

# HIGHLIGHTS OF THE HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY AND CARTOGRAPHY OF ARLINGTON COUNTY AND CONTIGUOUS AREAS OF VIRGINIA: PRIOR TO 1870

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## The Physical Landscape

Near Fairfax Stone, an historical marker in the Appalachian Plateau where West Virginia and Maryland are bounded by a dividing line, a tiny stream, the North Branch of the Potomac River, has its origin. From this beginning the Potomac River meets and absorbs the waters of many creeks, streams, and rivers to swell its volume to considerable dimensions in its wide confluence with the Chesapeake Bay some 400 miles to the southeast. During its passage across the valleys between age-old ridges in the Appalachian Mountains its channel is the Shenandoah River. Then flowing through the deepwater gap at Harper's Ferry in the Blue Ridge its current is accelerated by confinement to a relatively narrow channel in the hard rock comprising the Piedmont. Immediately above Georgetown the river plunges in spectacular fury across the crystalline rocks at Great Falls. Beyond the river loses its rapid flow to Chesapeake Bay through a southeastward trending estuary. Below Georgetown the Potomac is near grade and deposits much of its sediment, and it is ceaselessly under the command of the rhythmic ebb and flow of the relentless force of the tide.

The creeks, runs, and streams that flow generally north and east across Arlington County and adjacent lands deposit their sediments into the Potomac River and in most instances have filled its valley bottoms and choked the natural drainage.

The Potomac River which comprises the eastern and northern natural boundary of the county has played a dominant role in the settlement and land use of the region. In all instances the natural mouth of the streams have been filled with a delta that extends out into the Potomac. At low tide the considerable extent of this deposit of silt becomes everywhere apparent.

The pattern of the Potomac River and the contributory streams is largely a product of the geological and physiographic base across which they have etched their course. The so-called Northern Neck of Virginia in which our area is located includes two physiographic regions: (1) the Atlantic Coastal

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\* Based on a talk given before the Arlington Historical Society on January 8, 1971. This presentation was with black and white and color slide reproductions of maps and related illustrations in the National Archives and in the Library of Congress.

Plain, and (2) the Piedmont Plateau. The boundary between these two provinces, often referred to as the Fall Line, is

“ . . . sinuous and ill-defined being marked mainly by the feathering out of the softer Cretaceous formations as they lap up onto the border crystalline rocks of the Piedmont Plateau. The boundary is most marked in the stream valleys where the softer strata have been more easily eroded.”

This Fall Line or transition zone between the two provinces is a thin belt of rapid descent of 30-100 feet into the coastal plain roughly along a line between Georgetown south to Woodbridge, Virginia. The Fall Line often was a belt in which mills were built to take advantage of falls for power.

The landscape comprising the area in the Piedmont Plateau includes especially low, dissected, eroded hills. The area eastward beyond the Fall Line and peripheral to the Potomac River comprising the coastal plain, includes low sedimentary riverine terraces of recent origin extending out across a tidewater flat. Drainage through this region is generally meandering and sluggish. Much of the coastal plain bordering on the Potomac River comprises long, heavily-silted estuaries that are frequently covered with densely matted growths of water chestnuts, on each side of which the land is gently rolling. These tidal estuaries are a characteristic feature of the entire Potomac River below Great Falls; in many of them the water is saline and brackish. A striking characteristic of this tidewater lowland is the effect of the daily ebb and flow of the tide on the outline and appearance of the shoreline and particularly the estuaries. The excesses of soil erosion and the careless habits of man are everywhere apparent during low tide. The unwanted bric-a-brac and pollution of so-called “modern living” are also apparent during low tide along the full length of the Potomac River. Most of this tidewater lowland has been considerably altered by man to fit his variant plans for maximum use, especially for settlement.

Originally the county was covered by dense forests of hardwood trees interspersed with stands of red cedar and Virginia pine. In some places there were colonies of hemlock. Yellow poplar and other hardwoods grew near the Potomac. On drier sites inland oak and scattered Virginia pine were dominant. Chestnut trees were found on the higher terraces. Except for a very few small protected stands, this luxurious natural vegetation was destroyed by the axe and fire during the initial half century of agricultural settlement. This natural growth has been supplanted by red, white, pin, black, post, blackjack, and chestnut oaks, and hickory, beech, poplar, black locust, maple, dogwood, gum sassafras, and holly. Throughout much of the forest are scattered stands of Virginia pine.

