

March 31, 2019  
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Alexandria, VA 22310  
703-380-4658

Mayor Justin M. Wilson  
Alexandria City Council  
301 King Street, Room 2300  
Alexandria, VA 22314

Re: Appeal no. 2018-0041 and 00411."

Dear Mayor Wilson and City Council,

I am the granddaughter of Supreme Court Justice Hugo L. Black. I am writing today about the preservation of my grandfather's gardens on 619 South Lee Street. Those gardens are suffused with his love for his home and nature. His red roses bloomed and perfumed the summer air; his vegetables found their way to his dinner table; golden fish swam in the small, rock-surrounded pond; his grapes grew ripe and sugar-filled on his trellis; his parties spilled out onto the patio and into the gardens under paper lanterns; and many a set was played on his tennis court. I remember the gardens as a magical place to be as a child. Please do not destroy such a wonderland. New gardens seldom come close to the old established gardens in beauty and history. His spirit and continued presence live on in his beloved gardens. It would be a shame to lose all sense of him with its destruction. He, and it, cannot be replaced.

Thank you for your kind consideration,  
Ann Black Nash

*Ann Black Nash*

# THE SAUNDERS LAW FIRM

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April 2, 2019

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Mayor Justin Wilson  
and Members of City Council  
City of Alexandria  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

**Re: 619 South Lee Street,  
BAR appeals 2018-00410 and 2018-00411**

Dear Mayor Wilson and Members of City Council:

I am writing to register my objection to what I understand to be the proposed redevelopment of the property at 619 South Lee – the home until his death of Justice Hugo L. Black and Elizabeth Black. I served as a law clerk to Justice Black from 1960 to 1962 and was privileged to deliver one of the addresses on the occasion of the memorial services for him at the Supreme Court (a copy of which is attached hereto). I know the property at 619 South Lee and spent many hours working with Justice Black there. The Judge (as his law clerks called him) loved that property, including particularly the tennis court on which he spent many hours teaching some of his clerks the humility that comes from being bested by a septuagenarian and ultimately even by an octogenarian.


Because he lived and worked there for decades, as well as entertained Presidents, judges and dignitaries of his era, his imprint elevated 619 South Lee to a historic place even beyond the antiquity of the building itself. In fact, I know that Justice Black and Elizabeth even executed a document putting their property in a historic and open-space easement, and later his heirs reaffirmed that the protection extended to the unique side yard, garden and his beloved tennis court as well. His very clear intentions are certainly a further reason to weigh in preserving this very historic property, which in addition has officially been designated a Virginia historic landmark. Until now, all subsequent owners have respected those intentions and that history. To impose now a giant addition, nearly as big as the historic building itself, would erase history and destroy the garden area. I have been informed that your body has the power and duty to consider any proposal to alter the property in accordance with all these and related factors and the public interest.

I strongly believe that you should act to block the proposed construction. That construction would radically change the nature of this property as it was respected, preserved and maintained by the Judge. In my opinion, that would be a tragedy for anyone interested in the

April 2, 2019  
Re: 619 South Lee Street  
Page 2

history of our Supreme Court and for the City of Alexandria. Justice Black was a seminal figure in the history of the Supreme Court –a great, if not the very greatest, Justice ever to sit on that Court. I believe that in time his greatness will be fully recognized and his home, if preserved, will rival Mount Vernon as a site to be visited by everyone interested in American history. It should be preserved in its current state.

Respectfully,

  
George L. Saunders, Jr.

Enclosure

# **In Memoriam**

**HONORABLE HUGO LAFAYETTE BLACK**

Proceedings of the BAR and OFFICERS of the  
SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

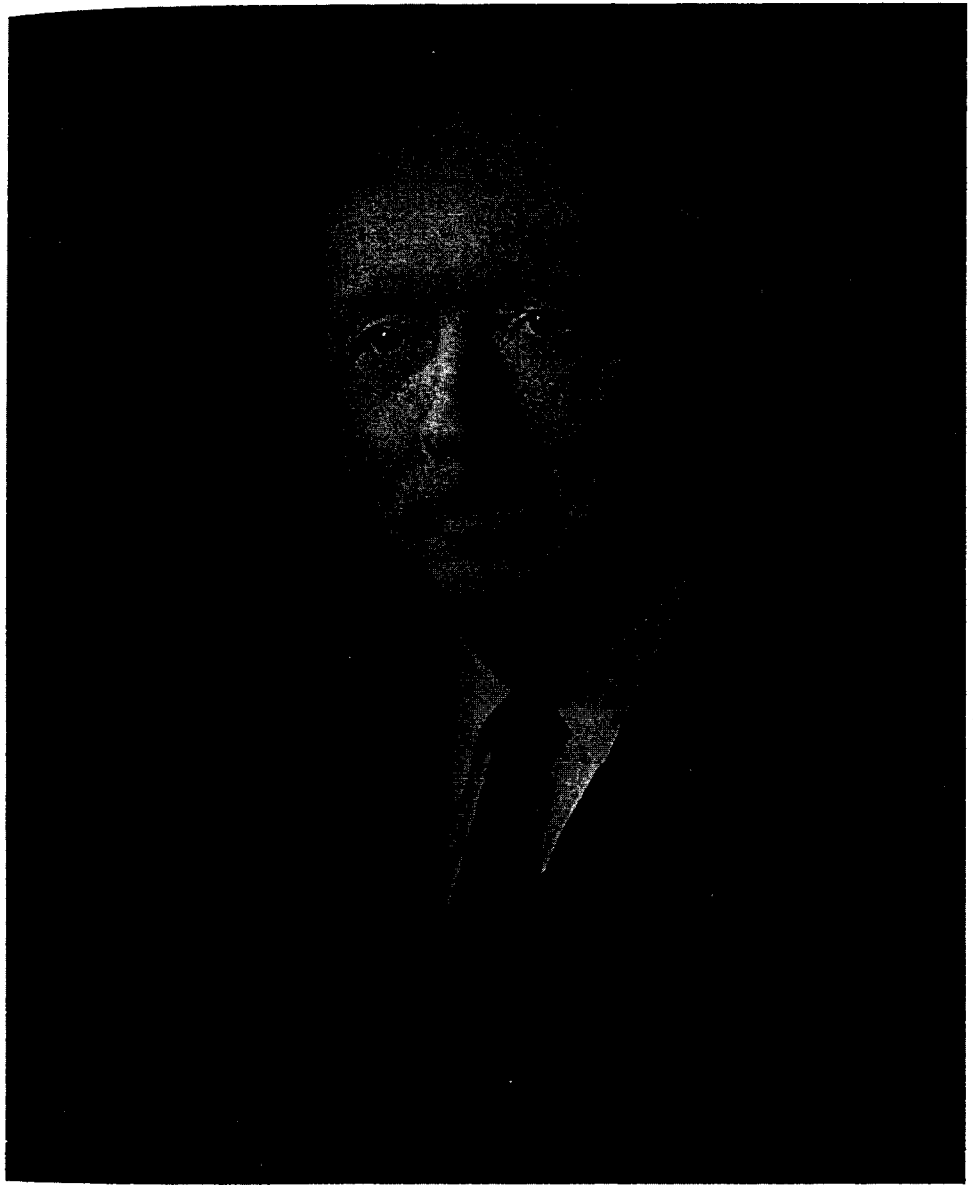
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Proceedings Before the  
SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

Washington, D. C.

April 18, 1972





HONORABLE HUGO L. BLACK

## IN MEMORIAM

The Chair recognized GEORGE L. SAUNDERS, ESQ.

Remarks  
of  
MR. SAUNDERS

---

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Attorney General, Mr. Solicitor General, Mrs. Black, Hugo, Josephine, other members of the family, and friends of Mr. Justice Black:

In every generation, there exist a select few individuals to whom the privilege and responsibility of extraordinary perception and understanding is given, upon whom—as Hermann Hesse put it—the “mark of Cain” is apparent. Hugo Black was such a man.

From his early childhood in Alabama, Justice Black was set apart from the people with whom he grew up by his recognition that the way of life they accepted without question was both unjust and self-destructive. Bigotry and racial prejudice were totally foreign to his nature, not because of any liberal impulse to sympathize with those less fortunate than himself, but because to him, as to Thomas Jefferson, all men were in fact created equal and common sense required that they be treated as such.

The same clarity of vision and willingness to act upon what he saw to be right set Justice Black apart in virtually every endeavor of his life. As a public official in Alabama, he took actions that rarely, if ever, had previously been taken by a public official in that State—as a prosecutor, when he convened a grand jury to investigate police brutality toward blacks; and as a police judge, when he refused to convict blacks for gambling on street corners because no effort was being made to prosecute whites who were equally guilty of gambling at the local country

## HUGO LAFAYETTE BLACK

club. As a Senator, he found himself at odds with the vast majority of his fellow Senators when he launched one of the first effective investigations into the lobbying activities of powerful corporations, and then shocked the legal world by issuing subpoenas to some of the most prestigious law firms in the country. As a member of this Court, he completely confounded many constitutional scholars, and most of his own judicial brethren, by insisting that the Constitution meant what it said and that it ought to be applied according to its terms.

Justice Black's unwillingness to go along with the established customs and officially accepted wisdom of the day did not stem from any fondness for change for the sake of change. He respected—indeed, revered—the institutions of this country and devoted most of his life toward preserving them. But he insisted that those institutions must be made to work the way they are supposed to work—he refused to be deluded into accepting glossy excuses for their failures. When the President sought to seize the steel mills without legislative authority, he wrote the opinion for the Court condemning the action and restricting the President to his proper executive function. When the House Un-American Activities Committee sought to conduct trials under the guise of making legislative inquiries, he condemned such proceedings as modern-day versions of the old bills of attainder and urged the Court to force Congress to stay within its constitutionally-defined legislative function. And when the Social Security Board terminated the old-age benefits due to a person who had been deported for having been a member of the Communist Party in the 1930's, he condemned its action as an infliction of punishment totally beyond the proper powers of any administrative agency.

Justice Black's concern that the institutions of our Government stay within their proper constitutional limits was nowhere more forcefully expressed than in connection with the decisions of his own Court. Justice Black realized the awesome power of the Supreme Court and the need to confine that power within precisely defined boundaries. He despised the interpretation of the Due Process Clause which would permit the Court to con-

## IN MEMORIAM

demn as unconstitutional any law it found to be arbitrary. To Justice Black, this amounted to nothing "more nor less than a judicial foray into the field of governmental policy"—a foray for which the Court is neither well equipped nor properly constituted. In his view, the Court's job is to apply the law as written, and leave the problem of establishing governmental policy to the people and their *elected* representatives.

It is ironic that despite Justice Black's overriding and constantly reiterated concern with the necessity of keeping this Court's power confined within its proper boundaries, he is almost universally regarded as a "judicial activist" by his friends and detractors alike. Those who agree with his opinions frequently do so on the ground that the results reached were good for the country and no other way of achieving those results was available. On the other hand, he has frequently been criticized for his opinions, particularly in cases involving the Bill of Rights, as being too permissive toward obscenity and sedition, and too soft on those accused of crime. In my judgment, these evaluations of Justice Black's work reflect a basic misconception of his judicial philosophy, both by his friends and by his foes.

The cornerstone of Justice Black's philosophy was his commitment—not to any particular law or set of laws—but his commitment to the concept of the rule of law in a democratic society. As much or more than any Justice in the history of this Court, he sought to keep his own personal views out of his decisions. He worked tirelessly to develop a judicial philosophy that was both internally consistent and faithful to the language of the laws he was sworn to uphold. He was "activist" where the law applicable to the situation required action. But where the law, as he saw it, placed no power or responsibility in the Court, he would not interfere with responsible branches of Government, however unwise he might personally view their action to have been. To Justice Black, this was required not by any doctrine of "judicial restraint" but by the simple principle that courts should apply law, not create it.

It has often been said that Justice Black "loved" the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, and no one can deny that he be-

## HUGO LAFAYETTE BLACK

lieved those documents represented the greatest achievement in law-making in the history of man. But Justice Black never questioned the power and right of the people to amend any provision of the Constitution—even the First Amendment. Indeed, when the storm of protest struck following his decision in the *Regents' Prayer* case and it appeared for a while that a constitutional amendment was imminent, the only reaction I ever heard Justice Black express was that it was the people's Constitution and they were entitled to amend it if they saw fit. The important thing to Justice Black was that the people have an opportunity to hear all sides of such issues and to decide freely what laws they want to live by. Once that is done, the responsibility of the courts is to enforce the laws upon which the people have decided—whether the judges like the laws or not.

It was this view that led Justice Black to place such heavy emphasis upon the First Amendment as the basic law guaranteeing the right of the people to open discussion of public issues. And the same view underlay his insistence that the law be enforced in the precise terms in which it is written. Justice Black believed that the whole notion of the rule of law necessarily presupposes an ability to make laws that are simple and intelligible to the average person and which the courts can enforce without rewriting. He saw the rule of law as the only alternative to a rule of force and violence in society and he realized that the rule of law will only work if people understand the law and accept it as a viable alternative.

Much has been said about Justice Black's contributions to the people of this country over a lifetime of public service. Those contributions were many and varied—this was a man of whom it could truly be said that the world is better for his having lived here. There will, of course, be disagreement as to which of his contributions was the most important, and only time will provide a definitive answer. But at the risk of being later proved wrong, I would like to suggest that Justice Black will be remembered longest for awakening the courts to their responsibilities

## IN MEMORIAM

to protect the freedoms of the people. From his earliest opinions, this was the major recurring theme—never more eloquently stated than in his 1939 opinion in *Chambers v. Florida*, where he said:

“Under our constitutional system, courts stand against any winds that blow as havens of refuge for those who might otherwise suffer because they are helpless, weak, outnumbered, or because they are non-conforming victims of prejudice and public excitement. \* \* \* No higher duty, no more solemn responsibility, rests upon this Court, than that of translating into living law and maintaining this constitutional shield deliberately planned and inscribed for the benefit of every human being subject to our Constitution—of whatever race, creed or persuasion.”

No higher praise need be given nor asked for on behalf of Justice Black than that he fully discharged this “solemn responsibility.”

Justice Black's ideas are still very much with us. Indeed, his ideas will, in all probability, dominate the law for generations to come; for I believe—as Justice Black believed—that those ideas are implicit in, and necessary to, the rule of law as we know it.

But the man who combined those ideas with the warmth and gentleness of a country boy from Alabama; the man who for 45 years walked with the most powerful leaders in our land yet never lost touch with its humblest citizens; the man who could contend with rulers yet never felt enmity for any man—that beautiful man is gone. And while those of us who were closest to him miss him and grieve for his family, we take heart in the fact that his life enriched us all. On behalf of the many law clerks who had the privilege of working with Justice Black over 34 years—and their families—all of whom he regarded and treated as his sons and daughters:

“Good-bye, Judge. We thank you for having had the chance to walk a part of the way beside you. We will miss you. But you go with the love of each and every one of us.”

Josephine Black Pesaresi  
13835 North 51<sup>st</sup> Street  
Scottsdale, Arizona 85254

April 4, 2019

RE: Appeal no. 2018-0041 and 00411

Mayor and City Council, Alexandria, Virginia,

My name is Josephine Black Pesaresi. I am the daughter of Justice Hugo L. Black. Unfortunately, I am the only remaining child named on the easement created by my father regarding the property located at 619 South Lee Street in Alexandria, Virginia.

As the only living child of Justice Hugo L. Black, I have not received any notice that there was a request moving through the system to alter or demolish the yard, structures or any parts of the 619 South Lee Street property.

I moved into the house at age 4, when my father was appointed to the United States Supreme Court by President Roosevelt. My father was President Roosevelt's first appointment to the Court. When my family bought the house on Lee Street, it was in a bad shape of disrepair. My mother and father spent years pouring their love into making the house, gardens and tennis court a sanctuary for my father during turbulent times in American history, and more specifically, during rounds of Court decisions that changed the course of American lives, but made my father a target of vitriol and hate. 619 South Lee Street and the property so carefully designed, planned and built were his true love and sanctuary--my father's place for peaceful reflection.

Although my mother would have preferred a property on Seminary Hill, on my father's salary, they could only afford a house in the more affordable places, and my parents loved the Lee Street house immediately as it was a block from the water.

My father bought the corner lot also and tore down the house located there to make for the yard they dreamed of. Plans were made for the gardens, rose bushes, fig trees, a pond and a peaceful refuge for tranquil walk-about. My parents also tore down the slave quarters behind the house to make room for the clay tennis court that became so central to my father's everyday existence.

My father built a tennis court because he started playing tennis late in life, and he spent countless hours on the court. Justice Black was known as the one Justice to remain in Washington to work at the Supreme Court in the Summer. He would field any calls, inquiries, or petitions that required immediate attention. The house, patio and yard are where he handled most matters that arose during the summer months. The tennis court was an integral part of his commitment to remain at the Supreme

Court in the summer months, as he believed it was a year-round job. His law clerks spent many hours with him, hitting balls back and forth, working on the logic of cases before them.

My father was a man of strict routine. He played tennis on the clay court every morning and again every night. One specific memory is seared into my brain of a historic moment that occurred during one of our tennis matches. As my father and I were hitting balls competitively back and forth, because it was always competitive with my father, our maid came to tell us that someone was at the door for the Justice. I went to see who it was, and was surprised to find the attorneys representing the Rosenbergs standing on our front stoop. Desperate for my father to give their clients a reprieve from their death sentence, they begged for me to have him come to the door. I returned to my father, still standing on the clay court, and explained the situation. With tears running down his face, he said, "Tell them I am sorry, but I have done all I can do." It was a heart-wrenching moment for him. My father knew in his heart that their execution would be wrong.

My father watered, rolled and maintained the tennis court himself until his death. Tennis was the love of his life, aside from the law. Law clerks who worked with my father spent hour upon hour on the court, neighborhood friends would come play matches on the weekend, and Vice President Henry Wallace was a frequent tennis opponent on the clay court on Lee Street. My father also had the pleasure of playing against tennis great Pancho Gonzales, who my father won a set against, and my father believed he had won that set fair and square until the day he died.

A large part of my father's life was spent in his oasis of his yard, patio and clay court. It meant a lot to him. I don't know what he would have done without the escape of his yard to work out the mental issues necessary to lead the Supreme Court through complex legal issues weighing on his intellect, day in and day out. The yard he designed, walked in, pruned bushes in, played tennis in, allowed him a place to work out the logic which would someday become the backbone of our country's legal jurisprudence.

Where the house ends, my father cherished a patch of rhododendrons which he faithfully came out to water by hand in his old tennis clothes each night after work. He never missed a night of tending to his rhododendrons. My father enjoyed doing his own gardening and yardwork. He planted, by hand, small fig trees, which years later began to bloom and produced voluminous figs, much to his delight and our neighbors dismay (as the figs filled up the neighbors pool.)

