about twenty years. According to Mary Peake's biographer, she was "a very amiable girl, and a good student." Later, Mary attended another school for African-American children, this one taught by "Mr Nuthall, an Englishman." Nuthall operated a school in the First Baptist Colored Church for about three years commencing in 1833. Nuthall was widely recognized as "a man of ability, well educated, and one of the best teachers of his time..." Mary Kelsey Peake evidently received the equivalent of a

ACADEMY FOR YOUNG LADIES
UNDER THE DIRECTION OF
The Sisters of Charity

THIS institution is located at the corner of Fairfax and Duke streets, Alexandria, D. C. and will commence on Monday the 19th inst. The class rooms are spacious and airy, and will be kept neat and clean for the benefit of the pupils.

Besides the usual branches of female education, lessons will be given in French, Music, Drawing, Painting, &c. The Sister who will attend to the French department, will use every exertion to communicate to the pupils, an accurate and correct pronunciation of the language, and introduce the practice of speaking the language, during class and recreation.

The Sisters will endeavor to impart that useful knowledge, and inculcate those correct principles of literature and morality, which are the brightest gems in the female character. The subjects of the principal cases of the Union are witnesses of the general benefit resulting to society since the commencement of the Institution in the United States. In the year 1819 a Society of Jesus Indian (colored) commenced in the vicinity of Emmitsburg, Frederick County, Maryland, known to the public by the name of Sisters of Charity, and incorporated by the General Assembly of Maryland in 1816; since that period, these Ladies have dedicated themselves in the service of God, and Education of females, of which this is a branch.

The course of instruction embraces the English and French languages, Orthography, Grammar, Composition, Writing, Rational Arithmetic, Geography, Ancient and Modern History, Conversations on Natural Philosophy and Chemistry, Book Keeping, Plain and Fancy Needle-work.

CHARGES

The Common Branches of English,
per quarter, . . . \$3 00

French, 7 00

Music and one of Instruments, 10 00

Drawing and Painting, 5 00

Oil Painting on Vases, 10 00

Embroidery, 10 00

Fancy Work, 5 00

Hours of Attendance, from 10 A. M. to 4 P. M. apply at the Academy to the Rev. J. Smith Pastor of St. Mary's Church

Alexandria Gazette, 25 June, 1832

seminary education. She became a teacher in the 1850s and continued teaching through the early days of the Civil War. Dedicated and tireless, she probably was among the first to teach the slaves seeking refuge inside Union lines in Hampton and Fort Monroe in the spring of 1861. Rev. Lewis Lockwood, representative of the American Missionary Association, organized schools in the area for former slaves, known as contraband, and credited Mary Peake, in his biography of her life, as "the first instructor of contraband in the United States."²⁷

The seminary movement took hold in Alexandria during the 1830s and expanded educational opportunities for young women beyond reading and plain needlework offered by dame schools, and the ornamental branches of education offered by other instructors. After a year or two of seminary instruction, the education of a young woman was essentially complete. In the 1850s a change occurred when promoters of higher education for women began to establish colleges to better train women as teachers. Some seminaries responded by improving their courses, others offered a less challenging curriculum for girls who had no interest beyond preparation for housekeeping and motherhood.

French-speaking immigrants and members of the Society of Friends contributed to the broadening of educational opportunities in Alexandria. Part Three will explore their contributions as well as two alternatives to local schools - private tutors and northern boarding schools. Additionally, many of Alexandria's daughters received little or no education. The article

concludes with a brief discussion of the prospects faced by uneducated women during the antebellum period.

Endnotes

1. James Muir, *Virginia Gazette and Alexandria Advertiser*, 5 August, 1790.
2. Benjamin Rush, "Thoughts upon Female Education," address given to the Visitors of the Young Ladies' Academy, Philadelphia, July 1787.
3. *Alexandria Gazette*, 8 July, 1850.
4. Erasmus Darwin, *A Plan for the conduct of female education in Boarding Schools Private Families, and Public Seminaries* (Philadelphia, 1798). Darwin was a noted British educator and grandfather of Charles Darwin.
5. *Alexandria Advertiser*, 27 June, 1803.
6. *Alexandria Daily Gazette*, 23 July, 1811.
7. Ann Collins to Zaccheus Collins, 2 December, 1811 and Elizabeth Collins Lee to Zaccheus Collins, 6 December, 1811. Copies courtesy of the Fairfax County Park Authority, originals in the collections of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. I am grateful to Jeanne Niccolls for bringing this correspondence to my attention.
8. Ann Collins to Zaccheus Collins, 11 January and 9 February, 1811; Elizabeth Collins Lee to Zaccheus Collins, 8 April and 9 September, 1811.
9. Mrs. Edmonds, *Alexandria Daily Gazette*, 22 December, 1813.
10. James Wilson, *Columbia Mirror and Alexandria Gazette*, 8 December, 1796.
11. *Virginia Gazette and Alexandria Advertiser*, 5 August, 1790.
12. Mary G. Powell, *The History of Old Alexandria, Virginia* (Westminster, MD: Family Line Publications, 1995), 104.
13. *Alexandria Daily Advertiser*, 1 January, 1805.
14. *Alexandria Daily Gazette*, 22 December, 1813.

15. Eliza Porter, *Alexandria Phenix Gazette*, 19 August, 1828.
16. Ibid.
17. Ann Wilmer, *Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, 31 March, 1841.
18. *Alexandria Phenix Gazette*, 13 August and 22 October, 1828.
19. *Alexandria Phenix Gazette*, 19 August, 1828.
20. Thomson Francis Mason Receipt Book, Alexandria, 1827-1832. Collection of the Board of Regents, Gunston Hall Plantation. Susan Escherich kindly brought the Mason receipt books to my attention. They contain several references to fees paid by Mason for the education of his children.
21. Letters from Margaret Stone to her father, William B. Stone, Esquire, Port Tobacco, Maryland, 1839-1840. Collection of the Alexandria Library, Lloyd House.
22. Darwin, 153
23. Margaret Stone to William B. Stone, 19 April, 1839.
24. *Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, 19 March, 1841.
25. *Alexandria Gazette*, 25 June, 1832.
26. A receipt survives in a private collection for twenty-five dollars for three months board and tuition paid by Mrs. Jenkins for her daughter Mary. The receipt, dated November 26, 1835, was signed by Sister Bernardina, superintendent of the academy.
27. Information on Mary Peake has been compiled from the U. S. Dept. of Education, *Special Report of the Commissioner of Education on the Condition and Improvement of Public Schools in the District of Columbia* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1871) and subject files in the collection of the Alexandria Library, Lloyd House.

Gloria Seaman Allen, Guest Curator for the exhibition, "Equally Their Due: Female Education In Antebellum Alexandria," is the former Director and Chief Curator of the DAR Museum, Washington, D.C. She is the co-author with Nancy Tuckhorn of *A Maryland Album, Quiltmaking Traditions, 1634-1934*, published in 1995. Gloria Allen is a doctoral candidate in American Studies at George Washington University. She received her M.A. in American Studies from George Washington University and her B.A. from Smith College. She lectures and writes extensively on the social history and material culture of the Chesapeake region.

The exhibition, "Equally Their Due: Female Education In Antebellum Alexandria" opened at The Lyceum, 201 North Washington Street, Alexandria, Virginia on June 28, 1996 and will be on view through January 5, 1997.

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