Eighteenth-century Alexandria, Virginia, before the Revolution, 1749-1776

Thomas M. Preisser

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BEFORE THE REVOLUTION, 1749-1776.

The College of William and Mary in Virginia,
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Eighteenth-Century Alexandria, Virginia, before the Revolution, 1749-1776

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of History
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Thomas M. Preisser
1977
APPROVAL SHEET

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Commerce was the most important factor in the founding and expansion of colonial Alexandria, which was superbly situated to serve the economic needs of the northern Virginia Tidewater, Piedmont, and Valley regions. Although the town was the administrative, cultural, and religious center of Fairfax County, it probably would not have possessed these functions without the stimulus of trade. Its expanding economy enabled it to dominate the other towns of the Potomac River basin and to grow to a size of just under 2,000 by 1776.

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In many ways the Potomac community was very much a part of the existing order in Virginia. This can be seen most clearly in the social and cultural development of the town. In no other areas are the traditional elements of life within the colony more evident.

The coming of the Revolution was a time of crisis for the town merchants. Although many of them suffered as a result of the trade boycotts, Loyalism never became a viable movement locally. The Alexandria economy as a whole was disrupted, but not seriously damaged, by the events leading up to American independence.

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I am grateful to my son Evan for his patience in letting his father finish this project. Finally, I want to thank my wife Julie. I could not have completed this dissertation without her help; she will understand why it is dedicated to her.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to trace the development of the town of Alexandria, Virginia from its founding in 1749 to 1776. The study focuses on all aspects of its growth during this period: economic, administrative, social, and political.

Commerce was the most important factor in the founding and expansion of colonial Alexandria, which was superbly situated to serve the economic needs of the northern Virginia Tidewater, Piedmont, and Valley regions. Although the town was the administrative, cultural, and religious center of Fairfax County, it probably would not have possessed these functions without the stimulus of trade. Its expanding economy enabled it to dominate the other towns of the Potomac River basin and to grow to a size of just under 2,000 by 1776.

Alexandria's most important export commodities were tobacco, Indian corn, and, after the mid-1760s, wheat and flour. Its tradesmen imported a variety of processed goods and manufactured items for sale in northern Virginia. The handful of true merchants resident in the community were heavily outnumbered by the local factors, or agents, of firms situated outside of the colony. Because the decision-making centers for its trades were located away from the Chesapeake, Alexandria's industrial, maritime, and service components were very slow to develop. In an economic sense, the Potomac town was basically a shipping and distribution center for finished goods, foodstuffs, tobacco, and other commodities.

Early Alexandria was a prosperous, stable, and relatively peaceful town. Its peace and stability can be attributed to its size and to the fact that its residents lived in a society grounded in the principles of deference. While its co-optive Board of Trustees was dominated by an oligarchy of planters and merchants, the latter group handled most of the business of town governance.

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The coming of the Revolution was a time of crisis for the town merchants. Although many of them suffered as a result of the trade boycotts, Loyalism never became a viable movement locally. The Alexandria economy as a whole was disrupted, but not seriously damaged, by the events leading up to American independence.
Eighteenth-Century Alexandria, Virginia
before the Revolution, 1749-1776
INTRODUCTION

The advent of European settlement in the uplands of colonial Virginia led gradually to the development of several urban centers in the Potomac river basin. The study that follows deals with the largest of these towns, Alexandria, Virginia, during the period from 1749 to 1776. It will focus on the process of urbanization in this northern Chesapeake preindustrial community and will cover all aspects of its growth: economic, political, administrative, and cultural. Throughout the study, Alexandria's development will be compared with that of other pre- and early-industrial urban centers in North America.

Located across the Potomac from Washington, D.C., Alexandria has expanded dramatically since the early 1930's. Many of its citizens, who are resigned to hearing their city described as "the bedroom of the nation's capital," have retained a lively interest in the past. Several of them, along with a handful of admirers, have written monographs concerned with the earlier decades of the city's existence. Of these studies, seven focus on Alexandria in the eighteenth century.

Perhaps the best of these monographs is also the oldest; it is Mary G. Powell's The History of Old Alexandria, Virginia From July 13, 1749 to May 24, 1861 (Richmond, Va.: The

loosely-organized study of the river town. Although *Washington Walked Here* does not include footnotes, it does contain a limited bibliography of secondary sources. Finally, in 1969 John Stoessel completed a Master's thesis at the Catholic University of America on "The Port of Alexandria, Virginia, in the Eighteenth Century." Stoessel's eighty page study begins with the period prior to the town's founding in 1749 and ends at the turn of the century. His thesis is relatively strong in its coverage of monographic studies in colonial and early national Virginia and American history. However, the author makes use of only a limited range of primary sources relating to the growth of early Alexandria.

Each of the preceding studies was written in order to explore some facet of life in the eighteenth-century town. In none was any attempt made to exhaust the available sources in a comprehensive study. It is the intent of this dissertation to use all of the relevant primary sources, and a broad range of secondary material, in order to trace the development of colonial Alexandria.

This survey of pre-Revolutionary Alexandria is a case study of urbanization in a region where urban development proceeded very slowly. The key to the rapid growth of this Potomac town can be found in the expanding economy of northern Virginia. Although Alexandria owed its existence to trade, the nature of its economic life resulted in an uneven pace of community development. Its unbalanced growth notwithstanding, by the end of the colonial period Alexandria had far outstripped its rivals in the Potomac River basin. Despite the primacy
of economic factors in determining early Alexandria’s development, the climate of life there, the structure of its government, and the evolution of its cultural institutions all contributed to its unique growth.

This dissertation has been influenced to a significant extent by the work of a number of scholars in American urban history and related areas and disciplines. The studies of five men among many were particularly important in sharpening my understanding of the phenomenon of urbanization in preindustrial America. The men are Jacob M. Price, Walter Christaller, Carl Bridenbaugh, Richard C. Wade, and Sam Bass Warner, Jr.\(^1\) The theories of Price regarding the growth of American port towns and of Christaller regarding the hierarchy of central places were especially significant in shaping my chapters on the economic development of early Alexandria. This study will have achieved its goal if it adds, however modestly, to the understanding that these five men, their contemporaries, and their predecessors have brought to the process of urbanization.

In order to trace with the greatest degree of clarity the

expansion and change over time of the community of Alexandria, this dissertation is organized in both topical and chronological fashion. There are six chapters, an appendix, and a bibliography. The chapter numbers and accompanying titles are I. Alexandria: Inception and Early Years; II. The Economic Development of Alexandria: The Foundations of Economic Growth; III. The Economic Development of Alexandria: The Expansion of the Grain Trade; IV. Governing the Town; V. The Social and Cultural Development of a Community; and VI. Alexandria and the Coming of the Revolution.
Map 1  Northern Virginia and Maryland: 1775


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CHAPTER I

ALEXANDRIA: INCEPTION AND EARLY YEARS

In 1957, Jean Gottmann used the term Megalopolis to describe the six hundred mile long urban corridor stretching across the northeastern United States. Its northern terminus lay in Boston; Alexandria served as the final stopping point far to the southwest.¹ It was not always so, of course. Even the beginning student of American history can testify to the relative lack of urbanization in our colonial period. The region of the Potomac River basin in the northern Chesapeake furnishes a good example of our rural origins. By the end of the colonial era, the largest town of the basin, Alexandria, had a population of less than two thousand.

Neither Alexandria nor the county of which it was the administrative and commercial center grew very rapidly in the decades that followed the American Revolution. The population of Fairfax County actually declined in the thirty years from 1810 to 1840, then began a slow, steady increase. Around 1930 the county entered a period of explosive growth, becoming heavily urbanized by 1960.² Alexandria's expansion paralleled

¹Jean Gottmann, "Megalopolis, or the Urbanization of the Northeastern Seaboard," Economic Geography, XXXIII (July, 1957), 189-200.

that of the surrounding area. Its population climbed from 33,523 in 1940 to 118,000 by 1970.\(^3\) The expansion of both city and county was directly related to the growth of the federal government in Washington, D.C. It was during the Second World War that Alexandria acquired what Dean Sprague Rugg has labelled "dormitory suburb characteristics," a set of features which have remained to the present day.\(^4\)

The opening chapter of this dissertation focuses on the process of urbanization in the colonial Chesapeake and on the first few years of Alexandria's existence. Indeed, the development of colonial Alexandria cannot be understood apart from the broader context of urbanization in the colonial Chesapeake, with emphasis on colonial Virginia. The unsuccessful attempts in the seventeenth century to found towns will be considered briefly, as well as the more successful efforts in the following century.

Several factors contributed to Alexandria's founding and rapid expansion. Among these were the growth of the trans-atlantic economy; the increase in population of both colonial Virginia and the American colonies; the opening of the Virginia backcountry to settlement in the eighteenth century; the fortuitous location of the town; a fundamental change in the

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mechanism used to market exports from the colony; and the effect of the French and Indian War.

Each of these considerations points toward a theme of central importance in explaining the existence of early Alexandria. The rise in the eighteenth century in the level of economic activity, both quantitative and qualitative, in the northern Chesapeake underlay the development of the town. Although Alexandria soon became the religious and administrative center of Fairfax County, its expansion would have been checked at an early stage without the stimulus of commerce. Trade was the lifeblood of the Potomac settlement, as it was of dozens of other urban centers scattered throughout the Chesapeake.

I

It is a commonplace that the development of port towns in the colonial Chesapeake lagged well behind that in other regions of colonial America. Yet as early as the 1660s the assemblies of both Virginia and Maryland had begun passing legislation designed to encourage the formation of towns. In 1669, 1683, and 1684 the Maryland Assembly endorsed town acts "for the Advancement of Trade." Although the acts proved ineffective, the assembly's enthusiasm was obvious.5 Virginia led off with its first port act in 1655 and followed

5Henry J. Berkley, "Extinct River Towns of the Chesapeake Bay Region," Maryland Historical Magazine, XIX (June, 1924), 129; Lois Green Carr, "The Metropolis of Maryland": A Comment on Town Development Along the Tobacco Coast," Maryland Historical Magazine, LXIX (Summer, 1974), 132.
Colonial Virginians of the period seem genuinely to have been interested in creating a series of ports on the Chesapeake waterways. William Fitzhugh, for example, enthusiastically supported the idea and there were many more like him. As the century wore on, the legislators mixed elements of coercion and persuasion in their attempts to persuade their fellow settlers to trade through towns. In the 1705 "act for establishing ports and towns," all goods brought into Virginia after 1708 by water, excepting only servants, slaves and salt, had to be landed at a designated town. Additionally, all exported goods would have to be shipped from a town. The carrot was also used; in the 1680 law, planters who settled in the proposed port towns were to be exempted from a number of taxes. Further, this law also stayed for a five year period collection of debts owed by town residents.

Colonial leaders marshalled a variety of arguments in an effort to convince the skeptics that towns would be a boon to the Virginia economy. The Reverend Francis Makemie, an

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8 William Waller Hening, ed., The Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia, From the First Session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619, 13 vols. (Richmond, Philadelphia, and New York: Published for the editor, 1809-1833), III, 404-419; Rainbolt, "Absence of Towns," 348.
indefatigable fighter in the cause, presented the most persuasive
defer of these in an eloquent pamphlet published in London in 1705.
First, he suggested, towns would make trading easier and less
expensive; easier, because the planters could find a wide
variety of goods for sale in each of the towns, and thus
would not have to search around for the desired item; less
expensive, because the ship captains could offload their
cargoes and pick up colonial exports at one central location.
Second, towns would prevent the other American colonies from
profiting at Virginia's expense. With an infrastructure of
towns, no longer would Pennsylvania carry off Virginia grain
and return it in the form of flour; towns would facilitate the
growth of native Virginia manufactures. Third, towns would
attract and employ good artists and tradesmen, both of whom
were sorely needed in the colony. Fourth, towns would, as
they grew, offer a ready market for the products of forest
and farm. This would in turn act as a stimulus to the local
economy.9

Makemie and his compatriots found a considerable amount
of support among the English merchants who traded in Virginia.
In 1705, for example, six London merchants prominent in the
Virginia trade petitioned the Lord High Treasurer, Lord
Sidney Godolphin, in "A Memoriall Recomending the Setting of
Ports in Virginia." Their memorial summarized the benefits

9Rev. Francis Makemie, A Plain & Friendly Perswasive
to the Inhabitants of Virginia and Maryland for Promoting
Towns & Cohabitation. By a Well-Wisher to both Governments.
Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, IV (January, 1897)
261-67.
that would accrue to the nation if the government would act to create a series of ports in Virginia. The officers of the crown would be able to keep closer track of Chesapeake shipping, thus suppressing fraudulent activity; channeling the flow of goods to and from Virginia would also increase the crown's revenue; ports would stimulate trade by sharply reducing the time spent loading and unloading colonial shipping; freight rates would in turn drop; and trash tobacco would be greatly diminished by requiring all tobacco to flow through public warehouses located in each of the proposed towns. Godolphin received the petition favorably and referred it to the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations. They in turn approved it, recommending that no more than three towns on each of the four great rivers of the western Chesapeake, plus two towns on the eastern shore, be created. An Order in Council subsequently approved the memorial, notifying the Board of Trade to instruct Major Edward Nott, the Lieutenant Governor of Virginia, to facilitate the passage of yet another town act.

In that fashion the home government promoted the enactment of the Town Act of 1706. However, before the ink was fairly dry on the paper, moves were afoot in the mother country to nullify the legislation. The problem, it seemed, was that

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10 Colonial Office Group, Class 5, Volume 1314, fol. 315-23, Public Record Office (Virginia Colonial Records Project microfilm, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Va.). Hereafter cited by the initials of the Public Record Office and the relevant office group, followed by the class and volume number (separated with a slash) and the folio number. All of the Public Record Office materials cited in this dissertation are on microfilm at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

11 P.R.O. Co. 5/1361, 104-7, 109-10.
the bill went too far. Both the government and the English mercantile community were concerned that the act would encourage Virginians to develop colonial manufacturing to a point that would undercut English businessmen. They also feared that the urbanization of Virginia would detract from the planting of tobacco, a vital element in the continued prosperity of the English mercantile community.  

England could, and did, disallow more than one Virginia town act. Yet it is apparent that neither urging the colonists to create towns nor nullifying the resultant legislation had very much effect on the number of urban centers in the Old Dominion. Several factors militating against urbanization had a far greater impact than the revocation of the town acts of the earlier colonial period.

One of the most significant of these concerned the unique geography of the Chesapeake Bay. The Bay has forty-eight principal tributaries, some navigable for well over one hundred miles. These tributaries in turn have over a hundred branches, a number of which are open to shipping for fifty miles or more. It has been estimated that Virginia has one mile of tidal shore for every six square miles of territory, or a total shore line of 4,612 miles.

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13Rainbolt, “Absence of Towns,” is the most complete discussion available of the various factors involved.

14Arthur Pierce Middleton, Tobacco Coast: A Maritime
The geography of the Chesapeake in turn profoundly affected the economic development of Virginia. It could truly be said that the colony was founded on smoke. The tobacco that sustained the colony from its earliest decades onward was a land-hungry crop, and the bay region proved superbly suited to its cultivation. Tobacco quickly exhausted the soil, so large tracts of land were needed for its cultivation. This in turn led to a dispersal of settlement in the region. Packed into heavy hogsheads, tobacco was hard to transport to market. Further, the leaf bruised easily as the barrels were rolled over the country roads. It was easier on the planter and his crop if the plantation could be located on a navigable body of water. The Chesapeake excelled in its thousands of miles of coastline; thus, settlement followed the coast. Since the tobacco could be loaded directly on seagoing vessels, there was no need for towns to serve as funnels for exports.