When I married my husband, my father walked me down the old wooden staircase at 619 Lee Street, and we were married in the living room by a Unitarian minister who was killed in the racial riots a year later in Montgomery, Alabama. My wedding reception was held in the gardens of our home on Lee Street, with the Justices of the Supreme Court walking around the patio, gardens and pond. It is one of the fondest memories we have in the yard and having his Brethren present when his only daughter was married meant the world to my father. Having his Brethren in the inner sanctum of his backyard was magical to him.



Many of the most important decisions in American legal history were sprouts of thoughts that began in the yard or on the clay tennis court of 619 South Lee Street. And when my father lay dying, at Bethesda Naval Hospital, he refused to let go of life until his private notes were burned. The notes he had written privately, between his Brethren, as they discussed cases and points of law. My father felt these notes were sacrosanct and no one should ever lay eyes on them. My brother, Hugo Black Jr. built a large fire pit, in that same back yard where my father's brilliance hatched many of the fundamental arguments held within those notes, and tossed the private papers into the fire one by one. Gideon. Brown v. Board of Education. New York Times v. Sullivan. It all went up into ashes in the backyard of 619 Lee Street.

So the question becomes: Is my father's life and career important enough to immortalize by preserving his home? His home included his house, yard and tennis court. I believe Alexandria should keep his home intact as an historic site. Is Justice Hugo L. Black an important enough part of American history to want to preserve this piece of him? That is the question this Council must answer, for you are the keepers and protectors of history.

Sincerely,

  
Josephine Black Pesaresi

JOHN W. VARDAMAN  
725 TWELFTH STREET, N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005

April 1, 2019

Honorable Justin Wilson, Mayor, and  
Members of City Council  
City of Alexandria  
City Hall  
Alexandria, VA 22314

Re: Appeal of BAR Cases Nos. 2018-00410 and 2018-00411

Dear Mayor Wilson and Council Members,

I am writing in support of the appeal that seeks to preserve the historic property at 619 South Lee Street that owes much of its historic value to the fact that it was the residence of Justice Hugo Black during his many years of service on the Supreme Court of the United States.

I served as one of Justice Black's law clerks for the 1965 Term of Court. During that time I and my fellow co-clerk, Drayton Nabors, spent considerable time at 619 South Lee Street. In the summer months we played many tennis matches with Justice and Mrs. Black on the tennis court in the back yard. I have attached two pages from a booklet entitled "Confessions of The Law Clerks" that the Justice's law clerks prepared for the Justice on the occasion of his 80th birthday, February 27, 1966. Both Drayton and I elaborate on our tennis games at 619.

It is significant that both Drayton and I focused on time spent with the Justice on the tennis court – a clear indication of how important that time was to us and how important tennis and that court were to the Justice.

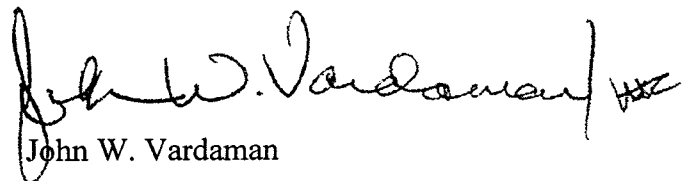
But, for Drayton and me, a tennis game was not just a tennis game with Justice Black. For it was almost always followed by iced tea, perhaps lunch, and a long discussion about the Supreme Court, the Constitution, American history, Justice Black's service in the Senate, his days in Alabama and any other subject we cared to raise.

Once the Term began, although most of our work was done in chambers at the Supreme Court, we continued to visit 619 S. Lee Street

regularly. Justice Black had a large upstairs study. There he had a big desk, plenty of work space for all of us, and an extensive library. If the Court was not in session and hearing arguments, Drayton and I were likely to go to Lee Street to work on opinions or cert petitions with the Justice in his study. We spent significant amounts of time there and that study served as an adjunct to his chambers at the Court.

Construction of a large structure in the yard would totally alter the property as it was laid out and lived in by Justice Black.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "John W. Vardaman". The signature is written in dark ink and includes a small flourish at the end. Below the signature, the name "John W. Vardaman" is printed in a standard serif font.

John W. Vardaman

[illegible][illegible]

How small and how fortunate among those whose recollections fill these pages with the Judge is only half gone, and much work remains, and how far it will soon be tennis weather again.

324 North Royal Street  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

April 4, 2019

Mayor and Council Members  
City Hall  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Appeal of 619 South Lee Street  
Nos. 2018-410 and -411

Dear Mr. Mayor and Council Members:

I am writing to ask that you carefully review and then deny the application to demolish a historic portion of the Hugo Black house, and to erect large and unsuitable buildings in its garden area.

I have lived in Old Town since 1972. From 2002 to 2004 I was President of the Old Town Civic Association. For several years I was a member and chair of the Alexandria Social Services Advisory Committee. I also was appointed to the City's Task Force To Revise the Zoning Code of Alexandria. The Task Force worked hard for two years to prepare the Zoning Code that was adopted and is currently in effect. Therefore I am thoroughly familiar with the requirements and standards that the Code enacts to protect historic properties in the Old and Historic District.

One of the outstanding such historic properties is the Hugo L. Black home and garden at 619 South Lee Street, not only because it includes one of the City's oldest surviving great residences, but also because it was for much of the past century the home of Justice Black, one of the preeminent persons ever to serve on the Supreme Court.

The proposal in the appeal before you violates most of the standards enacted in the Zoning Code. It would destroy an architecturally significant feature of the historic building. It would destroy Justice Black's famous gardens and tennis court, where many national figures gathered. It would redevelop the open space with modern buildings that do not belong in Old Town. And it would prevent future generations of seeing in its historic setting the home one of the nation's greatest judges.

It is rare that a house is so significant that it is the subject of a book. This one is. I am enclosing a copy of The History of 619 South Lee Street by Ruth Lincoln Kaye (1987). I hope you will read it. Pages pertaining particularly to Justice Black are pp. 42-51. The historian points out that "By far the most important decision regarding the house occurred when Justice and Mrs. Black on December 26, 1969, made a Deed of Easement to the Virginia Historic Landmarks Corporation, protecting the historic property against subdivision or drastic changes."

Mayor and Council Members  
April 4, 2019  
Page 2

This is a matter of much importance, not only for this appeal, but also as a precedent affecting the future of historic preservation in Alexandria. It deserves your deepest consideration.

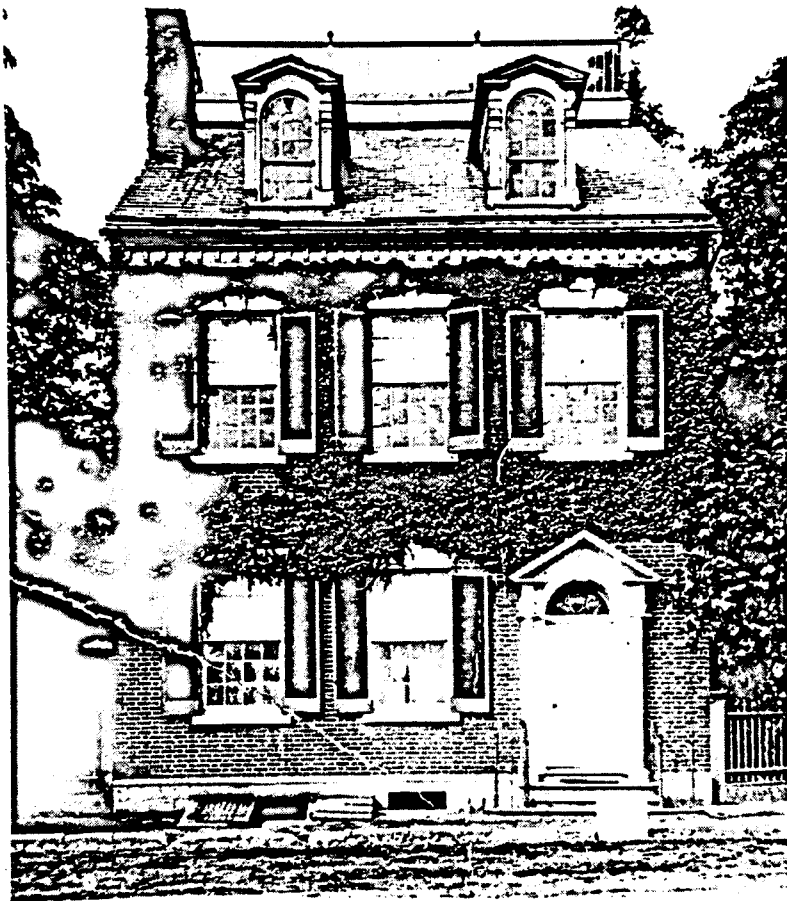
Sincerely,

  
Carolyn Merck

**THE HISTORY OF 619 SOUTH LEE STREET**

**ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA**

**Ruth Lincoln Kaye  
May, 1987**





## THE HISTORY OF 619 SOUTH LEE STREET

The handsome Federal house at 619 South Lee Street, now in its 187th year, began its existence as the home of a prosperous shipping merchant, Thomas Vowell. Sitting on a half acre of prime land in the southern sector of Alexandria, it overlooks the Potomac River. From a captain's walk on the roof, family members could observe ships either going out laden with tobacco and other commodities for export or returning home with imports of all kinds from England, Europe, and the West Indies: rum, sugar, coffee, sheet music. Even an island in Turkey which was apparently taken in barter by Mr. Vowell was offered for sale in the local paper.

Life was good until a series of national events cast shadows on the first occupants of the house and then on their successors - the Embargo Act of 1807, periods of national depression, and four wars - the War of 1812, Civil War, World Wars I and II. Three times the noble mansion went on the auction block at City Square, once for the paltry sum of \$1,858, once for \$2,340, and once for \$5,000. At one time the neighborhood sank so low that 619 South Lee became a boarding house for shipyard workers.

Not all was negative in the history of the home, however. For 71 years it belonged to the Snowden family, founders of the Alexandria Gazette, who raised a large family there. For another 34 years it was the home of a Supreme Court justice and his family. Thus for over a century it was in the possession of only two families, though the intervening decades saw a series of transient owners who for the most part let the old house deteriorate.

Now beautifully restored and furnished, it has come full circle to its original condition and purpose, that of being one of the most outstanding, comfortable, and valuable historical houses of the City of Alexandria.

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## THE LAND

The land on which 619 South Lee Street stands is rich in history.

In 1649 King Charles II of England, exiled to France, made a grant to some of his loyal followers of 5,282,000 acres of land in Virginia called then the "Northern Neck Proprietary". One of these men was Thomas Lord Culpeper of Leeds Castle, County Kent. Some years after Charles was restored to the throne in 1661, the son and heir of Lord Culpeper began to buy out the other grantees and by 1688 was issued a grant in perpetuity to five-sixths of the Northern Neck. The other sixth was held by his cousin, Alexander Culpeper.

By 1693 the entire Proprietary had been demised to the daughter of the second Lord Culpeper, Lady Catherine, wife of Thomas, Fifth Lord of Fairfax. Lady Catherine inherited most of the grant from her father, who died in 1689, and the rest from his cousin Alexander (d. 1693). The grant was thus consolidated and confirmed as the holding of Thomas Lord Fairfax, who passed it on to son Thomas, Sixth Lord Fairfax and Baron of Cameron.

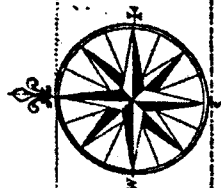
Disappointed in a love match, the story goes, Thomas, Sixth Lord Fairfax, came to Virginia, where he died years later in 1781 in obscurity at Greenway Court, White Post, in the Blue Mountains of Virginia. The Proprietary Land Office was closed after the Revolutionary War, and in 1808 the Fairfax family lands were confiscated.<sup>1</sup>

Meantime, colonization of the Northern Neck Proprietary had begun, and patents were issued on the basis of the headright system, whereby 50 acres were granted the patentee for each person brought in.

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1. Beginning at a White Oak, Beth Mitchell, 1977, Fairfax, Va., p. 3,4

A Scale of Miles 691 in one Degree of Longitude.



MARYLAND

A SURVEY of the NORTHERN NECK of VIRGINIA, being

The LANDS belonging to the R<sup>th</sup> Honourable THOMAS LORD EUREX BARON CAMERON awarded by & within the Bay of Chesapeake and between the Rivers Rappahannock and Potowmack:

The Courses of the Rivers

RAPPAHANNOCK and POTOWMACK,

Map drawn

4 Keditian

## ROBERT HOWSON

Robert Howson, whose last name is often spelled Howsing, was a shipmaster. On October 21, 1669, he received a patent of 6,000 acres along the Potomac River in return for bringing in 120 colonists, 50 acres for each.<sup>2</sup> The boundaries of this patent were roughly from Jones Point (near 619 South Lee) to a point midway between Memorial Bridge and Key Bridge, to one block east of the intersection of Washington Boulevard and Military Road in Arlington, thence southeast to Hunting Creek and back to the beginning.

## THE ALEXANDER FAMILY

John Alexander (d. 1677), whose family name is memorialized in the name of the city, bought the land on which Alexandria stands from Robert Howson on November 13, 1669, for 6,000 pounds of tobacco, a pound for each acre. For many years his purchase was in litigation, for it seems the royal governor of Virginia, Sir William Berkeley, made the mistake of issuing two patents on the same land.

He first made one to Margaret Brent of Maryland on September 6, 1654, re-issued November 20, 1662, for 700 acres, on condition of her transporting fourteen persons into the colony.<sup>3</sup> This patent covered most of what is now downtown Alexandria, or Old Town. The second patent was issued by Sir William to Robert Howson, above, on October 21, 1669. Included was the land granted previously to Margaret Brent, plus acreage extending north along the Potomac to Mason's Island (now Theodore Roosevelt Island) and south to Great Hunting Creek. When it was discovered that part of Alexander's purchase had been included on an earlier patent to Margaret Brent, he then had to pay the heirs of Margaret Brent an additional 10,500 pounds of tobacco to clear title, and did

2. Virginia Patent Bk 6:262, Va. State Archives

3. " " " 3:275; Bk 5, Vol. 1:1-340

so on February 26, 1674/5 (1675 by present reckoning).<sup>4</sup> One can imagine that Alexander was greatly displeased by the court decision and the inefficiency of the royal governor.

The land then descended through his heirs: Robert Alexander (died after June 1, 1704), Robert (d. 1735), to John (1735-1775) of Stafford County. John Alexander was only fourteen years old when Alexandria was founded by Act of the Virginia General Assembly in 1749.

John West, Jr., was chosen as surveyor. In Alexandria's Court House is an ancient document dated July 18, 1749, in which he stated that he laid off and surveyed sixty acres for a town to be called Alexandria.<sup>5</sup> The dimensions of each block were 353'2" north and south and 246'10" east and west, with four lots to each two-acre block. The site of 619 South Lee Street was not within this first and original plan, but was added in 1785 after petition to the General Assembly. Initially named Water Street, it was re-named Lee after the Civil War in honor of Robert E. Lee.

Upon the death of John Alexander in 1775, the land descended to his son William Thornton Alexander (1768-1818c), who owned it under guardianship. The executors of his father's will were empowered to lay off such lots "as are contiguous to the town, as they shall think proper". Although their plan included extending Alexandria's streets southward all the way to Hunting Creek, in actuality some blocks have never been cut through.

An old man, Robert Thomas, who died in Alexandria in 1821 at age 107, described the town in his boyhood as a "howling wilderness, only inhabited by the wild deer and wolf".<sup>6</sup>

Following are three photocopies of interesting plans: two drawn by George Washington in 1749 and one by George Gilpin in 1798 showing streets added by that time.<sup>7</sup>

4. Alexandria, A Composite History, Alex. Bicen. Com., 1975, p. 1

5. Alexandria Hustings Court Deed Book H:333

6. Alexandria Gazette and Daily Advertiser, Aug. 14, 1821

7. From The Cartography of Northern Virginia 1608-1915, Richard W. Stephenson  
Fairfax County, 1981



Doc A 51 " 3 31

The Shoals or Rocks

about 1/2 mile from the shore

The Edge of the Channel of the Potomack

Site that in the summer of 1860  
may be cut from there. Others may  
be located on the State road, and  
others on the river bank with them.

And others may be found by the  
road at the edge of the channel  
The edge of the channel of the Potomack  
is at the edge of the channel  
The edge of the channel of the Potomack  
is at the edge of the channel

Potomack

Shoals

Shoals





# REMARKS.

up in Lat. 38. 18. 20. North & 7 1/2 West of the  
Mer.

Water 50 feet Washington & Franklin  
66 feet Tide —

553 feet 2. Tol. North & South 5 2 1/2 feet 10. Inches  
at the Square between Union & Water Street  
East and West of the River  
Alexandria is 1200 1/2 ft to 7  
feet.

Water

Water

Water

Water 4 Episcopal Church

Square 6. 7. Presbyterian & Methodist. Meeting House  
Catholic & a Dutch Lutheran Church.

Meeting House.

7

## PLAN.

of the TOWN of

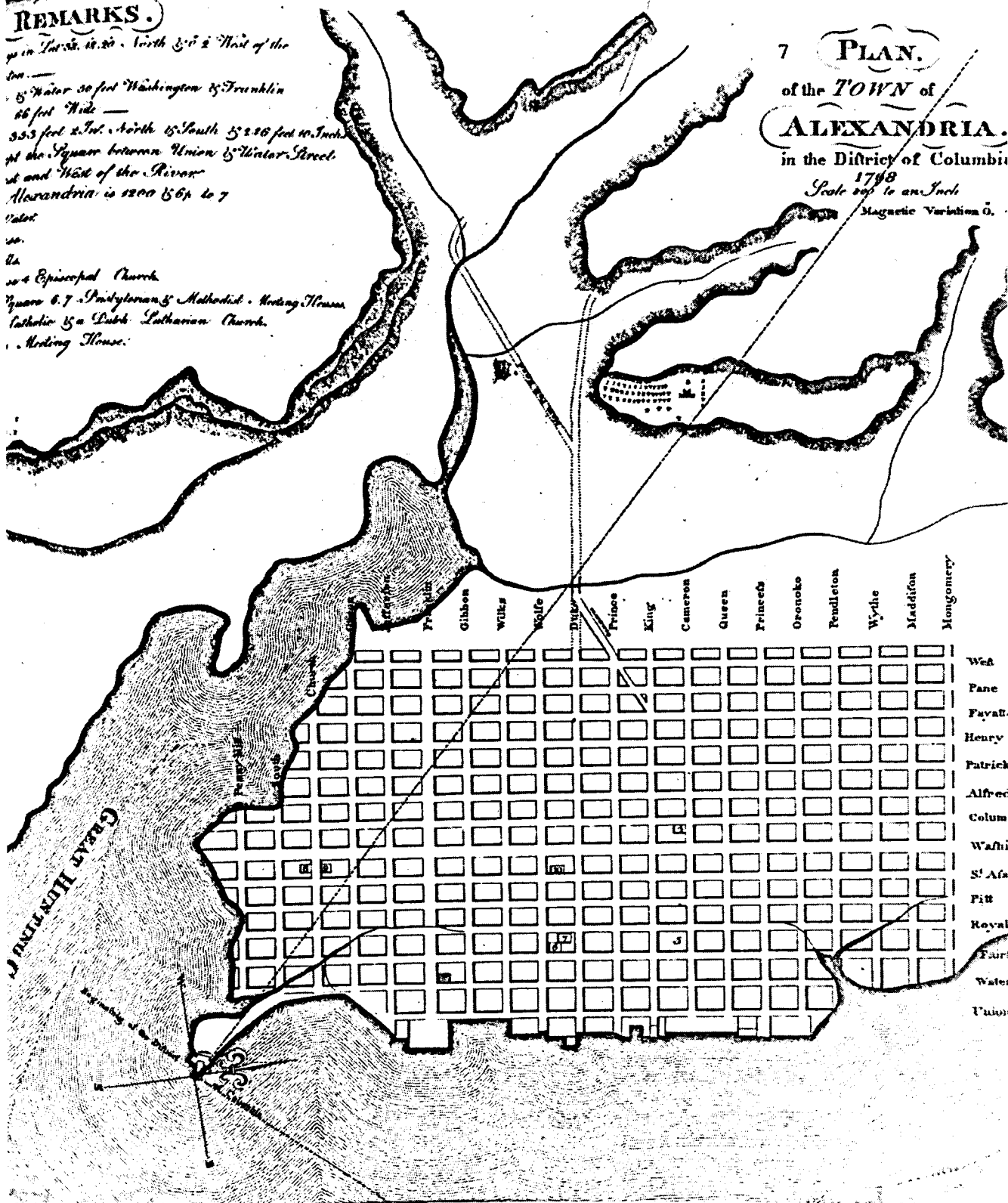
ALEXANDRIA.

in the District of Columbia

1798

Scale 100 to an Inch

Magnetic Variation 0.