This luxuriant natural landscape was viewed with almost a measure of reverence by the early explorers, among them Father Andrew White who, in 1634, recorded with vivid clarity that

“This is the sweetest and greatest river I have seene, so that the Thames is but a little finger to it. There are noe marshes or swamps about it,

but solid firme ground, with great variety of woode not choaked up with undershrubs, but commonly so farre distant from each other as a coach and fower horses may travel without molestation.

"The soyle . . . is excellent so that we cannot set downe a foot, but tread on strawberries, raspies, fallen mulberrie vines, accorns, walnutts, saxafras, etc; and those in the wildest woods. The ground is commonly a black mould above, and a foot within ground of a readish colour. All is high woods except where the Indians have cleared for corn. It abounds with delicate springs which are our best drinke."

### The Aboriginal Landscape

From various published sources and manuscript accounts of travelers and careful observers during the period of exploration and initial settlement of the Potomac River lowland prior to about the mid-18th century we may make certain reasonable generalizations. The aborigines of the area were of Algonquian stock. Their chief town, "Petomek" (the place where something is brought) was situated on an estuary of the Potomac Creek. Various bands of relatively small population were established in semipermanent settlements at or on the necks of land that extended into the main river. Favorably situated on one of the primary east-west trade routes and close to the major north-south Indian trading path at or near the base of the Fall Line, these Indian societies had a relatively highly developed and specialized culture. The Potomac waterway tapped a far inland natural resource and continued an unobstructed path south to the other centers of advanced Indian culture located on the lower Chesapeake. With such favorable resources and location it was inevitable that these peoples should become important traders. As early as 1619 a delegation of Potomac Indians called at Jamestown to request the English to send up two ships with items for trade as they had a bumper crop of corn. Trade by the Indians was conducted over long distances; for example, copper from the mines of the Lake Superior region was an item of trade. Items of Indian manufacture that were traded extensively included specialized resources such as shell currency, "peake" and "roanoke", body dyes, arrowheads, various oils, and furs.

During the 17th and early 18th centuries the principal Indian settlement in our general region was that of the Piscataways near the mouth of the Piscataway creek in Maryland opposite Mount Vernon. Other important semipermanent villages were those of the Doegs or Dogues known as Permacocook on Chipawansic Island, on nearby Maryland Point, and in tidewater Fairfax county; the Tauxnent on the Occoquan, the Namasingakent on Dogue Run; the Mayaones on Piscataway Creek; the Nacotchtanke below the Eastern Branch (Anacostia); and the Namerough-vena on Alexander's Island. These settlements were in close proximity to the primary waterway—the Potomac River.

The Indians were agriculturalists and hunters whose villages were built

near their fields which occupied cleared sites or Indian open fields. Perhaps the best of the first sketches of a village built and occupied by Indians of the Middle Atlantic coast, and probably fairly representative of the more permanent villages in our general locality, is a beautiful watercolor drawing of the unenclosed village of Secotan on the Pamlico River in North Carolina. It was made by John White who accompanied the Raleigh expedition in the 1580's. Trees were felled by girdling and by burning through the base. Crops and dried meats were stored in the village (which sometimes was enclosed within a stockade). The principal crops included corn, beans, pumpkins, cucumbers, various melons, gourds, and potatoes. Wild peaches, raspberries, strawberries, black walnuts, hickory nuts, chinquapins, and acorns were gathered. Deer, turkeys, ducks, bears, and squirrels especially were a source of meat. During the spring and summer months the Indian diet was supplemented by fish, especially sturgeon and herring, and by various shellfish, all of which were dried for storage. Indian manufactures included baskets and mats, wooden bowls, dishes, and spoons, and clay tobacco pipes which were traded for skins and other objects. Dugout canoes were shaped from selected felled trees.

