

Gadsby's Tavern



Restoration

In the early 20th century Alexandria's economy was struggling, despite major efforts to develop a strong industrial base. But by the early 1920s, inspired by efforts to restore the colonial city of Williamsburg, Virginia, Alexandrians began to recognize the significance of the historical environment around them. This interest in preserving the City's historic buildings was generated by the newly-formed American Legion Post 24, which was seeking not only a Post headquarters but also a fitting memorial to World War I soldiers. With support from many local groups and individuals, the American Legion purchased and restored the structures known as Gadsby's Tavern, and opened them to the public for tours. This initiated other attempts to protect, preserve and promote Alexandria's heritage as a national treasure. In 1972, the Legion gave the buildings to the City of Alexandria, which restored both buildings again and reopened them in time for the Nation's bicentennial celebration in 1976. The buildings continue to serve the community as a space for learning and entertainment.



Ice Well

In 1793, the Alexandria Common Council granted John Wise permission to build an icehouse underneath the corner of Royal and Cameron Streets, as part of his construction of the City Tavern, later called Gadsby's Tavern. Linked directly to the tavern basement by a brick-walled and vaulted tunnel, tavern staff would use the ice to chill beverages, preserve perishable foods, and create desserts like ice cream. Later, tavern-keeper John Gadsby also sold ice to the public for 8 cents per pound, according to a June 1805 newspaper advertisement. The availability of ice at the tavern distinguished the establishment as one of the best of its kind in the 18th century.

Ice "harvesting" was an expensive and time-consuming process. Large blocks of ice were cut from the frozen Potomac River in the winter and hauled by cart to the street corner where they were lowered through a hatch into the well. Once in the well, the ice was pounded into one large mound and covered with straw to preserve it for use through the summer months.

Originally hidden beneath the sidewalk surface, the ice well is now available for public viewing on the opposite corner.

Shopping

Dining

Market Square

King Street

Waterfront

Torpedo Factory Art Center



WALKING MAP LEGEND

- Information
- Public Parking
- Museum
- Shopping & Dining
- Park
- Public Parks
- King Street Trolley Stop
- Taxi Stand
- Lodging
- Bike Route
- Attraction
- Visitor Attraction
- Metro Station
- Water Taxi
- Capital Bikeshare
- 5-minute walk (1/4 Mile)
- Civic
- Civic Destination