


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: OCTOBER 4, 2018

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: INFORMATION CONCERNING COLONEL JOHN FITZGERALD

Last week I received the attached unsolicited letter from Ms. Maddy McCoy, whom I do not know, but I have been told is a well-respected historical researcher in regard to the subject of slavery. She was the researcher who found the manumission papers of the 18th Century three-greats-ago grandfather of current Virginia Lt. Governor Justin Fairfax. Given the current community discussion about the naming of the park at the foot of King Street, I thought that this was information that City Council and the Naming Committee should be aware of. A copy will also be provided to the local chapter of the Ancient Order of Hibernians whose President previously indicated to City staff that they planned to engage in historical research about Colonel Fitzgerald. Since I had received this information, and it relates to a current community debate, I felt I had an obligation to share it. Also attached is a timeline of the life of Col. Fitzgerald prepared by the Office of Historic Alexandria.

Attachments

cc: Emily Baker, Deputy City Manager
Gretchen Bulova, Acting Director, Office of Historic Alexandria
Craig Fifer, Director, Office of Communications and Public Information
Jack Browand, Division Chief, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

John Fitzgerald Timeline

1769 Immigrates to Virginia from County Wicklow, Ireland

Before 1775 Marries Jane Digges of Prince George's County, Md.

1775-1778 Serves as Aide de Camp to George Washington

1778 Injured in the Battle of Monmouth, resigns commission and returns to Alexandria

1779 Partners in the wheat export business with Valentine Peers

1781 Leads Alexandria militia to repel two boat British attack on Alexandria

1784 Expands import business to include wines, pepper, olives, linens, and other European Goods

1785 Appointed a director of the Potomac Company

1786-1787 Mayor of Alexandria

1788 Member of the Alexandria committee to ratify the US Constitution

1788 Begins fundraising for the construction of St. Mary's Church (now Basilica), which was completed in 1795, one of the first donors is George Washington

1793 Made customs collector for the Port of Alexandria

1793-1796 President of the Potomac Company

1795 Adds rope factory to his holdings; Commissioned as US Naval Officer

1799 Relieved of duties as customs collector, declared bankrupt, dies

Major Land Holdings: Wharf, ½ of Wales Brewery, 37 acres contiguous to Alexandria, *Alexandria Times and DC Daily Advertiser* 5/13/1802, 27 acres adjoining the city of Alexandria, including his residence Federal Spring, Fitzgerald's Warehouse on the SE corner of King & Union, *Alexandria Gazette* 5/13/1818, Land in Ohio, estimated by his brother in law to be worth \$40,000 in 1820, *Letter from William Digges, July 12, 1820, Papers of Col. John Fitzgerald, Box 1, Folder 4, Booth Family Center for Special Collections, Georgetown University*

Evidence of Slave Holding:

Household listing claims 5 whites in house, 12 blacks. *1782 Fairfax County holdings that are used in 1790 Virginia Census.*

1787 Personal Property Tax Assessment lists 1 white male older than 16, 9 blacks older than 16, 5 blacks under the age of 16. *1787 Personal Property Tax Records for Alexandria City.*

1788 Personal Property Tax Assessment lists 2 white males above the age of 16, 9 blacks above the age of 16, and 2 blacks between the age of 12 and 16. *1788 Personal Property Tax Records for Alexandria City.*

1789 Personal Property Tax Assessment lists 1 white male above the age of 16, 7 blacks above the age of 16, no blacks under the age of 16. *1789 Personal Property Tax Records for Alexandria City.*

1790 Personal Property Tax Assessment lists 3 white males above the age of 16, 6 blacks above the age of 16, and 2 blacks between the age of 12 and 16. *1790 Personal Property Tax Records for Alexandria City.*

Advertisement from his estate for the sale of "Several Valuable Slaves" in Market Square of Alexandria. *Columbia Mirror and Alexandria Gazette*, 5/13/1800

Bill of Sale of "Negro Boy Patrick" and "slave Patrick" to Peter Sherron by executors of Fitzgerald's will. *May 14, 1800, Papers of Col. John Fitzgerald, Box 1, Folder 4, Booth Family Center for Special Collections, Georgetown University*



September 25, 2018

Mark B. Jinks
City Manager
City of Alexandria
301 King Street
Alexandria, Va. 22314

Dear Mr. Jinks,

In regard to the slaveholdings of Alexandria merchant, John Fitzgerald, I have consulted the relevant historical documents and can report the following:

Personal Property Tax Records

Personal property tax records identified and taxed the number of enslaved individuals held by individual citizens. John Fitzgerald was recorded as owning slaves from the inception of the said tax in 1782 until his death in 1799. Enslaved individuals under the age of 12 were not taxed. Though not recorded in these records, Fitzgerald also held many enslaved children under the age of 12, as seen in his probate documents. The following list shows the number of Fitzgerald's slaveholdings in what would be present day City of Alexandria.¹

Year	Slaves aged above 16 years	Slaves aged 12-16 years
1782	11 [total]	
1783	8	4
1784	6	7
1785	6	4
1786	8	3
1787-1795	[not recorded]	
1796	12	2
1797	12	2
1798	12	2
1799	12	2

¹ Fairfax, Virginia, Personal Property Tax, Fairfax County, Personal Property Tax Lists: 1782-1850.

