

615-621 KING STREET

Alexandria, Virginia

Historical Overview

January 2022



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Introduction & Summary of Findings

EHT Traceries has prepared this Historical Overview Report on the two commercial buildings located at 615-619 and 621 King Street in Alexandria, Virginia. The purpose of this report is to document the history of the properties, including a chronology of the construction, use, and alteration of the buildings over time.

The properties consist of Lots 7 and 8, occupied by the building at 615-619 King Street, and Lot 6 which is occupied by the building at 621 King Street (legally 621-623 King Street). 615-619 King Street is occupied by a two-story commercial building constructed of brick and concrete masonry in 1930, while 621 King is occupied by a two-story building constructed during the late nineteenth century and heavily altered in 1906.

Both buildings are located within the boundaries of the Alexandria Historic District (also referred to as the Old and Historic Alexandria Historic District) as amended through an additional documentation listing in 1984. The district was originally listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 1966 and the Virginia Landmarks Register (VLR) in 1968. The NRHP listing was further amended in 2017 and has a period of significance that extends from 1700 to 1949. The Alexandria Historic District was also listed as a National Historic Landmark (NHL), though neither building is located within the NHL as its boundaries differ from those of the NRHP/VLR historic district.

To prepare for this report, Traceries completed an on-site survey to provide an understanding of the existing exterior conditions of the buildings, and conducted archival research using online databases and repositories including the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Library of Congress, DC Public Library, the Local History/Special Collections at the Barrett Branch of the Alexandria Library, and records from the City of Alexandria. Analysis of our survey and research findings was utilized to inform our understanding of the history and development of the subject properties and the buildings thereon.



Figure 1: Location of the subject properties outlined in red. The building at 615-619 King Street overlaid in green while 621 King is overlaid in yellow. Fairfax County Historical Imagery Viewer.

Site History

The subject properties are located on Lots 6 through 8 of Block 3 on the north side of King Street between St. Asaph and Washington Streets in the City of Alexandria. Currently numbered 615 through 621 King Street, the properties were historically numbered 151 through 159 King Street until 1888 when the current street numbering system was implemented. Specifically, the building at 615-619 King Street was 151-155 King Street while the building at 621 King Street was 157-159 King Street.

615 King Street (originally 151 King) was originally occupied by a Federal style house likely built in the early nineteenth century. The house was a two-story, side-gabled brick masonry building with two gabled dormers. The earliest available map documentation comes from the 1877 Hopkins Atlas of Alexandria which depicts the house with an irregular plan due to a rear wing or ell, which was likely comprised of several additions. The map also indicates that there were three wood frame ancillary buildings along the west and north (rear) property lines behind the house, accessible from the public alley that runs through the block.

The 1877 atlas also depicts the building that formerly stood at 619 King Street (originally 155 King) which was a two-story, flat roof brick masonry commercial building constructed in the mid-nineteenth century. The building had an irregular plan, with a rear ell that had at least two wood-frame additions attached to its north (rear) side. The buildings at 621 and 623 King Street (originally 157-159 King) are also depicted as small commercial buildings with rear wings. 621 King Street is represented as a masonry building while 623 is shown as a wood frame building with a rear masonry addition.

By 1885, the property at 615 King Street had been improved with the construction of several small brick structures at the rear of the main building along the west property line, replacing several of the earlier wood frame structures.



Figure 2: 1877 Hopkins map showing the four original buildings that stood at 615-623 King Street (formerly 151-159 King). Alexandria Library Local History/ Special Collections.

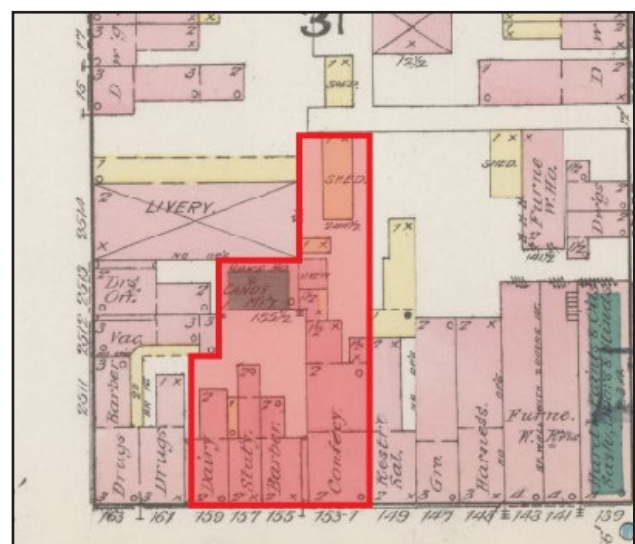


Figure 3: 1885 Sanborn showing the four buildings that stood on the subject properties. Note the outbuildings and ancillary structures that stood at the rear of the buildings. Library of Congress.

The new structures included a masonry oven, likely to support the property's function as a confectionery at the time. Changes to 619 King Street included the removal of the wood frame additions at the rear of the property, while 621 King Street had a small one-story wood frame addition added along the west side of the rear wing, abutting the east side of the adjacent building at 623 King Street. 623 King Street had been improved with the demolition of the former wood frame building which was replaced by a two-story masonry building. This building and the two-story masonry building at 621 King Street were altered and combined into a single building in 1906.

Between 1885 and 1896, maps indicate that no extensive changes were made to the properties. In the six years between 1896 and 1902, however, a new carriage shed and large wood frame ancillary building were constructed at the north (rear) end of the property at 615 King Street, accessible from the public alley. Changes were also made to the building at 621 King Street which was expanded with a two-story rear addition.