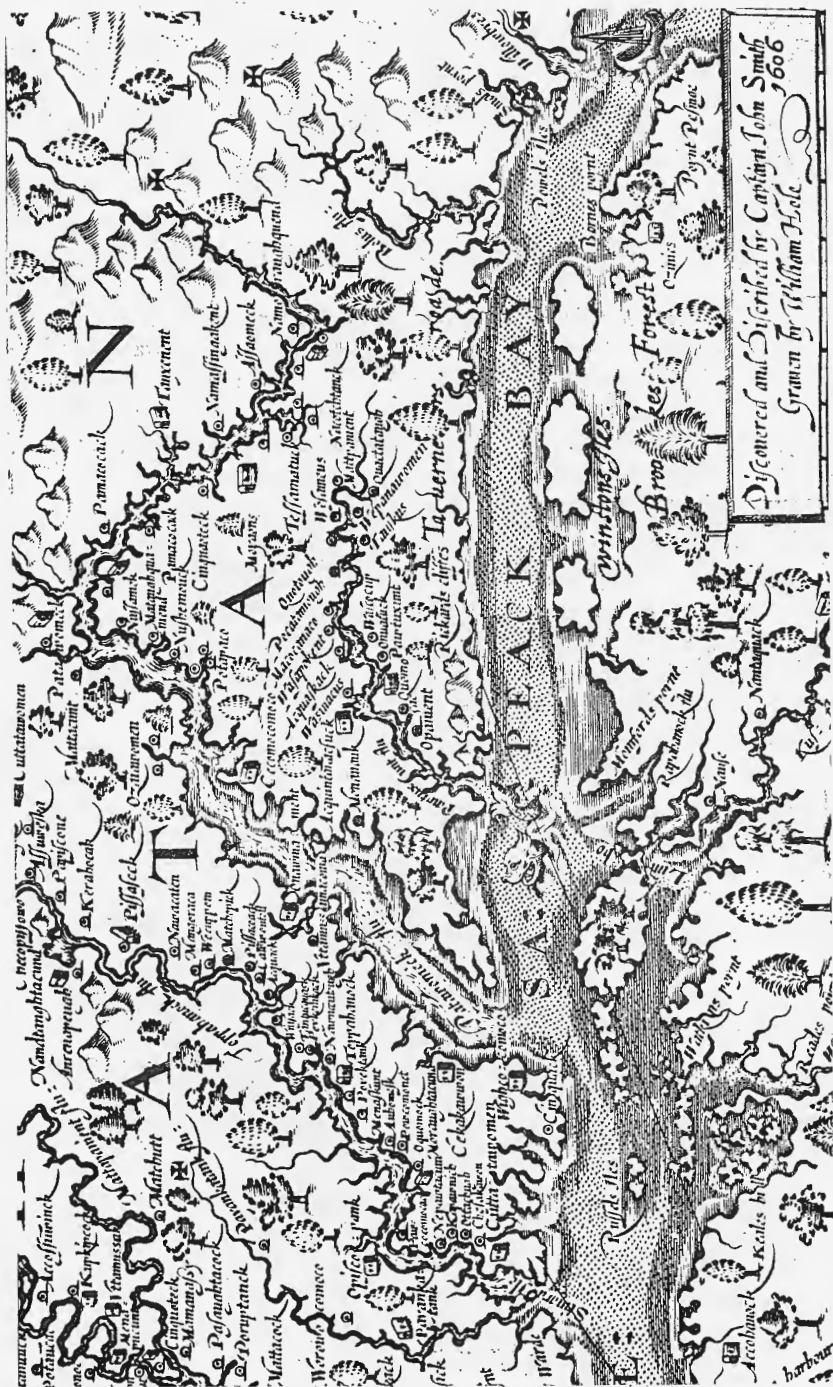
During the 17th and early 18th centuries the total Indian population in the area did not at any one time exceed more than 3,000 persons and they were scattered through some dozen villages. By about 1750, however, the indigenous population had almost vanished. European settlers had taken over the land and their numbers were increasing rapidly. The Indians had either moved west, been absorbed by other tribes, or died off.

### **Exploration and Initial Settlement: 1607-1690**

After the first crude maps of the New World issued early in the 16th century and the pioneering on the spot surveys and compilation of maps by John White in 1585 there was a spate of maps of the Middle Atlantic Coast all of which were based on superficial or cursory exploration or more often imagination. Most of them include numerous estuarine indentations of the coast some of which might be identified as being Chesapeake Bay.

The first map bearing some semblance of fact is one of the coast of southeastern U.S. compiled by John White, capable cartographer of the short-lived Raleigh settlement in North Carolina in 1585. Compiled mostly from Indian information, it shows the large entrance to Chesapeake Bay with the village of the "Chesepiac" Indians.

Perhaps the first reasonably accurate account of the natural landscape is in the record of Captain John Smith's remarkable voyage up the Potomac River in the spring of 1608, barely a year after the initial landing and establishment of the Jamestown Colony near the mouth of the James River. With his published account (1612) is the equally remarkable map of Virginia that locates Indian settlements or villages vicinal to the Potomac River. His brief description of the region of our interest notes that



Captain John Smith's Map of Virginia, reproduced from an engraving in the Library of Congress

"The fourth river is called *Patawomeke*, 6 or 7 myles in breadth. *It is* navigable 40 myles, and fed as the rest with many sweet rivers and springs, which fall from the bordering hills. These hills many are planted, and yeelde no lesse plentie and variete of fruit, then the river exceedeth with abundance of fish . . . The river above this place [Little Falls] marketh his passage down a low pleasant valley overshadowed in many places with high rocky mountains; . . ."