Nor were towns necessary to distribute the myriad products imported by the Chesapeake colonies each year. As a notable historian of colonial Virginia remarked early in the eighteenth century, his fellow settlers were "not forward in contributing their assistance towards the making of particular places [i.e., towns], every plantation affording the owner the provision of a little market; wherefore they most commonly build upon some convenient spot of land in their own plantation, though towns

are laid out and established in each county;...15 The "little markets" described by Hugh Jones retarded urbanization in yet another way. The larger plantations could function as shipping and distribution points, each servicing a number of smaller plantations lacking direct access to oceangoing shipping or to the mercantile houses in England that imported tobacco.

Finally, the consignment system of marketing tobacco was itself a major impediment to urbanization. Under that system, English merchants controlled both the purchase and the shipping of colonial tobacco. They also oversaw the extension or contraction of credit to the planters of the colonial Chesapeake. The Chesapeake merchants of the seventeenth century lacked the capital necessary to compete with their rivals in England. This lack of competition in turn fostered the perpetuation of a decentralized system of marketing tobacco and distributing imported goods. Decentralization had the effect of contributing to the lack of urbanization.16

II

In the years following the transition from the seventeenth


to the eighteenth centuries, the pace of urbanization in Virginia slowly began to increase. There were a number of elements, both indirect and direct, that were instrumental in accounting for this phenomenon. The most indirect of these, and the one with the greatest significance for the Atlantic littoral communities as a whole, concerns what historian D. A. Farnie has described as the rise of the commercial empire of the Atlantic.\(^{17}\)

Farnie noted that with the gradual transformation in the seventeenth century of western culture from a spiritual to a secular orientation, economic activity became increasingly dominant in the life of western man. Gradually a common economic civilization arose in both transatlantic and cisatlantic lands, with commerce as a bond holding together widely diverse societies. Commercial activity in the area was stimulated enormously after 1607 by the emergence of a series of staples which made the Atlantic basin the center of a vast commercial empire. The increasing focus on economic activity led to a growing propensity to consume and to the establishment of a new value structure based largely on profit and trade. It also led to the eclipse of the sacred by the secular tradition in the mind of western man.\(^{18}\)

The inhabitants of the British Isles and their kin across the Atlantic were in the vanguard of those caught up in the


transformation. As the colonial period of American history unfolded, exports to the mother country increased steadily in both type and quantity. These exports in turn provided an immense stimulus to the home economy. One estimate, for example, is that the colonies were responsible for most of the growth in English foreign trade in the eighteenth century.  

These exports to England and other countries also facilitated the expansion of the colonial American economy. A recent economic study concluded that, while subsistence agriculture furnished an important base to colonial incomes, changes in incomes and improvements in the standard of living were due largely to overseas trade and other market activities.  

Various theories have been advanced to account for the expansion of the colonial economy during the period from about 1710 to 1775.  

Although estimates of the actual rate of growth of per capita income vary widely, the fact that per capita income in colonial North America increased significantly

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21 Ibid., pp. 9, 43; Egnal, "Economic Development," 199, 203.

22 Egnal, "Economic Development," 199-200, estimates an average annual growth rate of 0.5 percent between 1720 and 1775; George Rogers Taylor, "American Economic Growth Before 1840: An Exploratory Essay," Journal of Economic History, XXIV (December, 1964), 427, 429, 437, estimates a rate of 1.0 percent or higher between about 1710 to 1775.
from 1710 to the time of the Revolution is generally accepted.\textsuperscript{23}

As one of the most important of England's colonies, Virginia profited substantially from the accelerated pace of economic growth. Although subject to considerable fluctuation, the price of tobacco in Virginia increased significantly in the middle decades of the eighteenth century. Between 1740-1744 and 1760-1764, colonial prices for tobacco rose thirty-four percent. The prices paid for foodstuffs sent from Virginia to the Caribbean during the same period increased even more dramatically. Wheat prices rose fifty-nine percent, flour fifty-four percent, and pork forty-eight percent. While the overall rate of increase in the export price of these commodities diminished after 1764, the upward trend nevertheless continued to the year 1775.\textsuperscript{24}

Although many of the commodities shipped from Virginia eventually found their way into a number of foreign markets, most of her exports went initially to the mother country and its empire. The expansion of the overseas demand for Virginia products is reflected in the price trends discussed briefly in the preceding paragraph. The sale and export of these


commodities are discussed below to the extent that they relate to the economic development of Alexandria. It is sufficient here to note that Virginia's economy expanded greatly, if unevenly, in the first three quarters of the eighteenth century. The maturation and increasing complexity of that economy created an ideal climate for the beginning of urbanization.

The historian Marc Egnal asserted that the growth in population between 1720 and 1775 of the American colonies was the most significant factor in their increased total output. Whatever the precise nature of the relationship between economic and demographic growth in early America, it is obvious that the two were intimately related. As the population of the thirteen mainland colonies expanded, so did the quantity and variety of the commodities they exported. It soon became apparent that towns offering specialized shipping facilities, as well as a host of related services, were an absolute necessity if the commercial system was to continue to expand.

While the evidence documenting the growth of the colonial population is certainly incomplete, the general trends seem clear enough. Robert Wells found that household size in the mainland colonies remained fairly constant in the

25 The most complete general discussion of the Virginia economy during the latter years of this period is Calvin Brewster Coulter, Jr., "The Virginia Merchant" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1944), chapters IV, V, and VIII.

century preceding the American Revolution. Families during this period generally averaged between five and seven persons. Between 1720 and 1775 the population of Britain's North American colonies increased at a rate of about three percent per year and doubled approximately every thirty years.\textsuperscript{27}

The mainland colonies' population, both black and white, stood at about 400,000 in 1715. By mid-century it had increased to a little over 1,200,000; in 1776 it was around 2,500,000.\textsuperscript{28}

Virginia experienced a comparable rate of increase in its population after 1700. At the start of the century its total population was in the neighborhood of 72,000 to 80,000. By 1750 it had expanded to a figure somewhere between 135,000 and 275,000. The various estimates are much closer by 1774, and 500,000 is the generally accepted figure. Of that number, roughly 300,000 were white, and the rest, black.\textsuperscript{29}


\textsuperscript{29}Greene and Harrington, American Population, pp. 137-141; Potter, "Growth of Population in America," Table 1, p. 638; Lord Dunmore to Secretary of State Dartmouth, Mar. 18, 1774, P.R.O. C.O. 5/1352, 11; Wells, Population of the British Colonies, Table VII-5, p. 284.
Settlement along the coast led inevitably to penetration of the interior. Although the westward movement progressed very slowly as the colonies matured, the build-up of population in the more densely settled coastal regions eventually forced men to seek new land in the interior. Virginia's coastal plain was the earliest region to be claimed in that colony. The Piedmont Plateau, lying between Tidewater and the Appalachian range, furnished the next great area of settlement. Opening the Piedmont to cultivation proved a time-consuming process, if for no other reason than the extent of the region; it varied in width from 30 to 175 miles. The mountains and valleys of the Appalachians were next. First the Shenandoah Valley and the Blue Ridge to its east were opened. Subsequently, and not without a great deal of Indian and white blood being shed in the process, the frontiersmen pushed into the major ranges of the Appalachians.

Another very significant factor stimulating the pace of westward expansion in Virginia was soil exhaustion. Soil erosion contributed greatly to land depletion even before the coming of the white man. Planting tobacco in quantity in the Chesapeake only made a chronic problem worse. In order to protect themselves against the tendency of their cash crop to leach the soil of its nutritive value, Chesapeake tobacco

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30. See the suggestive comment on the growth of population density and westward settlement in Lockridge, "Social Change," 406.

planters habitually engrossed large tracts of land. Thus, as they took up the available land in the Tidewater region and expanded into the Piedmont in search of more, they encouraged others to do the same.

With the opening of the uplands of Virginia to settlement and cultivation, a major transformation occurred in the economic life of the colony. Not only were ever-increasing quantities of goods being shipped from the colony each year; a growing percentage of those goods were originating in regions beyond the reach of sea-going vessels. It was entirely predictable that the products of the interior would eventually funnel through collection points situated on or near the westernmost limits of those great Virginia rivers open to large ships. It has long been recognized that towns tend to develop at major transportation breaks. This is particularly true of those breaks that occur when goods are transferred from land to water transport. Interruptions in transportation, especially those in which both the goods being shipped are physically transferred and the goods themselves change owners, attract both people and money in abundance.

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to an acquaintance in Scotland, Alexander Rose summarized the process: "We can expect to have great Towns at the Falls of the Rivers only, where the Commodities of the back Country must be brought for Exportation." He might have added that these same towns could also serve a dual function as entrepôts for imports being shipped to the interior.

Each of the elements discussed above contributed greatly, either directly or indirectly, to urbanization in Virginia. One other point remains to complete the circle. It concerns a change in the mechanism used by Virginia planters to market their crops. The transition in eighteenth century Virginia from the consignment to the direct purchase method of marketing tobacco greatly stimulated the growth of towns in the colony. It did so because it was convenient for those merchants and factors operating within the latter system to do business at one of the tobacco warehouses scattered throughout Virginia. In time, towns occupied by merchants, artisans, servants, and a host of others gradually developed at many of these locations.

The system whereby Virginia planters consigned their tobacco to British merchants originated in the seventeenth century. It operated in a very straightforward fashion. A planter would ship his tobacco directly to a British merchant for sale in Britain or elsewhere. While the planter bore full responsibility for shipment and any risk entailed in

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34 Alexander Rose to Robert Grant, Dec. 20, 1768, *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, XXXIII (January, 1925), 82-84.
transporting his tobacco, he commonly shipped his leaf on a vessel provided by his overseas contact. The merchant then supervised the unloading process, paid the necessary duties, and arranged for the storage and sale of the commodity. His commission on the sale of the tobacco usually amounted to eight to ten percent of the net proceeds.\textsuperscript{35}

In addition to marketing the planter's crop, the merchant also performed several other important services for him. Perhaps the most significant of these, and easily the most difficult, involved procuring and shipping household goods and other personal items back across the Atlantic.\textsuperscript{36} Part or all of the amount due the planter could be advanced to him in the form of credit, if he so chose. Variations within the system notwithstanding, there was no room left for any middlemen between the planter and his overseas agent.

The consignment system functioned erratically in the best of times. With the coming of age of the Virginia economy, it became a cumbersome, expensive, and increasingly outdated anachronism. Its shortcomings were legion. In the first place, many planters saw it as an overly expensive and often wasteful means of marketing tobacco. In his fulminations against the consignment method, George Washington provided


the contemporary reader with a veritable catalogue of its drawbacks.

Robert Cary and Company of London, Washington's long-time consignment agent in the period before the Revolution, bore the brunt of most of his attacks. According to Washington, he was almost never paid a decent price for the tobacco he exported. For example, in June, 1768 he wrote that "I have lost (at least) four years out of five by my consignments having better prices offered in the Country [i.e., in Virginia] than my Tobo. has sold for in England which is not only discouraging but almost sufficient to bring about a change in the System of my management." His London agent apparently followed the custom of the times and sold Washington's tobacco soon after receiving it, which brought a doleful comment from the planter: "I cannot help adding that I was sorry to hear you speak of Tobacco daily advancing after our's was disposed off. That Tobacco woud rise and sell almost as high as it ever had done was as clear to me as the Sun in its meridian height...."37 In other letters he complained of the exorbitant cost of insuring tobacco consigned to Cary and associates; of the unfair freight rates Cary charged its regular customers; and of the money he lost because he was tied to an inflexible marketing mechanism.38 While it is


38 Washington to Robert Cary and Co., Oct. 12, 1761; Washington to Robert Cary and Co., June 23, 1766; and Washington...
true that Washington was quick to express his feelings if he discerned even a hint of careless or unethical business practices, it is equally true that the complaints he voiced were shared by a great number of his contemporaries.

If the consignment system often worked badly in the business of exporting and marketing tobacco, it proved equally defective in its other major facet, that is, in the import of finished goods by the consigning planters. Although Virginia planters usually specified in considerable detail those items they wanted shipped by their British agents, they were often disappointed. Defective or damaged goods might be received, and it was terribly difficult to obtain satisfaction in these cases. Parcels were occasionally sent to the wrong Chesapeake river, and some must have taken years to reach the original addressee. Thieves or vandals might plunder or damage incoming parcels. Finally, if by happy chance the right items were shipped and they arrived in good order, the quantity might be wrong. Lamenting the shipment of two dozen whip saws when he had requested only two, George Washington concluded a letter to his London agent on a note to James Gildart, June 25, 1768, in Fitzpatrick, Writings of George Washington, II, 368, 435, and 494-95.

of resignation: "What I shall do with the abundant overplus I really know not as I apprehend it will be a difficult matter to dispose of such a quantity in this part of the Country." \(^{40}\)

With all its shortcomings, the consignment system continued in widespread use in eighteenth century Virginia. Its hold on the planters of the Tidewater region was especially strong. In order for Virginians to adopt a different marketing technique, the defects of the old system had to be clearly illustrated and a more effective way of doing business had to be in place and operating smoothly. With the rapid economic and demographic expansion of the colony, the old system was strained to the breaking point. \(^{41}\) At this juncture, the use of the direct purchase method became increasingly widespread in Virginia. The method, which involved the transfer locally of title to the tobacco from the producer to a resident agent or employee of a British firm, was eminently suited to the needs of planters in the region above the fall line. The resident agents would buy the leaf, collect it for shipment, and send it in quantity to their employers in Britain.

For purposes of convenience the agents commonly resided near the tobacco inspection and storage warehouses that were established on the rivers and estuaries of the Chesapeake. Many of these centers were situated near the fall lines of the rivers, as close to the Piedmont as possible. In addition

\(^{40}\) For theft, etc., see Coulter, "Import Trade of Colonial Virginia," 301; for Washington's problem, see Washington to Robert Cary & Co., Aug. 1, 1761, in Fitzpatrick, Writings of George Washington, II, 363.

to their Piedmont suppliers, the resident agents gradually developed a new clientele consisting of those Tidewater planters who rejected the consignment system. It was simply easier, and many deemed it more profitable, to sell one's tobacco outright instead of consigning it.

The other advantage of the direct purchase system lay in the acquisition of the necessary household items from overseas. Although the agents paid their suppliers in a variety of ways, including current money and, less often, sterling, book credit was the most commonly used method of payment.\(^2\) That meant that those planters who sold their crop to the agents generally bought most of their household goods from the same source. The advantages of the system were obvious; one could see what was being purchased, and could buy the exact quantity needed.

The advent of this new marketing technique provided the ultimate factor needed to stimulate urbanization in Virginia. Nevertheless, with the exception of Norfolk, none of the colony's urban centers could properly be labelled cities. Each fell short of the three thousand inhabitants commonly required for inclusion in that category.\(^3\) Omitting only Williamsburg,


all owed their existence primarily to economic activity. There was nothing unique in that. Certainly down to the early period of the industrial revolution in America and abroad, commercial factors had been decisive in the creation and growth of the great majority of urban centers.\textsuperscript{44} Emphasizing the primacy of economic activity is not meant to obscure the important political and social functions performed by early American towns. These aspects of urban life have been emphasized in a number of studies, and rightly so.\textsuperscript{45} But commerce remained the lifeblood of virtually all towns in Virginia as elsewhere. Since the Scots played such an important role in the evolution of the Virginia economy, and since they served as catalysts for the new urban centers that sprang up in Northern Virginia, it is appropriate here to consider their activities in the Old Dominion.