In July 1903, a permit to build was filed for the construction of an addition at 619 King Street. The two-story addition to the mixed-use store and residence was constructed of brick. Perhaps the most significant change to the subject properties in the 1900s, however, occurred in 1906 when a permit for repairs and alterations was filed to combine the two, two-story, brick masonry buildings at 621 and 623 King Street into a single commercial building. As part of the alteration, the original facades of both buildings were removed and replaced with a new brick masonry facade uniting both buildings as a single storefront. The new brick masonry storefront featured a central,

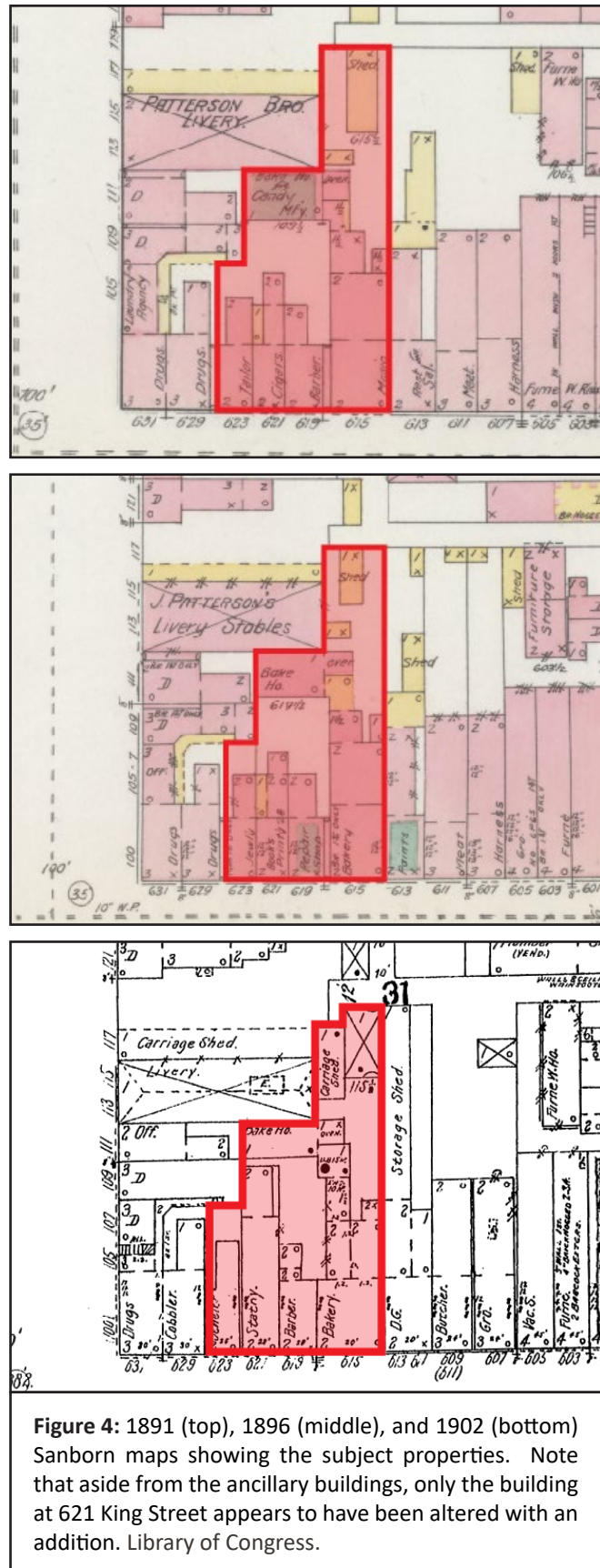


Figure 4: 1891 (top), 1896 (middle), and 1902 (bottom) Sanborn maps showing the subject properties. Note that aside from the ancillary buildings, only the building at 621 King Street appears to have been altered with an addition. Library of Congress.

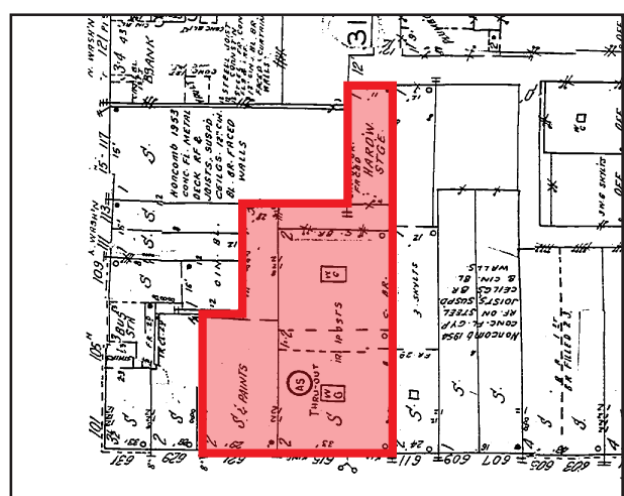
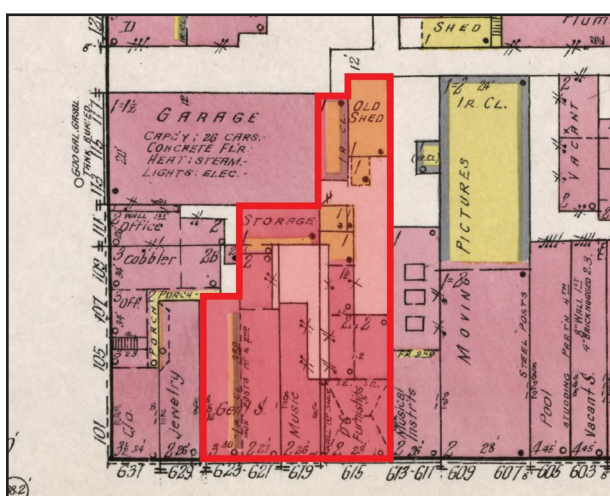
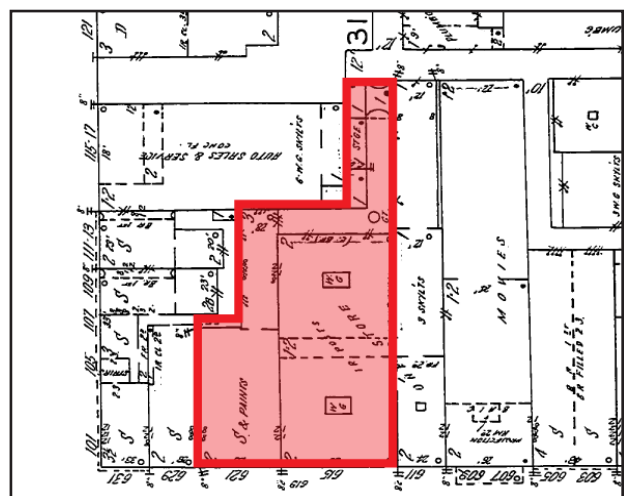
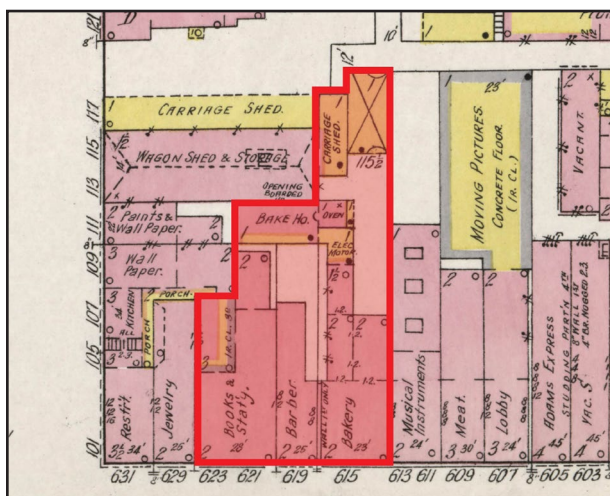
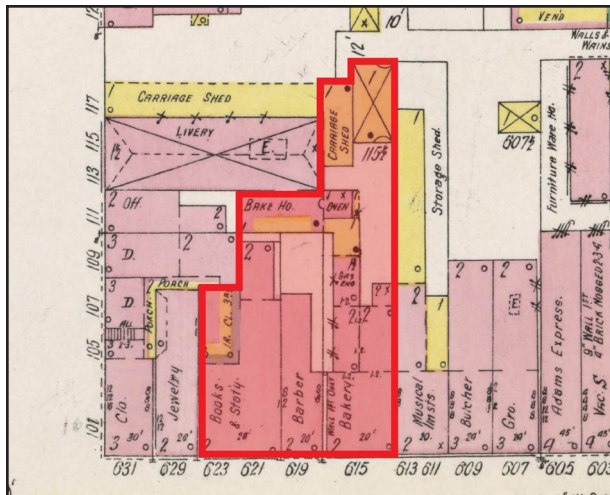