Smith also notes that in this area

". . . The river itself [the Potomac], turneth Northeast, and it is still a navigable streame . . ."

Smith confused the Eastern Branch with the Potomac.

The first permanent English settlement in North America was established at Jamestown on the James River in 1607. From this nucleus, the population spread northward into the numerous estuaries of Chesapeake Bay and westward up the main rivers toward the Fall Line. So great was the pressure for the rich tobacco lands adjacent to the rivers emptying into Chesapeake Bay that the Virginia Colony had "ranged" (surveyed) the lands up to the vicinity of Mount Vernon and established titles to the lands as early as 1657. In 1647, Giles Brent, a Marylander, crossed the Potomac to the north shore of Aquia Creek near its mouth. Accordingly he became the "first citizen of the Potomac Freshes" and the northernmost resident. There is much uncertainty and not a little confusion as to the location and successive early ownership of the lands between Mount Vernon and Great Falls.

The rangers or early surveyors for the colony sailed upstream, identified and named successive necks of lands separated by estuaries, and platted the lands between the rivers and creeks. These first landmarks were identified numerically. In 1653 the Virginia Assembly established Westmoreland County as including lands

". . . ffrom Machoactoke river where Mr. Cole lives; and so upwards to the ffalls of the great river of Pawtomake above the Necostins towne . . ."

Cartographic knowledge of the Virginia Colony that we received by arm-chair cartographers and geographers in Europe resulted in a wide variety of maps depending on the accuracy of the source and the imagination of the delineator.

A ". . . Map of Virginia discovered to ye Hills . . .," said to have been made by one Virginia Farrer in London about 1650, is an excellent example. Here is a strange mixture of truth, imagination, and perhaps even willful misrepresentation of terrain. Beyond the mountains, presumably the Appalachians, the continent slopes westward to those ". . . happysshore . . . ten dayes march . . ." to ". . . The Sea of China and the Indies." This map east of the Appalachians appears to be derived from Smith's map, the area to the west from imagination.

One of the most remarkable maps of the 17th century was compiled by the Bohemian, Augustine Hermann, who had settled in Maryland by 1660.

In that year by agreement with Lord Baltimore he had acquired Bohemia Manor in Cecil County as the price for preparing a map of Maryland and the contiguous lands of Virginia. Compilation of this map from surveys required nearly the full decade of the 1660's. The Potomac River was shown with a relatively high degree of accuracy to Potomack Falls, and so was Anacostian Island.

By the end of 1657 twenty-seven land hunters had ranged and recorded claims of 28,000 acres of land in Westmoreland fronting onto the Potomac River below Great Falls. It was during this period that Great Hunting and Four Mile Run Creeks, and Analostan Island were identified as primary landmarks. It was generally recognized that the region above Great Hunting Creek had potential for profitable English settlement. However, Indian occupants and their animosity contained the frontier. In 1669 a Welsh sea captain, Robert Howson, obtained a patent to 6,000 acres which was described as being ". . . upon the freshes of Potowmeck River above the dividing branches of the same . . ." Subsequent surveys indicated that this patent was on and above Great Hunting Creek and that it extended upstream as far as Analostan Island. In the same year he transferred his title to the surveyor John Alexander.

The increasing pressure of settlers on these lands and the apparent inability or lack of interest by the British authorities to protect the frontier led to the ill-fated Bacon's Rebellion in the 1670's and subsequently to the Susquehannock War. As a result of these frontier wars settlers who had attempted to occupy the Northern Neck retreated to the area below Aquia Creek.

### **The Development of an Agricultural Economy: 1690-1783**

Permanent settlement of the Potomac River Valley above Occoquan River began in earnest during the 1690's. First the tracts of land comprising the necks or peninsulas between the estuaries along the Potomac River were settled. Quickly the forests were felled and the fertile soil was planted with tobacco and a few staple crops. Wharves were built near the river to facilitate the export of tobacco and the import of manufactured goods and the wide variety of special items required for the maintenance of an essentially self-contained plantation economy.

The plantation house, at first a small dwelling on an elevated site with a commanding view of the river, generally was enlarged or fundamentally remodeled as the fortunes and the needs of the planter increased. Larger plantations of several thousand acres or more became, in fact, small self-contained communities with a yeomanry of craftsman as well as farmers. The dominant role of all of the activities within these plantations was the cultivation of tobacco.