SLAV_RY INV_NTORY D_TABASE

Probate Records

John Fitzgerald died in 1799. The probate trail he left behind provides us with insightful information into his enslaved holdings. Probate inventories, estate and sale accounts regularly identify slaves by first name, age, and value (identified last names are rare). These records can provide enslaved family structures and sometimes identify to whom an individual slave was bequeathed or sold. In addition to John Fitzgerald's Alexandria property[s], he also owned several farms in Fairfax and Loudoun counties. The following are the named enslaved individuals owned by John Fitzgerald at the time of his death, and what happened to them, if known: ^{2 3 4}

Name	Description	Value	After Fitzgerald's Death
Bill	Negro	£60	Purchased by Mrs. Fitzgerald on 12 May 1800 for £52
George	Negro	£70	Purchased by Mrs. Fitzgerald on 12 May 1800 for £60
Ben	Negro	£70	
Nancy	Negro	£50	Purchased by John Wise on 12 May 1800 for £77
Rachal	Negro	£50	Purchased by Mrs. Fitzgerald on 12 May 1800 for £50
Rose	Negro	£45	Purchased (with 2 children) by Mrs. Fitzgerald on 12 May 1800 for £50
Sukey	Negro	£30	
Joseph (Joe)	Negro	£40	Purchased by Mrs. Fitzgerald on 30 Mar 1801 for £60.6
Patrick	Negro	£40	Purchased by P. Sheran on 12 May 1800 for £74
Betty	Negro	£45	Purchased (with 2 children) by James Caralon 12 May 1800 for £106
Alice	Negro	£25	
Henry	Negro, 3 years old	£15	
Esther	Negro	£50	Purchased by Mrs. Fitzgerald on 12 May 1800 for £69
Charles	Negro	£60	Purchased by Thomas Crandal on 30 Mar 1801 for £100.10
Name	Description	Value	After Fitzgerald's Death

² Fairfax County Will Book I1: 15, Inventory of John Fitzgerald (of Alexandria), Fairfax County, Virginia, Historic Records Center, Fairfax Circuit Court, 1801, Recorded on 22 September 1801.

³ Fairfax County Will Book I1: 19, Inventory of John Fitzgerald, Fairfax County, Virginia, Historic Records Center, Fairfax Circuit Court, 1801, Recorded on 22 September 1801.

⁴ Fairfax County Will Book I1: 325, Sale Account of John Fitzgerald, Fairfax County, Virginia, Historic Records Center, Fairfax Circuit Court, 1803, Recorded on 22 November 1803.

SLAVERY INVENTORY DATABASE

Luke	Negro	£40	Purchased by James Brown on 12 May 1800 for £74
Sophia (Sophy)	Negro	£50	Purchased by Thomas Hughs on 12 May 1800 for £69
Sam	Negro	£40	Purchased by John Davies on 12 May 1800 for £81
Edmund	Negro, lame, a shoemaker	£40	Purchased by P. Sheran on 30 Mar 1801 for £79.10
Harry	Negro	£70	Purchased by Thomas Crandal on 30 Mar 1801 for £90
John	Negro	£60	
Frank	Negro	£35	Purchased by Jonathan White on 12 May 1800 for £40
Giles	Negro	£55	Purchased by G. McMunn on 12 May 1800 for £75
George	Negro	£25	
Clem	Negro	£55	Purchased (with wife & 4 children) by G. Atkinson on 12 May 1800 for £141
Pris	Negro, valued with her children Peter & Ned	£55	
Peter	Negro, valued with mother Pris & brother Ned	£55	
Ned	Negro, valued with mother Pris & brother Peter	£55	
Anthony	Negro	£25	
Rose	Negro	£50	Purchased by M. Sexsmith on 12 May 1800 for £72
Nancy	Negro	£45	Purchased by R. B. Jamesson on 12 May 1800 for £87
Matt	Negro	£65	Purchased by Hepburn & Dundas for £75
Charles	Past labor	£0	
Pegg	Wife of Charles, Past labor	£0	
Charles	Boy, 12 years old	£40	
Tom	At present supposedly poisoned, if well would be worth...	£90	
Milly	Wife of Tom	£40	
Name	Description	Value	After Fitzgerald's Death

SLAV_RY INV_NTORY D_TABASE

Nell		£50	Her husband's name is Jim, belonging to Mr. Richard Connor
Ned	Child of Nell, about 8 years	£40	
Winny	Child of Nell, under 8 years	£25	
Bett	Child of Nell, under 8 years	£20	
Harry	Child of Nell, under 8 years	£18	
Linny	Child of Nell, a suckling	£12	
Patt		£60	
Anthony	Child of Patt, age 3	£20	
Ralph	Child of Patt, age 2	£15	
Bill	23 or 24 years old	£90	

John Fitzgerald had one of the largest slaveholdings in Alexandria history.

Sincerely,

Maddy McCoy
Slavery Inventory Database, LLC

HARC Vice-Chair, Planning District 2