THOMAS VOWELL  
(10/24/1769 - 10/15/1845)

8

Thomas Vowell, who built the handsome house at 619 South Lee Street in 1800-1801, was a shipping merchant who came to Alexandria with his father of the same name from England about 1787.<sup>8</sup> Other sons of Thomas Vowell, Senior, who helped establish the family business were John Crips Vowell and Ebenezer.

Alexandria just after the Revolutionary War did a thriving business in importing. The Vowells quickly established themselves in the port section of town, operating from a wharf and warehouse on Union Street, and living nearby in a small house on Prince Street owned by Captain John Harper.<sup>9</sup> John Harper, who had a large family, provided brides for John C. and Thomas, Jr., the latter being married to Mary Harper in 1794.<sup>10</sup>

His fortunes were on the rise in this period.

In May of 1790 he or his father started advertising to buy a lot near the town;<sup>11</sup> and in late summer of 1798 Thomas Vowell, Jr., bought from William Thornton Alexander and Lucy, his wife, of King George County the site of 619 South Lee Street [Water Street in those days].

"To Thomas Vowell, Jr., of Alexandria, Fairfax County, a Lott or half acre of ground situate lying and being upon the north side of Franklyn [sic] Street, and west side of Water Street in the town of Alexandria bounded as followeth, to wit:  
Begining at the Intersection of the said streets and runing thence westwardly with Franklyn Street, binding therewith 123'5", thence northwardly with a Line parallel to Water Street 176'7" thence Eastwardly with a line parallel to Franklyn Street 123'5" to Water Street thence with Water Street and binding therewith 176'7" to the begining, and all houses, buildings, streets, lanes, Alleys, profits, Commodities,

8. Virginia Journal & Alexandria Advertiser, Oct. 4, 1987; Concise History of City of Alexandria 1669-1883, F.C.Brockett, 1883, printed at Gazette, p.9

9. City Directory 1791

10. Presbyterian Meeting House records

11. Va. Journal, op cit, May 13, 1790

Hereditaments & Appertenances whatsoever to the said premises belonging or in any wise appertaining...in consideration of ground rent of sixty six silver dollars and sixty six cents the first day of November in each year..."

[Spelling exactly as in the original deed.]

The date was August 29, 1798, and Thomas Vowell was said to be "of Alexandria, Fairfax County". The same day Lucy gave separate consent to the sale.<sup>12</sup> Less than four years later, he had finished his mansion, sparing no expense, and William Thornton Alexander "released and remised" his ground rent obligation for the sum of 200 lbs.<sup>13</sup> The date was May 5, 1802.

Land and Personal Property Taxes for 1798, 1799, and 1800 show no taxation of Thomas Vowell, Jr., on this property. In 1801 he paid taxes on property assessed at \$1,250, no location given. Probably the house was under construction at this time. In 1802 there is a full-blown tax assessment for him on a brick house on Water Street, valued at \$4,500 and occupied by himself. He was also taxed on one horse and a dog.<sup>14</sup>

From newspaper accounts later on, it is learned that in addition to the house there was a separate kitchen, coach-house, stable, with a "pump in the yard".<sup>15</sup> The assessment on the house of \$4,500, which in those days was apparently at 100% value, shows that the house in comparison with others was one of the finest in the town.

Location of the property is shown on the Gilpin Plan of 1798. (See Page 7.) Limits of the town had been extended south and west in October of 1785.<sup>16</sup> Franklin Street was so named in honor of patriot Benjamin Franklin. Water Street was named thus for obvious reasons, and was re-named Lee after the Civil War in honor of Robert E. Lee.

12. Alexandria Hustings Court Land Deeds L:209,235; B:485

13. Land Deeds B:485

14. Alex. Land and Personal Property Taxes of date

15. Alexandria Gazette July 18, 1829

16. Alexandria, a Composite History, pub. by Alex. Bicen. Com., 1975, p.31,34,36

When Thomas Vowell was only 38 years old a series of setbacks ruined his once-bright prospects.

All through the late 1790s the newspapers had been full of advertisements for wares to be had at the store of Thomas Vowell on King Street or on Fairfax, imported on his brig "Numa".

"October 4, 1787: Thomas Vowell has just opened at the store formerly occupied by Mr. Thomas Conn, on King Street near the corner of King and Royal Streets, a LARGE QUANTITY of READY-MADE CLOTHES suitable to the season, and a variety of DRY GOODS, which he will sell low for cash or any kind of country produce." [Note offer of barter.]

"May 12, 1791: Just imported [dry goods] and for sale by Thomas Vowell at his store, in Fairfax Street."

"November 8, 1792: Just received -- Law's collection of sacred music, select Harmony, Rudiments of Music...Thomas Vowell, at his Store in Fairfax Street...who also has for sale ...Dry Goods...Red Port and Madeira Wine."

"April 19, 1794: THOMAS VOWELL AND SONS have for sale Sugar...Coffee...Turk's Island Sale... Whiskey..."

"July 4, 1795: A store and Cellar on King Street to rent...JOHN AND THOMAS VOWELL who have for sale a good Riding-Chair with fall back top."

"November 22, 1796: JOHN AND THOMAS VOWELL have removed to Union Street, near Mr. Alexander Smith's, where they have for sale Rum in Hogs-heads, Apple Brandy in do., Mould and Dipt Candles, Sugar and Coffee in barrels, Coarse and Fine Salt, and a number of other articles."

In the midst of the many advertisements appeared this sad and poignant tale:

"January 12, 1792: I will pay TWENTY DOLLARS for the discovery, to enable me to prosecute to conviction, the person or persons who, either through malice, or wantonly and wickedly, beat

a valuable Cow of mine, on Saturday last, broke her collar bone and six of her ribs, in which miserable condition she languished until the next day, when she died big with calf. It is hoped that any good citizen who saw, or heard of this cruel act will give notice. THOMAS VOWELL." 17

By February of 1800 Thomas Vowell, Sr., and his son Ebenezer had removed to Winchester, Virginia, where Thomas Senior died not long after making his will of October 3, 1800.<sup>18</sup>

Although the City Business Directory of 1810 shows Thomas Vowell still living on Water and Franklin in his home, occupied by "seven whites, one free black and eleven slaves", it was in this period that his world began to collapse.

Like many merchants of the East Coast, the Vowells depended for their livelihood on their shipping trade. The Embargo Act of 1807 and the Non-Intercourse Act of 1809, imposed by Congress under the urging of Thomas Jefferson, destroyed the shipping trade. They seem to have been necessary measures to combat the stopping of American ships on the high seas by the British who were searching for deserting sailors and interfering with our commerce in other ways, but the effect was to ruin many merchants, whose ships were idle and warehouses crammed with goods going nowhere. Trade was restored in 1810, but the acts of piracy and boarding continued, and business was brought again to a standstill by the War of 1812.

During the War, Thomas Vowell served on the committee of Vigilance. It was also his misfortune to be Chairman Pro-Tem of the Alexandria City Council when it passed a resolution that, the city having no artillery or troops, it should surrender to the British. The date was August 28, 1814.<sup>19</sup>

17. Va. Journal, op cit, Jan. 12, 1792

18. Alexandria Land Deeds A:73, W:195

19. History of Second Presbyterian Church in Alexandria 1817-1950, Richard B. Dow, Garrett & Massie, Richmond, Va., 1951, p. 23

Facing ruin by 1812, Thomas Vowell, Jr., and his brother and partner, John Crips Vowell, divided their property.<sup>20</sup> Within the next decade the country went into an economic slump which escalated into a depression in the 1820s. 1827 was a very bad year for Thomas. On January 22, 1827, in the dead of winter occurred one of the most devastating fires Alexandria has ever experienced.

A fire originating in the cabinet shop of James Green (in the center of the block bound by King, Prince, Fairfax and Royal) started and, fed by wind, destroyed or seriously damaged fifty three buildings in Old Town.<sup>21</sup> The Vowells owned a number of them. Of particular mention was the three story warehouse owned by Thomas and occupied by Edward Sheehy as a bacon and pork store: "loss very great".

Now 58 years old and too old to start over, Thomas Vowell put all his property in trust with John Douglass on July 13, 1827, "because of [my] debts to sundry creditors in large sums of money and by reason of losses and misfortunes in trade".<sup>22</sup>

- (1) one undivided moiety in warehouse and wharf called Vowell's wharf on the east side of Union between King and Prince Streets;
- (2) half acre of ground with brick dwelling house and other improvements on west side of Water Street and north side Franklin at their intersection...
- (3) [twelve other pieces of property] and one-fourth part of the Brig Numa and cargo if sold.

He protected his wife's dowry by this indenture: on the same date, July 13, 1827, Charlotte (his second wife) signed a Deed of Trust to secure her husband's creditors, giving up her right of dower to his real estate by placing in the hands of John Douglass, trustee, the following property. "Slaves Nelly, Christy and her issue of three children, four coloured boys named Alexander, William, age 7, James, age 5, and Thomas, age 1; as well as all household and kitchen

20. Land Deeds W:1, 5 May 1812

21. Alexandria Gazette, Jan. 22, 1827

22. Land Deeds Q2:195

furniture as it now stands in dwelling occupied by Thomas Vowell on Prince Street." <sup>23</sup>

[Note: it is significant that the family of Thomas Vowell had moved out of the house on Water Street and back into the small house on Prince Street occupied by the Vowells almost a half century before.]

The date of their leaving the beautiful house on Water Street may have been ten years before. The Gazette of September 1, 1817, had carried this advertisement:

"THE HOUSE AND LOT occupied by the subscriber, on Water Street: 28 feet wide and 40 feet deep, with covered way pantry, a large kitchen, smoke house, and also a brick stable, carriage house, &c., on Franklin Street; it has a front on Water Street of near 150 feet, and binds on the corner of Franklin Street 83 feet 5-12 inches; the garden is spacious. A part of the purchase will be required in hand - the balance on accommodating credit. For terms apply to THOMAS VOWELL."

The house did not sell, and again on February 27, 1826, he advertised "for rent or sale a brick dwelling house on Water Street near Gibbon lately the residence of the subscriber ...carriage house and room for three horses and a cow".

Finally the trustees of his property took charge and advertised on July 18, 1829 "a large two story brick dwelling house and half a lot...now in occupancy of Mr. John Adams... built and finished throughout in the best manner, and has always been well taken care of; coachhouse, stables, smoke house, etc., pump in the yard."

This sale took hold, and the lovely old house passed out of the hands of Thomas Vowell.

That he was a man of substance despite his many misfortunes is proven by the many records of his accomplishments and offices of trust given him by the townsfolk of Alexandria.

In 1808, not yet forty years old, he was treasurer of the Relief Fire Company, trustee of the Washington Bridge Company,

23. Land Deeds Q2:236

a director of the Alexandria-Washington Turnpike Company, and President of the Bank of Potomac. His record in the War of 1812 has already been shown, when he was chairman pro-tem of the city council. In 1834 he was President of the Mechanics Bank, on King Street near St. Asaph.<sup>24</sup>

By far his most long-lasting contribution to Alexandria was his being one of the founders of the Second Presbyterian Church.<sup>25</sup> He and his brother John Crips Vowell led a group of fifty one adults in breaking with the Presbyterian Meeting House over a relatively minor matter, the choosing of an assistant to the co-pastor. They resigned in May of 1817, and began meeting in a small church then occupied by St. Paul's Episcopal Church on South Fairfax Street between Prince and Duke. [St. Paul's was then building a new and much larger church on South Pitt and moved into it in 1818.] Thomas and John were among the first chosen elders, also were on the board of trustees, and Thomas was chosen first clerk of the Session. The Second Presbyterians soon outgrew the church and built a new one in 1840 at the northwest corner of Prince and Saint Asaph, which still exists today. Much altered in the front, it is now an office building. A photocopy of its graceful architecture as built in 1840 follows. Thomas was buried from this church in 1845.

In his long life (he lived just nine days short of his 76th birthday) he had three wives, a little known fact. Church records show he was first married to Mary Harper, who died on August 19, 1805, of consumption. Her death was the first of many misfortunes to attack Thomas Vowell. He was then married to Charlotte Orme, who was living in 1827 as shown by the deed of trust mentioned previously but who died before the date of his next marriage. A memorial stone, no date, stands to her memory in the Presbyterian Cemetery off Wilkes Street, south of the town. She was 72 years old, 14 days.

<sup>24</sup> City Directory, 1834

<sup>25</sup> Dow, op cit, pp 5, 12



VOWELL

15

He was married (3) to the widow Elizabeth Mills, on May 26, 1842.<sup>26</sup> Thomas was then 73 years old and his bride was 40. [See another Winter/Fall marriage, that of Justice Black and his second wife, Page 44 herein.]

His will was made on February 1, 1843 and proved on November 3, 1845, leaving to Elizabeth "all household and kitchen furniture as it now stands in my dwelling house on A 129 Prince Street next to the corner store on Water Street". He died on October 15, 1845, and is buried in the Presbyterian Cemetery on the southern edge of town. His widow outlived him many years until her death on December 29, 1883.

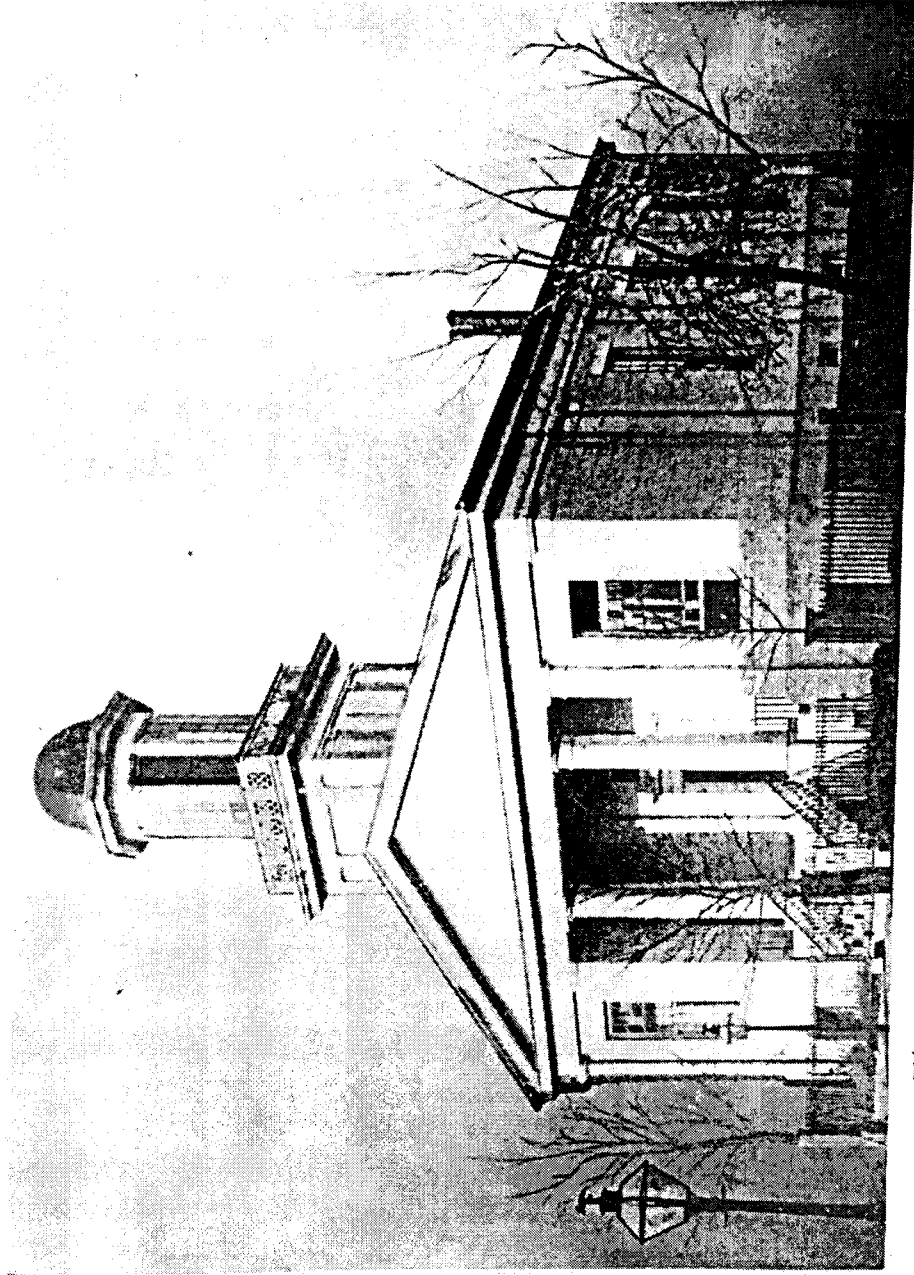
It is known that he had at least one child, Mary Ann, daughter of his first wife, Mary Harper. Mary Ann was married on April 7, 1823, to Norman Fitzhugh, a founder of St. Paul's Episcopal Church,<sup>27</sup> and died before her father, in 1840.