Figure 5: 1907 (top), 1912 (middle), and 1921 (bottom) Sanborn maps. Note that the 1907 Sanborn depicts the newly completed building at 621 King Street which held the store of R.E. Knight. Library of Congress.

Figure 6: 1927 aerial (top) 1941 Sanborn (middle) and 1959 Sanborn (bottom). The original federal style building with gable and dormers is visible in the 1927 aerial before being replaced by the J.C. Penney Store as shown in the Sanborns. Library of Congress.

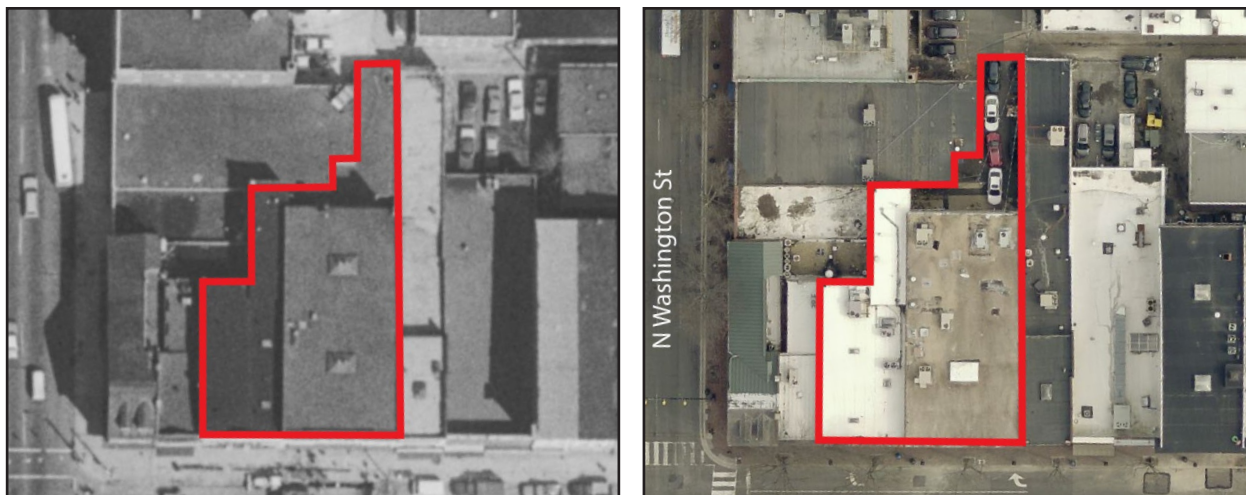


Figure 7: 1972 aerial (above, left) showing the subject properties with the two buildings at 615-619 & 621 King Street. Note that 615 King Street had wired glass sky lights and a rear storage building that was demolished in 1980. The 2021 aerial (above, right) shows that one of the wired glass skylights has been removed completely while the other has been enclosed. The area behind 615 has also been cleared for vehicular access from the alley. Fairfax County Historical Imagery.

round arched entrance flanked by storefront bay windows, stone accents, a metal cornice, and a semi-arched brick roof parapet, an appearance it largely retains today with minor alterations to the storefront windows.

Map documentation indicates that no changes occurred to the subject properties between 1906 and 1921. The earliest photograph of the properties, which dates to that year, shows the current building at 621 King Street with an unpainted exposed brick exterior, and the two buildings at 615 and 619 King Street which are no longer extant. In May 1929, J.C. Penney Co. purchased the commercial buildings 615 through 619 King Street and razed both buildings. The present two-story, flat roof commercial building was subsequently constructed in their place. By the early 1950s, a one-story concrete block storage building, accessible from the public alley, was constructed to the rear of 615 King Street. The storage building was razed in 1980. Today, the two commercial buildings—615 and 621 King Street—which stand on the subject property largely retain their original exterior features and stylistic elements with minimal alterations.