The price that was to be paid for such large-scale emphasis on tobacco

was great. Yields decreased after the third or fourth year of cultivation, and there was a growing amount of sheet erosion, gullying, and general soil impoverishment. Planters bore an inescapable witness to the increasing rapidity with which the streams, especially the estuaries, were filled with the fertile sediments derived from the farms; yet there were few among them who found a satisfactory solution, except to acquire and to use or misuse new lands progressively farther inland. Shortly after mid-century a few inhabitants, especially the plantation owners on the Potomac River tide-water, recognized the warnings and were actively engaged in a variety of practices to conserve and to restore soil fertility.

Aware of the growing pressure of farmers and settlers on the acquisition of lands in the piedmont and anxious to have an accurate map of his extensive holdings in the Northern Neck, Lord Fairfax in 1736 appointed William Mayo and several other surveyors to "... examine the main branch of the Potowmack river called Cohungoruton to the head spring thereof." One of the principal results of this survey was the first reasonably accurate map of the region, certainly of the Potomac River and the tributaries thereto. Mayo completed this herculean task with a party of four surveyors and thirteen assistants, six of whom were chain-carriers, for a sum of three shillings per day.

In the *Virginia Gazette*, published in Williamsburg, January 5, 1737, was a proposal "... to make an exact survey of the [Virginia] colony, and print and publish a map thereof in which shall be laid down the bays, navigable rivers, with soundings, counties, parishes, towns, and gentlemen's seats, with whatever is useful or remarkable ... ." The remarkable map that resulted from this survey was completed in 1749 and printed in 1751. The principal compilers were Joshua Frye, professor of mathematics and surveying at the College of William and Mary, and Peter Jefferson, father of Thomas Jefferson, a noted land surveyor. This highly creditable map gave a reasonably accurate cartographic image of Virginia and was revised and republished in several subsequent editions.

A fundamental map of Virginia was republished in several editions each of which were brought up-to-date with certain cultural information such as roads, sites of new towns and settlements, and mills and mines. The last edition of the map was published in 1775. It was included at a reduced scale by Thomas Jefferson with his *Notes on Virginia* published in 1787. On the 1781 edition the roads leading into Alexandria from across the piedmont to the west, Camerons Ordinary (or tavern), Mason's Island, and 4-Mile creek are shown.

Planters in the area above the confluence of the Occoquan by mid-century generally realized that diversification of the economy was essential to survival and that reliance on tobacco would doom them to failure. Accordingly they began to export other crops, trade in western lands, enter professions, raise slaves, introduce and experiment with new crops, fertilizers, mulches,



manures, and livestock, especially cattle, and even to establish some forms of industry, however elementary. The gradual turn to simple forms of industry during the second half of the century was symptomatic and gave rise to the beginnings of profitable non-agricultural pursuits.

Toward midcentury many of the large holdings of land behind the tidewater plantation were progressively subdivided, sold, and resold. As the lands in the tidewater area became impoverished there was continuous pressure to open up new lands to the west. Tobacco was grown on many of the newly cleared lands on the piedmont. When ready for market it was moved to wharves and warehouses situated on the Potomac River. The crop was shipped in specially constructed hogsheads over routes that came to be called "tobacco rolling roads". Interestingly, the principal routes first followed were Indian paths and then more direct and clearly defined roads that led to inspection stations and warehouses. Apparently the rolling of hogsheads was continued for many years after wagon transportation was introduced and improved roads became standard. During the second half of the 18th century three main roads crossed or entered the Alexandria-Arlington area. Two originated in the Shenandoah Valley, one striking thru Vestals Gap and the other striking thru Williams Gap in the Blue Ridge and entered Alexandria. The intercolony post road entered Alexandria from the southwest and crossed the Potomac to Annapolis. These became the primary routes for migration of settlers moving west to settle the Shenandoah Valley and beyond. The northernmost of these two routes passed thru the southern part of Arlington County and is roughly present-day Route 7. During the latter part of the period a route led from Alexandria to Georgetown. Rather primitive roads and paths connected the principal plantations.

The strong trend to diversification of crops in the region led to the production of various grains, especially wheat and corn. In order to market these crops it was necessary to mill them. This required the building of grist and flour mills at strategic sites on waterways, and, significantly, when possible, on sites along the Fall Line. An excellent example of one of these mills is the restored George Washington mill a short distance northwest of Mount Vernon. There were many others like it on the coastal plain and on the piedmont. Not only did these mills grind the grains of the planter-owner but they also processed grains grown in the far hinterland.