Prior to the act in 1707 which united England and Scotland, the latter country was legally barred from trading with any part of the English empire. The Navigation Act of 1660 underlined the policy of exclusion; one of its primary aims was to keep Scottish trade out of England's empire. The law proved strikingly ineffective. Encouraged by their own government and using a variety of tactics, the Scottish merchants steadily expanded their illicit trade with their neighbor's colonies. Their trade with Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania was particularly heavy. They concentrated on exporting tobacco and they seemed to be everywhere in the Chesapeake during the 1690s. As Charles M. Andrews noted, it was easy for British officials and merchants to complain about the trade but extremely difficult to detect it.

After the Act of Union, Scotland's commercial contacts with the Chesapeake colonies expanded rapidly. The various factors responsible for the growth of the Scottish economy, and the role the Chesapeake colonies played in that expansion, have been considered elsewhere in superb fashion. It is


49 See especially Jacob M. Price, "The Economic Growth of

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not necessary here to deal with the complexities of that question. However, it is important to consider briefly the reasons why the Scots were so successful in their commercial penetration of Virginia.

In the first place, the fact that the Scots had long been denied the protection of the English imperial system contributed to their subsequent prosperity. They had been forced to be efficient in order to survive. Survival also dictated that the merchants remain flexible in their business dealings. Unlike their English counterparts, the Scottish merchants were not committed to any one system of trade. Thus, they found the direct purchase system of buying Chesapeake tobacco a very congenial way of doing business, while most of their London competitors remained tied to the consignment system.50

The English hold on the Tidewater region was too strong for the Scots to break, but the area of the Piedmont and back country was another matter. At enormous expense, the Scottish merchants established a series of stores staffed by resident factors at or near the heads of navigation of the great Chesapeake rivers. The trade with Virginia was centered on Glasgow from the beginning. Those Glasgow firms doing business in the Old Dominion both diminished in number and increased in size as the eighteenth century progressed. By 1773, the two largest

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Glasgow houses (Alexander Speirs & Company and John Glassford & Company) buying Virginia tobacco accounted for over one-fourth of all tobacco brought into that city. As the firms diminished in number, they expanded their activities in the Chesapeake. For example, by 1774 the Cuninghame group in Glasgow operated seven stores in Maryland and another fourteen in Virginia.\textsuperscript{51}

The resident agents staffing these Chesapeake stores soon acquired a reputation as aggressive, hard-working businessmen. They both bought tobacco and other commodities for export and sold a wide range of imported goods. Their most important function was assembling for shipment those commodities earmarked for export from Virginia. The greatest expense in the export trade, excluding the prime cost of the commodities involved, was freight. It was the factor's responsibility to insure a quick turn-around for his firm's ships operating in Chesapeake waters. If he were outstanding at his job, he could reduce the time involved from two to six months down to fifteen days. Incidentally, the fact that he was often more interested in buying tobacco quickly than in waiting for the right price tended to enrage his competitors in the trade.\textsuperscript{52}

There were a variety of other factors involved in assuring Scottish commercial success in Virginia. Because the Glasgow


firms had access to large amounts of capital, they could afford to extend credit to the small planters of the back country. Geography was also vital: the route from the Chesapeake to Glasgow ran north of Ireland, and was two to three weeks faster in sailing time than that to London. It was also much safer in wartime than the southerly route. Finally, Glasgow had an abundance of cheap labor available, which kept the cost of refitting ships, manufacturing goods for export, and so on, down.53

This enumeration of the reasons why the Scottish did so well in Virginia is not exhaustive. Nevertheless, it is helpful in understanding why they prospered so mightily as they fanned out across that colony in the decades before the Revolution. They were instrumental in founding and/or promoting the development of a substantial number of Chesapeake towns, many of which live only in the minds of those who study the past.54

Although the resident factors and their employers in Glasgow worked diligently in an effort to ingratiate themselves


with the Virginia planters, it was an uphill struggle. The agents were often viewed with suspicion, distrust, and occasionally, open contempt by their hosts. William Lee wrote that:

A North Briton is something like the stinking and troublesome weed we call in Virginia wild onion. Whenever one is permitted to fix, the number soon increases so fast, that it is extremely difficult to eradicate them, and they poison the ground so, that no wholesome plant can thrive.55

Liked or disliked, the Scottish agents played a major role in modernizing the Virginia economy and in creating dozens of smaller urban centers in the colony. It is vital to note that, while these scattered settlements may not have met the criteria established for towns (again, a population concentration of three thousand or more), they performed many of the functions we associate with larger urban centers. In a seminal article on urbanization in the eighteenth-century South, Joseph Ernst and Roy Merrens emphasized a point long understood by careful students of the process of urbanization. It is that function and sphere of influence are far more significant than area or population in characterizing a town and determining its importance.56 With a population that


56 Joseph A. Ernst and H. Roy Merrens, "'Camden's turrets pierce the skies!': The Urban Process in the Southern Colonies during the Eighteenth Century," William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd Ser., XXX (October, 1973), 555, 567-71; cf. the critical discussion of the Ernst and Merrens article in Hermann Wellenreuther, "Urbanization in the Colonial South: A Critique,"
did not equal two thousand during the colonial period, Alexandria does not meet the usual requirement for classification as a city. Yet it dominated the Potomac River valley, served the economic needs of a large hinterland in the Virginia Piedmont and mountain regions, and exported a fortune each year in tobacco, grain, and other commodities. The rapidity with which the town on the Potomac developed was only partly due to hard work on the part of its citizens; geographic factors played a major role.

The town's advantages over its rivals began with the river that provided it access to the Chesapeake and the Atlantic.

Describing the Potomac in 1634, Father Andrew White noted that

This is the sweetest and greatest river I have seen, so that the Thames is but a little finger to it. There are no marshes or swamps about it, but solid firm ground, with great variety of woods, not choked up with undershrubs, but commonly so far distant from each other as a coach and four horses may travel without molestation.

The adjoining land was a fair match for the river:

I will end therefore with the soil, which is excellent so that we cannot set down a foot, but tread on Strawberries, raspberries, fallen mulberry vines, acorns, walnuts, saxifrages etc. and those in the wildest woods. The ground is commonly a black mould above, and a foot within ground of a reddish colour. All is high woods except where the Indians have cleared for corn. It abounds with delicate springs which are our best drinke.57


57 Fr. Andrew White, "A Briefe Relation of the Voyage unto..."
If the Potomac charmed its visitors, it delighted those merchants who located along its shores. One hundred and forty miles in length from its mouth to the fall line, it was the largest of the Chesapeake's tributaries. Alexandria would be located on a particularly favorable cove situated a dozen miles below the falls of the river. Ships of any burden would be able to use her wharves with ease.  

The Potomac held other advantages as well. Alexandrians would never be bothered by a blight that destroyed the commercial life of many other Chesapeake towns. Soil erosion in the Chesapeake, which L. C. Gottschalk notes antedated the establishment of the English colonies, reached alarming proportions as the line of European settlement moved inland. The most significant effect of sedimentation before the Revolution was the blockage of navigation channels. Most of the early Chesapeake port towns were purposely located at the heads of inlets in order to reduce the distance travelled by planters as they shipped their goods to market. As it turned out, the heads of navigation were ordinarily the location of the heaviest degree of sedimentation. As soil erosion accelerated, the damage became obvious. In many cases it took


less than half a century for a thriving open-water port to be converted into a mud flat.\textsuperscript{59}

The list of eighteenth-century northern Chesapeake ports crippled by rapid sedimentation is a long one. In Maryland, it includes Piscataway, Joppa Town, Upper Marlboro, and Bladensburg; in Virginia, Dumfries.\textsuperscript{60} The size of the Potomac below the fall line indicated that sedimentation would not hinder the growth of Alexandria.

III

Although Alexandria grew rapidly in the years after its founding in 1749, it was a comparative late-comer among the towns of the Chesapeake. In 1654, Mistress Margaret Brent of Maryland received a seven hundred acre grant of land on the Virginia side of the Potomac. Her grant included all of the land that would subsequently become the town of Alexandria. Fifteen years later, Robert Howsing (Howson) was awarded a six thousand acre grant in the same area. Howsing's tract in turn included all of Brent's land. Before the end of 1669, Howsing deeded his entire tract to John Alexander. Five years later, Alexander paid Margaret Brent's heirs 10,500 pounds of tobacco and cask for their 700 acres.\textsuperscript{61} Their title to the


\textsuperscript{60}Gottschalk, "Effects of Soil Erosion," 223-24, 229, 231, 234 (Piscataway, Joppa Town, and Dumfries); Berkley, "Port of Dumfries," 103; Maryland Gazette, May 24, 1759; May 31, 1770 (Upper Marlboro); Biddle, "Bladensburg--An Early Trade Center," 317-19, and the Maryland Gazette, Mar. 25, 1762 (Bladensburg).

\textsuperscript{61}James R. Caton, Legislative Chronicles of the City
land secured, the Alexander family retained the tract until the late 1740s. Although the land was included in the boundaries of the Culpeper/Fairfax Northern Neck grant, it belonged to the Alexanders. However, they were required to pay to the Northern Neck proprietor those "rents, services, etc." that would ordinarily go to the crown. 52

As settlers began to cultivate the land in northern Virginia the colonial government moved to establish counties in the region. In 1731, Prince William County was organized. Fairfax County was formed in 1742 from that section of Prince William that lay north of the Occoquan River and Bull Run. 63

Most of those who emigrated to Fairfax Harrison's well-loved Old Prince William did so with the intent of becoming tobacco planters. The colonial government was also interested in the planting and marketing of tobacco. In an effort to standardize the quality of the leaf being shipped from Virginia, a tobacco inspection act was approved in 1730 that provided for a large number of public warehouses. The warehouses were to be used for the inspection and storage of all tobacco due to be exported. One of the warehouses was to be located


63Morton, Colonial Virginia, II, pp. 548-49.
at "great Hunting Creek, upon Broadwater's land," in Prince William County. That location proved inconvenient, and in 1732 the warehouse was ordered to be built upon Simon Pearson's land, on the north side of Great Hunting Creek.  

The new warehouse on Hunting Creek soon attracted a small group of young Scottish factors. Around 1740, James Pagan, John Carlyle, and William Ramsay took up residence there. They quickly named their settlement Belhaven, in honor of the memory of John Hamilton (1656-1708), the second Baron Belhaven. Belhaven had been a great Scottish patriot and a good friend of the merchants of that country.  

The warehouse prospered, as did the small trading community that developed around it. Pagan, Carlyle, and Ramsay were joined by several other men, including Laurence Washington and Lord Thomas Fairfax, in October, 1748, in a petition to the General Assembly asking that a town be established at the warehouse. Their petition was immediately challenged by John Alexander, a wealthy Virginia merchant who had inherited most of the land on which the new town would be built. Alexander objected on the ground that he would have no control over the price of the lots (they were to be sold at auction, and the proceeds distributed to the original owners of the land). His counter-petition asked that the town be located elsewhere. Both petitions were referred to the

64 Hening, Statutes at Large, IV, 266-69, 328-31.
66 H. R. McIlwaine and John Pendleton Kennedy, eds.
Committee of Propositions and Grievances. After a certain amount of maneuvering, the House endorsed a measure establishing a town at the warehouse. With Governor Gooch's assent, the bill became law on May 11, 1749.67

An act for erecting a town at Hunting-Creek warehouse, in the county of Fairfax was brief and to the point. Sixty acres were to be set aside for the new town. This land was to be surveyed and divided into streets and lots, which could not be larger than one-half acre apiece. The lots were to be sold at public auction. The proceeds from the sale, after expenses had been deducted, were to be distributed among the original owners of the property, namely John Alexander, Philip Alexander, and Hugh West. No one could buy more than two lots. Each purchaser had to build a twenty-square-foot house, with a nine-foot pitch and a stone or brick chimney, on his lot within two years or forfeit his title. Wooden chimneys were forbidden in the town, as were hogs running loose.

A group of eleven men named in the founding legislation were "hereby constituted and appointed directors and trustees for designing, building, carrying on, and maintaining the said town upon the land aforesaid." They were to replace members co-optively and were instructed to meet as often as they thought necessary. They could not do business without a


67McIlwaine and Kennedy, Journals of the House of Burgesses, VII, 355-56; Hening, Statutes at Large, VI, 214 (only the title is printed here); Harrison, Landmarks of Old Prince William, pp. 406-07.
quorum of six members. Their responsibilities included insuring that the town inhabitants kept the streets, landings, and public wharves in good repair.68

Probably the most important position below the level of trustee was that of Overseer of Streets and Landings. Chosen by the trustees, the overseer occupied a position created in 1751. In 1763 the trustees defined explicitly the overseer's area of responsibility. He was expected to keep the streets "dry and fitt for traveling for Waggons & foot people" and to maintain the public landings in good repair. Failure to perform his duty entailed a fine of one pound.69

The trustees also appointed the town Ballast Master. He had the responsibilities of regulating traffic on the public wharves and of helping to keep the wharves in good repair. With the exception of the position of town clerk, the town offices below the level of overseer and ballast master were neither clearly defined nor regularly staffed.70

The founding legislation made no provision for a municipal police force. Assisted by several constables, the Fairfax County sheriff bore direct responsibility for maintaining

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70 Proceedings of the Board of Trustees Town of Alexandria, Virginia, 1767-1780 (Alexandria Public Library, Alexandria, Virginia; photostat) (cited hereafter as Proceedings of Alexandria Trustees, 1767-1780, followed by date). I have been unable to locate the original copy of this record. The cite is to Jan. 22, 1775.

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order in Alexandria and the rest of the county. Local offenders were to be tried in the county court.

Counter to the wishes of a number of town leaders, the 1749 act named the Potomac settlement Alexandria. Apparently this was done in an effort to appease the Alexander family. The old name lingered on, however. In 1752 a group of citizens requested that Alexandria be renamed Belhaven. Their petition was summarily rejected by the House of Burgesses.  

Following the instructions, six of the trustees met soon after the founding act became law. They directed John West, Junior, Fairfax County surveyor, to survey and lay out the town. Calling on the young George Washington to assist him, West soon completed the survey. Eighty-four one-half acre lots were laid out. The width of Water Street was set at fifty feet; the rest of the streets were to be sixty-six feet wide.

In his town plan John West followed sound historical precedent but displayed the customary lack of imagination. Virtually all colonial American towns used the grid pattern. Its use has remained widespread in this country and throughout the world down to the present day.  

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71 Somerville, Washington Walked Here, p. 43, and McIlwaine and Kennedy, Journals of the House of Burgesses, VIII, 34.


73 John W. Reps, Tidewater Towns: City Planning in Colonial Virginia and Maryland (Williamsburg, Va.: Colonial

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Map 2  Alexandria, Virginia: 1749

Note: Although there was a strip of land extending across the front of lots 31, 36, 41, and 46, that fact is not reflected in the survey map of 1749. That map is reproduced here exactly as it appears in the Fairfax County survey book.