Figure 8: The two buildings at 615-621 King Street as they appeared in 1974. Alexandria Library Local History/Special Collections.

615-619 King Street

Historical Summary

In 1929, the two historic buildings that originally stood at 615 and 619 King Street were demolished to make way for the current two-story commercial building that was constructed to serve as a J.C. Penney Co. department store. Prior to the construction of the current building, an early-nineteenth century two-story Federal-style residence and commercial building stood at 615 King Street and a mid-nineteenth-century two-story commercial building stood at 619 King Street.

The Federal-style house that stood at 615 King Street until 1929 was likely built in the early nineteenth century, though the exact date is unknown as the earliest map documentation that shows the building on the site dates to 1877. While the initial occupants of the building are unknown, it was being used as a confectionary by David H. Appich by April 1858.¹ Appich was born in Württemberg, Germany in 1801 and spent his youth there before immigrating to the United States in 1826. He arrived first in Baltimore before settling in Alexandria.²

Appich was trained as a baker, and by 1847 he was operating a confectionery store and bakery in Alexandria. In April 1858, he moved his store to the two-story brick dwelling and store at 151 (615) King Street. Appich's name appears on the 1877 Hopkins map, and city directories indicate that he remained in that location until 1881.³

Appich died in 1887, but 615 King continued to operate as a bakery for another three years until 1890, possibly by another member of Appich's family. From 1891-1893, the building was briefly used as store selling home goods,

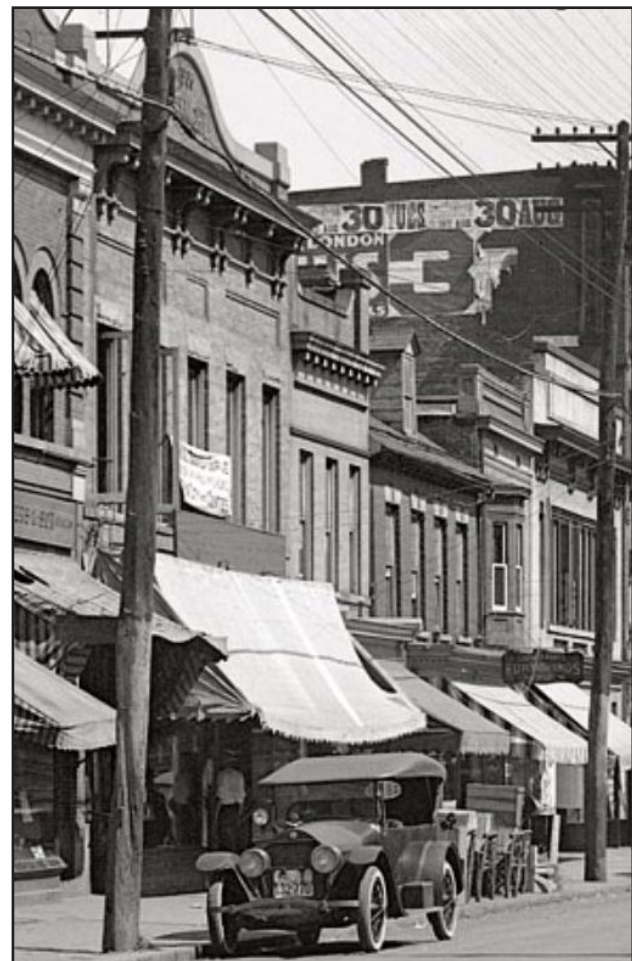


Figure 9: Part of a 1921 image looking east down King Street in Alexandria. The two buildings which originally stood at 615-619 King Street are visible to the right of R.E. Knight's store at 621 King Street which is partially obscured by the utility pole in the foreground. Shorpy.

1 "Notice," *Alexandria Gazette*, 21 April 1858: 3.

2 Michael H. Tepper, *Passenger Arrivals at the Port of Baltimore 1820-1834*, (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1982), 786.

3 1881, Alexandria, VA, City Directories, Alexandria Library Local History & Special Collections.

operated by M.S. Parker.⁴ By March 10, 1894, however, the building had been converted back to use as a bakery under the operations of H. Bloch. Bloch sold a variety of baked goods from his bakery, including bread, cakes, rolls, pies, coffee cakes, as well as specialty items such as wedding cakes.⁵ Over the following years, Bloch would offer a variety of baked goods, including pastries, and by 1914 he was also selling ice cream from his store.⁶

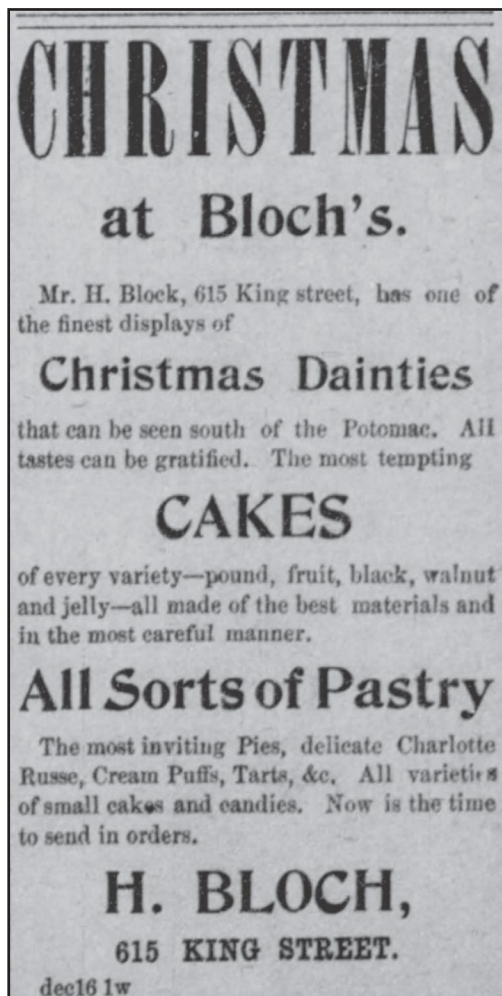


Figure 10: 1903 Christmas advertisement for baked goods from H. Bloch's bakery at 615 King Street. *Alexandria Gazette*.