If Thomas could come back now, after a passage of almost 142 years, he would be happy to see how little his beautiful home on Lee Street has changed. The garden is still extensive, the carriage house still stands. Gone are the smoke house and pump/well. The neighborhood has grown up, and where he grazed his cows on the slopes of Franklin Street there are now houses. The boxwoods he imported from England still survive in the garden, and are of immense size.

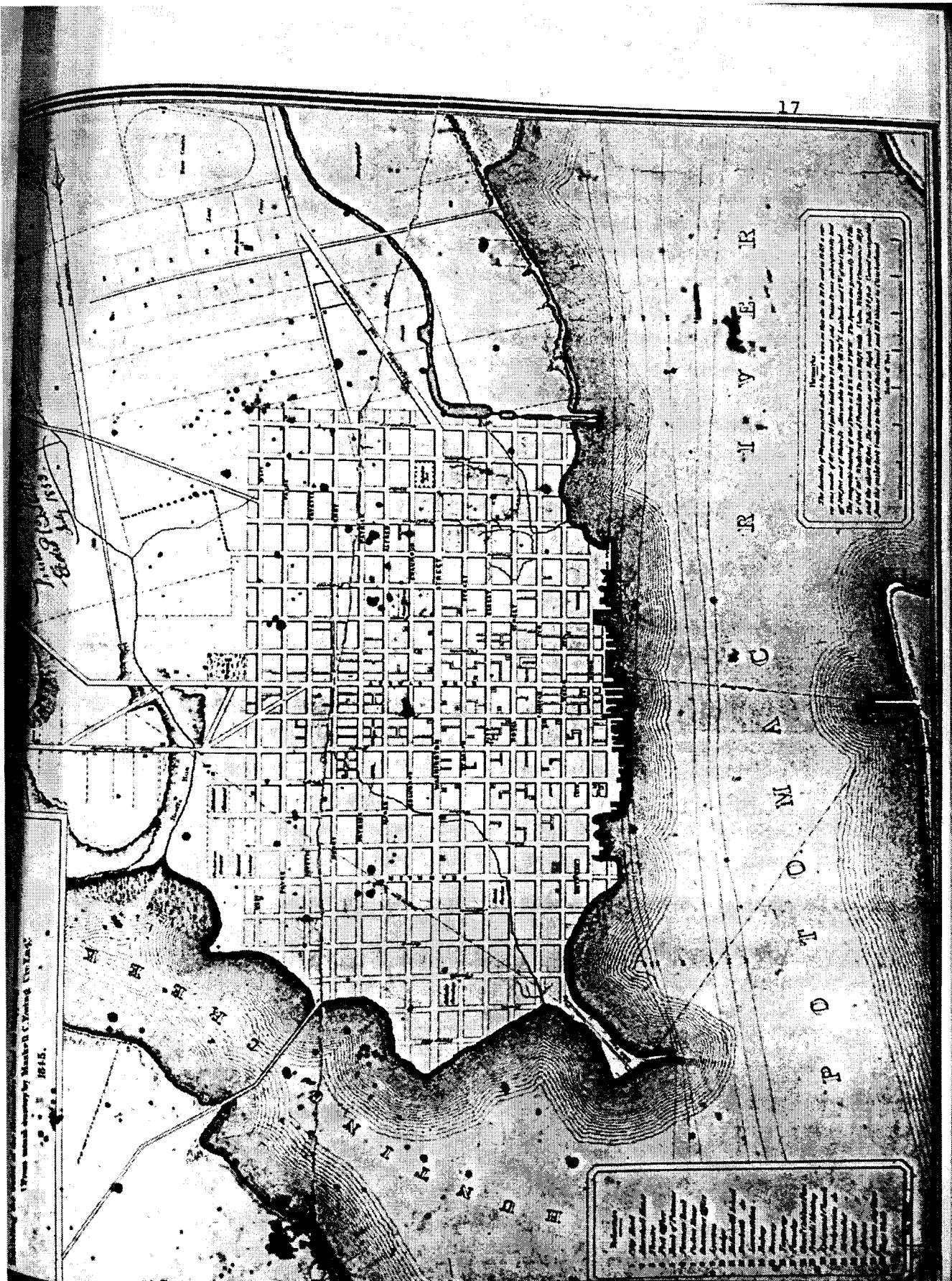
Following is a photocopy of Thomas Vowell's church which he served faithfully all his life. The facade much altered now, it still stands at the northwest corner of Prince and St. Asaph Streets. Also following is a survey made of the city by Maskell Ewing in 1845, the year of Thomas Vowell's death. His church and his old home at 619 North Lee are marked in red.

<sup>26</sup>. Minister's Returns, on film at Lloyd House Library

<sup>27</sup>. St. Paul's Church Register



*The original building on the present site completed in February 1840*  
Second Presbyterian Church



## JOSEPH HARRIS

Having fallen on hard times, Thomas Vowell had to sell his home for the benefit of creditors. On June 23, 1829, the house and lot were put up for public auction at Market Square and were knocked down to Joseph Harris for the trifling sum of \$1,858.<sup>28</sup>

Five months later Harris put the house in trust with Robert J. Taylor to secure a note for \$2,000 which he owed Henry Daingerfield, payable in twelve months.<sup>29</sup>

Like Vowell, he had bad luck financially, and could not raise the money, so the house was sold at auction again in 1842.

Harris seems to have been a man of no particular distinction. The 1803 Tax Register ascribes no house to him, taxing him only as "one male tithable", with no animals or wagons.<sup>30</sup> In 1810 he was living in a house on Water [Lee] Street occupied by seven whites and one slave, and his occupation is described as "tidewaiter" - an interesting and intriguing term meaning a customs house official who watched the landing of goods to see that the customs regulations were observed and the revenue laws obeyed.<sup>31</sup> No doubt his occupation gave him knowledge of the great house of the once-wealthy shipping merchant.

Nothing more is known of him. The Alexandria Gazette notes the death of one Joseph Harris on April 25, 1848.

28. Land Deeds R2:332

29. Land Deeds Z2:381, 16 Nov. 1829

30. 1803 Tax Register, not original, typed list at Lloyd House Library

31. Alexandria Business Directory, 1810

## THE SNOWDEN FAMILY

The Snowden Family owned the house at 619 South Lee almost exactly 71 years.

The previous owner having defaulted on a note, the house was put up for auction on June 16, 1842. Notice was given in the Alexandria Gazette, as required by law, for thirty days on "a certain lot or half acre of ground situated on West side Water Street and North side Franklin at their intersection, 176'7" on Water and 123'5" on Franklin, with two story brick dwelling house and all other buildings and improvements".

Among the bidders that June day was Thomas Vowell, who had built the house in 1800-1801. It may have been a sad day for him, since he himself had lost the house to creditors in June of 1829. Thomas Vowell was high bidder at \$2,350. His bid was probably what is called a straw bid, for the deed of sale records that "whereas Thomas Vowell (has not) received any deed for said lot of ground, (he) has disposed of his interest therein to (Edgar Snowden)". Laurence Taylor, executor of the original trustee of the property in 1839 [see HARRIS] Robert J. Taylor, deceased, was directed to give the deed of sale to Edgar Snowden.<sup>32</sup>

Thus started a period of almost three quarters of a century when the members of one family called 619 So. Lee their home, until the widow of Edgar's son Hubert sold it in 1913.

Samuel Snowden and descendants Edgar, Sr. and Jr., edited Alexandria Gazette from 1800 until the paper was sold in 1911, were highly regarded citizens of the town. Samuel (1776-1831) was born in Piscataway, New Jersey, in the year of Independence, and came to Alexandria in 1800.<sup>33</sup> In that year he founded the Gazette, which he and the family

32. Land Deeds B3:329

33. Lodge of Washington, A History of Alexandria-Washington Lodge #22,  
F. L. Brockett, 1876, George E. French publisher, Alexandria,  
pp. 32, 135

always regarded as the beginning of the newspaper, rather than as a successor to the papers that had existed in the town since 1784.<sup>34</sup> [The Gazette today regards its beginning as in 1784, under various titles until 1819 of the Virginia Journal and Alexandria Advertiser, Phenix Gazette, Columbian Mirror, etc.]

Samuel was a founder of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, founded in 1809 after a split with Christ Church.<sup>35</sup> He was active in the Masonic Lodge as treasurer two years and senior warden two years.<sup>36</sup> The Alexandria Business Directory for 1810 spells his name "Samuel Snoden", occupation printer, with seven white members of his house on Water Street and three slaves. He was married to Nancy (Ann) Longden on January 2, 1802,<sup>37</sup> daughter of John Longden, who served in the Revolutionary War and later became Alexandria's Superintendent of Police and measurer of the Port.<sup>38</sup> They had only one child, Edgar. Samuel died on July 12, 1831, only 55 years old, and his only son, Edgar, succeeded him as editor of the paper.

Edgar Snowden, Sr. (1810-1875) had been admitted to the bar and intended to practice law, but was propelled into life as a newspaperman upon the death of his father.<sup>39</sup> He lived at the exciting time of the Civil War and, though warned by Federal authorities occupying the city, published articles which were considered offensive by them. After one especially striking story his newspaper office, then located on the south side of Prince Street between Fairfax and Royal, was sacked and burned. The incident, here encapsulated, involved reporting that St. Paul's minister, after refusing on the morning of February 9, 1862, to pray for the President of the United States, Mr. Lincoln, was

34. Edgar Snowden, Sr., Va. Journalist & Civil Leader, Carroll H. Quenzel, Charlottesville Va., 1954, p. 6

35. History of St. Paul's Episcopal Church 1809-1984, Ruth Lincoln Kaye 1984, Goetz Printing Co., Springfield, Va. p. 11

36. Brockett, op cit, p. 32

37. Minister's Marriage Returns, Alexandria, on film, Lloyd House Library

38. Quenzel, op cit, p. 5

39. Ibid, p. 7; City Dir. 1834:lawyer's office at Fairfax and King

dragged out of the church at gunpoint, an event unparalleled in American history.<sup>40</sup> The newspaper at this date was being published under the name of "The Local News". Almost every column of the issue of February 10 was devoted to this remarkable occurrence. One paragraph, however, inserted by the military commander of the city, did not deter the Yankees from burning the paper's building next day:<sup>41</sup>

"Headquarters, Alexandria, Va., Feb. 9, 1862-Special Order No. 26. - The practice of making offensive remarks and demonstrations to the guards, military men, and Union citizens of this city, by females and others of secession proclivities, will no longer be tolerated. All those offending in such matters will hereafter be promptly arrested and treated as the circumstances may require. By command of

Gen. Montgomery

J. R. Freese, Ass't Adj't Gen'l"

The Gazette being temporarily out of operation, Edgar (gr.) Snowden was pressed into service unwillingly as a hostage on Yankee supply trains.<sup>42</sup> The trains had been repeatedly attacked and burned by Confederate guerrillas under famed John S. Mosby, therefore as a safeguard a number of prominent citizens such as Edgar Snowden and John Burke were arrested and assigned to ride the trains, hopefully as deterrents against further raids.

With no evidence to the contrary, it is to be assumed that Edgar's large family was allowed to remain at the home on South Lee (then Water Street), although most prominent families fled the town rather than take an oath of loyalty to the United States government.

Edgar's civil duties were numerous. Much earlier, in 1835, he was elected to the City Council, and then became mayor for three years, starting March 26, 1840.<sup>43</sup> At retrocession from D.C. in 1846, he was the first delegate to Virginia Assembly.<sup>44</sup>

40. Kaye, op cit, p. 47-50

41. Ibid, p. 51

42. Quenzel, op cit, p. 48

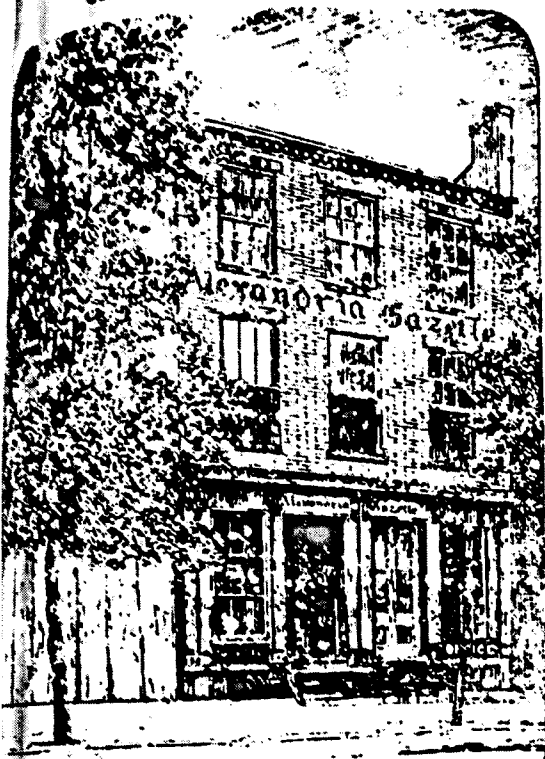
43. Ibid, p. 15

44. Alexandria, a Pictorial History, Harvey & Stansfield, Norfolk VA, Donning Co

# The Alexandria Gazette

NOV 1904  
A-1  
1901-1908

Gazette Home On Prince Street ...



From 1857 To Outbreak Of War Between States

Gazette building before moving to 317 King Street. Since 1965 the Gazette has operated from 17 St. Asaph Street.

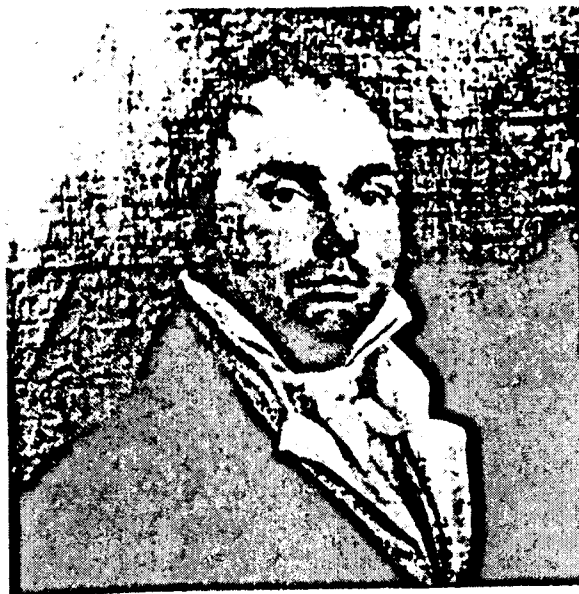
*Courtesy of the Gazette*

## ALEXANDRIA GAZETTE

22

The *Alexandria Gazette* proudly flies a flag proclaiming itself to be "America's Oldest Daily." This claim is justified by the fact that the paper can trace its beginnings to 1784, when it was published under the name of the *Virginia Journal and Alexandria Advertiser*. Established by George Richards, it was then a weekly. By 1797 the paper was published as a daily under another name. Samuel Snowden acquired it in 1800 along with another local publication. He remained owner and editor until 1831 when his son Edgar succeeded him. Edgar was forced to publish an underground newspaper during the Civil War and was witness to the fire which destroyed the *Gazette* office on Prince Street.

In 1911 the *Gazette* passed from the hands of the Snowden family. Charles C. Carlin, Sr., became the controlling stockholder. Under his leadership and that of his son, the *Gazette* flourished as Alexandria's oldest newspaper. When Charles C. Carlin, Jr., died in 1966 his wife, Sarah S. Carlin, became president and editor. She sold the paper to the State-Record Company, Columbia, South Carolina, in October 1973. It has remained a part of that corporation.



Samuel

Edgar Snowden. In addition to his association with the *Gazette*, Snowden was mayor from 1839 to 1843 and the first delegate sent to the Virginia Assembly when the town was ceded back to the state.

*Courtesy of the Gazette*





300 Block of Prince Street  
In 1880

**The Alexandria Gazette  
719 North St. Asaph Street**

The Alexandria Gazette, oldest daily newspaper in the United States (established as The Virginia Journal and Alexandria Advertiser on Feb. 5, 1784), became a daily in 1797. It has had several homes over the years such as this one on Prince Street. It now publishes in a modern plant on North St. Asaph Street.

**ALEXANDRIA, February 5**  
On Wednesday the 31st of December, his Excellency General WASHINGTON honored this Town with a visit.—His Arrival was announced by the Discharge of Thirteen Cannon.—The Mayor and Commonalty of the Town waited on his Excellency and presented to him the following Address:

# The Virginia Journal AND ALEXANDRIA ADVERTISER.

HUC UNDIQUE GAZ. VIR.  
CONGRITUR

(No. 1. of VOL. I.)

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 1784.

(No. 1.)



**The  
Alexandria Gazette  
America's Oldest Daily  
Estab. 1784**

**A Free Press  
A Free People**



*The Alexandria Gazette* is one of the few newspapers anywhere to have its own flag, as well as the oldest daily paper in the United States. Begun as *The Virginia Journal and Alexandria Advertiser* on February 5, 1784, the *Gazette* became a daily in 1797. The history of Alexandria and of the Nation may be found "in depth" in the *Gazette's* microfilmed files.

The original masthead is reproduced below.

*An item from the Alexandria Gazette in 1872:*

We learn that the managers of the Alexandria and Washington Railroad contemplate running local trains on that train at night, at an early date. They will, no doubt, be well patronized as many of our citizens are often detained in Washington after night and are forced to wait for the Southern Express train. It will also be an inducement to persons who do business in Washington to reside in this city where rents and living expenses generally are so much cheaper.

From Alexandria, U.S.A., Yesterdays Remembered  
First & Citizens National Bank, undated

In Masonic Lodge #22, Edgar Snowden was master mason in 1875 and his son Hubert was steward the same year.<sup>45</sup> When Chief Justice John Marshall died in 1835, Edgar gave the funeral oration at the memorial service.<sup>46</sup>

In another area, Edgar was Justice of Peace for Alexandria for many years. He was appointed by President William Henry Harrison on March 26, 1841, "reposing special trust and confidence in your integrity, Diligence, and Discretion". The paper was signed:

"Given under my hand this 26th of March A.D. 1841 and of the Independence of the United States the 65th. Daniel Webster, Secretary of State."