At mid-century tiny villages came into being at strategic spots along or at the Potomac River above Occoquan. Comprised of only a few homes, a warehouse or two, an office, and a store, these villages served as a kind of collecting point for tobacco and for the sale, barter, and exchange of manufactured articles. The merchants, usually Scots, were representatives of large firms in London and Glasgow. Of all these sites, only Georgetown and Alexandria developed into permanent settlements. The founding of these settlements in the late 1740's was an event of considerable consequence to the up-

per Potomac River tidewater area. Though the primary incentive for establishing Alexandria and to some extent Georgetown was to provide a facility for tobacco warehousing, by the early 1770's wheat and corn had become the dominant crops. Shipbuilding also developed. Cargoes included especially flour, bread, shingles, tea, tar, barrel staves, iron, tobacco, cordage, and smoked herring. Shortly before the Revolutionary War, Alexandria was listed as ranking fourth in trade in the colonies, surpassed only by New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. International trade favored the growth of both Georgetown and Alexandria. A primary response to the growth of these two settlements was the accelerated development and extension of agriculture in the so-called Northern Neck region of Virginia during the late colonial and early Federal period.

### **Expansion of Influence into the Hinterland: 1783-1869**

The period between the Revolutionary War and the Civil War bound the area inextricably into the growth and development of the National Capital. As Washington grew and its administrative functions increased so did its reliance on the hinterland for natural, economic, and human resources. Though the area's dominant contribution to this growth was agriculture its history, particularly that of Alexandria, was closely responsive to the demands for river, canal, and land transportation routes. Indeed, the fate of Alexandria as an urban satellite of Washington and as a competitor of Georgetown, was largely determined by transport facilities and the development of a competitive transportation net.

During this period prior to the Civil War all of the region except Alexandria City was rural. Though agriculture was generally diversified, there was a tendency to emphasize the production of crops and livestock so necessary to the residents of Washington City, particularly dairy, vegetable, fruit, and poultry products. Because of its close proximity to Washington the agricultural economy was more stable than it was in areas remote from the City. Movement of goods from farm to market, that is to Alexandria and to Washington City, emphasized the urgent need to develop and to improve a network of roads, canals, water routes, and finally railroads.

One of the first orders of business after Congress created the District of Columbia in 1791, in which Washington City was the nucleus was to accurately survey and mark its metes and bounds. The talented and reputable surveyor, Andrew Ellicott, was commissioned to survey and mark the exterior boundary of the District, a square ten miles by ten miles. A stone marker was set at each carefully measured mile along the boundary. Ellicott's somewhat generalized reasonably accurate topographic map of the area completed from surveys in 1791-1792, shows the principal elements of terrain, the creeks and runs, and the successive riverine terraces. Unfortunately, the map did not delineate much of the cultural landscape.

You will recall that in 1846 all of the District of Columbia south of the

Potomac River was retroceded to Virginia. Alexandria once again became a town in its own right. Arlington County in 1870 was created out of all the land beyond Alexandria that was part of the portion of the District returned to Virginia.<sup>1</sup>

Not all of the mile posts originally so carefully sited along the line of survey have been preserved. Fortunately, the initial survey post on Jones Point, the southernmost marker, is fairly intact, though it is quite weathered and occasionally inundated by floodwaters. This stone marker was set in 1791 with appropriate ceremonies attended by leading citizens.

Upon his return to Virginia from his brief visit to England in 1789 one William Tatham was persuaded by Governor Beverly Randolph and the Privy Council of Virginia to become Geographer-in-Charge of the newly organized State Geographical Department in Richmond, perhaps the first such department in the United States. Tatham accepted this assignment with much enthusiasm and lively, perhaps too lively, imagination. One of his principal planned projects was to be the compilation and drafting of a large-scale county map of Virginia, in which Thomas Jefferson must have played a large role. Apparently Tatham had full access to the resources of the archives of the State and carried on his work in adequate quarters. Early in 1790 he distributed a brochure about the map and related text. But the map died aborning.

Tatham's plans for a large-scale county map of Virginia and those espoused by Frye and Jefferson before him were echoed by Thomas Jefferson in his letter to Governor Nicholas dated April 19, 1818. The plan was approved and detailed surveys were begun county by county. John Wood, Professor of Mathematics at Petersburg Academy, was named director of this comprehensive survey. Many of the county manuscript compilations are in the State Archives in Richmond, several are in the National Archives. The survey was completed by Herman Böyë and published as a state map in 1827 and in successive editions to 1859.

The several reliable maps of the region published during the first half of the 19th century reveal much about the development of roads, canals, water routes, and railroads. An act of 1795 by the Virginia Assembly noted that there were

“. . . A great many waggons which use the public roads leading from the northwestern parts of the state to the town of Alexandria . . .”