Bloch closed his bakery in 1917. The location was soon converted for use as a clothing store operated by Max Sperling which remained open through the mid-1920s. Sperling sold a variety of clothing for men, women, and children, ranging from dresses and suits, to undergarments, socks, and aprons.⁷ By 1929, however, the store had closed, and the building was sold on May 4th to the J.C. Penney Company for the development of a new store.⁸

Unlike the building that stood at 615 King Street, the commercial building that formerly stood at 617 King Street was built at a much later date, likely in the mid-nineteenth century. As early as 1868, the building was being used as a barber shop, and continued to operate as such under the auspices of several proprietors—including barbers Henry Wortche, J.W. Simpson, and F.L. Plitt—until the 1910s.⁹

By 1919, the barber shop closed permanently and was placed by a graphophone store operated by Columbia Graphophone. The store opened on May 3, 1919 under the management of F. Devaughn.¹⁰ The store operated through at least early 1921 as indicated by the Sanborn Map from that year, but by December 1921 it was replaced by H. Fedder & Co., a footwear sales business.¹¹ City directories indicate that H. Fedder & Co. operated at 619 King Street until at least 1924, but was no longer operating from that location in 1929 when it was sold to

4 "M.S. Parker," *Alexandria Gazette*, 22 December 1892: 1.

5 "New Bakery," *Alexandria Gazette*, 12 March 1894: 2.

6 "Christmas at Bloch's," *Alexandria Gazette*, 23 December 1903: 3; "H. Bloch's," *Alexandria Gazette*, 27 May 1914: 2.

7 "M. Sperling," *Alexandria Gazette*, 23 May 1922: 3.

8 "Alexandria Realty is Sold for \$58,000," *The Washington Post*, 5 May 1929: M2.

9 Untitled, *Alexandria Gazette*, 15 February 1868: 3;

10 "The Columbia Grafanola Store," *Alexandria Gazette*, 6 May 1919: 4.

11 "H. Fedder & Co.," *Alexandria Gazette*, 9 December 1921: 4.

the J.C. Penney Company and subsequently razed for the construction of a new store.¹²

J.C. Penny purchased the two buildings at 615-617 and 619 King Street on May 4, 1929, for a total of \$58,000. An article from the following day stated that the company planned to immediately proceed with razing the buildings in preparation for the construction of a new store building. The new store was planned to be equipped with modern fixtures and lighting equipment, and was to be one of the latest of the company's approximately 1200 stores at that time.¹³

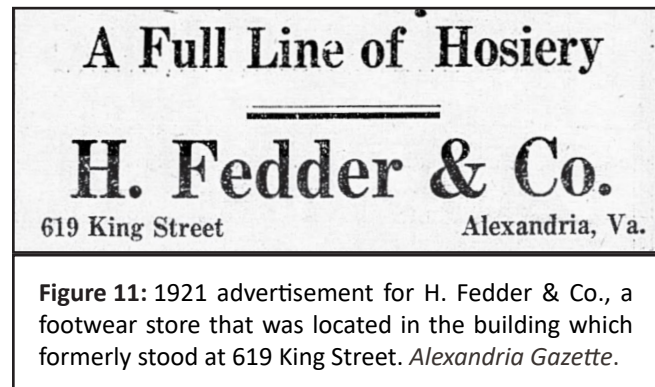


Figure 11: 1921 advertisement for H. Fedder & Co., a footwear store that was located in the building which formerly stood at 619 King Street. *Alexandria Gazette*.



Figure 12: The building at 615-619 King Street as it appeared in 1974 when occupied by Pier I Imports. Alexandria Library Local History/Special Collections.

By May 29, 1929, just over three weeks after obtaining the deeds to the properties, both buildings at 615 and 619 King Street had been demolished and the foundations for the new J.C. Penney Co. department store building completed.¹⁴ When the new building was completed later that year, J.C. Penney Co. moved its wares and operations from its old location on lower King Street, which opened four years earlier in 1925.¹⁵ City directories indicate that the J.C. Penney store remained open at this location for 25 years before closing in summer 1954.¹⁶

The former J.C. Penney Co. Store at 615-619 King Street was only vacant for several months before a new Drug Fair drug store opened in that location at the end of October 1954.¹⁷ The drug store remained open for eleven years before closing in 1967. It was replaced by a women's clothing store called Philipsborn Inc. which was in business for just six years before closing in 1974. Pier I took over the store

12 1924, Alexandria, VA, City Directory, Alexandria Library Local History & Special Collections.

13 "Alexandria Realty is Sold for \$58,000," *The Washington Post*, 5 May 1929: M2.

14 "Alexandria To Have New Kresge Store," *The Washington Post*, 29 May 1929: 5.

15 "Book to Retire After 20 Years As Store Chief in Alexandria," *The Washington Post*, 16 May 1945: 4.

16 1932-1955, Alexandria, VA, City Directories, Alexandria Library Local History & Special Collections.

17 "Grand Opening," *Evening Star*, 27 October 1954: 38.

space in 1975 but closed by the end of 1979.¹⁸

By December 1979, 615-619 King Street was being eyed by McDonalds as a possible new location for their prominent chain of fast food restaurants. Many locals, however, were concerned about the prospect of a McDonalds restaurant in Old Town. Residents voiced their dissent ahead of the issues going before the Alexandria City Council. Under a compromise plan developed by the City Planning Commission, the Golden Arches would not be allowed at the proposed Old Town location, only the name McDonalds would be allowed as signage.¹⁹ Despite dissent by some local members of the community, the Alexandria City Council voted 5-2 to allow McDonalds to proceed with their new restaurant at 615 King Street.²⁰

The new McDonald's location in Old Town opened on King Street in late 1980. Despite being unfavorably viewed by some residents, the chain was quite popular with both tourists and residents alike, and remained open for 23 years before closing in 2003. That year, McDonalds closed the restaurant and sold the property to a holding group called King Street LLC.²¹ On April 19, 2006, they sold 615 King Street to Walgreen Company, a national drugstore chain.²² The space was quickly converted for use by Walgreens which opened that year. Walgreens closed in March 2020 after nearly fourteen years of business at 615 King Street. The building is currently vacant.