Nine days later President Harrison died, having been in office only thirty days. He had caught cold on inauguration day and pneumonia developed. The Whig President was succeeded by a Whig Vice President, John Tyler, who on July 10, 1841, reappointed Snowden Justice of Peace for "Alexandria County, D.C." : "a Whig in a Whig stronghold".<sup>47</sup>

Edgar was married at unknown time to Louisa Jane Grymes (1811-1897), daughter of Benjamin Grymes, who served under George Washington in the Revolutionary War and there earned the sobriquet of "Ben the Bold".<sup>48</sup> They had thirteen children, of whom Edgar chose his son and namesake to be editor of the Gazette after his death. His will, written on August 12, 1866 and proved November 11, 1875, left all to his wife, including the newspaper establishment. His mother, who was 80 years old when he wrote the will but who died before him, was to be supported, and his son Edgar was to carry on the business and receive half the profits.<sup>49</sup>

In actuality, Edgar, Jr., did serve as editor from 1873 to 1890, when he was succeeded briefly by his brother Harold for one year, and by younger brother Hubert from

45. Brockett, op cit, p. 188

46. Quenzel, op cit, p. 10

47. Alexandria Land Deed Book A3:313; Quenzel, op cit, p. 9

48. Quenzel, op cit. p. 7

49. Alexandria Will Book 1:169

1901 until 1911.<sup>50</sup>

After the death of Edgar Snowden, Jr., in 1892, the family apparently had some difficulty about settling the estate and went into court about it. In a suit labelled Hubert Snowden vs Harold Snowden et al, Hubert was made Commissioner of Sale on May 23, 1900.<sup>51</sup> The chancery suit went on for years and years, until 1914, with various items of Snowden property recorded in chancery books at the Court House. One by one, members of the family died without having the estate settled: Harold in 1901, William Powell in 1906, Louisa in 1907, Wilfred in 1910, Cedric in 1911, and finally Hubert in 1912. [See family chart at end of this chapter.] Hubert's widow, Edith Ashby Snowden, was appointed Special Commissioner on April 25, 1913, and at last the end was in sight.<sup>52</sup>

GAZ;  
30 Sept 1896  
storm blew  
down 2  
chummy)

Just before Hubert's death in 1912, the family sold the Gazette building and all its contents to the Alexandria Gazette Corporation, and thus the newspaper passed into other hands after 111 years of publishing by the same family. No purchase price is indicated on the deed.<sup>53</sup> The building was still the one on Prince Street, 60' west of Fairfax Street, and had therefore been rebuilt after the fire of 1862. The date of sale was April 24, 1911.

Two years later, the old Snowden home was sold by Edith A. Snowden to Richard B. Washington for \$2,900, with approval of the Court.<sup>54</sup> On the corner of Franklin and Lee was a frame house which had been built as a wedding present for Hubert Snowden<sup>55</sup>, and it was sold by Edith on February 26, 1914 to Charles E. Devine for \$1,700.<sup>56</sup> [For further disposition of this property, see HUGO L. BLACK.]

50. Quenzel, op cit, p. 7

51. Chancery Case 101, Book 6:34

52. Chancery Book 9:292

53. Land Deed Book 61:73, 24 April 1911

54. Chancery Book 9:304, May 30, 1913

55. Telecon, RLK with Mae Devine Rush, 5/8/87

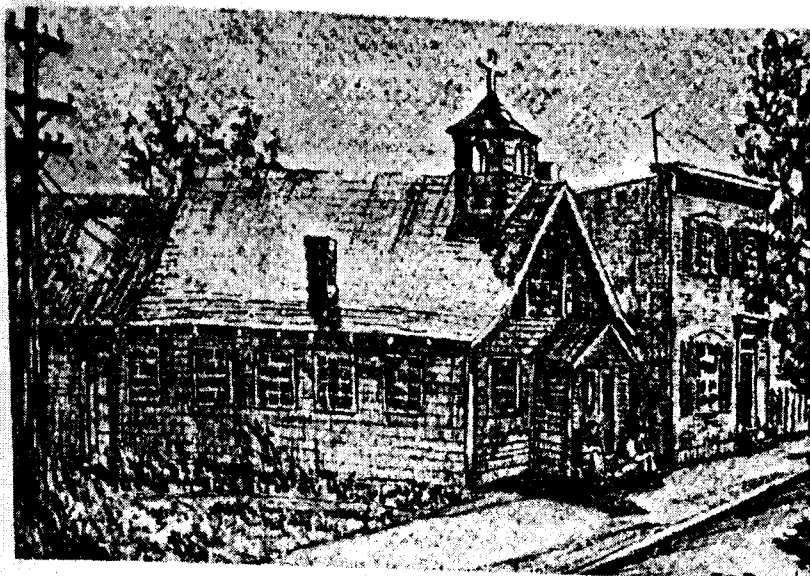
56. Land Deed Book 63:368

City Directories for 1900 and 1903 show that Charles Devine was a shoefitter at 719 South Lee before he moved to Hubert Snowden's house in 1914. Among his children is Mae Devine Rush, born in 1912, who provided some firsthand glimpses of life at 619 South Lee early in this century. Snowden children she remembers vividly include Clarence and Elsie, whose pictures in 1903 are reproduced on the next page. [Clarence, an unusual but typically Southern name for a girl, was named for her grandmother, Clarence Brent Snowden, wife of Edgar, Jr.]

The little frame house on the corner had an open porch on the second story level which overlooked the side yard of the Snowden home. (See Page 30.) Here little Mae Devine spent many happy hours swinging and, as she said, "singing at the top of her lungs". She well remembers the pump/well in the center of the garden and the brick carriage house where she and cousins played. The stretch of Franklin Street leading to the shipyard went steeply down hill, and neighborhood children nicknamed it Mulberry Hill. Part way along the block was a cow pasture where evidently the Snowdens, and Vowells before them, kept their cow.

The Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of 1912, drawn the year Mae was born (Page 30) shows changes to the Snowden house: a one story brick cover for the well, flanked by a small frame addition, and a long one story frame addition to the western end of the brick house. By 1921 the latter had disappeared, (see Page 31) and the tiny frame structure north of the carriage house was a chicken house.

Water service came late to the block. Devines used a privy located just east of the stable, along the street side. The main Snowden house at 619 did not acquire indoor water lines until May 24, 1879. Permit #1471 states: "Mrs. Louise Snowden is hereby permitted to have a  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. ferrule inserted in main Mount Cameron conduit pipe to supply premises on South Lee Street - two story brick belonging to and now occupied by Mrs. Snowden. Hydrant in yard, bath, 1 wash pavement, carriage. NO: kitchen water, water closet, or horse."



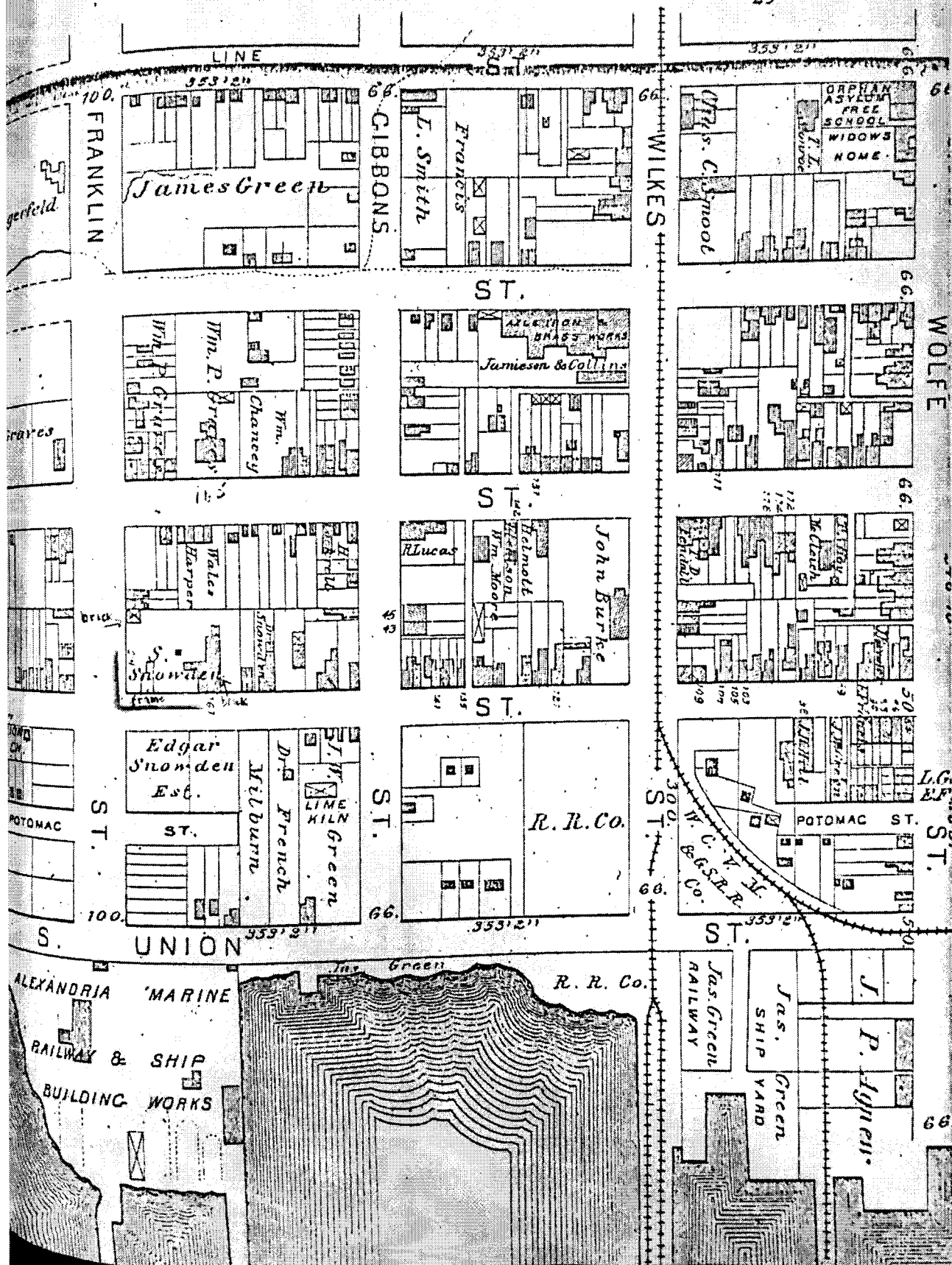
(Drawing by Evelyn Packard Akerley, 1944c)

The Old Chapel of the Good Shepherd



Young Ladies Guild of CGS, 1903. *Left to right, front row:* Marian Bryant, Jessie Armstrong. *Left to right, middle row:* Dorsey Ashton, Mrs. Thomas Moss, Polly Leadbeater. *Left to right, last row:* Ellen Fawcett, Lelia Steiner, Grace Kerfoot, Rebecca Uhler, Clarence Snowden, Elsie Snowden

From History of St. Paul's Episcopal Church 1809-1984  
Ruth Lincoln Kaye, Goetz Printing Co., Springfield, VA, 1984





EST'S

4A

FRANKLIN

8A

7A

15  
FRANKLIN

**S. PATRICK**

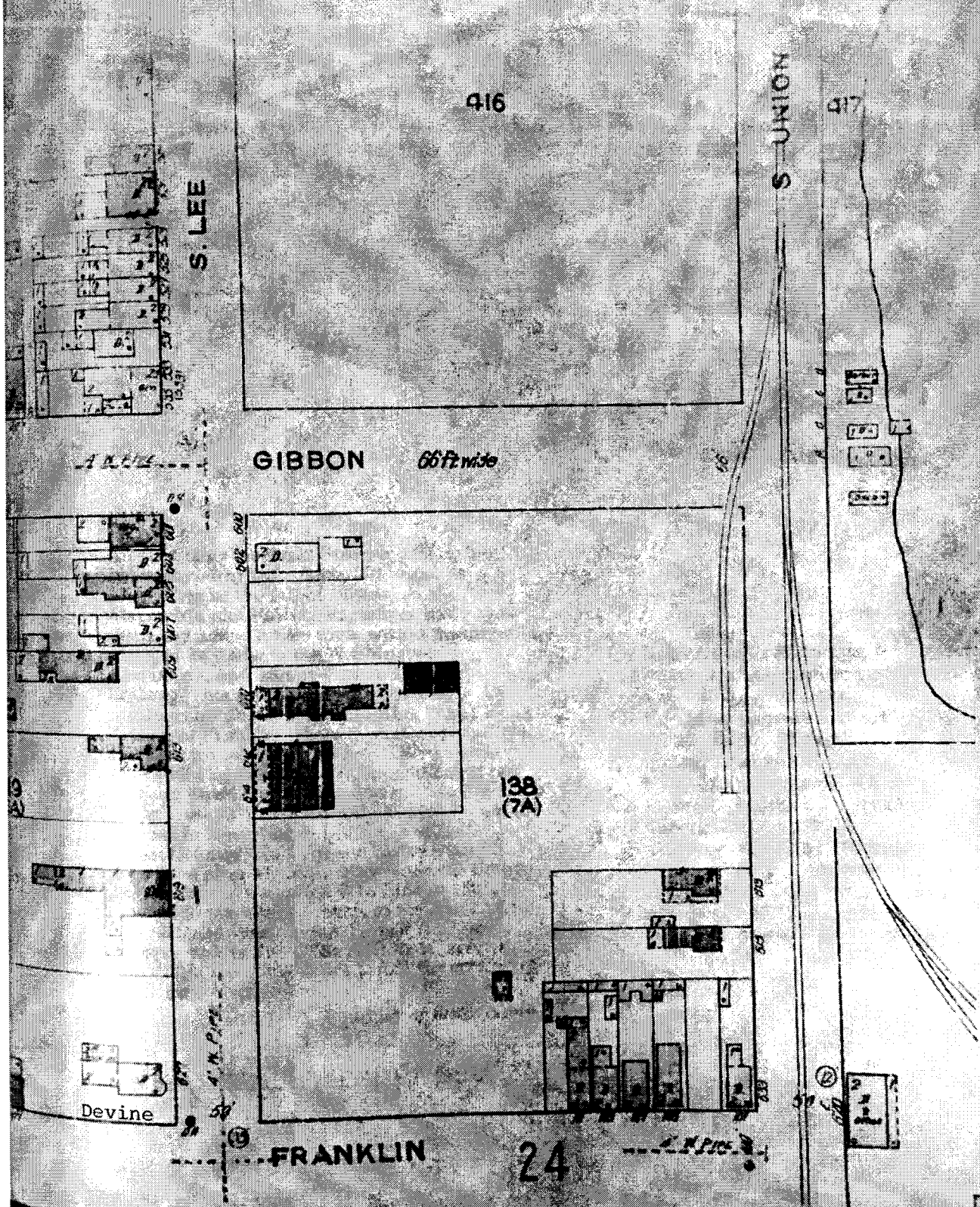
T. F. BARNHARTSON, SON & CO.  
CORN MILL & W. HO.

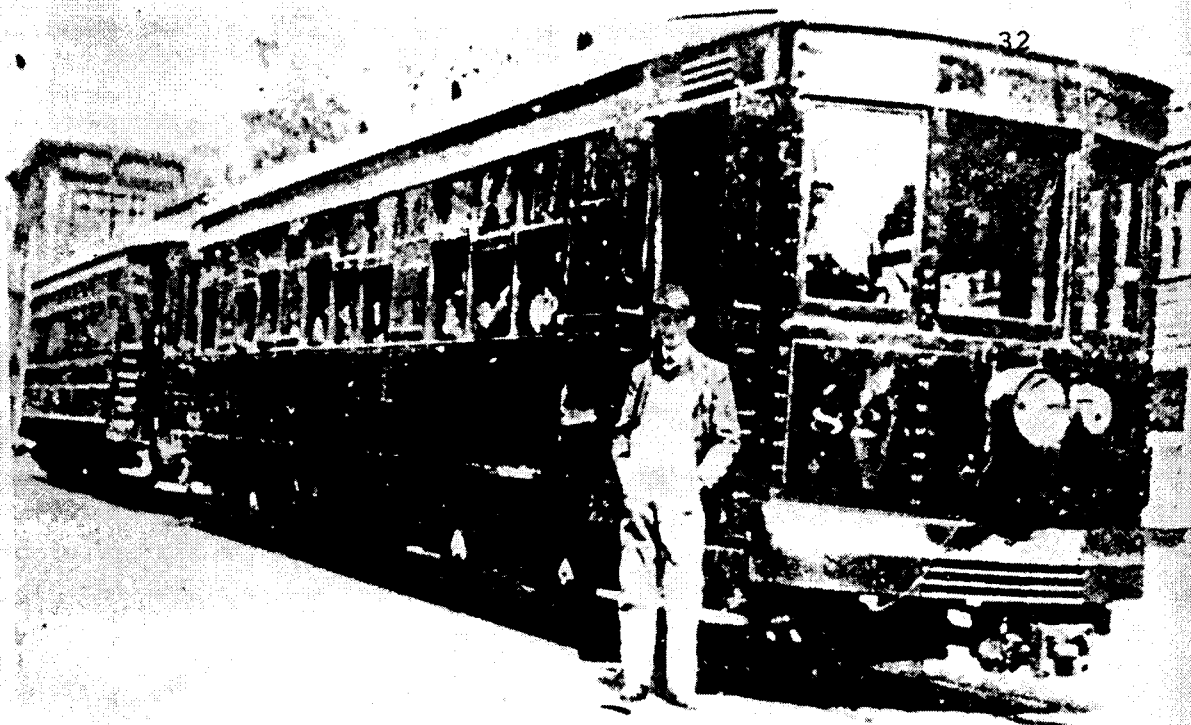
[illegible]

Scale of feet

18 FRANKLIN







An old trolley on Royal Street in the early 1900s. Streetcar transportation began in Alexandria in the fall of 1892 when the Alexandria and Fairfax Passenger Railway Company added a new route within the city and changed its name to the Washington, Alexandria, and Mount Vernon Electric Railway. This line lasted a generation, transporting passengers from King Street along Fairfax to Franklin where it went west to Royal and then turned sharply south. Other tracks were added to this early route, including a run on King Street from Commonwealth to Royal. A powerhouse and carbarn were located east of the roadbed in New Alexandria south of Belle Haven Country Club. An end to the trolley came soon after Mr. R. L. May made the first bus run for the Columbia Pike Line in 1921. This led to the establishment of the Alexandria, Barcroft, and Washington Transit Company, Incorporated, in 1935. The A. B. & W. served Alexandria for many years before the coming of the modern Metro liners.

*Courtesy of Seaport Inn*

Electric railways came to Alexandria in 1892. This trolley passed south from King Street along Fairfax to Franklin, where it turned west to Royal, thence south and across Hunting Creek bridge all the way to Mount Vernon. Families used to take picnics and go down for the day.

From Alexandria, A Pictorial History  
Harvey & Stansfield, 1977, Donning Co., Norfolk VA



Washington-Mount Vernon Electric Line brought tourists to Washington's home years before the Mount Vernon Parkway. The drive was still 11 years in the future when

this 1921 photo was taken. Careful observers will note this Electric Line Terminal building has a familiar shape in a familiar spot on the circle in front of the estate.