Source: Fairfax County Record of Surveys, June 18, 1749, pp. 29-30.
the uncontrolled (and uncontrollable) growth of cities, Oswald Spengler labelled the "chessboard form, . . . the symbol of soullessness." 74 It is highly doubtful that the planners who adopted this form were aware of the symbolic aspect of their work. Its advantages from a commercial point of view had long been recognized. 75 Towns following the grid pattern are easily surveyed and laid out. Since most of their lots are of uniform size and shape, they are readily appraised and exchanged. Further, adding rectangular blocks to the existing town is a mechanical process that is quickly completed. Topographic features and aesthetic considerations were usually


ignored by those planning the town.\textsuperscript{76}

Public sale of the half acre lots—the standard size lot sold in Chesapeake towns—was advertised in the \textit{Maryland Gazette} in the spring and early summer of the year.\textsuperscript{77} Lot sales proceeded at a good pace. Over a two-day period (July 13 and 14) forty-two lots were sold.\textsuperscript{78} By 1753, all of the initial block of eighty-four lots had been taken.\textsuperscript{79} Of those purchasers whose occupations during this period could be determined, there were seven merchants, six planters, one ferry and ordinary keeper, one carpenter and ordinary keeper, one carpenter, one mariner, two attorneys, one minister, and one blacksmith.

Information concerning the price and initial owners of Alexandria lots is given below in Table 1 and in Appendix A of this dissertation. It will be seen that the lots varied in price from the £48.7.8 paid by Hugh West, Senior, for number 14 down to the £0.5.9 paid by the Reverend John Moncure for number 61. The average price of all those lots for which deeds were recorded was £14.4.7. Not surprisingly, the price of a lot dropped as one moved inland from the river or away


\textsuperscript{77}Maryland Gazette, June 14, 21, 28, and July 5, 1749.

\textsuperscript{78}Proceedings of Alexandria Trustees, 1749-1767, July 13, 1749. Cf. Somerville, \textit{Washington Walked Here}, p. 77. Not all of the deeds were registered immediately.

\textsuperscript{79}See Appendix A, Initial Owners of Alexandria Lots. Lot nos. 43 and 44 were set aside for the county Court House and Prison.
## TABLE 1

**INITIAL SALE OF ALEXANDRIA LOTS, 1749-1753**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Block of Lots</th>
<th>Lot Numbers</th>
<th>Highest Price Paid</th>
<th>Lowest Price Paid</th>
<th>Average Price Paid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E. of Water St.</td>
<td>2-4, 14, 20, 56,</td>
<td>£48.7.8</td>
<td>£10.15.0</td>
<td>£21.15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>62-63, 69-71, 77-79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. of Water St.</td>
<td>26, 31, 36, 41, 46, 51, 57, 64, 80,</td>
<td>£33.6.6</td>
<td>£6.9.0</td>
<td>£21.14.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Lot No. 14)</td>
<td>(Lot No. 51)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. of Fairfax St.</td>
<td>16, 27, 32, 37, 42, 47, 52, 65, 81,</td>
<td>£21.10.0</td>
<td>£6.9.0</td>
<td>£14.17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Lot No. 32)</td>
<td>(Lot No. 81)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. of Fairfax St.</td>
<td>23, 28, 33, 38, 48, 53, 59, 66, 74, 82,</td>
<td>£14.10.3</td>
<td>£5.7.6</td>
<td>£8.7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Lot No. 48)</td>
<td>(Lot No. 66, 74)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. of Royal St.</td>
<td>24, 29, 34, 39, 49, 54, 60, 67, 75, 83,</td>
<td>£16.2.6</td>
<td>£5.7.6</td>
<td>£8.7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Lot No. 49)</td>
<td>(Lot No. 67, 75)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. of Royal St.</td>
<td>40, 45, 50, 55, 61, 68, 76, 84,</td>
<td>£12.7.3</td>
<td>£0.5.9</td>
<td>£6.9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Lot No. 50)</td>
<td>(Lot No. 61)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average price of all sixty lots: £14.4.7

Source: Appendix A, Initial Owners of Alexandria Lots. All price averages are rounded off to the nearest penny. All prices given here and elsewhere in this dissertation are in current money of Virginia unless otherwise noted.
from the center of town.

Several interesting points can be extracted from this material. All of them suggest a common theme: the strength of the local economy and the vitality of the town being built at Great Hunting Creek. First, note that only four of the eighty-four lots sold were later forfeited to the trustees because the property had not been improved. That is a very low figure and indicated the value of land in the new town.80 Second, the sale of all eighty-four lots within four years of Alexandria's founding offers another proof of its vitality. It was not uncommon in colonial American towns for property in the initial survey area to remain unsold for decades.81 Third, while those lots on the perimeter of Alexandria were relatively low in cost, the price rose sharply as one approached the town center.82 There was never a time when one could buy town land and settle there inexpensively.

Several of those who held town lots seemed content with the mere fact of ownership. Their refusal to build conflicted with the requirement that a house be erected on each lot


82 Compare Alexandria with Yorktown where similar lots sold for an average of five to seven pounds each; Riley, "Suburban Development of Yorktown," 523.
within two years. The law eventually became a nuisance that plagued the citizenry. In 1752 the trustees and a number of townspeople petitioned the burgesses requesting that the building clause be revoked. The government acceded to their wishes later in the year. The same process was repeated in 1764 when a similar clause in the 1762 Act for enlarging the town of Alexandria was repealed.\(^{83}\) However, the trustees occasionally invoked the two-year clauses even after their annulment. Their selective invocation of the ordinances was apparently designed to force development of the town.\(^{84}\)

There are a number of indicators in the years preceding the French and Indian War that suggest a significant degree of growth and prosperity in the small town. One is found in the physical development of Alexandria. Very few lots with buildings on them changed hands during this period. Those that did usually reveal a substantial investment of the part of their owners. For example, John Pagan decided to sell his town property before he moved away from Alexandria in 1752. He offered a lot (probably number two) for sale, along with its buildings. The latter consisted of a warehouse twenty-four by thirty-six feet and a smaller room. The warehouse

\(^{83}\) For 1752, see McIlwaine and Kennedy, Journals of the House of Burgesses, VIII, 65, 70, 72-73, and H. R. McIlwaine, ed., Legislative Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia, 3 vols. (Richmond: The Colonial Press, 1918-1919), II, 1072. For 1764, see Hening, Statutes at Large, VII, 604-7 (This is the 1762 act enlarging Alexandria); McIlwaine and Kennedy, Journals of the House of Burgesses, X, 238, 246; and Hening, Statutes at Large, VIII, 49-51 (This is the 1764 act of repeal).

\(^{84}\) For one such case, that of Thomas Harrison and his lot number sixty, see Proceedings of Alexandria Trustees, 1749-1767, Feb. 2, 1761, and Feb. 1, 1763.
had a seven-foot deep stone cellar of the same dimensions as the building proper with two levels above it. The first level had been partitioned into two granaries. A twelve-square-foot room, completely lathed and plastered and with a brick chimney, adjoined the larger building. The lot itself was entirely enclosed by a rail fence. 85

Another sign of growth can be found in a petition forwarded to the Virginia burgesses by the residents of Fairfax County. Drafted in 1752, the petition asked that Alexandria be allowed to hold fairs. The colonial government acted swiftly in agreeing to the request. A statute signed by the governor in February authorized semiannual fairs in the town. Two-day fairs at which all items could be sold were approved for the last Thursday in May and October. 86 The act was renewed in 1755 for a ten-year period. 87

There is an element of anxiety present in many of the affairs taking place in the river town in this period. Alexandrians were transparently eager to see their town prosper, and they displayed a very thin skin whenever it was criticized. They clearly realized that the key to growth lay in increasing the functions performed in their town. Relocating the county

85 Maryland Gazette, Oct. 30, 1751; Virginia Gazette (Williamsburg) (Parks), Oct. 11, 1751.

86 McIlwaine and Kennedy, Journals of the House of Burgesses, VIII, 10, 21, 24, 31, 97; McIlwaine, Legislative Journals of the Council, II, 1063-64; Hening, Statutes at Large, VI, 286-87.

87 McIlwaine and Kennedy, Journals of the House of Burgesses, VIII, 250, 255, 261, 263, 265, 295; McIlwaine, Legislative Journals of the Council, III, 1135-36; Hening, Statutes at Large, VI, 499-500.
court was an obvious possibility. The interesting thing was the aggressive way in which they went about achieving that goal.

In February 1751/52 a group of ninety-three subscribers pledged £42.15.8 to build a court house and prison in Alexandria for the use of Fairfax County. The only stipulation was that the governor would first have to approve the change of location (the court house and jail were situated a mile or two north of the present city of Vienna). The subscribers included all of those men who were then, or who later became, prominent in town affairs. Their contributions ranged from the fifty pounds pledged by Hugh West, Senior, to John Posey's ten shillings tenpence. The pledges averaged a handsome £4.15.2. The governor's council received the petition containing the pledge on March 23, 1751/52. Hearing no objections to the request, it ordered the Fairfax court and prison relocated. Possibly anticipating the move, in January the Fairfax County Court had ordered that a whipping post, stocks, and a ducking stool be erected in the new town to be used "for punishing Offenders."  

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88 "Petition of the Principal Inhabitants of Fairfax County," Ramsay Papers, 1751-1889. Division of Cultural History, National Museum of History and Technology, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.


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Moving the county court house and prison took a certain amount of time. The transfer was completed by 1753, at which point the Alexandria trustees contracted with several workmen to fence the court house lot. The county continued its practice of paying the routine expenses connected with the court and prison (such as tending the jail and cleaning the court house) while the town trustees reimbursed those who had handled the relocation. Having acquired the county facilities, Alexandria thus gained an important advantage over Colchester, its principal rival in Fairfax.

Alexandria was a small but thriving port town by the time the French and Indian War erupted in the interior of North America. The overall effect of the war was to accelerate the development of the town. Although Table 2 indicates that its population declined during the war years, by 1763 Alexandria had emerged as the leading urban center of the Potomac River valley basin. It would maintain that position until its eclipse by Washington, D.C., in the nineteenth century.

Virginia was badly prepared to fight a war of any size at the beginning of 1754. When the fighting began, most of the colony's merchants viewed the war as a grave threat to commerce. It was, for many of them. However, for those fortunate enough to be engaged in the business of supplying

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### TABLE 2

**POPULATION OF ALEXANDRIA, 1755-1790**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Fairfax County Tithables</th>
<th>Total Population of Alexandria</th>
<th>No. of Whites</th>
<th>White Percentage</th>
<th>No. of Blacks</th>
<th>Black Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1790</td>
<td>3,817</td>
<td>2,748</td>
<td>2,153</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1788</td>
<td>3,801</td>
<td>2,736</td>
<td>2,144</td>
<td></td>
<td>592</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1784</td>
<td>3,054</td>
<td>2,199</td>
<td>1,722</td>
<td></td>
<td>477</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1771</td>
<td>2,508</td>
<td>1,806</td>
<td>1,415</td>
<td></td>
<td>391</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1770</td>
<td>2,385</td>
<td>1,717</td>
<td>1,345</td>
<td></td>
<td>372</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1768</td>
<td>2,242</td>
<td>1,614</td>
<td>1,264</td>
<td></td>
<td>350</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1762</td>
<td>1,686</td>
<td>1,214</td>
<td>950</td>
<td></td>
<td>264</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1755</td>
<td>2,376</td>
<td>1,711</td>
<td>1,339</td>
<td></td>
<td>372</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table was prepared using the following regression technique: the number of Fairfax County tithables in the years indicated was known, as was the white, black, and total population of Alexandria in 1790. To determine the population of Alexandria in 1788 an equation was set up using the number of tithables in the county in 1788 and 1790 and the town population in 1790. The unknown was then computed. The same process was repeated to determine the town population in 1784 using the number of county tithables in 1784 and 1788 and the town population in 1788. The procedure was continued to the year 1755. The same method was utilized to determine the white population of the town, working from the town and white populations instead of the county tithable and town populations. The black population was obtained by subtracting the white from the total population. Note that the population figures for Alexandria prior to 1790 are estimates based on the number of Fairfax County tithables.

This total was used on Feb. 17, 1790 to compute the county levy and is probably based on a count taken the preceding year.
In 1790 the population of Fairfax County was 12,320. In that year Alexandria had 22.3% of the total county population. The town population figures given on this line are taken from the First United States Census, which was probably compiled locally in 1789.

Of the 595 blacks enumerated in 1790, 52 were free and 543 were slaves. Thus, free blacks comprised 8.7% of the town's black population.

It is not clear why the number of tithables declined so sharply in 1762. The decline may be related to the large number of Virginia troops taking part in the Cherokee War on the southern frontier in 1760-1761 and to the sizeable regiment maintained by the colony in the interior until May, 1763. See Morton, *Colonial Virginia*, II, pp. 731-36.

Source: Lindeman, "Fairfax County, Virginia," Table II.5, p. 30, and Appendix B, Table A.1, p. 58 (for Fairfax County population); Fairfax County Order Books, 1755-1790 (for number of tithables in Fairfax County); and Heads of Families at the First Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1790: Records of the State Enumerations: 1782 to 1785; Virginia (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1986), p. 10 (for Alexandria population).
His Majesty's troops, the conflict offered profit along with risk.

The initial, and long-lasting, objective of the Imperial forces in Virginia was to end the French domination of the Ohio Valley region. A staging area for the Virginia and English regiments in the region and a convenient point of resupply were essential in achieving this goal. Although still quite small, Alexandria proved ideally situated to fulfill both these requirements.

Before the end of March 1754 Major George Washington was busy in Alexandria collecting men and supplies for the first major transmontane expedition against the French. He used the Coffee House (subsequently renamed Gadsby's Tavern) as a recruiting center and trained his forces in the area. On Washington's recommendation John Carlyle, a town trustee and merchant, was appointed Commissary of Provisions for the small force that marched west later in the year.

Alexandria's involvement in the war that followed Washington's surrender at Fort Necessity was extensive and long-lasting. In 1754 the town served as Washington's headquarters, and in 1755 General Edward Braddock assumed command there. Braddock oversaw a formidable build-up of soldiers and material in the town as he prepared for his ill-fated thrust against Fort Duquesne. The town benefited from the famous meeting of five colonial governors there in April; from the

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provisioning of the soldiers (there were over 1600 of them) waiting to march across the mountains; from the ongoing need to supply those troops garrisoned in the West; and from the excellent wagon roads cut over the Blue Ridge at Ashby's and Snicker's Gaps as part of the logistic support of the Anglo-Virginian forces. 94

Finding accommodations for Braddock and his men imposed a severe strain on the town's facilities. There were virtually no rooms available for travellers by the end of spring. 95 Braddock's troops complicated things by assuming the role of a conquering army. John Carlyle tells the story well:

They differed, us & them, & by sum means or another came in so prejudiced against us & our country, so that they used us like an enemy country & took everything they wanted & paid nothing, or very little for it, & when complaints was made to the Comdg officers, they curst the country & inhabitants, calling us the spawn of convicts, the sweeping of the Gaols, etc which made their company very disagreeable— . . . [The General


and his party lodged with me, he took everything he wanted, abused my home, & furniture, & made me little or no satisfaction....