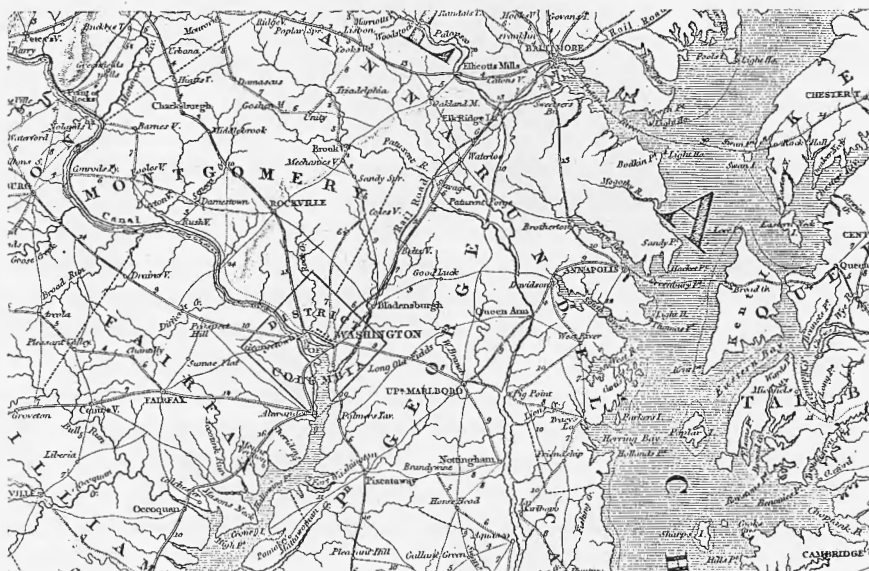
During the first several decades of the 19th century, acts were passed to survey for and to lay out from Alexandria several turnpikes west and northwest toward the Shenandoah Valley and the Potomac River. Gates were erected at strategic locations, tolls were taken, and appropriate maintenance was carried on. These turnpikes effectively linked Alexandria with a pro-

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<sup>1</sup> Ed. note: "A History of the Boundaries of Arlington County, Virginia," Office of the County Manager, Arlington, Va.: 1967. (2nd Ed.).

ductive hinterland and, in turn made it dependent on her. Stages, the mail, and a large volume of transport moved over these routes. A good example of a survey of the route of one of these roads in the early 1820's is shown on a manuscript map of the Middle Turnpike from Alexandria City to Difficult Run.

In 1839 David Burr, one-time cartographer to the House of Representatives published an atlas of the United States showing the principal roads and stage roads. The primary roads in the Alexandria to Georgetown area are shown in part of his map of Virginia.



Burr, David H. Map of Virginia, Maryland and Delaware exhibiting the Post Offices, Post Roads, Canals, Railroads, etc., 1839. Scale 1:650,000.

During the late colonial and early Federal periods the principal north-south stage and post route crossed the Potomac by ferry, either in the vicinity of Alexandria or near Georgetown. With the building of Washington City and the rerouting of this principal stage route through that city, Alexandria interests incorporated the Washington Bridge Company to construct the Long Bridge across the Potomac River to connect Washington with Alexandria. Contemporaneously

“ . . . the Washington and Alexandria Turnpike Company opened a new road between the town of Alexandria and Bridgepoint on Alexander’s Island opposite the City of Washington and the construction of another from the western extremity of the causeway leading from Alexander’s Island to the boundary line of the District of Columbia towards the Little River Turnpike Road in the State of Virginia. Both of these roads have since been landmarks, the one as the lower road between Long Bridge and Alexandria which parallels the railroad and

the upper road via Bailey's Cross Roads, to the Little River Turnpike below Annandale."

Begun in 1808, with imported Irish labor, the Long Bridge was completed in 1809. Tolls on the bridge paid the owners handsomely. An entry in *Niles Register* for November 1813, notes that

"... The drawhouse on the Washington Bridge was consumed by fire, which will cause a serious interruption to travel for a great many vehicles pass daily north and south ..."

Canals played an important, albeit expensive role in the history of the region, especially during the period prior to the 1850's. George Washington and others were responsible for construction of the so-called Potowmack Canal around the Virginia side of Great Falls during the 1780's and 1790's. By 1826 the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Company began work on its vast canal project linking Baltimore with the Ohio Valley using the Potomac River Corridor. In 1829 it acquired the property and rights of the Potowmack Company;. As part of its extensive nation-wide internal improvements program the Federal Government in 1827 surveyed a route for a canal from Georgetown to Alexandria.