THE SNOWDEN FAMILY

Samuel Snowden m Jan. 7, 1802  
b 1776 d. 7/12/1831

Nancy Longden, dau of John Longden  
d. 7/27/1872 d. 1830  
age 86

only child

Edgar Snowden m Louisa J. Grymes, dau of "Ben the Bold"  
12/31/1810-9/24/1875 3/30/1811-25 Apr 1897

twins	Edgar	Harold	Louisa	Anne	Cedric Wilfred	Jane Osmund Mary	Hubert Wm. Powell
died	1833-1892	1826?-1901	d 7/29/1907		d 1911	b 1844 m	b 1851 d 1906
at	m				d 1912	d 1897 Saml	d 1912
birth	Clarence	Lelia				Wallis	m
	1834-1914	Leigh				Edith Ashby	1856-1957
	dau. of	(living				dau. of Turner	
	John H. Brent	1907)				Wade Ashby &	
& Lucy Page						Elizabeth G. Ashby	
Taylor							

Arthur  
1862-1938

m Anna Mary Windsor  
1860-1927, dau. of

David A. Windsor  
& Mary Catherine Burke

Clarence Brent Mary Windsor D.A. Windsor  
b 10/27/1885 b 6/13/1887 b Aug 1890  
d. 5/7/1919, suicide  
by gunshot  
wound

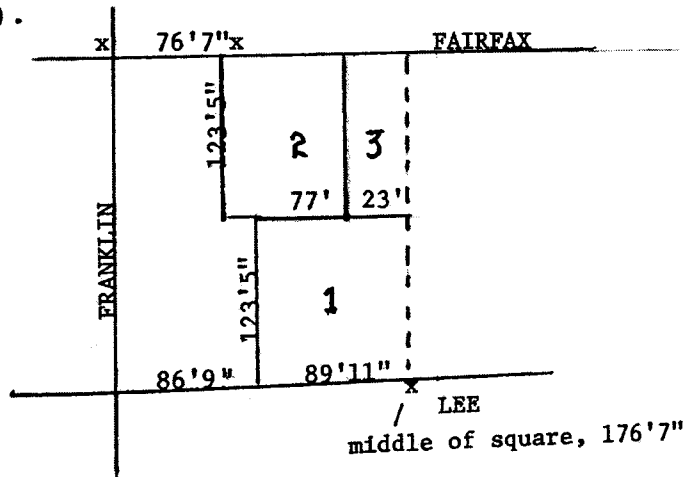
Edgar Elizabeth G. Edith A., II  
bp 1880 b 5/12/1889  
at Christ Ch

REFERENCES: Christ Church Register, graveyard  
Quenzel, op cit  
Obituaries, Gazette  
Ministers' Returns, on film

Richard B. Washington was a lawyer who on June 3, 1913, purchased the old Snowden home in division of the Snowden properties under the supervision of Chancery Court.<sup>57</sup> He paid the (for now ridiculous) sum of \$2,900.

Even at that, he had to borrow \$2,000.<sup>58</sup>

The deed for the house encompassed only the house site as drawn below and numbered one. He later purchased two lots extending through onto Fairfax Street, drawn below as purchases two and three, from Willard P. Graves on November 20, 1914, for \$450 and \$500 respectively.<sup>59</sup> Thus Richard Washington by November of 1914 owned much of what is represented at 619 South Lee now, except for the corner property (see BLACK).



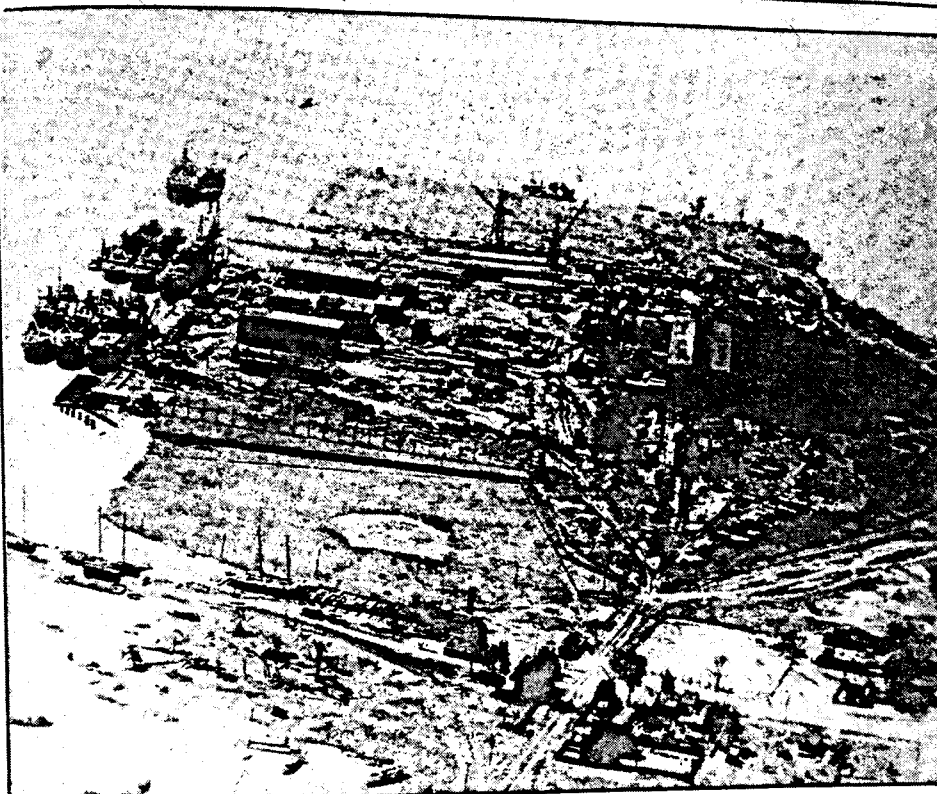
The grantors of the house deed were Edith A. Snowden, Special Commissioner under Chancery Court; Edith Snowden, widow and devisee under the last will and testament of Hubert Snowden, deceased; Edgar Snowden, unmarried, Elizabeth G. Snowden, unmarried, and Edith A. Snowden, Second, only children and surviving heirs of Hubert Snowden; Arthur Snowden and Mary W., his wife; Leila L. Snowden, widow of Harold

57. Land Deeds 62:593  
58. " " 62:594  
59. " " 64:142



THURSDAY, MAY 21, 1987 THE ALEXANDRIA GAZETTE

OPINION • 5



Probably no old area of Alexandria has changed more than the waterfront. This 1920 photo of the south end of the waterfront shows the World War I shipyard that produced ocean freighters (at left) — most of them eventually sunk as useless after hostilities ended. Note sailing ships lying at anchor

with bare masts in the left foreground. What appears to be the Jones Point lighthouse at top center either has been moved since 1920, or there has been enormous change in the shape of the point. Clearly, the waterfront was a busy place, even in the postwar depression of that year.

## MARSCHER

On September 10, 1920, John C. Marscher and his wife Julia C. bought the house from Richard B. and Agnes Marshall Washington. Revenue stamps indicated they paid \$3,000.<sup>67</sup> The deed was subject to a Deed of Trust of \$5,000 dated October 23, 1918, made by Richard Washington.<sup>68</sup> A deed of Correction was later filed correcting the spelling of Marscher, which had been mis-spelled as Merscher, and Mrs. Marscher's middle name, incorrectly given as "A."<sup>69</sup>

Their name was frequently confused by printers. Boyd's City Directory for 1917, in which it is noted that he was a florist on Windsor Avenue in Del Ray, spells it Marcher. The City Telephone Directory for 1919 spells it Marshner.

672  
6/9/1924  
Struck twice  
by lightning

The lot they bought was exactly as described on Page 35 herein, going back all the way to Fairfax Street.

John Marscher died a few months later, on January 10, 1921, age 61, and Julia was left to struggle with payments on the house.<sup>70</sup>

On September 15, 1922, she put the property in trust with F. S. McCandlish for \$2,000 payable to the National Bank of Fairfax. Interest was at 6%, with three notes for \$1,000, \$500, and \$500.<sup>71</sup> Widow Marscher was unable to keep up these payments, and lost the house and land at public auction on September 26, 1925 - the third time 619 South Lee had been sold at auction since it was built in 1800-1801. (See VOWELL and HARRIS.)

Last public record of Julia is in 1930, when she was reported as living near Alexandria, her name mis-spelled again as Marcher,<sup>72</sup> the last indignity.

- 67. Land Deeds 71:239
- 68. " " 67:289
- 69. " " 82:127
- 70. Death Register at Alexandria Court House
- 71. Land Deeds 74:335
- 72. City Tel. Directory, 1930

Mrs. Marscher having defaulted on her mortgage payments and on taxes, the property was put up for public auction on September 26, 1925 at twelve noon at the Royal Street entrance to City Hall. Highest bidder was Charles Pickett, at \$5,000.<sup>73</sup>

"Whereas by deed of Trust Julia C. Marscher conveyed to F. S. McCandlish, Trustee, 619 South Lee Street to secure payment of \$2,000 made 9/15/1922, payable three years after date...and whereas default in payment of interest and of taxes on said having been made - (McCandlish) advertised the property for sale for four consecutive weeks in the Gazette at public auction, and on September 26, 1925, at twelve noon at the Royal Street entrance to City Hall, the highest bidder was Charles Pickett for \$5,000, the said property was cried off and sold to the said Charles Pickett, who had paid the entire purchase money in cash."

Actually, the same day Charles and Katherine C. Pickett, his wife, borrowed \$2,000 from McCandlish and T. Blackwell Smith, which was paid off by March 17, 1931.<sup>74</sup>

During this decade, the southern edge of town was not the most desirable place to live. Starting in 1918, when the shipyard at the foot of Franklin Street went into high gear because of World War I, the streets were crowded with shipyard workers looking for a cheap place to live. Many boarded in nearby homes, such as 619 South Lee Street, and homeowners were glad for the extra income.<sup>75</sup> Most of the houses were owned or rented by blue collar workers, such as Charles Devine, the shoefitter. A block or two away on South Fairfax Street lived so many Negroes that the area was called Haiti. Tiny stores dotted the area, selling groceries and sundries. The Picketts did not stay long.

73. Land Deeds 84:282

74. " " 84:284

75. Telecon with Mae Devine Rush 5/8/1987



Milton A. Elliott, a baker who had moved over from Washington, and his wife Mary E. (Pettit) next bought the house. The date was May 31, 1926, and they assumed the Deed of Trust of \$2,000 which Picketts had made.<sup>76</sup> In addition, they negotiated another Deed of Trust with F. S. McCandlish for \$5,500.<sup>77</sup>

The Elliotts held the property only two months. Nothing more is known of them, except that Mrs. Elliott had grown up in the area and may have known the house well.<sup>78</sup>

76. Land Deeds 86:574

77. " " 86:575

78. Telecon, RLK and Mrs. Thomas Rohr, 525 S. Lee, 5/12/1987

GEORGE WASHINGTON RHINE

40

George Washington Rhine, who owned much property in Alexandria, and his wife Ruth J. next bought the house and land, on August 6, 1926.<sup>79</sup> The deed was subject to liens of two Deeds of Trust which they assumed, of \$2,000 and \$5,500, as previously described. Mr. Rhine also assumed a third mortgage for \$1,177.59 at 6% from Richard B. Washington,<sup>80</sup> which he retired on March 17, 1931. (Ref.74 herein.)

Little else is known about the Rhines, who held the house less than five years. It is known that they did occupy the house, as the 1931 telephone directory lists them as living there.

79. Land Deeds 88:286  
80. Land Deeds 88:287

Mr. Cain is credited by neighbors as having done much to restore the house, which had had a succession of short-term owners for many years. Apparently the house had been allowed to get run-down, and roomers had not improved the situation. Additionally, the nation was going through a severe depression, the likes of which had never been known in the United States.

When Ben B. Cain bought the house from the Rhines on April 27, 1931, no purchase price was noted on the deed.<sup>81</sup> It was subject, however, to a Deed of Trust dated January 28, 1931, for \$5,000, which he assumed and which was released in March of 1934.<sup>82</sup>

Neighbors say he may have been the one who connected the kitchen area to the main house. The drawings of the house on Pages 29, 30, and 31 herein would indicate that the connection was made before 1877. It is said that Mr. Cain renovated the old fireplace in the kitchen, repairing the bricks, and also removed the original old mantels.

A human interest story involves the Cains raising a young boy, Milton Greenland, who fell in love with a wealthy young girl in town, daughter of philanthropist Robert South Barrett. Viola Barrett and he were married and raised a family in the area of Alexandria called Rosemont.

The Cains were not listed as citizens of Alexandria in the City Directory for 1936, therefore must have moved away. Instead, neighbors on Lee Street were delighted to have Rear Admiral Percival S. Rossiter live there 1933-1937,<sup>83</sup> and the oldtimers there have never forgotten the Admiral.

In 1938 the house was vacant.

81. Land Deeds 106:396

82. " " 105:363

83. Water company records of date

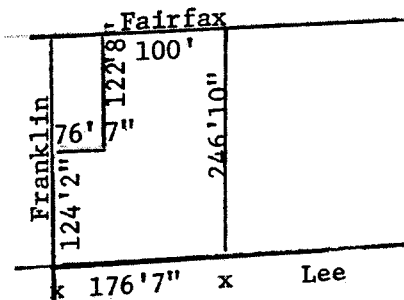
## THE BLACK FAMILY

The year 1939 marked the beginning of a period of great serenity for the handsome old house on Lee Street. The Black Family of Supreme Court Justice Hugo L. Black enjoyed a residency of 34 years, a period only exceeded by that of the Snowden family.

On August 8, 1939, Josephine F. Black, wife of the Justice, bought the property as described on Page 35 herein from Benjamin B. Cain, Jr., and his wife Margaret T. Cain.<sup>84</sup> Revenue stamps indicate the cost was \$10,000. The deed was subject to a Deed of Trust of \$10,000 dated November 25, 1936, C. S. Taylor Burke, Trustee.<sup>85</sup>

Two months later, on October 2, 1939, Mrs. Black bought the corner house and lot from Julia A. Devine, widow, et als, for \$6,500.<sup>86</sup> Julia Devine had acquired the latter by will of her husband Charles, who died in 1925.<sup>87</sup>

The property then assumed the dimensions which it has today.



In 1938 the Blacks had been living on Quaker Lane, in a lovely old house called "Cranford".<sup>88</sup> According to a biography of the Justice written by his son,<sup>89</sup> Mrs. Black had been eager to have a home in the old section of Alexandria.

84. Land Book 155:70

85. Land Book 132:342

86. Land Book 156:244; telecon 5/8/87 RLK & Mae Divine Rush

87. Will Book 4:202

88. City Directory 1938

89. My Father, A Remembrance, Hugo Black, Jr., Random House, NYC, 1975

During the time that Hugo La Fayette Black had been serving in the U.S. Senate, 1927-1937, the Blacks lived in Wesley Heights, Maryland. In 1937 he was appointed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to the Supreme Court, and Mrs. Black, tired of moving back and forth from Alabama to Washington during sessions, determined to have a home in Virginia. While they were living on Quaker Lane, she went "exploring" and came upon the magnificent old house on South Lee Street. Even though it was much in need of renovation, she could see its possibilities, and therefore bought it in her own name.

Work began on 619 before they moved into it, painting and renovating. The large old kitchen in the back ell became a bedroom, in which they placed the old spool bed in which it is said the Justice had been born. A small bathroom was installed behind the fireplace. Possibly during this time the stairway along the North wall of the kitchen wing (the outline of which was discovered by the Ginsburgs in 1974 when they, too, were renovating) was removed. It probably led to a loft for Mr. Vowell's eleven slaves and - later on - for house servants. Windows were also cut into the North side of the front hall of the mansion to let in more light.<sup>90</sup>

The old frame house on the corner, built as a wedding present to Hubert Snowden and recently the home of the Devine family, had become so delapidated that the Blacks immediately had a wrecking crew knock it down. In its place, the Justice planted a vegetable garden, fruit trees, and flowers. Many plantings were left in place, notable the immense English boxwoods that most likely had been planted by the first owner, Thomas Vowell, an Englishman by birth and a shipping merchant with commercial ties to England.

A man of many interests, Justice Black had a tennis court installed in the yard, which the family much enjoyed and which is still there. A great convenience was being able to use the one story room at the west end of the kitchen wing for a

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90. Telecon, RLK and Mrs. Hugo L. Black, 5/12/1987

changing room and shower. Music was another hobby of his, and it said that he enjoyed playing the harmonica and piano and singing old songs to guests.<sup>91</sup>

On December 7, 1951, the family suffered a grievous loss when Mrs. Black was discovered to have died in her sleep. Her will of November 4, 1940 left everything to her husband.<sup>92</sup>

"I, Josephine Black, being a person over 21 years of age and of sound mind, do hereby make, publish, and sign this my last will and testament. By this will I give and bequeath to my husband Hugo L. Black all the property, real, personal, and mixed, of which I may die possessed."

Mr. Black was named executor, and was bonded for \$40,000. Their three children were Hugo L. Black, Jr., age then 29, Sterling Foster Black, then 27, and Martha Josephine, age 18.

Within a few years, Justice Black, being a convivial soul, fell in love again. On September 11, 1957, at age 71 he was married to Mrs. Elizabeth DeMeritte, age 49, who had been acting as his secretary. The marriage license record gives his birthplace as Clay County, Alabama, and hers as Pratt City, Alabama.<sup>93</sup> They were married in the parlor of the old home at 619 Lee and had their reception in the garden (as did also his daughter Josephine).<sup>94</sup>

Minor repairs and changes were made to the house during his second marriage, pointing the brickwork and repairing the roof.<sup>95</sup> The back ell was raised three feet and sides were filled in with masonry.<sup>96</sup> An off street parking area was made possible by removing an elm tree on the North side of the house.<sup>97</sup>

By far the most important decision regarding the house occurred when Justice and Mrs. Black on December 26, 1969,

91. Black, op cit, p. 205

92. Alexandria Will Book 27:16

93. Alexandria Marriage Register Book 14:58

94. Telecon, RLK and Mrs. Black

95. Alexandria Building and Repair Permit #1784, dtd 11/3/1961

96. " " " " #17826, dtd 11/7/1961

97. " " " " #26653, dtd 9/15/69

made a Deed of Easement to the Virginia Historic Landmarks Corporation, protecting the historic property against subdivision or drastic changes.<sup>98</sup> A copy of this deed is inserted at the back of this history.

On the same day, Justice Black conveyed to Elizabeth S. Black, his wife, a one-fifth interest in the property.<sup>99</sup>

Mr. Black died on September 25, 1971, age 85, devising to his widow, age 63, son Hugo, age 49, son Sterling, age 47, and daughter Martha Josephine Pesaresi.<sup>100</sup>

Two years later it was discovered that the Deed of Easement was not complete, and the heirs to the estate issued a Deed of Correction, substituting Paragraph 2 [on P. 493 of Book 705] of the original Deed of Easement to include the tennis court, other outbuildings and structures as well as the swimming pool and garage.<sup>101</sup> See Deed of Correction following Deed of Easement.

The next few pages contain photocopies of the house and members of the Black family during their ownership.

Mrs. Black, second wife of the Justice, died on May 17, 1987, a week to the day after giving an interview on the history of 619 South Lee Street. By coincidence, the same issue of the newspaper carrying the notice of her death carried also the death notice of one Clement C. Orme, who left three surviving relatives in Virginia.<sup>101a</sup> The surname is unusual, and there seems little doubt that he was related to Charlotte Orme, second wife of Thomas Vowell, builder of the house. (See Page 14 herein, third paragraph.)