Physical Description

615-619 King Street is a rectangular plan, two-story commercial building constructed in 1929 to serve as the new J.C. Penney Company store in Alexandria. The building is constructed of reinforced concrete and brick masonry. The facade is faced with brick laid in a running bond. The brick exterior is painted white, but was likely unpainted exposed buff brick originally. The building is topped by a flat roof concealed by a low parapet with an original metal cornice. The roof originally had two wired glass skylights that have since been removed.

The primary (south) elevation fronting King Street is three bays wide with a central recessed entrance containing a set of contemporary metal and glass double-leaf sliding doors at the first-story. The entrance is flanked on either side by large bays that contain contemporary multi-light fixed metal frame window units; included in the west window unit is a glass and metal frame single-leaf door. The second story features the same multi-light fixed window units as the first-story and have original stone or cast concrete lintels coated with the same white paint as the brick exterior. Above the second story windows is an original metal cornice surmounted by a brick roof parapet.

18 1955-1980, Alexandria, VA, City Directories, Alexandria Library Local History & Special Collections.

19 "Ronald McDonald Heats Up Old Town Protectors," *The Washington Post*, 15 December 1979: B3.

20 "Alexandria OKs McDonald's for Old Town Site," *Evening Star*, 17 December 1979: 31; "Big Mac Coming to Alexandria," *Evening Star*, 17 December 1979: 47.

21 City of Alexandria, Office of the Clerk of Circuit Court, Deed, 16 April 2003.

22 City of Alexandria, Office of the Clerk of Circuit Court, Deed, 19 April 2006.

Photographs indicate that parts of the facade, specifically the first-story store front, were altered several times throughout the twentieth century. Images from the early 1960s show a dark stone veneer cladding the first-story exterior of the building as late as 1965. By 1970, the stone cladding had been removed during a renovation that altered the storefront. The original storefront windows were removed, and the openings partially infilled to accommodate slightly smaller window units. A projecting metal pent roof was installed over the main entrance and windows at the first story. The original second story windows—large units comprised of two large, fixed lights flanked by one-over-one double-hung sash and surmounted by three fixed lights—remained in place until approximately 1979. The storefront was again altered that year with the removal of the projecting pent roof attached to the facade when the building was converted for restaurant use.

The most recent alterations occurred in 2006 with the demolition and redesign of the storefront, and the addition of new first-story brick laid in running bond to match that of the second story. New windows were installed at both stories, and signage was added for Walgreens drug store. The facade has remained largely unaltered since that time.

The north (rear) elevation facing Ross Alley is clad with buff brick laid in a five-over-one common bond. A single-leaf flat metal door is located at the first story while contemporary single-light fixed window units are located at the second story. Several window and door openings at the first story have been infilled with brick, including a door opening with ghost marks that indicate a pedimented door surround. The east and west side elevations abut neighboring buildings and are not exposed.



Figure 13: 615-619 King Street as it appeared in 2019 while still occupied by Walgreens. Google Street View.

621 King Street

Historical Summary

The extant early twentieth-century commercial building at 621 King Street gained its present appearance in 1906 when two nineteenth-century buildings that stood at 621 and 623 King Street were partially demolished and combined into a single commercial building behind a new facade. Designed by local Alexandria architect William Leon Clark, the building was altered to

accommodate the business of Robert E. Knight.²³

Knight was born in Alexandria in June 1866 to Ferdinand and Ann Johnson Knight. In his youth, Knight learned the printing trade by working with the *Alexandria Gazette* and *The Washington Post*, and later with the *New York World* and *Philadelphia Inquirer*.²⁴ By 1895, he opened a news stand on the south side of King Street as a circulation agent for the *Washington Post*, distributing the *Post*, the *Alexandria Gazette*, and other newspapers, while also operating his own stationery and book business.²⁵

Knight's business grew rather quickly, and in March 1896, he moved his store from 616 King Street to 621 King Street after purchasing the property. In addition to newspapers, stationery, and books, Knight expanded his wares to sell magazines as well as brands of tobacco and cigars.²⁶ By 1898, Knight again expanded his business wares, selling novelty goods, toys, and glassware operating more as a general store than a stationery and news sale business.²⁷ By November 1904, Knight's business had grown large enough that he purchased the neighboring building at 623 King Street, occupied at that time by Dearborn & Son, jewelers.²⁸

Over the course of the following year, Knight hired local Alexandria architect William Leon Clark to design his new store spanning 621 and 623 King Street. Plans were finalized by December 1905, and Knight hired his brother, Julian D. Knight, as contractor to partially demolish the existing buildings and construct the new store which was initially estimated to cost \$5,000.²⁹ On March 3, 1906, a permit for repair and alterations was issued to Robert Knight for 621-623 King Street. The permit specified that two buildings were to be altered "for the purpose of making more room for increase of business as the present store is inadequate".³⁰ The new building at 621 King Street for the R.E. Knight store was completed that year.

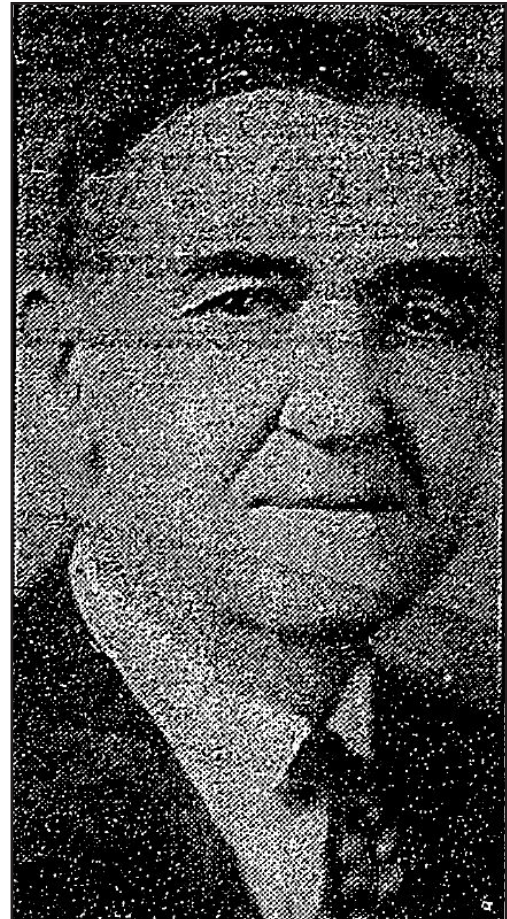


Figure 14: Photograph of R.E. Knight that accompanied his 1939 obituary in the *Washington Post*.