That sort of behavior became all too familiar throughout the colonies as the war progressed. In a careful study of British operations in North America during the period, Alan Rogers found that the royal army generated conflict everywhere it operated because of its use of arbitrary military power.97

Dealing with the British troops passing through the town may have been a distasteful business, but it provided a lucrative source of income over the long run for the town merchants. As late as 1760, there were still four hundred soldiers garrisoned in Alexandria, and hundreds more were stationed further west.98 The town remained heavily involved in the war, furnishing both soldiers and supplies, to its conclusion. If Alexandria lost some of its own men in the fighting, certainly many of its tradesmen gained heavily in the provisioning business.99 A considerable number of his fellow merchants must have shared John Carlyle's sentiments in a passage he wrote a year before the war began:

96 John Carlyle to his brother, Aug. 15, 1755, Carlyle Papers.
98 Pennsylvania Gazette (Philadelphia), June 19, 1760.
99 Washington's correspondence provides a good indication of the heavy involvement of the town in the war effort. See Fitzpatrick, Writings of George Washington, I.
I have Got as easy a fortune as I could expect In the times... In this Country a Man has so many advantageous prospects & ways of Laying out money that I cannot say but I am more anctious [anxious] after money & sumtimes repine at the Want of it Then I should do, i.e. 100

Taken as a whole, the 1750s proved to be a prosperous decade for Alexandria.

Looking back, it is apparent that Alexandria owed its existence and early growth to a series of loosely-related developments occurring in the eighteenth century. Among these were the rise of the Atlantic economy; the increasing density of settlement in colonial Virginia; the opening to cultivation of new lands in the west of that colony; the advent of a new mechanism for use in marketing Virginia crops; and the advantageous location of the town at a transportation break within the Potomac River basin. Throughout the 1750s and beyond, Alexandria was preeminently a commercial town. Its expansion would have been severely retarded, if not checked altogether, without the stimulus of trade.

100 John Carlyle to an unnamed correspondent, Aug. 11, 1753, Carlyle Papers.
CHAPTER II

THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF ALEXANDRIA:

THE FOUNDATIONS OF ECONOMIC GROWTH

The importance of commerce in the expansion of early Alexandria has already been stressed. The Potomac town did serve as the administrative, ecclesiastical, and cultural center of Fairfax County. However, even these relatively modest functions derived from Alexandria's role as a major trading center in northern Virginia.

In its earliest years the shipment of tobacco, Indian corn, and other commodities sustained Alexandria's growth. The approach of the Revolution coincided with a change in the Potomac town's exports. Its merchants continued to ship large quantities of tobacco, but wheat and other grains, along with flour, became the dominant trading products.

The merchants who purchased the tobacco, grains, lumber, and other items ordinarily paid their suppliers in either manufactured goods or in credit. Alexandria thus became a major port of entry for finished products destined for use throughout northern Virginia and the Potomac River Valley. The town also functioned as a regional center for the trade in slaves and indentured and convict servants.

The expansion of Alexandria facilitated the growth of a limited range of industrial and service activities, such as
shipbuilding. But in 1775, as in 1750, the business life of the town centered on its import and export trade. Colonial Alexandria never attained the balanced economy characteristic of Boston, Philadelphia, or Norfolk.

The key to understanding the forces decisive in shaping Alexandria's economic development is found in a theme articulated by Jacob M. Price. Because his interpretation is so important in shaping the conclusions set forth in this dissertation, it is presented here in some detail.

In an article that is of transcending importance in its field, Price analyzed the development of early American port towns. He began by asking why the life of some of the American colonies produced relatively large towns while the life of others did not. He argued that the answer to this question could be found in examining the functions performed by the various port towns. Price asserted that in order for a colonial town to become relatively large, it had to satisfy three criteria: a suitable geographic location, an appropriate volume of trade, and a certain quality of economic activity. In considering the towns of the colonial Chesapeake, he noted that with only two exceptions (Baltimore and Norfolk) the quality of economic activity typical of the region prevented the growth of large towns.

To understand why this was so, we must examine briefly the economy of the eighteenth-century Chesapeake. The great export commodity of the region was tobacco. Virtually

1Price, "Growth of American Port Towns."
all of the region's crop was shipped to Britain, using either the consignment or the direct purchase system. In both cases, the complex problems associated with marketing the leaf were handled by British, not colonial, merchants. For this reason, what Price described as the "entrepreneurial decision-making center" was located abroad, not in the Chesapeake colonies. The entrepreneurial decision-making center can be defined as the center of operation for those who risk their own capital in deciding on the processing, shipment, and disposition of commodities under their control.

This condition resulted in a restriction of the quality of economic activity carried on in the Chesapeake towns. Price remarked that preindustrial towns in general had four basic roles: (1) civil and ecclesiastical administration, (2) maritime transport and external commercial exchange, (3) industrial production, and (4) internal services. Locating the decision-making center of a trade (such as tobacco or small grains) in a port town usually led to the presence there of sailors, ship-chandlers, and the like, as well as specialist brokers, insurance underwriters, and a manufacturing population to process goods being prepared for shipment. The presence of these groups would in turn lead to the development of an active service sector composed of innkeepers, tailors, peruke-makers, petty retail shopkeepers, teachers, ministers, and so on. Conversely, locating the decision-making center elsewhere would likely render the port in question little more than a shipping point, regardless of the volume of goods moving through it.
Colonial Alexandria fits the latter model quite well. Determinations regarding the shipment and disposition of most of the tobacco and grain leaving the town were made by merchants residing outside of Virginia. Since this was the case, one would expect that the town's maritime, industrial, and service components would develop only partially. Thus, even the designation of Alexandria as a local administrative (Fairfax County) and ecclesiastical (Fairfax Parish) center was not enough to effect its transformation to a major preindustrial town. It is true that a wide variety of goods could be purchased in Alexandria, that a certain level of manufacturing was attained there, and that the town offered a limited range of service activities. For all that, Alexandria did not approach Philadelphia or even Norfolk in its development.\(^2\)

The model adopted here runs counter to the argument that urbanization in the eighteenth-century South, or in any comparable region in America, followed a unique pattern. Two recent studies of the urban process in the South have also rejected this notion for that section.\(^3\) Certainly for


the earlier period of American history, regional differences are a great deal less important than economic, political, and geographic factors in accounting for the extent and form of urbanization.

In eighteenth century English usage, a merchant was a person who traded overseas, or risked his capital abroad. However, because the word "merchant" is a convenient term to describe all those men trading in early Alexandria, it will be used in this less precise fashion. In those cases where the eighteenth century definition is needed, "true merchant" or "tertiary trader" will be used. The evidence indicates that few true merchants resided in Alexandria.

The men who have been called merchants in the Potomac town were generally either factors of British firms or secondary traders. The latter are individuals who were active in the wholesale and retail trades and who perhaps ordered goods from overseas. These secondary traders did not actually trade overseas or venture their capital abroad. John Carlyle almost certainly qualified as a true merchant (or a tertiary trader, to use Price's term). The evidence

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6 Ibid.
indicates that John Dalton and Robert Adam probably also merited inclusion in that category. It seems likely that these three men were the only members of the Alexandria mercantile community who rose to the level of tertiary trader. Few Alexandrians enjoyed the independence that came with making their own decisions and risking their own capital in matters of trade.

I

Although on several occasions Alexandria tertiary traders shipped cargoes of tobacco to Britain, the trade in that commodity was almost always handled by the resident agents, or factors, of British mercantile houses. Of the seven or eight traders buying tobacco in Alexandria in 1775, Harry Piper was one of the most active. His Letter Book provides an absorbing record of the business dealings of an English factor living in the Chesapeake. Piper's shipments of tobacco to Whitehaven constituted only a small part of the enormous quantities of that leaf carried each year from Virginia to Britain.

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7 For a shipment in 1766 by Robert Adam, see P.R.O. C.O. 5/1450, 12; for one in 1764 by John Hunter, see C.O. 5/1449, 60; for one in 1756 and one in 1757 by John Carlyle, see C.O. 5/1447, 54 and 66.

8 The estimate of the number of tobacco merchants is based on my own count and on the individuals and firms listed in Robert Carter's Letter Book, in March, 1775; see Appendix C.

9 Harry Piper Letter Book, 1767-1775. Manuscripts Department, Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville: microfilm.
Despite the increasing tendency of Virginia planters to diversify their crops, tobacco remained the great export commodity of the Old Dominion throughout the colonial period. Even in the 1770s, tobacco accounted for over seventy-five percent of all exports from Virginia. Virginia exported more than twice as much tobacco as its nearest rival, Maryland, during the period 1768 through 1772. The two colonies together accounted for over ninety-five percent of the tobacco exported from the British North American colonies during these same five years.

Since tobacco was an enumerated commodity, it could only be carried to Britain or to other parts of the empire. In fact, over ninety-nine percent of the tobacco shipped from the British Colonies in North America went directly to Britain. London served as the main port of entry, followed by Glasgow, Whitehaven, Liverpool, and Bristol in that order.

The Scottish trade in colonial tobacco reached its peak from 1768 through 1770, when its share of the whole averaged about fifty percent. While virtually all of the Scottish tobacco was reexported to the European continent (her principal markets were France and Holland), a substantial amount of the


11 James P. Shepherd, "Commodity Exports from the British North American Colonies to Overseas Areas, 1768-1772: Magnitudes and Patterns of Trade," Explorations in Economic History, 8 (Fall, 1970), Table 1, 12-23. A fine visual display of this data is found in Cappon, Atlas of Early American History, p. 26.

tobacco imported by England was consumed in the mother

\textsuperscript{13} In order to satisfy the demands of their French
and other continental customers, the Scottish concentrated
their stores along the Potomac and James Rivers and bought
vast quantities of Oronoco tobacco for export.\textsuperscript{14}

Generalizations about the prices offered for Chesapeake
tobacco during the first three quarters of the eighteenth
century are a risky business. The price fluctuated so greatly
that the period has to be studied on a year to year basis.
Jacob Price found that the price of Chesapeake tobacco was
generally low but fairly stable from 1726 to 1774. The average
annual wholesale price offered for tobacco in Philadelphia
rose very gradually from 1720 to the time of the Revolution.\textsuperscript{15}
In a survey of the price of tobacco and other commodities in
Revolutionary Pennsylvania, Anne Bezanson noted that between

\textsuperscript{13}Price, "Rise of Glasgow," 180-81 (for market percent-
ages); and "Economic Growth of the Chesapeake," 500-501 (for
Scottish markets); Lewis Cecil Gray, History of Agriculture
in the Southern United States to 1860, 2 vols. Contributions
to American Economic History (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith,
1958), I, Table 5, p. 214, and Egnal, "Economic Development,"
209 (for British consumption of tobacco).

\textsuperscript{14}Price, "Economic Growth of the Chesapeake," 509;
Middleton, Tobacco Coast, p. 128; Thomson, "The Merchant in

\textsuperscript{15}For two assessments of the price fluctuations of
Chesapeake tobacco, see Gray, History of Agriculture, I, pp.
271-75, and Craven, Soil Exhaustion, pp. 51-52. For Price's
assessment, see his "Economic Growth of the Chesapeake," 499;
for the Philadelphia price series, see Anne Bezanson, Robert
D. Gray, and Miriam Hussey, Prices in Colonial Pennsylvania,
Industrial Research Department, Wharton School of Finance and
XXVI (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1935),
Table 10, p. 422.
1764 and 1771 tobacco made its steepest prewar rise.\textsuperscript{16}

The price trend was certainly favorable enough to encourage tobacco growers to open more acres to cultivation each year. English imports of Chesapeake tobacco stood at about thirty million pounds weight at the end of the seventeenth century. After a leveling-off period of approximately twenty-five years, tobacco imports began to rise. By the early 1770s Britain was importing an average of about one hundred million pounds weight of Chesapeake tobacco per year.\textsuperscript{17} It should be noted that the increased amounts of tobacco available for export were not the result of more efficient agricultural techniques. Most of the wasteful methods of tobacco cultivation being used in 1720 were still widely practiced fifty-five years later.\textsuperscript{18}

Since no record was kept of the shipping entering or clearing Alexandria, there is no way to measure the amount of tobacco or other commodities being carried abroad. However, we do know that a substantial number of vessels passed through the South Potomac Customs District during the 1750s and 1760s.\textsuperscript{19}


\textsuperscript{19} The district, which stretched from the Falls of the Potomac to Smith's Point in Chesapeake Bay, is shown in Cappon,\textit{ Atlas of Early American History}, p. 40.
Chart 1 on the following page shows that approximately thirty to fifty vessels traveled to and from the district each year during that period. As Alexandria was a major port from the early 1750s on, it is reasonable to assume that many of those vessels stopped there.

Although the mercantile records of early Alexandria are incomplete, it is apparent that a good deal of the tobacco clearing the South Potomac district was shipped from there. Chart 2, which appears below, gives a general indication of the number of hogsheads of tobacco clearing the customs district from 1749 through 1768. Not surprisingly, the amount of tobacco being exported over these years is closely related to the number of vessels leaving the customs district.

Chart 2 shows that about six to seven thousand hogsheads of tobacco were carried from the Potomac region each year from 1761 through 1766. Assigning a weight of 1,058 pounds to each hogshead would mean that from 6,348,000 to 7,406,000 pounds of tobacco left the South Potomac Customs District annually over this period. Virginia exported about fifty-five to sixty million pounds weight of tobacco per year during the 1760s. Thus, the South Potomac district accounted for roughly ten to fourteen percent of all the tobacco carried from the Old Dominion from 1761 through 1766. The district's share of the tobacco exported from Virginia and Maryland combined

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20 1,058 pounds is the average weight of 4,823 hogsheads of tobacco shipped by Harry Piper over the years 1767-1775; see Table 3 below.

Note: The numbers on the left margin represent the number of vessels entering and clearing.

The figures in the Chart should be regarded as approximate. There are significant gaps in the customs records, and part of the material that is available is illegible. The figures are complete for the years 1750-52, 1754-56, 1758, and 1761-66. The period 1769-76 has not been included because the records are too fragmentary.

Source: P.R.O. C.O. 5/1445, /1447, /1448, /1449, and /1450 (Naval Officer's Returns, South Potomac District).
### Chart 2

**Export of Tobacco from the South Potomac Customs District, 1749-1768**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (17--)</th>
<th>49</th>
<th>50</th>
<th>51</th>
<th>52</th>
<th>53</th>
<th>54</th>
<th>55</th>
<th>56</th>
<th>57</th>
<th>58</th>
<th>59</th>
<th>60</th>
<th>61</th>
<th>62</th>
<th>63</th>
<th>64</th>
<th>65</th>
<th>66</th>
<th>67</th>
<th>68</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The numbers on the left margin represent hogsheads of tobacco, expressed in thousands.

*The figures in the Chart should be regarded as approximate. There are significant gaps in the customs records, and part of the material that is available is illegible. The figures for tobacco are complete for the years 1750-52, 1754, 1756, 1758, and 1761-66. The period 1769-76 has not been included because the records are too fragmentary.*

**Source:** P.R.O. CO. 5/1445, /1447, /1448, /1449, and /1450.

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averaged less than ten percent. The amount of tobacco shipped from the Chesapeake region annually from 1761 through 1766 can be estimated conservatively at seventy-five to eighty million pounds weight.22

Harry Piper was one of the most important of those factors engaged in assembling cargos of tobacco for shipment from the South Potomac Customs District. When Alexandria was founded in 1749 he was present as the salaried employee and attorney of the Whitehaven merchant firm of John Dixon and Isaac Littledale. He maintained his connection with that company, and his residence in Alexandria, until his death in the late 1780s.