98. Land Deeds 705:491-5

99. " " 705:489

100. Will Book 91:736

101. Land Deeds 757:868, April 23, 1973

101a. The Washington Post, May 19, 1987, Pages B4,5

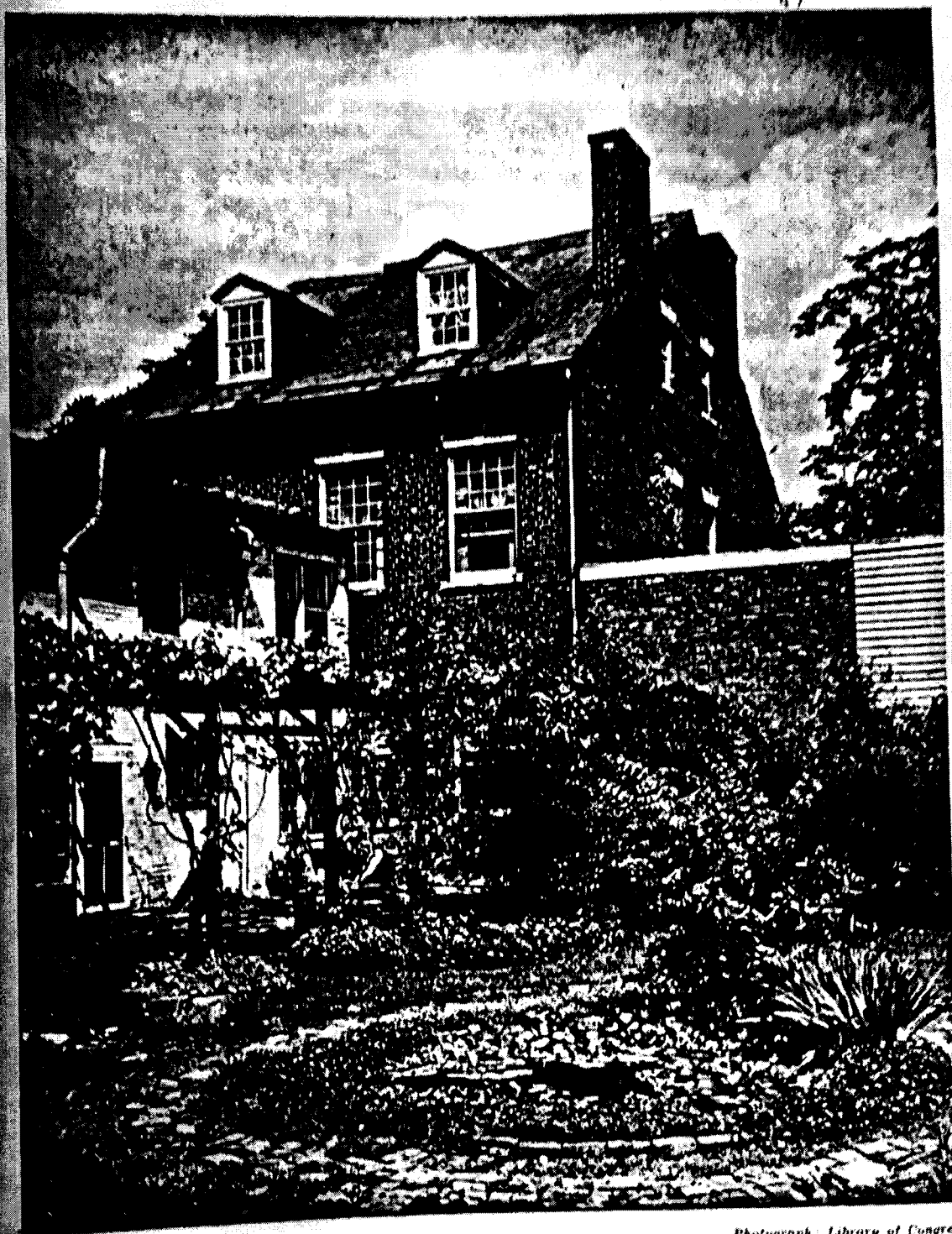


Photograph: Library of Congress

builders paid much attention to fenestration and detail as is beautifully indicated in the residence of Justice and Mrs. Hugo Black.

From Alexandria Houses 1750-1830, Deering Davis, Bonanza Books, New York, 1946, which describes the house as a "fine Georgian structure...The massive and dignified doorway is surmounted by a pediment, and the facade cornice is unusual and of fine workmanship".



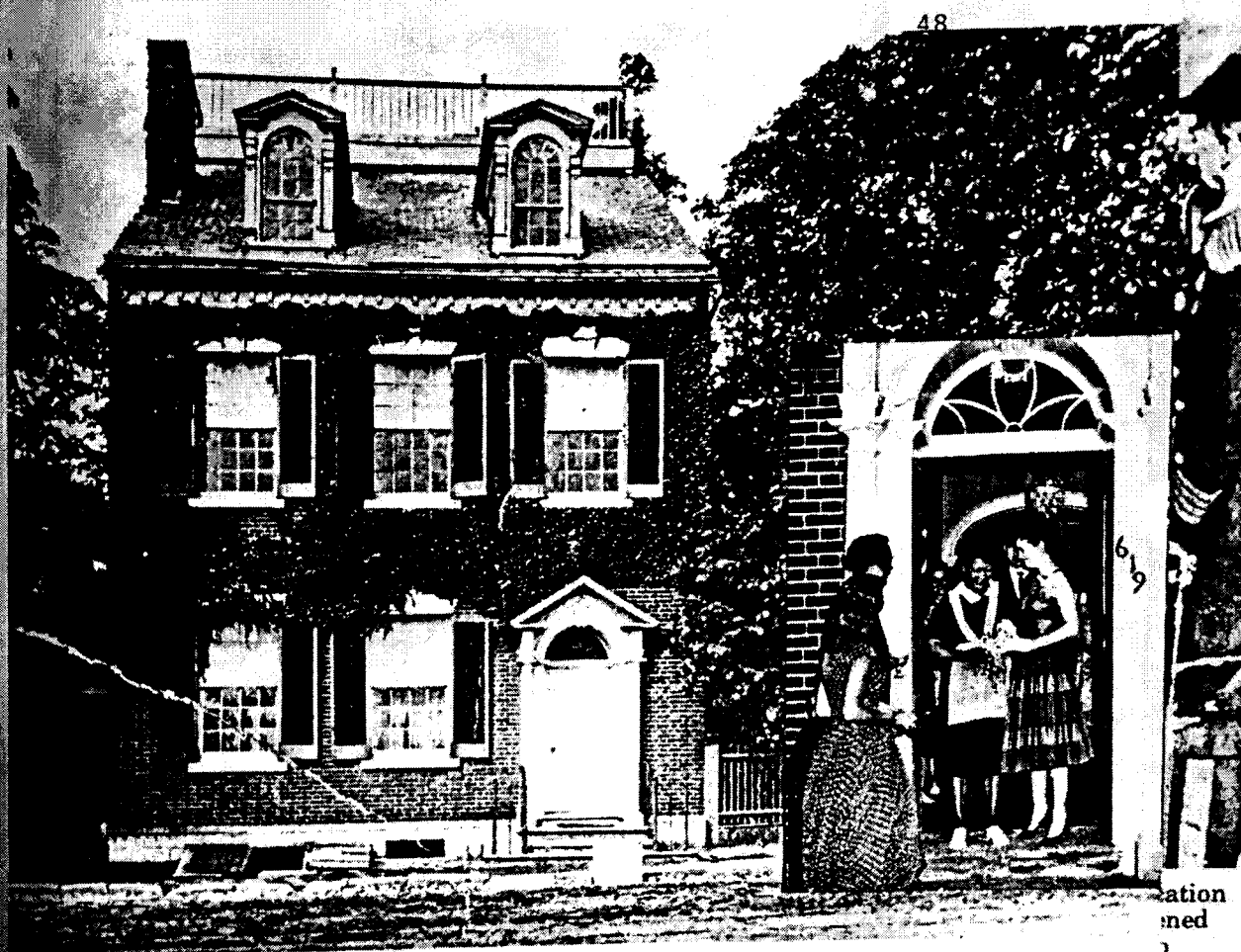


*Photograph: Library of Congress*

### The Garden Side

The ell, originally a separate dependency, has been rounded where it joins the main structure in order not to obstruct a window.

From Deering Davis, *op cit*



This house at 619 South Lee Street, was the Snowden family home from 1842 to 1912. For years the residence of Justice Hugo Black, the inset shows his daughter, Josephine, after her wedding in their home.

*Courtesy of Edith Snowden  
Photo by Ben T. Boogher, Jr.*

Harvey and Stansfield, op cit, p. 40

g of

er, Jr.



President Herbert Hoover in town for dedication of George Washington Parkway, which opened to Mount Vernon in 1932. Beside car, left to right, are Governor John G. Pollard, Mrs. Hoover, President Hoover, Mr. William A. Smoot, and Mayor Edmund F. Ticer.

*Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Stanley King*



Justice William O. Douglas, left, at wedding of Josephine Black and Mario Pesaresi.

*Photo by Ben T. Boogher, Jr.*

## PortScenes

### Justice Black, remembered



Justice Hugo Lafayette Black

An Old Town  
institution is seen  
from the distaff side

Jane Edwards  
Art Columnist

Judge's house, 619 South Lee Street  
old port section of Alexandria, was  
and beautiful, bearing its two hun-  
years almost regally.

Elizabeth Black, "Mr. Justice and Mrs. Black"

is still Justice Black's House. And  
the woman who penned the above  
Elizabeth Black, is keeping the  
most regal" sense of her husband's  
story alive in her new book, "Mr.  
Justice and Mrs. Black."

February 27 of this year marked the  
centennial of his birth. His widow pub-  
lished on that day this combination of  
memoirs written by both her late husband  
and herself.

Hugo Lafayette Black purchased the  
brick house on Lee Street in 1937 when  
he first became a Supreme Court judge.  
Previously, he had served as an U.S.  
Senator from his native state of Alabama.

The justice brought the property, ac-  
cording to his second wife and widow,  
Elizabeth Black, because he wanted more  
space for his young family. He lived here,  
and loved this house, throughout his pres-  
tigious, 34-year career on the Supreme  
Court and until his death in 1971.







On August 1, 1973, the present owners purchased the property from the heirs of Hugo L. Black: Elizabeth S. Black, Hugo L. Black, Jr., and his wife Bessie Graham Hobson Black, Stephen Foster Black and his wife Nancy Lee Black, and Martha Josephine Black Pesaresi and Mario Pesaresi, her husband.<sup>102</sup> Revenue stamps indicate the purchase price was \$225,000.

TAX VALUE 2001  
= 2,618,900  
Tax = 29,070

United Virginia Bank/First & Citizens National placed a Deed of Trust on August 15, 1973, of \$75,000 plus interest, payable at \$604.20 monthly.<sup>103</sup> The same day a Deferred Purchase Money Deed was placed by Richard H. G. Hobson and F. S. McCandlish amounting to \$50,000 at 8% interest, payable in five annual installments.<sup>104</sup> This deed was released on March 9, 1979.<sup>105</sup> The property, surveyed by Peter R. Moran, is described in Schedule A, attached.

Mr. and Mrs. Ginsburg have done much to restore the beautiful old home to its rightful place as one of Alexandria's finest residences.

In January of 1974 extensive remodelling of the interior was accomplished.<sup>106</sup> Besides cosmetic changes in bathrooms and kitchen, they transformed the old kitchen wing on the West side of the house. Originally the kitchen had been a separate dependency, in 1800. At time unknown a hyphen was made to connect it to the main house. (See Page 47.) On the advice of the architect, the East wall of the old kitchen was removed, making one large room of the kitchen and hyphen. The only remaining evidence of this remarkable change is seen in the worn slate in the floor connecting the ell to the hall of the main house. In this large and comfortably furnished room one is instantly at home. Four new doors leading to the garden were installed on the South side of the room. The tiny bathroom tucked behind the massive old fireplace has been

- 102. Land Deeds 761:821
- 103. " " 761:825
- 104. " " 761:830
- 105. " " 937:21
- 106. Building & Repair Permit #30490, dtd 1/9/1974

retained, and a small bar has been created on the opposite side.

The ground floor of the lovely old house remains exactly as constructed in 1800/1801. The woodwork is particularly fine, with elaborate ceiling molding, chair rails in wedding ring design, doorways and doors of fluted pilaster. The mantels are not original,<sup>107</sup> the old ones having been removed by a previous owner - perhaps Mr. Cain. The shutters are, however, original. During renovation many coats of paint were stripped, and the hardware was replaced out of necessity.

In the front hall, which lies along the Northern side of the house and in which Justice Black had windows cut, the chair rail is original. A keyed archway frames the hall, and there is a simple stairway with square balusters. The newel post is not the original one.

On the second floor is the master bedroom, beautifully proportioned, with a bedroom/library at the front of the house which was Justice Black's study. The Ginsburgs have put in extensive book shelves. The back of the hall leads into the second story of the west ell, and now comprises huge walk-in closets. On the third floor are two bedrooms and bath.

The ground floor wing to the South contains a modern kitchen and breakfast room, remodelled by the present owners, who added a bay to the breakfast room. At one time there was evidently a wooden porch which looked out over the garden. [See Pages 29, 30, also the small and separate pump and well-house West of the wing in the area of the lily pond (Page 47).] The architect changed the slope of the roof of this wing from slanting towards Lee Street to slanting towards the garden, to conform artistically to the roof line of the main house.

In other repairs and changes, the swimming pool was added in Summer of 1974,<sup>108</sup> and a brick wall and gate were

107. Deering Davis, op cit, p. 112  
108. Building & Repair Permit #3168, dtd 6/24/1974

added that autumn.<sup>109</sup> In 1976 permission was obtained to make alterations to the original carriage house of 1800/1801.<sup>110</sup> Up till that time the floor had been of dirt, although the second floor had been converted to an artist's studio for the first Mrs. Black. Evidence of the first purpose of the attractive brick building is seen in the wide carriage door on the Franklin Street side. The stable of 1800, long gone, may perhaps be seen in the maps on Pages 30 and 31 herein. Of wood, it would have deteriorated long ago. As far as is known, only one horse and two cows were ever stabled there.

The most recent renovation was that accomplished in 1981 in the kitchen-breakfast area, aforesaid.<sup>111</sup>

In 1981 the City of Alexandria offered property owners whose land lay along Franklin Street the opportunity to buy strips of what had been intended to be part of the street. In 1785 Franklin Street, named for Benjamin Franklin, was planned as 100' wide, as only one other street in town lies - Washington Street. The plans never came into effect, however, and a number of property owners along the street were dismayed to find they had encroached on what was legally city property. To clear title, the City made the offer, and many residents accepted. The price was high. In all fairness, everyone had lost sight of the original objective, and the street had not even been paved until 1920. Mr. and Mrs. Ginsburg obtained title to the area that ran along the<sup>112</sup> South side of their property by paying \$6,171 on June 22, 1981.

*Mr. Ginsburg served the gov't under FDR.*

- |      |  |                        |
|------|--|------------------------|
| 109. | Building & Repair Permit                       | #3190, dtd 8/21/1974   |
| 110. | " " "  | #9851, dtd 11/29/1976  |
| 111. | " " "  | #37535, dtd 10/28/1981 |
| 112. | Land Deed of B&S, Consolidation and Correction | 1024:306               |



## SCHEDULE "A" - DESCRIPTION

Beginning at a pipe found at the common corner of Lots 500 & 501 and being on the northerly line of Honorable Hugo L. Black as shown on a plat recorded in the Land Records at D.B. 441 Pg. 338 and running with the southerly line of Lot 501, S 81° 08' 46" E 136.96 feet, thence with the westerly line of South Lee Street (50' Wide) S 09° 30' 05" W 178.08 feet (passing over an adjusted deed called for point at 176.49 feet) thence with the northerly line of Franklin Street (100' Wide) N 80° 49' 02" W 124.16 feet, thence leaving Franklin Street N 09° 30' 05" E 77.47 feet (passing over a deed called for point at 0.89 feet) thence N 81° 08' 46" W 122.73 feet, thence with the easterly line of South Franklin Street (66' Wide) N 09° 30' 35" E 99.62 feet, thence with the three southerly lines of Lot 500 as shown on said plat S 81° 08' 46" E 61.67 feet and N 09° 30' 35" E 0.28 feet and S 81° 08' 46" E 48.26 feet to the place of beginning containing 34,309 square feet of land.

4375  
DEED OF BARGAIN AND SALE  
AND CONSOLIDATION  
AND CORRECTION

56

BOOK 1024 PAGE 306

THIS DEED, made this 27th day of May, 1981, by and between THE CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA, party of the first part; and THE LEE STREET CORPORATION, party of the second part;

WHEREAS, the party of the first part is the owner of certain land known as Franklin Street in the City of Alexandria, Virginia, as more particularly described hereafter and in Vacation Ordinance No. 2536, a copy of which is attached hereto and made a part hereof; and

WHEREAS, the party of the second part is the owner of the property on the northwest corner of Franklin and South Lee Streets in the City of Alexandria, Virginia, upon which is erected No. 619 South Lee Street and other improvements; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the aforesaid Ordinance, the party of the first part has agreed to sell that portion of Franklin Street more particularly described below to the party of the second part, for and in consideration of the payment of Six Thousand One Hundred Seventy-One and 00/100 Dollars (\$6,171.00).

NOW, THEREFORE, WITNESS, that for and in consideration of the sum of Six Thousand One Hundred Seventy-One and 00/100 Dollars (\$6,171.00), the party of the first part does hereby grant, bargain, sell and convey, with a SPECIAL WARRANTY of title under the said Party of the second part, all of that certain lot or parcel of ground, located in the City of Alexandria, Virginia, and more particularly described as follows:

BEGINNING at a point in the west line of South Lee Street (50 feet wide) at its intersection, with the north line of Franklin Street (100 feet wide); thence departing said point and running through the Franklin Street right-of-way the following courses and distances: S. 09° 30' W., 10.00 feet to a point lying 40.00 feet from the Franklin Street monument line; N. 80° 49' W., 123.42 feet to a point also lying 40.00 feet from said monument line and, N. 09° 30' E.,

10.00 feet to a point in the north line of Franklin Street; thence with said line S. 80° 49' E., 123.42 feet to the point of beginning. Containing 1,234.2 sq. ft. or 0.0283 acre.