23 City of Alexandria Permit No. 118, Application for Permit for Repairs, Alterations, &c., 621 King Street, 3 March 1906, Alexandria Library Local History/Special Collections.

24 "Robert Knight Dies at 73," *The Washington Post*, 17 February 1939.

25 Untitled, *Alexandria Gazette*, 22 May 1895: 3; "Robert Knight Dies at 73," *The Washington Post*, 17 February 1939.

26 "Washington Post Bureau," *Alexandria Gazette*, 11 March 1896: 3.

27 "Knights for Xmas Toys," *Alexandria Gazette*, 3 December 1898: 1.

28 "Property Sales," *Alexandria Gazette*, 17 November 1904: 3.

29 Untitled, *Alexandria Gazette*, 1 December 1905: 3.

30 City of Alexandria Permit No. 118, Application for Permit for Repairs, Alterations, &c., 621 King Street, 3 March 1906, Alexandria Library Local History/Special Collections.

No. 118

Application for Permit for Repairs, Alterations, &c.
CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, VA.

Alexandria, Va., Mar 1 1906

To the CITY ENGINEER:

The undersigned applies for a permit to construct
the following described building:

Description of Present Building.

Where located	<u>621 King</u>	Name of owner	<u>R. E. Knight</u>
No. of buildings to be altered	<u>two</u>	Name of architect	<u>Leon Clark</u>
Area of present building	<u>36 ft 8 in</u>	Name of mechanic	<u>J. D. Knight</u>
No. of stories	<u>2 in front 3 in rear</u>	Name of occupant	<u>R. E. Knight</u>
Style of roof	<u>tin flat</u>	Material	<u>iron brick</u>
How is the building occupied?	<u>store</u>	If a dwelling, how many families?	
What is the cost of the proposed improvement?	<u>\$ 3800.00</u>		

Nature of Proposed Alteration, &c.
GIVE DEFINITE PARTICULARS.

For the purpose of making
more room for in case
of business, as the present
store is inadequate for
business now being conducted

For what will the building be used after alteration? store

After alteration will the building conform, in every respect, with the requirements of the building law? Yes

Signature, Julian D. Knight

Address, _____

Figure 15: Part of the Permit to Build issued by the City of Alexandria on March 3, 1907 for the partial demolition and construction of a new store at 621-623 King Street for R.E. Knight. Alexandria Library Local History/Special Collections.



Figure 16: R.E. Knight's store as it appeared in 1928. Alexandria Library Local History/Special Collections.

Watch For Our Big

CHRISTMAS SALE

"We Sell Something of Most Everything"

R. E. Knight & Son

621-25 King Street Phone 41

Figure 17: 1920 advertisement for R.E. Knight & Son's Christmas Sale. *Alexandria Gazette*.

Over the following decades, Knights business continued to expand. By 1920, he had brought one of his sons in to work with him and changed the name of the business to R.E. Knight & Son.³¹ The name was altered again by the mid-1920s when several of Knights other sons joined the firm and the company was changed to R.E. Knight & Sons, a name it retained until the store closed in the 1960s. The types of wares sold at the store expanded again by the 1930s with the sale of hardware in addition to the household stores and stationery that Knight had sold for over thirty years.³² Robert Knight was still head of the firm when he died in February 1939. At the time of his death, Knight was president of the Alexandria Retail Merchants Association, and had previously served as president of the Retail Merchants of Virginia and the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce. He also served on the Board of Police Commissioners and the City School Board.³³

After Knight's death, his four sons—F. Clinton, Leonard M., Robert E., Jr., and J. Herbert Knight—continued operating the family business. City directories and photographs indicate that R.E. Knight & Sons continued to sell household stores and hardware until November 1963 when the store permanently closed for business.³⁴

31 Advertisement, *Alexandria Gazette*, 10 November 1920: 5.

32 "Robert Knight Dies at 73," *The Washington Post*, 17 February 1939.

33 "Robert Knight Dies at 73," *The Washington Post*, 17 February 1939.

34 1924-1964, Alexandria, VA, City Directories, Alexandria Library Local History & Special Collections.

621 King Street remained vacant for one year before it was purchased by Charles, Marshall, and R.R. Brown, who converted the building into a men's clothing shop simply named Brown's Men's Shop. Changes were made to the storefront prior to the opening of the new store, and the exterior of the building was painted. Brown's remained open for thirteen years before closing in 1979 when the family sold the property to the Burke & Herbert Bank & Trust Company.³⁵ A branch of the Burke & Herbert Bank opened at 621 King Street in 1980. Burke & Herbert Bank was founded by John Woolfolk Burke and Arthur Herbert in Alexandria in 1852, making them the oldest continuously operating bank in Virginia.³⁶ The bank's branch at 621 King Street remained open for 40 years before closing in 2020. 621 King Street is currently vacant.

Physical Description

621 King Street is a rectangular plan, two-story commercial building with a two-story rear wing. The building is composed of two, mid-to late-nineteenth century buildings that were heavily altered and combined into a single commercial building in 1906. It is constructed of brick masonry with rusticated stone accents. The brick exterior, originally unpainted, has been finished with paint since 1965. The building features an original bracketed metal cornice surmounted by a partially rounded roof parapet concealing a flat roof.