Possessed of a keen sense of civic responsibility, Piper worked untiringly on behalf of his community. During the 1750s and early 1760s he served as a juror in most of the trials held in Fairfax County. Often, his name appears as the jury foreman. Appointed an Alexandria trustee in 1763, Piper brought to his new position the same degree of industry. Despite the precarious nature of his health, the local records and other sources indicate that he involved himself in virtually every aspect of town government.

Piper had several responsibilities as a resident factor. The most important of these was buying Potomac tobacco and gathering it for shipment to Whitehaven in the vessels chartered by his employers. Dixon and Littledale occasionally

22 These figures are derived from the export totals prepared by Jacob Price in his "Economic Growth of the Chesapeake," 497.
called on him to sell commodities they had shipped to Alexandria, such as coal and indentured and convict servants. Such requests were uncommon, however, and Piper had little to do with the sale locally of consignments from Whitehaven. John Muir generally had sole responsibility for that task. Since Muir's work was customarily separated from that of Piper, it will be dealt with at a later point in this chapter.

Among Piper's other responsibilities were the tasks of advising his employers on the proper types and amounts of goods to send to Alexandria; of providing them with current information on the state of the tobacco trade; of acting as their local attorney; and of collecting the debts due the firm.

As Table three on the following page shows, Piper shipped a great deal of tobacco, as well as lesser amounts of other commodities, to Whitehaven in the years immediately preceding the Revolution. He purchased an average of thirty to forty hogsheads of tobacco annually from each of his suppliers. He sent his employers over five million pounds of tobacco during the years 1767 through 1775. That averaged out at 616,178 pounds of tobacco a year, or 582.4 hogsheads. The twenty-one vessels that carried tobacco to Whitehaven transported an average of 229.67 hogsheads, or 242,946 pounds.

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23 Piper Letter Book, July 13, 1773 and Aug. 31, 1774 (coal shipments); July 19, 1768, May 12, 1769, and June 15, 1772 (indentured and convict servant consignments).

24 This was an unusual mercantile arrangement; cf. the merchants and factors described in Clark, New Orleans, p. 88; Middleton, Tobacco Coast, p. 107; and Shepherd and Walton, Economic Development of Colonial North America, p. 51.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Ship</th>
<th>Tobacco$^a$</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-24-67</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Ruby</td>
<td>164 (172,434)</td>
<td>15 tons pig iron; 3,190 barrel staves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-10-68</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Hero</td>
<td>407 (432,872)</td>
<td>20 tons Occoquan pig iron; 8,360 barrel staves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-12-69</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>William</td>
<td>140 (146,450)</td>
<td>12 tons Occoquan pig iron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-24-69</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>King George</td>
<td>260 (284,634)</td>
<td>&quot;a quantity of barrel staves&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-18-69</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>Hero</td>
<td>230 (248,353)</td>
<td>52 1&quot; &amp; 1½&quot; oak boards; 6,700 barrel staves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-2-70</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>King George</td>
<td>200 (209,743)</td>
<td>9,100 barrel staves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-23-70</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>Ruby</td>
<td>120 (127,749)</td>
<td>4 tons bar iron; 20 hogsheads flaxseed; 4,900 barrel staves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-4-71</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>Hero</td>
<td>307 (334,488)</td>
<td>20 tons Occoquan pig iron; 8,800 barrel staves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-16-71</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>212 (225,905)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-22-71</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>Lowthen and Lenhouse</td>
<td>258 (272,057)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-20-72</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>Lowthen and Lenhouse</td>
<td>279 (291,301)</td>
<td>15 tons Occoquan pig iron; 5,790 barrel staves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-8-72</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>Mayflower</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>20 tons pig iron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-17-72</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>Olive</td>
<td>359 (383,478)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-20-73</td>
<td>237-38</td>
<td>Vigilant</td>
<td>142 (148,564)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-13-73</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>Wells</td>
<td>340 (358,560)</td>
<td>16 tons Occoquan pig iron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-8-73</td>
<td>262-63</td>
<td>Lyon</td>
<td>51 (52,595)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Ship</td>
<td>Tobacco $^a$</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-26-73</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>Mayflower</td>
<td>170 (185,364)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-24-73</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>Vigilant</td>
<td>122 (130,931)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-31-74</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>Wells</td>
<td>335 (347,608)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-14-74</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>Vigilant</td>
<td>200 (202,399)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-27-74</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>Mayflower</td>
<td>187 (187,567)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-14-75</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>Wells</td>
<td>340 (358,805)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Totals</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4,823 (5,101,857)</td>
<td>142 tons pig iron; 46,840 barrel staves; 20 hogsheads flaxseed; 52 1&quot; &amp; 1(^{1/2})&quot; oak boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average shipped per year $^b$</td>
<td>582.4 (616,178)</td>
<td>15.8 tons pig iron; 5456 barrel staves; 2.5 hogsheads flaxseed; 6,5 1&quot; &amp; 1(^{1/2})&quot; oak boards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^a$ The amount of tobacco is expressed in hogsheads, followed in parentheses by the weight in pounds of the shipment.

$^b$ Because the total number of consignments in 1767 is probably incomplete (the Letter Book begins with a letter dated July 23, 1767), the shipment on Oct. 24 of that year is not included in the averages.

each. The watercraft sent by the firm also carried 46,840 barrel staves, 20 hogsheads of flaxseed, a small quantity of oak boards, and 142 tons of pig iron. The last commodity was ordinarily transported freight-free by the vessels' captains; it served ably as ballast, in place of sand.  

The Table indicates that Dixon and Littledale usually sent two or three ships each year to Alexandria. Most of the outgoing cargo left the town between July and November. Rarely did the Whitehaven partners send a vessel to the town during the winter months; the ice was too great a threat. As Piper noted in a letter dated February 20, 1773, "this is a terrible time to have vessels to load." Two days later he wrote that "the River is entirely Frozen over."  

It difficult to determine how busy Piper's various business obligations kept him. A study done a number of years ago on the tempo of mercantile life in colonial America indicated that Piper and his colleagues worked at a more deliberate pace than their twentieth-century counterparts. The volume of Piper's outgoing correspondence to his employers is revealing in this regard. During the nine year period 1767 through 1775 he wrote ninety letters to Dixon and


Littledale, or an average of ten a year. By way of comparison, the Yorktown factor of the firm of John Norton and Sons averaged nineteen letters annually from 1767 through 1771. James Beekman, a New York merchant, averaged thirty-four letters per year over the same period.  

It is important to note that a series of factors beyond the control of Piper and his counterparts in Alexandria and elsewhere dictated a slower pace of commercial activity. Perhaps the most important of these was the rather haphazard means of communication characteristic of the period. Communication by sea between Britain and Virginia was terribly slow and poorly organized, and the dissemination of public information in the thirteen colonies was no better. Operating with only rough guidelines from his employers, it is not surprising to find Piper proceeding slowly, carefully, and above all, cautiously as he went about his business. In common with many of his fellow merchants, Piper undoubtedly spent many hours each week weighing the alternatives open to him.  

Although he wrote rather infrequently to his employers,

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Piper attempted to keep them current on the state of the local economy. He supplied them with price quotations for all of the major export commodities of the region, but he focused on the amounts offered for tobacco. His letters indicate a continuing interest in, and awareness of, the market price of tobacco throughout the Chesapeake.30

In a profession characterized by a rapid rate of turnover Piper's long association with Dixon and Littledale was extraordinary. His extended tenure as their Alexandria factor was no doubt due in part to the close personal relationship the three men maintained during his stay in Virginia. His retention was assured by Piper's astuteness as a factor; he was obviously a first-rate tobacco merchant. Although good at his job, Piper rarely found it easy. In the opening pages of his letter book he referred several times to the difficulties confronting a local tobacco buyer. He noted that the habitually unsettled state of the tobacco market made "this trade so very precarious that I am heartily sick of it." Several paragraphs later, he touched again on the same theme: "I am quite tired of a Business which there is so little satisfaction in."31 Examining the causes of Piper's dissatisfaction not only sheds light on the daily operations of an Alexandria tobacco merchant. It also underscores the competitive nature of the environment within which Piper and his colleagues worked.

30For examples, see the Piper Letter Book, July 28, 1769 and Aug. 8, 1772. Cf. Soltow, "Role of Williamsburg," 472.

Piper's foremost rivals in the region were the Scottish factors of the great mercantile houses of Glasgow. Their numbers augmented those already engaged in buying tobacco, creating an enviable situation for the local planters. As Piper remarked in 1770, "the misfortune of this Trade is, we are too much subjected to the caprice of a few, because there are too many purchasers pushing one another." The Scottish firms sent large numbers of vessels to the region each year. In their rush to load their employers' ships quickly and thus minimize the turnaround time, the factors recklessly bid up the price of tobacco. Piper and the other buyers were left to suffer the consequences of this action.

In a letter to his employers written in December, 1770, Piper graphically described the sort of problems he and his non-Scottish colleagues faced. A large quantity of tobacco had recently been transported to the town. It was all immediately bought and shipped by the Scottish factors resident there. They paid £1.2.6 per hundred pounds of tobacco, giving £0.10.0 in cash and the rest in goods. That was an exceptionally high price to pay when the rate of exchange stood at twenty, or five percent below par. "I could not conceive," Piper wrote in despair, "they would give so much [sic], as I think there was no occasion for it, but they are determined to have the whole Trade." With more than a degree of

32 Ibid., Apr. 3, 1770.
33 Ibid., May 12 and Aug. 24, 1769; Dec. 11, 1770; Nov. 27, 1771; Jan. 10, 1772.
34 Ibid., Dec. 11, 1770. For a lucid discussion of rates
justification, he wrote in 1772 that "some of the Scotch seems to envy any one that has the least share of the Trade." 35

In order to combat the rapacious tactics of his rivals, Piper was forced to adopt business practices that he realized were unwise. Theoretically, he could pay in cash, in bills of exchange, or in goods (drawn from John Muir's town store) for the tobacco he purchased. In fact, the intense competition for their crops meant that the local planters were increasingly unwilling to accept only goods in exchange for tobacco. They demanded a good price and at least partial payment in cash or bills. Each year Piper had to draw a large number of bills of exchange on his Whitehaven employers in order to pay his local suppliers of tobacco. The amounts involved ranged from less than twenty to over one hundred pounds. They were usually payable at the end of sixty days. Piper was particularly apt to draw bills for tobacco when the price of that commodity dropped to an attractive level. 36

Piper's employers would have preferred that he extend book credit to his suppliers so that the latter would buy their necessities from Dixon and Littledale rather than from a competitor. The firm would thus have profited from both

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the resale of Virginia tobacco and the mark-up on their goods sold in Alexandria.\(^{37}\) Even worse than the large numbers of bills drawn by Piper was the fact that they occasionally became due even before the tobacco they had purchased arrived in Whitehaven.\(^{38}\) That, and Piper's inability to collect promptly the debts owed to his firm, added considerably to his woes.\(^{39}\)

The difficulties faced by Piper did not all stem from his rivalry with his Scottish counterparts. Although all tobacco exported from the colony was supposed to be carefully checked and approved by inspectors of proven integrity, sometimes the system broke down.\(^{40}\) Piper did everything in his power to avoid accepting hogsheads stored in the tobacco warehouse at Aquia Creek because the inspectors were sometimes "rather careless," and at other times "great"


\(^{38}\) For example, see the Piper Letter Book, Oct. 12, 1772.


Villains." He wrote in the late spring of 1772 that he hoped they would "soon be turned out." Even tobacco stored at a well-run warehouse was not entirely safe. In 1769 Piper wrote his employers that "some Infernal rascal" had rolled a hogshead of their tobacco off the wharf at Quantico warehouse and into the creek. The tobacco was subsequently dried and repacked before being sent on its way.

From time to time Piper complained of the rising incidence of theft in Alexandria and the surrounding territory. More than just the occasional loss of a few pounds of tobacco was involved. For example, in April, 1769, he was occupied in fitting out a fishing flat. He wrote his employers that the work was slowed because his supplies kept disappearing. He added that "I have no house to put any Thing into, & it is now become common to Steal everything from the Craft. . . ." Nor was Piper safe from the curse of counterfeit money. In a letter to Whitehaven in 1773, he remarked that he had recently lost upwards of two hundred pounds through his acceptance of "nicely done" counterfeit bills.

Two of Piper's most vexing responsibilities were buying the proper amount of tobacco and insuring that it was quickly packed and shipped when one of his firm's vessels made port.

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41 Piper Letter Book, Aug. 2, 1770 and June 15, 1772.
42 Piper Letter Book, June 15, 1772.
43 Ibid., Aug. 24, 1769.
44 Ibid., Apr. 15, 1769 and Feb. 20, 1773.
in Alexandria. Occasionally things went smoothly, as they did when the "very obliging & industrious" Captain Rothery and his "very good Crew" loaded the Wells with 340 hogsheads of tobacco in only 15 working days. At the other extreme, rarely did things go as badly as in the fall of 1772 when the Olive arrived for a consignment of tobacco. Piper's description to his employers of the sequence of events cannot be improved upon:

The Cap. [Captain Morrison] has been continually Drunk & Stupid, I have scarcely ever seen him, but in such a situation, that it was needless to speak to him—the Mate & People I suppose were unacquainted with stowing the Ship, so that she has fallen incomceivably short, & what is most provoking [I] was never made acquainted with it till the very last; I told them all along they were to leave room for the load the Platt was down the River for, but to my great mortification [I] was obliged to land 11 HHDs that were Stowed to return to this Warehouse before it would be taken in; . . . .

Piper added that the slipshod loading of the Olive had left him with over forty hogsheads of tobacco he could neither ship nor sell. He concluded bitterly with the remark that "it is hard I must draw for this when I thought I was guarding as much as possible a[ ] [against] having any tobacco left—" Disasters of this sort undoubtedly strengthened Piper in his resolve to return to his native England. He never abandoned that dream, but he lived out his life in Virginia.

II

The steady flow of tobacco, foodstuffs, and other items

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46Ibid., Nov. 17, 1772.
from early Alexandria was matched by the import of a wide range of commodities. Much less is known about the import than about the export trade of the Potomac town. However, enough material has survived to permit a discussion of the salient aspects of that trade.

The Letter Book of Harry Piper provides a glimpse of the operations of John Muir, Piper's colleague and fellow employee of Dixon and Littledale. A search of the South Potomac Customs District records reveals very few shipments to the region by the Whitehaven firm before the early 1760s. The records are incomplete, however, and there may have been several consignments for which no information has survived. Muir's workload expanded from about 1765 on, when the number of vessels sent to Alexandria by his employers increased substantially.

The bulk of Muir's stock apparently consisted of low-grade goods which he found difficult to sell. The fact that many of his fellow merchants shared the same burden did little to ease Muir's plight. His difficulties were compounded by the vicissitudes of the local retail trade. There was occasionally an overabundance of imported goods for sale, which resulted in a very low turnover rate in Muir's inventory.