FURTHERMORE, WITNESS, that for and in consideration of the above conveyance and pursuant to the Ordinance attached hereto, the party of the second part hereby consolidates the aforesaid vacated parcel into the land conveyed by Elizabeth S. Black, et al., to the Lee Street Corporation by deed dated August 1, 1973, and recorded among the land records of the City of Alexandria in Deed Book 761 at Page 821, as shown on a plat attached hereto and made a part hereof, approved by the appropriate authorities of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, said new lot shall, in fact, be known as "Lot 500" containing 35,502 square feet or 0.8150 acre as shown on the plat attached hereto dated January 13, 1981, prepared by Holland Engineering and more particularly described with corrected measurements as follows:

BEGINNING at a point in the easterly right-of-way line of South Fairfax Street (66.00 feet wide), said point lying N. 09° 30' 00" E., 76.95 feet from the northerly right-of-way line of Franklin Street (variable width); thence with the easterly right-of-way line of South Fairfax Street, N. 09° 30' 00" E., 99.72 feet to a point, a corner to Catherine Grant and M. E. Conroy; thence with the land of Grant and Conroy, S. 81° 09' 00" E., 61.70 feet to a point; N. 09° 30' 00" E., 0.28 feet to a point; and continuing with the land of Grant and Conroy and with the land of Stevenson and Marianne T. Weitz, S. 81° 09' 00" E., 185.13 feet to the westerly right-of-way line of South Lee Street (50 feet wide); thence with South Lee Street, S. 09° 30' 00" W., 188.20 feet to the northerly right-of-way of Franklin Street; thence with Franklin Street N. 80° 49' 00" W., 123.42 feet to a point; thence continuing with Franklin Street and with the land of Angela S. Anderson, N. 09° 30' 00" E., 87.47 feet to the northeast corner of Anderson; thence continuing with the lands of Angela S. Anderson and with the lands of H. Boyd or Estelle Robinson, and Robert R. or Jeanne J. Thompson, N. 81° 09' 00" W., 123.42 feet to the beginning. Containing 35,502 square feet, or 0.8150 acre.

BOOK 705 PAGE 491

3919 ✓✓

THIS DEED OF EASEMENT, MADE this 26<sup>th</sup> day of December, 1969, between Hugo L. Black and his wife, Elizabeth S. Black, herein called Grantors, and VIRGINIA HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION, an agency of the Commonwealth of Virginia, herein called the Grantee,

W I T N E S S E T H:

WHEREAS, Chapter 11 of Title 10 of the Code of Virginia entitled "Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission" (1966 c. 632) Sections 10-135 to 10-145 was enacted to preserve historical landmarks in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and created the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission to receive properties and interests in properties for the purpose, among other things, of the preservation of such landmarks and their settings; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 13 of Title 10 of the Code of Virginia entitled "Open Space Land Act" (1966 c. 461) Sections 10-151 to 10-158 was enacted to preserve permanent open-space lands; and

WHEREAS, the Grantors are the owners of a tract of land hereinafter described, in the historic section of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, on which there is situated a house constructed in the late Eighteenth Century and of architectural significance and historic value;

NOW, THEREFORE, in recognition of the foregoing and in consideration of the sum of Ten Dollars (\$10) and other valuable considerations, the receipt of which are hereby acknowledged, the Grantors do hereby grant and convey to the Grantee an open-space easement in gross over, and right in perpetuity to restrict the use of, the following described real estate located in the City of Alexandria, Virginia, (herein called the property):

Hen  
will  
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for  
12  
13/1  
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20  
1-  
see  
7-

BOOK 705 PAGE 492

All of that parcel of ground, with its improvements and appurtenances, located in the City of Alexandria, Virginia, upon which is erected No. 619 South Lee Street, and other improvements, being more particularly bounded and described as follows, to-wit:-

BEGINNING at a point on the west side of Lee Street at the middle of the square between Gibbon and Franklin Streets, said point being 176 feet 7 inches north of Franklin Street; and running thence south on Lee Street 176 feet 7 inches to the intersection of Lee and Franklin Streets; thence west along Franklin Street 124 feet 2 inches; thence north parallel to Lee Street 76 feet 7 inches; thence west parallel to Franklin Street to a point on the east side of Fairfax Street; thence north to Fairfax Street 100 feet, more or less, to a point equidistant from Gibbon and Franklin Streets; thence east in a direct line 246 feet 10 inches to the point of beginning. Being the same properties which were acquired by Josephine F. Black by deeds duly of record among the Alexandria City land records, from B. B. Cain, Jr., and wife, and from Julia A. Devine, widow, et al., and by Hugo L. Black under the will of Josephine F. Black duly probated in the Circuit Court of the City of Alexandria, and in which Hugo L. Black has by deed of record duly conveyed a one-fifth undivided interest to Elizabeth S. Black.

The restrictions hereby imposed on the use of the property are in accord with the Commonwealth of Virginia's policy, as set forth in Acts, 1966, c.632, to preserve historical properties in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and in Acts., 1966, c.461, §2, to preserve scenic areas, to conserve lands and other natural resources and to preserve permanent open-space land, and the

acts which the Grantors, their heirs, successors and assigns, so covenant to do and not to do upon the property, and the restrictions which the Grantee is hereby entitled to enforce shall be as follows:

1. The manor house will be maintained and preserved in its present state as nearly as practicable, though structural changes, alterations, additions or improvements as would not in the opinion of Grantee fundamentally alter the historic character of the house may be made thereto by the owner, provided that the prior written approval of Grantee to such change, alteration, addition or improvement shall have been obtained.

2. No building or structure shall be built or maintained on the property other than (i) the manor house, (ii) the old carriage house and adjoining servants' quarters and (iii) a garage; provided, however, that after the date of this Deed of Easement, no building or structure described in (ii) shall be altered, restored, renovated or extended and no structure described in (iii) constructed except in a way that would in opinion of Grantee be in keeping with the historic character of the house, and provided that the prior written approval of Grantee to such action shall have been obtained.

3. No industrial or commercial activities shall be carried on on the property except such as can be carried on from the buildings or structures described in 2 above without alteration of their external appearance.

4. The property shall not be subdivided.

5. No sign, billboards or outdoor advertising structure shall be displayed on the property other than one sign not exceeding two feet by three feet for each of the following purposes: (i) to state the name of the property and the name and address of the occupant, (ii) to advertise an activity permitted

BOOK 705 PAGE 494

under paragraph 3 above, and (iii) to advertise the property for sale or rental; provided, however, that this paragraph 5 shall not limit the Grantee's right, hereinafter described, to display on the property, at its discretion, a small marker or sign evidencing its ownership of the easement granted herein.

6. No dump of ashes, sawdust, bark, trash, rubbish or any other unsightly or offensive material shall be permitted on the property visible from the streets.

The Grantee and its representatives may enter the property (i) from time to time for the purpose only of inspection and enforcement of the terms of the easement granted herein, and (ii) in its discretion to erect a single marker or sign, not exceeding two feet by two feet, which states the name of the Grantee and advises that the Grantee owns the easement granted herein.

Although this open-space easement in gross will benefit the public in the ways recited above, nothing herein shall be construed to convey a right to the public of access or use of the property, and the Grantors, their heirs, successors and assigns shall retain exclusive right to such access and use, subject only to the provisions herein recited.

Acceptance by the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission of this conveyance is authorized by Sections 10-138 and 10-142 of the Code of Virginia, and by such acceptance below the Commission designates the property described above as a certified landmark.

WITNESS the following signatures and seals:

Hugo L. Black (SEAL)  
Hugo L. Black

Elizabeth S. Black (SEAL)  
Elizabeth S. Black

Accepted:

VIRGINIA HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION

By [Signature]  
Executive Director 12/32/69  
[SEAL]

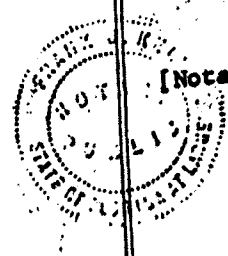
STATE OF FLORIDA } To-wit:  
COUNTY OF DADE }

I, Frank J. Kelly, a Notary Public in and  
for the jurisdiction aforesaid, hereby certify that Hugo L.  
Black and Elizabeth S. Black, whose names are signed to the  
foregoing easement bearing date this 26th day of December, 1969,  
have acknowledged the same before me in my jurisdiction afore-  
said.

Given under my hand this 26th day of December, 1969.  
My commission expires September 21, 1972.

[Signature]  
Notary Public

Notary Public, State of Florida at Large  
My Commission Expires Sept. 21, 1972  
Bonded by American Fire & Casualty Co.



VIRGINIA:  
[Notarial Seal] Clerk's Office of the Corporation  
Court of the City of Alexandria, this in-  
strument was received and the Taxes im-  
posed by Soc. 58-54, (a) and (b), of the  
Code have been paid and with the an-  
nexed certificate, admitted to record  
on Dec 31, 1969 at 12:07 o'clock P.M.  
Teste:

[Signature]  
Clerk



WHEREAS, Bessie Graham Hobson Black, Nancy Lee Black and Mario Pesaresi are the spouses respectively of Hugo L. Black, Jr., Sterling Foster Black and Martha Josephone Black pesaresi; and

WHEREAS, Hugo L. Black, Jr. and Elizabeth S. Black have qualified in the Corporation Court of the City of Alexandria as Co-Executors of the Estate of Hugo L. Black, deceased; and

WHEREAS, Grantors and Grantee wish to correct the Deed of Easement to make such provision and to reflect the original intent with regard thereto;

NOW, THEREFORE, in recognition of the foregoing and in consideration of the premises and the sum of \$1.00, receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, the parties agree that the Deed of Easement is hereby corrected by deleting paragraph Number 2 in its entirety and substituting the following paragraph Number 2 therefore:

2. No building or structure shall be built or maintained on the property other than (i) the manor house, (ii) the old carriage houses and adjoining servants' quarters, (iii) a tennis court and other outbuildings and structures which are commonly or appropriately incidental to a single family dwelling including without limitation a swimming pool and garage; provided, however, that after the date of this Deed of Easement, no building or structure described herein shall be altered, restored, renovated or extended and no structure described herein constructed except at such place and in such a way that would in opinion of Grantee be in keeping with the historic character of the house, and provided that the prior written approval of Grantee to such action shall have been obtained.

With the exception of the foregoing correction, all of the other terms and conditions of the Deed of Easement shall remain in full force and effect and are hereby ratified and confirmed.

ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS, HOUSE & STABLE  
by

64

WORTH BAILEY

Consultant, Historic Alexandria Foundation  
1966-1967

VOWELL-SNOWDEN HOUSE ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: A late Federal town house designed in the indigenous manner with particular attention to proportions and refinement of details.
2. Condition of fabric: Well maintained.

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Two-and-a-half stories plus cellar. Front block, approximately 45' x 50' plus rear all extending about 50'.
2. Foundations: Rubble to grade. Cellar arched partitions follow same plan as floors above. Remnant of brick paving. A cellar stair is similarly located as the original -- under the staircase.
3. Wall construction: Brick, Flemish bond with carefully tooled joints on facade, common bond elsewhere. Stone arches with key, stone sills, distinguish original windows in main block. A watertable of moulded stone across front is an unusual refinement which occurs here at a time when the watertable itself is beginning to disappear locally.
4. Stoop, bulkhead: Aquia stone stoop and steps with nosing, wrought iron railing with turned balusters, brass finials; wrought iron footscraper. Opening to cellar at sidewalk level shows up in 1936 photograph, but has since been eliminated.
5. Chimneys: A pair of high inside end chimneys at south end of front block. The ell chimney serving the original kitchen is an original feature; a second in the more recent hyphen is rather recent.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The wood doorway is a smaller and simplified version of that of the City Hotel addition at Gadsby's Tavern. The keystone is reeded; the jambs are flush paneled and the door itself has eight panels, sunk outside and in but in slight relief against the background.
  - b. Windows and shutters: The windows for the most part are twelve light over twelve light double hung sash. The nature of the property and the openness at the north permitted the installation of windows to the improvement of interior lighting. Fixed slat shutters on front.
7. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Gable roof with paired dormers

front and rear. The former are pilastered and have round-headed sash. A trapdoor and accompanying weathering of the slate bespeak a Widow's or Captain's Walk, a feature which is recalled by some of the oldest inhabitants. A ladder leads from the attic to the space above.

- b. Cornice: An arched and coved cornice with underlying dentil moulding is an unusual type in Alexandria.

#### Technical Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: Here the town house plan with side hall is characteristic, but the original kitchen was built as a dependency. The hyphen where it was joined to the main house was rounded so as not to interfere with the windows upstairs and down. This long two-story ell with one-story extension supplies comfortable living quarters. A later kitchen wing, now modernized and extended by a frame addition, opens off the dining room.
  2. Wall and ceiling finish: Plastered walls and ceilings with simple plaster cornices in the hall and parlor.
  3. Doorways and doors: Fluted pilasters and keyed archway frame the simple stairway with square balusters. The founded handrail of southern pine sets the half-round motif for the chair rail which ascends all the way to the finished attic. In the front hall the chair rail exhibits an unusual triple gouging and that in the parlor has a guinoche design.
  4. Trim: Simple architrave moulding. In the parlor the windows are recessed and the panels and the folding shutters show the same treatment as the door: likewise there are interior shutters in the dining room.
  5. Hardware: Wrought iron and brass box lock hardware. A pair of paneled shutters on kitchen ell have wrought iron strap hinges which may be original.
- The wrought iron brackets of snow stops, to be observed in the 1936 photographs, were apparently removed and inserted in the north and south gables for fastening vines.

#### D. Site:

1. General setting: The Vowell-Snowden House faces eastward on South Lee Street and originally had a clear sweep of the Potomac River below the hill. Most of the half acre site remains, well landscaped with flagstone terrace and grape arbor, rose garden & tennis court.
2. Enclosures: A feature of this town estate is an open enclosure along Lee Street consisting of brick piers filled between with local brick wall and wrought iron

- panels. A high brick wall along Franklin Street affords absolute privacy.
3. Outbuildings: The contemporary brick stable still stands along the Franklin Street line and immediately adjacent is a carriage entrance leading into the grounds.

Prepared by Worth Bailey  
Consultant for the Historic  
Alexandria Foundation  
July 1966

#### VOWELL-SNOWDEN STABLE

Location: Franklin Street, between Lee and Fairfax Streets, Alexandria, Virginia

Present Owner: Justice and Mrs. Hugo L. Black

Present Use: Shop and Storage

Brief Statement: The Vowell-Snowden Stable and Coach House

of Significance: is a fine example of a once common type dependency building of which few now remain in Alexandria.

#### HISTORICAL INFORMATION

- A. Physical History:
1. This building shares the same history as that detailed in the HABS study for the Vowell-Snowden House Survey.
  2. Date of erection: Attribution: 1798-1800
  3. Notes on alterations and additions: Justice Black has made necessary repairs, but only one design change in substituting wide vehicular openings to serve a garage function. On the northwest corner at the rear, a two-story addition with shed roof, erected previous to his ownership, became a studio.

#### B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

Reference has been made to the comprehensive history of the Vowell-Snowden House itself, yet the Alexandria Land and Personal Property Assessments of 1810-12, in the Virginia State Library, shed some light on the probable accommodations supplied by this structure. For these three years we read:

1810, Vol. 27, p. 19

Thomas Vowell, jun.-

2 Male Tithables; 2 Stories;  
2 Cows, 1 2-wheeled carriage;  
1 male dog.

1811, Vol. 27, p. 19

Thomas Vowell, jun.-

1 Male Tithable; 2 Stories;  
1 Horse; 2 Cows; 1 2-wheeled  
Carriage; 1 Male Dog.

Thomas Vowell, jun. - 4 Male Tithables; 2 Stories;  
1 Horse; 2 Cows; 1 2-wheeled  
Carriage; 1 Male dog.

The two-wheeled carriage was a vehicle also called a chaise or chair. Apparently at the time the tax returns were made in 1810, Vowell was between "horses". His cows may have shared the stalls with the horse.

Prepared by Worth Bailey  
in collaboration with  
The Historic Alexandria Foundation  
Mrs. Hugh B. Cox, President  
January 1967

### ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. General Statement:
1. Architectural character: As a rare specimen of a characteristic utilitarian building type of the Federal period, its representative nature and reference value confer distinction.
  2. Condition of fabric: Exterior in good condition; interior relatively intact.
- B. Technical Description of the Exterior:
1. Overall dimensions: Approximately 28'6" x 18'; one story and loft. Addition to original structure very evident in plan and elevation.
  2. Foundation: Brick.
  3. Wall construction: Flemish bond on south (street) elevation; common elsewhere, headers are irregularly spaced, occurring at intervals of three or five courses. Brick size 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 4 (7 rows constitute 18" height).
  4. Chimney: Relatively modern.
  5. Openings:
    - a. Doorways and doors: Board-and-batten pedestrian door in southwest corner original, but louvered panel a later improvisation; worth noting is the ovolo moulding with filets as the chief decorative treatment of frame. Double vehicular doors modern.
    - b. Ventilators in gables: Vertical apertures under apex of roof, now closed with masonry, but discernible in brickwork from inside.
  6. Roof:
    - a. Shape, covering: Gabled with ridge running east-west; composition.
    - b. Framing: Wood and obviously a replacement; original plates more or less intact with tie beams dividing the loft into three sections. The extensions of walls above floor give added head space to this area.

- c. Cornice, eaves: Simple wood mouldings replacing original work.

C. Technical Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans: Behind the southwest door a narrow room, perhaps intended for the groom, runs the depth of the building. At the north end there is a narrow board-and-batten door which originally opened to the garden and in the northeast corner a similar one opening into a center space, defined by the present cement floor but more particularly by the brick footing of a cross partition. At the rear is a six-over-six light double hung window approximately centered in the rear wall of this space. Both areas are plastered and the details of the installation (brickwork and plaster) suggest that the window may have been an afterthought, but installed during construction. This space is believed to be the actual coach room.

The adjoining section to the east reveals a hardpacked earth floor, while the whitewashed walls and ceiling further suggest that here were the stalls. There would have been sufficient space for about three of them. The rear wall now has a door communicating with the garden, but that is definitely a later feature.

2. Stairs: Open ladder type stair with modern treads and railings rises north-south along the east wall of the Stable.
3. Flooring: The so-called groom's quarters displays narrow pine boards, probably replacing an earlier installation. In the loft are many random-width pine boards which arrest attention. The appearance of the numerous peg holes and a great many unfashioned sections suggest the probability of salvage, perhaps from the stalls below stairs.

Incidentally, the loft floor joists are size  $9\frac{1}{2}$ " x 3" and are laid 24' on center. From the vantage point of the loft one can determine that the laths used for the plaster ceiling below are sawn.

4. Trim: All openings identified as original display the ovolo-filet mouldings. Baseboards with bead appear in the groom's room.
5. Hardware: Sparse, but nevertheless an interesting and varied lot: strap hinges; butt hinges, open face spring latch and downspout strap.

- D. Size: The Vowell-Snowden stable faces south on Franklin Street. The facade marks the property line which is continued eastward by gateway and high brick wall to the corner of Lee Street. Worth noting is a stone splash block at the southeast corner of the structure.

Prepared by Worth Bailey  
Consultant for the Historic  
Alexandria Foundation  
May 1967