The primary (south) elevation fronting King Street is three bays wide with symmetrical fenestration. The main entrance is centrally located in a recessed round-arch opening with a rusticated stone keystone at the first story and contains a set of double-leaf, wood-paneled doors with large rectangular lights surmounted by a semi-circular transom. Multi-light fixed wood sash windows flank the entrance. The second story has five window openings that contain four over six double-hung wood-sash windows. The window openings have rusticated stone sills and lintels. Slightly recessed brick panels separate the second story windows from the bracketed metal cornice at the



Figure 18: 621 King Street as it appeared in 1963 during the closing sale of R.E. Knight & Sons. Alexandria Library Local History/Special Collections.

³⁵ 1964-1979, Alexandria, VA, City Directories, Alexandria Library Local History & Special Collections; City of Alexandria, Office of the Clerk of Circuit Court, Deed, 20 July 1979.

³⁶ "About Burke & Herbert Bank," Burke & Herbert Bank, accessed 17 December 2021, <https://www.burkeandherbertbank.com/about/>.

roof line. A partially rounded brick parapet wall with concrete coping conceals the roof. Inscribed within the rounded portion of the parapet is the date 1906, noting the year in which the facade was built and the two earlier buildings at 621 and 621 King Street were combined into a single structure. Originally, the rounded portion of the parapet also had R. E. KNIGHT inscribed below the date, but this was removed after R.E. Knight & Sons closed in 1963.

Photographic documentation provides evidence for alterations to the first-story storefront that have occurred throughout the twentieth century. Built for R.E. Knight in 1906, the facade appears to have remained unaltered for over fifty years under the ownership of the Knight family before the closure of R.E. Knight & Sons at the end of 1963. Prior to the closure, the building featured two large, projecting storefront bay windows to showcase wares. Above the bays were smaller transom lights. The window openings and central entrance were surmounted by a small wood cornice attached to the facade that delineated the first and second stories.

Prior to being occupied by a men's clothing store in 1965, the first-story storefront was altered. The storefront bay windows and main entry doors were removed from the first story, which was recessed inward to create a covered recess open to the exterior and lined with show windows.



Figure 19: Another view of 621 King Street in 1963. Alexandria Library Local History/Special Collections.

The original arched brick entry opening was left intact, although the bottoms of the bay storefront window openings were removed and the narrow transom lights above the storefront were infilled. The wood cornice above the first story was also removed and the exposed red brick exterior was painted white. Paneled wood shutters were installed on the second-story windows.

The exterior retained this appearance through at least 1979 when the men's clothing store closed. The building was purchased that year by Burke & Herbert Bank which altered the storefront to its current appearance to make it more compatible with how it appeared historically. The shutters at the second story were removed and double leaf doors and

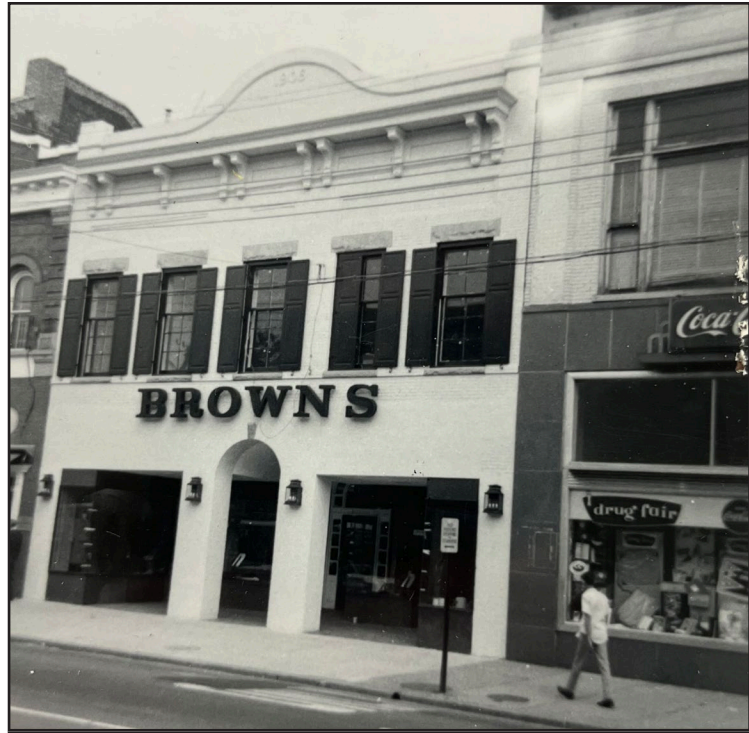


Figure 20: 621 King Street as it appeared in 1965. Alexandria Library Local History/Special Collections.



Figure 21: 621 King Street as it appeared in 2019 prior to the closure of the Burke & Herbert Bank branch. Google Street View.

fixed storefront windows were reinstalled in the original openings. The facade has remained largely unaltered since that time.

The rear (north) elevation and the east and west side elevations abut neighboring buildings and are not exposed apart from the second story which rises above several of the surrounding buildings to the north and west. The visible portions of these elevations are exposed red brick.

Conclusion

The subject properties now addressed as 615-621 King Street historically included four two-story dwellings and commercial buildings as well as several rear ancillary structures. Under the ownership of Robert E. Knight, the two buildings that stood at 621 and 623 King Street were partially demolished and combined into a single building with a newly constructed facade. This building, which still stands at 621 King Street, underwent several alterations to its storefront during the late twentieth century, changing its original configuration and appearance.

The adjacent building, located at 615-619 King Street, was constructed in 1929 after two earlier buildings that stood on the property were razed. The extant building, which functioned as a department store for over twenty years before it was used variously as a clothing store, drug store, and fast food restaurant, has also had its storefront altered multiple times. These alterations resulted in the removal of the original first-story stone veneer, enlargement of the storefront window openings, in addition to the replacement of the original second-story window sashes.



Figure 22: 615-621 King Street, 2019. Google Street View.

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Additional Photographs



Figure 23: Looking west down King Street, 1928. Alexandria Library Local History/Special Collections.



Figure 24: Looking east from the intersection of Washington and King Streets, 1970. Alexandria Library Local History/Special Collections.



Figure 25: Looking northeast, 1978. Alexandria Library Local History/Special Collections.

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