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48 P.R.O. C.O. 5/1445, /1447, /1448, /1449, and /1450.
50 See Coulter, "Import Trade of Colonial Virginia," 300-304.
51 Piper Letter Book, Aug. 8, Sept. 9, and Oct. 24, 1772.
That contributed to a very slow collection of debts due Dixon and Littledale, giving Muir "the greatest uneasiness. . . ."\textsuperscript{52}

The merchandise shipped to Muir was not only often second-rate; it frequently arrived badly damaged. Incoming packages were sometimes stowed in the ships' holds along with consignments of damp coal. It is no wonder that the former had a "shocking appearance" when unpacked. From time to time, Piper and Muir received goods that were beyond salvation. In 1774, Piper wrote his employers that "I really dont know what to do with his [Muir's] Irish Linnins, he is afraid to put them in the Store, for fear of giving his Goods a bad Character. . . ." The linens were ultimately discarded and Muir received a ten pound credit from Piper.\textsuperscript{53}

Generalizing on the basis of limited evidence, it seems that the vast majority of manufactured goods brought into Alexandria were handled by men who, like John Muir, were the local factors of British firms. Although the South Potomac customs records do provide a few examples of shipments of goods to Britain by Alexandria merchants such as John Carlyle, John Dalton, and Robert Adam, the vessels they dispatched to that area did not usually return directly to Alexandria.\textsuperscript{54} Instead, they ordinarily came back via the

\textsuperscript{52}Ibid., Aug. 8, 1772.

\textsuperscript{53}Ibid., June 21, 1773 (first quote); Aug. 9, 1769 (second quote); July 28, 1769. See also Coulter, "Import Trade of Colonial Virginia," 300-301.

\textsuperscript{54}For examples of these shipments to Britain, see P.R.O. C.O. 5/1447, 54 and 66; /1449, 60; and /1450, 12 and 40.
West Indies, bringing an assortment of commodities which were presumably sold in the Potomac town. Their vessels carried large quantities of rum, molasses, and sugar, as well as limes and other goods, to the Potomac customs district. Carlyle and a few of his fellow merchants also traded directly with several ports in the Caribbean. Their outbound cargos are better left for discussion in the next chapter. Their inbound shipments generally conformed to the pattern indicated above: rum, molasses, sugar, and limes dominated the ships' manifests. Very little is known about the sale of these imports in Alexandria. Several town merchants inserted in the regional newspapers extensive lists of commodities to be sold either wholesale or retail. The lists consisted of an extensive number of finished goods as well as foodstuffs and raw materials.

The existing primary source material indicates that Alexandria's small community of true merchants avoided completely another important facet of the local economy: the trade in indentured and convict servants and slaves.

The Chesapeake was a particularly attractive region for those engaged in the lucrative business of exporting indentured and convict servants to the American colonies. It is not

55 For examples of these shipments from the West Indies, see P.R.O. C.O. 5/1447, 54 and 87, and /1448, 27.

56 See especially the detailed list of goods offered by Robert Adam and Co. in the Virginia Gazette (Purdie and Dixon), Aug. 20, 1772. Note also the items offered by four town merchants in the Maryland Gazette on Feb. 19, Mar. 5, June 18, and July 30, 1761.

57 On the Chesapeake as a center for the servant trade,
known how many servants were carried to that locality during the colonial period. Certainly many thousands of indentured servants were conveyed to Virginia and Maryland. Just over twenty thousand convict servants were brought to the two colonies. 58

Although the Chesapeake settlers welcomed indentured servants, strenuous efforts were made in both colonies to exclude felons being transported for their crimes. The attempts invariably failed. 59 They failed in part because Britain would not allow the colonial governments to obstruct a trade that was both profitable to a number of home country merchants and useful in removing large numbers of inmates from Britain's overcrowded jails. They also failed because most Chesapeake planters welcomed cheap convict labor. Abbot Emerson Smith spoke to the point when he noted that the British government did not force convicts on the colonies because it did not need to do so. 60

The exact number of indentured and convict servants


58Smith, Colonists in Bondage, p. 119.

59Ibid., pp. 119-21, and Middleton, Tobacco Coast, pp. 149-50 and 153-54.

brought to colonial Alexandria is unknown. Chart 3 on the
next page underscores both the fluctuations in the number of
servants transported to the South Potomac Customs District
and the fact that a sizable population of servants entered the
district from 1749 through 1768. Although incomplete, the
customs records during this period show that 1,621 servants
came into the South Potomac District. The customs records
do not differentiate between convict and indentured servants.

References in the Maryland Gazette and in Harry Piper's
Letter Book make it clear that Alexandria was a major center
in the servant trade. Between 1766 and 1775 a minimum of six
vessels loaded with indentured servants almost certainly
discharged their cargos there. From 1768 through 1772 at
least three ships carrying convict servants made Alexandria
their port of debarkation. 61

We know comparatively little about those firms engaged
in the business of importing and selling servants in early
Alexandria. The firm of Russell and Hodge transported one
shipload of indentured servants from London which they sold
in the town in 1766. Also, Dixon and Littledale occasionally
consigned groups of indentured and convict servants to Harry
Piper to sell locally. 62 The Whitehaven company began to

61 These estimates are based on information in the
Maryland Gazette, Apr. 3, 1766 and June 15, 1775, and in the
Piper Letter Book, July 19 and Sept. 10, 1768, May 12, 1769,
June 15 and Aug. 8, 1772, and Sept. 8, 1773.

62 Maryland Gazette, Apr. 1, 1766 (the Russell and Hodge
shipment); Piper Letter Book, July 19 and Aug. 10, 1768; Sept.
17, 1771; and June 15, 1772 (Dixon and Littledale's shipments).
Note: The numbers on the left margin represent the servants and slaves entering the customs district.

The figures in the Chart should be regarded as approximate. There are significant gaps in the customs records, and part of the material that is available is illegible. The figures are complete for the years 1750-52, 1754, 1758, and 1761-66. The period 1769-76 has not been included because the records are too fragmentary. The records do not differentiate between convict and indentured servants.

Source: P.R.O. C.O. 5/1445, /1447, /1448, /1449, and /1450.
transport servants to Alexandria at least as early as 1764. In that year they sent seventy-five servants from England to the South Potomac Customs District. It is reasonable to infer that these people were being sent to Alexandria for sale by Piper. 63

The local demand for both convict and indentured servants fluctuated greatly from year to year. In 1771 Piper advised his employers to arrange for a shipment of men and women to Alexandria. Less than two years later he urged them to hold their shipments until the market improved: "We have had a prodigious importation of Servants this Year, if any should offer to you, do not be induced to take them, for they will scarce sell at any rate..." 64 Not surprisingly, Piper found that sick and old servants were difficult to sell, as were those whose criminal reputation preceded them. He discovered it almost impossible to place "these good looking half Gent. sort of men" because everyone was afraid of them. 65

The advertisements placed in the regional newspapers concerning runaway servants from Alexandria provide us with a considerable amount of information on that segment of the local work force. 66 They enable us to construct limited

63P.R.O. C.O. 5/1449, 62.

64Piper Letter Book, Nov. 4, 1771 and Sept. 8, 1773. See also a letter dated July 24, 1767 in which he notes "every place is overrun" with convict servants.

65Ibid., July 19, 1768, Sept. 17, 1771 (the quoted material), June 15, 1772.

66The information that follows is taken from the Maryland Gazette, the Pennsylvania Gazette, and the Virginia Gazette (Parks and Rind and their successors).
profiles of the indentured and convict servant population of the town.

The advertisements list eleven indentured servants who deserted their positions in colonial Alexandria. Scotland and England supplied two each, four were Irish, and the nationalities of the remaining three were not given. The advertisements, which covered the period from 1754 through 1775, gave the ages of only three of the runaways. The oldest was twenty-five, and the youngest, about sixteen. All but one of the escapees were men. The only woman among them ran away with her husband, who was also an indentured servant. Of those whose occupations were listed, two were bakers. There was also a breechesmaker, a brickmaker, a joiner, and a servant.

Alexandria owners also advertised for the return of sixteen convict servants who fled the town from 1758 through 1775. Again, natives of Ireland led the list: seven of them fled, followed by five Englishmen and one Dutchman. The nationalities of three of the escapees were not supplied. The advertisements noted the ages of twelve of the servants. With only one exception, they ranged in age from about sixteen to about thirty. The following trades were represented by the runaways: baker (2), barber (2), bucklemaker, cooper, joiner, physician's assistant, sawyer, shoemaker, and weaver. The occupations of five were not indicated. The only woman among the sixteen was the wife of a convict who also escaped.

Several points concerning these servants deserve emphasis. First, note that the Irish led the list in both categories of
runaway servants. Perhaps that is one reason why Irish servants were not favorably regarded in the region. Second, the wide variety of trades practiced by the runaways suggests that the servant population of Alexandria was for the most part highly skilled. Third, the large numbers of those escaping indicate that white servants played an important, albeit forgotten, role in the economic development of the early town. Almost all of these escaped servants were owned by town merchants such as Robert Adam, John Carlyle, and John Dalton, or by local ordinary keepers, such as Michael Gretter and Andrew Wales. The advertisements for the return of these men and women remind us that indentured and convict servants were a major element in the population of colonial Alexandria.

While the number of slaves transported by sea to colonial Alexandria was not great, the town did serve as an important regional center in the slave trade. Virginia as a whole had the largest slave population of all of Britain's mainland colonies, although it ranked second in importance to South Carolina in the importation of slaves. Between 1710 and 1769 52,504 slaves were brought to Virginia. Of that total, 45,088 were carried directly from Africa. Almost all of the remainder came from the West Indies.

67On this point, see the Piper Letter Book, Aug. 10, 1768, and Smith, Colonists in Bondage, p. 38.


Herbert S. Klein has analyzed the Virginia slave trade from 1727 through 1769. He concluded that British merchants monopolized the direct Africa-to-Virginia route. He also found that only 1,060 slaves in 10 ships were transported to the South Potomac Customs District during these years. Those slaves comprised less than 3 percent of the 38,724 slaves brought into all six Virginia port districts in the same period.\textsuperscript{70} Chart 3 above gives an approximation of the number of slaves brought into the South Potomac district from 1749 through 1768. The surviving customs records for the district show that 545 slaves entered during this period. That figure should be compared with the 1,621 servants carried into the district over the same years.\textsuperscript{71}

The limited number of slaves transported into the South Potomac district for sale during the second and third quarters of the eighteenth century is attributable to several factors. Two of these seem especially important. First, the Potomac region was not settled until well after the James and York River areas. Second, northern Virginia never rivalled the southern and central Chesapeake in the production of tobacco, a crop well suited to slave labor. The relatively diversified agricultural and preindustrial economy of the northern Chesapeake apparently made servants more attractive than slaves.

\textsuperscript{70}Klein, "Slaves and Shipping," 387, 411, and Table 7 on 398.

\textsuperscript{71}P.R.O. C.O. 5/1445, /1447, /1448, /1449, and /1450.
to the planters and entrepreneurs of the region.

The existing source material reveals that six consignments of slaves were sold in Alexandria before the Revolution. John Dalton and Company imported twenty-five slaves in 1750 and sixteen the following year. The first group entered the Potomac by way of York; the second came from Barbados. Also in 1751, William Ramsay and Company conveyed an additional thirty-six slaves to the Potomac town from Barbados.\(^7^2\) In the late summer of 1762 John and Thomas Kirkpatrick, a pair of Alexandria merchants, offered to sell "a parcel of very healthy Gambia Slaves" for either bills of exchange or cash.\(^7^3\) In the spring of 1773 Baldwin Matthews Buckner, whose profession is not known, advertised the sale of "a small cargo of choice Gold Coast Slaves" for either cash or bills of exchange. Later that year, Robert Adam and Company imported six slaves from Jamaica.\(^7^4\)

It is possible that the firms of John Dalton and Robert Adam imported their consignments of slaves on their own risk, and used their own capital. However, Ramsay, the Kirkpatricks, and Buckner were probably acting here as factors, and selling the slaves on a commission basis. The importation and sale of slaves was an expensive and risky proposition. Given the cost of that kind of undertaking, and the monopoly by British

\(^7^2\)Ibid., 5/1445, 55, 58, and 59.
\(^7^3\)Maryland Gazette, Sept. 9, 1762.
\(^7^4\)Virginia Gazette (Purdie and Dixon) and Virginia Gazette (Rind), May 27, 1773 (the Buckner sale); P.R.O. C.O. 5/1352, 133 (the Adam shipment).
merchants of the direct route from Africa, few Alexandria merchants were likely to become heavily involved in the trade.

Although Alexandria was not a significant import center for new Negro slaves, the town did function as an important slave market. The first officially recorded public auction of slaves in Alexandria took place at the court house in 1757. From that time forward, the sale of slaves in the town became increasingly widespread. There were very few sales of slaves in groups of more than four or five. If the advertisements placed in the regional newspapers are any indication, few of the slaves being sold possessed special skills. Occasionally, however, a parcel of highly skilled slaves was sold in Alexandria. An instance of this sort occurred in 1770 when seventeen slaves owned by John Ballendine were sold in order to pay a debt he owed Hector Ross, a Colchester merchant.

Using the technique of regression analysis as explained in Table 2, explanatory note a, the black population of Alexandria in 1771 was estimated at 391. That figure is just under twenty-two percent of the total population of the town. It is likely that Alexandria in the 1770s had a larger percentage of Negroes in its total population than did the

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cities of Boston, New York, Newport, or Philadelphia. On the other hand, Charles Town, Annapolis, and Williamsburg undoubtedly had a much larger percentage of black residents than did Alexandria. The relatively low percentage of Negroes in early Alexandria was probably due in part to the widespread use of white servant labor in the town. It is also likely that the free white residents of the community were not wealthy enough as a group to sustain a substantial population of slaves working as domestics. It will be seen that many, if not most, of the black residents of Alexandria worked as unskilled or semi-skilled laborers.

It has been asserted that late eighteenth-century Alexandria had a large free black population. In fact, the opposite is more nearly true. Only fifty-two free Negroes resided in the town in 1790. That was less than ten percent of the total black population of Alexandria in that year. There is no reason to believe that the free black community of colonial Alexandria was more than a trace element of the total number of Negroes resident there. Many of the cities


78 Cf. Tate, Negro in Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg, pp. 28-29 and 33.


80 Heads of Families at the First Census, p. 10.
and towns of the antebellum South may have sustained numerically significant free black populations, but that was not the case with prerevolutionary Alexandria or Williamsburg. 81

The local black population contributed only minimally to the problem of crime in colonial Alexandria. The most common offense committed by black Alexandrians was theft. Those men and women unlucky enough to be caught were ordinarily sentenced to thirty-nine lashes on the bare back at the public whipping post. 82

There is only one possible example of a really serious crime committed by black Alexandrians during the town's colonial period. Both the Pennsylvania Gazette and the Georgia Gazette reported the story. The former newspaper provided its readers with a concise account:

From Alexandria, in Virginia, we learn, that a Number of Negroes there had lately conspired to poison their Overseers, and that several Persons have lost their Lives in Consequence thereof; that some of the Negroes have been taken up, four of whom were executed about three Weeks ago, after which their Heads were cut off, and fixed on the Chimneys of the Court-House; and it was expected that four more would soon meet with the same Fate. 83


82 For example, see the Fairfax County Order Book, Dec. 18, 1770, p. 159. See also Tate, Negro in Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg, pp. 99-101. On the punishment of slaves in antebellum southern cities, see Wade, Slavery in the Cities, pp. 184-97.