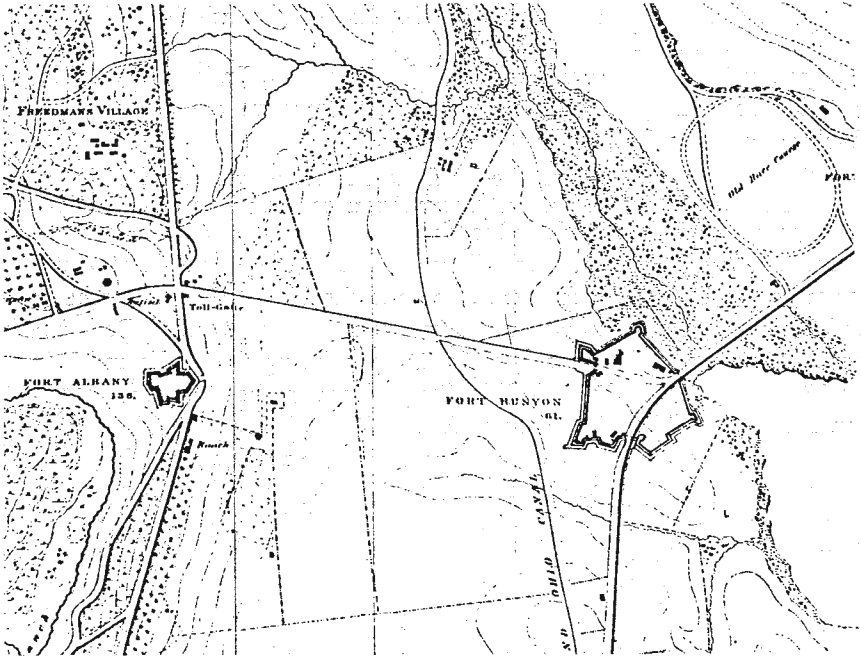
In 1827 Alexandria subscribed \$250,000 to the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal project, providing that a proposed Alexandria Canal could be linked with it. From this agreement grew the costly Alexandria-Georgetown Canal.<sup>2</sup> Wharves, piers, turning basins, and related works were constructed on the Potomac River between Montgomery and First Streets and below Washington Streets in Alexandria. On this first reasonably accurate large-scale map of the Virginia shore there is a wealth of information on roads, paths, farms, field patterns, vegetation, and houses. Failure of the canal to compete with the railroad resulted in the closing of the canal by 1887 and the loss of most of an investment of nearly \$1,250,000.

During the 1850's the first reasonably accurate large-scale detailed topographic surveys were made of the area of our interest. Among these especially were surveys by the U.S. Coast Survey. On the eve of the Civil War the Coast Survey published a large-scale topographic map with annotations in color showing the location of forts, camps, and roads.

A "Topographical Map of the Original District of Columbia and Environs Showing Fortifications around the City of Washington compiled by E. G. Arnold" published in 1862 notes the location of forts and batteries in the Arlington County-Alexandria area. But this map has added significance to us because it rather clearly shows the location of the railroads, principal roads, mills, the canal, principal runs and streams, and other historical sites. Though the detail of relief is highly generalized the principal features are readily recognized.

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<sup>2</sup>Ed. note: Maxine Goff Morgan: "A Chronological History of the Alexandria Canal," Parts I and II, *Arlington Historical Magazine*, Vol. 3, Nos. 1 and 2 (1965 and 1966).



U.S. Army Engineer Department Environs of Washington, D C. [1864?]  
Scale 1:10,500

To those of us who are interested in the history, historical geography, and historical cartography of Arlington County and circumjacent regions during the first several decades after the mid-19th century there is a treasure trove of information, particularly among the Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers in the National Archives. During the several years prior to the fratricidal war of 1861-1865, the Topographical Engineers of the War Department, aware of an impending national crisis, directed some of its remarkable talents to surveys for and compilation of a topographic map of the "Environs of Washington" on a very large scale, one mile to six inches.

The area covered in twelve sheets are shown on an index map. Sheets 4, 5, 7, and 8 together cover most of Arlington County. The manuscript map is unique in that apparently it has never been published. Here is a basic source of information about the physical and cultural landscape which is indispensable to us as local historians.

Near and after the end of the Civil War the United States Quartermaster Corps was required to make an inventory of all its properties in the environs of Washington. One of the most valuable records of this inventory are the plans and cartographic drawings of Fort Albany, Government Farm, Arlington Park Stables, Freedmans Village Headquarters and Freedmans Village plans.