83 Pennsylvania Gazette, Dec. 31, 1767; Tate, Negro in
The story is sensational, but is it true? Given the complete lack of corroboration in any other sources, the answer is almost certainly no. For whatever motives, the same person could have written similar accounts to both newspapers. Had this incident really occurred, it is improbable that it would have passed unmentioned in the town and county records, in the two regional newspapers, and in the private correspondence of the local residents. The two newspapers that carried the story very likely printed it without verifying it first.

Although the major occupation of most slaves in colonial Virginia was tobacco production, a significant number were put to work at other tasks. In an otherwise excellent book, Herbert S. Klein erred when he wrote that only the house servants in the colony "had the possibility of breaking out of the confined world of the plantation." The records kept by a major Alexandria merchant firm reveal that slaves were an integral part of the labor force of early Alexandria.

During the year 1775 the firm of Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer and Robert Townshend Hooe leased six slaves from their masters for various projects. At least four of the six

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Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg, p. 100, n. 43 (for the Georgia Gazette story).

84 On this point, see Tate, Negro in Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg, pp. 109-113.


86 Klein, Slavery in the Americas, p. 183.

87 Jenifer and Hooe was primarily interested in the export

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worked on the sloop Sally and the schooner John, which were being used to carry flour and other commodities. With two exceptions, the slaves were leased for a period of six months to a year. The firm paid a set fee for the rental of slaves. The charge was £0.2.6 for one day's work and £16 for the entire year. The slaves' owners were either paid directly for the use of their property or their accounts with Jenifer and Hooe were credited in the necessary amounts.

Jenifer and Hooe was only one of the local firms using slave labor in their operations. The practice of hiring slave labor seems to have been widespread in Alexandria. Slave hiring in the colonies dated from the beginnings of American Negro slavery. The practice was followed everywhere in the South. However, it was especially common in the towns of wheat and flour during the Revolutionary era. The name of the business changed with its partners. During the 1770s and 1780s it was variously known as Hooe, Stone and Company, as Jenifer and Hooe, and as Hooe and Harrison. The manuscript records of the partnership are a part of the Lawrason and Fowle collection of the New York Public Library. The firm's records are: [Robert T.] Hooe and [Richard] Harrison. Journal, 1778-1787. [Robert T.] Hooe and [Richard] Harrison. Journal, 1779-1783. [Robert T.] Hooe, [Blank] Stone and Company. Invoice Book, 1770-1784. [Daniel of St. Thomas] Jenifer and [Robert T.] Hooe. Journal, 1775-1785. [Daniel of St. Thomas] Jenifer and [Robert T.] Hooe. Ledger, 1775-1777. All sources are held by the Manuscripts Department, Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, microfilm. For confirmation of the copartnership of Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer and Robert T. Hooe, see the Fairfax County Deed Book, Liber M-1, Jan. 29, 1776, p. 181.


89 Jenifer and Hooe Ledger, 1775 (various dates).
and cities of that region. Slave hiring should not be confused with allowing a slave to "hire his own time." The latter method was apparently never used in early Alexandria.

The available evidence indicates that Alexandrians of both races worked peacefully alongside each other in the colonial town. As was the case in most other American towns and cities of this period, resentment on the part of whites over economic competition with black men was muted. Two factors softened whatever hostility the white working force of Alexandria may have felt toward its black counterpart: (1) slaves were a distinct, legally inferior class whose existence hardly posed a threat to whites, and (2) a prosperous economy meant that there was plenty of work for all.

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91 On allowing slaves to hire their own time, see Starobin, Industrial Slavery, pp. 135-36, and Wade, Slavery in the Cities, pp. 48-54.


Very little is known about the location of black housing in colonial Alexandria. It is likely that most, if not all, of the town's slaves lived on their masters' property and that the black population of Alexandria was dispersed throughout the town. Alexandria was too small to have developed zones of affluence. Also, urban segregation of the races was still in the future.  

III

In examining the level of manufacturing and related commercial activity in the Potomac town, two points stand out. First, most Alexandrians labored alone, aided only by their families or perhaps a partner or a helper or two. An appreciation of the wide variety of trades practised by the townspeople can be gained by examining Table 4 below. Small-scale craft manufacturing existed widely in the towns and cities of the American colonies. In that sense, Alexandria's economic development duplicated that of her sister communities. Of course, the pattern had been established centuries earlier, with the home of the craftsman serving as both a place of work and a place of residence.

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94 Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll, p. 413; Jordan, White Over Black, p. 415. See also Wade, Slavery in the Cities, pp. 75-79.


TABLE 4
81 ALEXANDRIANS WHOSE OCCUPATIONS CAN BE IDENTIFIED: 1772-1775

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Merchants</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary Keepers</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joiners</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacksmiths</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butchers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distillery Owners</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matters</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joiners and House Carpenters</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Teachers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blockmaker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brewer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bricklayer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinetmaker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartwright and Butcher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooper</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cordwainer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Carpenter</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ropemaker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schoolmaster</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ship Builder</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ship Carpenter</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver and Copper Smith</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoemaker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanner</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tinner</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tobacconist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaver</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheelwright</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fairfax County Deed Books, Order Books, and Will Books; Maryland Gazette and Virginia Gazette (A. Purdie and J. Dixon; W. Rind; C. Rind; C. Rind and J. Pinkney; and A. Purdie); Piper Letter Book; and Proceedings of Alexandria Trustees, 1767-1780.
Second, because of the commercial orientation of Alexandria's merchants, there was little emphasis placed on the development locally of manufacturing. An observation made by David Montgomery on the economic growth in the early national period of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore holds true for colonial Alexandria as well. In noting that most manufacturing was carried on outside of these four cities, he added that the merchant leaders of these communities were primarily concerned with vending the produce of labor, both mechanical and agricultural, rather than hiring labor.\(^97\) The expansion of manufacturing in a town like Alexandria would be limited further by the fact that the entrepreneurial headquarters for its trades was located outside of the colony. It is not surprising that Alexandria was heavily commercial rather than industrial in its orientation.

In 1957 Cerinda W. Evans observed that Alexandria's strategic location on a circular bay in the Potomac gave it great importance as a shipbuilding center.\(^98\) In reality, the town never achieved genuine prominence as a shipyard. It was overshadowed in this area by Norfolk as well as several other Chesapeake ports.

The Chesapeake shipbuilding industry as a whole began to grow steadily after about 1730. Although the demand for


Chesapeake vessels fluctuated in the decades leading up to the Revolution, it generally remained strong. There were several major factors underlying the industry's expansion. The growth of overseas demand for Chesapeake flour and small grains gave impetus to the building of smaller vessels suited to the trade. Also, the expansion and partial redirection of Virginia's coastwise trade, as well as the desire of Chesapeake merchants for vessels suited to the transatlantic routes, stimulated the colony's shipbuilding industry. Arthur P. Middleton's assertion that the Chesapeake in the period from 1725 to 1775 became a shipbuilding center second only to New England in Britain's American colonies is undoubtedly correct. However, statistics compiled near the end of the colonial period indicate that Virginia and Maryland shipyards ran a distant second to their northern rivals.

Most of the shipping built in the Chesapeake colonies was comparatively small in size. Although very large vessels were occasionally built in the region, rarely did one exceed


101 Middleton, *Tobacco Coast*, pp. 242-43; Shepherd and Walton, *Economic Development of Colonial North America*, Table 8, p. 60; Goldenberg, *Shipbuilding in Colonial America*, p. 120.
four hundred tons. The average burden of vessels built in the
Chesapeake in 1771 was about 91 tons, roughly the size of a
brigantine.\(^{102}\) A great many of the smaller sloops, schooners,
and brigs were completed in the shipyards of Virginia and
Maryland.\(^{103}\)

From 1763 through 1774 at least 36\(^{104}\) vessels were built
in Virginia.\(^{104}\) Table 5 below indicates that during this
period a minimum of nine watercraft were completed in Alexandria.
Those nine were part of a group of eighteen vessels constructed
at the colonial town from 1749 to the Revolution. Given the
fragmentary nature of the primary sources, there may have
been a few extra vessels built at Alexandria for which no
record has survived.

The Alexandria vessels ranged in size from two hundred
ton ships down to thirty ton schooners. With an average burden
of 111 tons, they were slightly larger than the typical
Chesapeake vessel. Those Alexandria watercraft which retained
a home port in Virginia averaged only 81.7 tons. The locally-
constructed vessels sailing out of English ports were consider­
erably heavier; they averaged 149 tons. That reflects the
fact that the vessels owned by English merchants sailed the
trans-Atlantic routes, while the Virginia ships were used in

\(^{102}\)Middleton, Tobacco Coast, pp. 239 and 242-43; cf.
Goldenberg, Shipbuilding in Colonial America, p. 119.

\(^{103}\)For three helpful descriptions of the various categories
of shipping found in colonial Chesapeake waters, see Middleton,
Tobacco Coast, pp. 215-17; Evans, Shipbuilding and Shipping
in Colonial Virginia, pp. 57-60; and Goldenberg, Shipbuilding
in Colonial America, pp. 77-82.

\(^{104}\)Kelso, "Shipbuilding in Virginia," p. 16.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Home Port</th>
<th>Tons</th>
<th>Guns</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Owner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1752</td>
<td>Jane &amp; Nancy</td>
<td>Snow</td>
<td>Whitehaven</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>William Hicks &amp; Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1755</td>
<td>Alexandria</td>
<td>Snow</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>John Carlyle &amp; Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1757</td>
<td>Neptune</td>
<td>Brig</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>John Carlyle &amp; Co.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1758</td>
<td>Potomack</td>
<td>Schooner</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>John Dalton &amp; Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1760</td>
<td>Hero</td>
<td>Ship</td>
<td>Whitehaven</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>J. Dixon &amp; I. Littledale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1763</td>
<td>Lovers Adventure</td>
<td>Ship</td>
<td>Bristol</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>John Copithorn &amp; Co.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1763</td>
<td>Tryall</td>
<td>Ship</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>John Stewart &amp; Co.</td>
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<td>1764</td>
<td>Triton</td>
<td>Snow</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Thomas Kirkpatrick &amp; Co.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1764</td>
<td>Fairfax</td>
<td>Ship</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>1765</td>
<td>Swift</td>
<td>Schooner</td>
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<td>60</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>John Carlyle &amp; Co.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1765</td>
<td>Adventure</td>
<td>Brig</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>Robert Adam &amp; Co.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1766</td>
<td>Nillum</td>
<td>Snow</td>
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<td>100</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>James Whitfield &amp; Co.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1767</td>
<td>George</td>
<td>Schooner</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>Year</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Home Port</td>
<td>Tons</td>
<td>Guns</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Owner</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>1768</td>
<td>Jeanie</td>
<td>Ship</td>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Archibald Henderson &amp; Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1770</td>
<td>Fairfax</td>
<td>Brig</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>John Carlyle &amp; Co.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1770</td>
<td>The Farmer</td>
<td>Brig</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Col. George Washington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1772</td>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>Brig</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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Source: P.R.O. C.O. 5/1349, /1350, /1352, /1445, /1447, /1448, /1449, /1450; P.R.O. T. 1/512; Maryland Gazette, Oct. 4, 1770, and Apr. 9, 1772; Virginia Gazette (Purdie and Dixon), Apr. 23, 1772; Virginia Gazette (Rind), Apr. 23, 1772.
the coastal and West Indian trade.\textsuperscript{105}

Although the Alexandria shipbuilding industry got off to a promising start, it faltered in the early 1770s and became inconsequential within a few years. Launched in 1772, the brigantine Betty was probably the last vessel built at the colonial port.\textsuperscript{106}

The limited scale of shipbuilding in Alexandria is reflected in the fact that there was probably only one shipyard in the colonial town. Thomas Fleming, a shipbuilder and town trustee, ran the yard. For whatever reason, Fleming refused to undertake very large shipbuilding ventures. Hampered by a lack of skilled assistants, he even found it difficult to engage in major ship-repair projects. Fleming's business remained on a limited scale to the time of the Revolution.\textsuperscript{107} In comparison, Annapolis had two shipyards in the late colonial period. At the peak of the yards' production an average of three ships a year was launched.\textsuperscript{108}

The factors underlying the collapse of Alexandria's shipbuilding industry are close at hand. For one thing, the region's timber supply began to disappear in the later 1760s.

\textsuperscript{105}For verification of this point, see the South Potomac customs records in P.R.O. C.o. 5/1349, /1350, /1352, /1445, /1447, /1448, /1449, /1450, and also P.R.O. T. 1/512.

\textsuperscript{106}For details of the Betty's launching and sale, see the Maryland Gazette, Apr. 9, 1772; the Virginia Gazette (Purdie and Dixon), Apr. 23, 1772; and the Virginia Gazette (Rind), Apr. 23, 1772.

\textsuperscript{107}Piper Letter Book, Feb. 26, 1768, and Aug. 9, Sept. 6 and 23, and Dec. 18, 1769.

\textsuperscript{108}Papenfuse, In Pursuit of Profit, pp. 11-12.
Observing the lumber shortage, Harry Piper wrote in 1771 that "Ship Building is done [i.e., finished] at Alexandria, as there is no Timber to be got, therefore little demand for Rigging." The situation had not improved by 1774 when he remarked that "we have no Vessels a building, nor likely to have any."\(^{109}\)

Much more important was the virtual absence of genuine merchants in the colonial town. Timber could have been transported to Alexandria from those Chesapeake regions where it was readily available. However, the lack of a solid nucleus of tertiary traders proved a more formidable impediment than a shortage of wood. Norfolk, by contrast, had a thriving community of merchants trading on their own with the West Indies and southern Europe. Norfolk's merchants could, and did, have many of their vessels built locally. They could also provide work for substantial numbers of mariners, butchers, small merchants, tanners, and shopkeepers.\(^{110}\) Alexandria's few genuine merchants, such as John Carlyle, John Dalton, and Robert Adam, might have their vessels built locally.\(^{111}\) However, they could not by themselves sustain the town's shipbuilding industry. The location away from Alexandria of the entrepreneurial headquarters of its trades effectively destroyed the business of building ships there.\(^{112}\)


\(^{111}\)See Table 5 above.

Colonial Alexandria had only a single tannery. Annapolis, by contrast, had at least four tanneries in operation before 1763. Alexandria's facility was built in 1762 by Robert Adam on a plot of town land he owned. He immediately leased the completed facility to Peter and John Weis for an annual fee of twenty-five pounds. The tannery was rented for a seven-year period. It was described in minute detail in the lease, which also stipulated that a two hundred pound fine would be paid if either party defaulted on the agreement. The tannery continued in operation for the remainder of the colonial period.

The town acquired its first distillery only a short time before the Revolution began. Owned by Daniel Roberdeau of Philadelphia, the distillery was built on a wharf adjoining the public landing and on part or all of lots ninety-three, ninety-four, and ninety-five. Roberdeau had earlier acquired the lots from the estate of John Hughes for £400 Pennsylvania currency. He imported workmen from Philadelphia to build the distillery. When they had finished, Roberdeau had far more than just an "Alexandria Rum" and "Low Wine" distillery. Among the buildings on the property were a stone distillery measuring seventy-one by thirty-nine feet and a two story stone storehouse fifty by fifty feet. Grain storage bins filled the first floor of the storehouse, while the second floor was intended for use as a sail or rigging loft. A molasses store, a cooper shop, and miscellaneous other

buildings also graced the premises. The entire facility was built below the bank of land separating the town proper from the river. As Roberdeau had no intention of moving to Alexandria, he proposed to rent his property.  

Whether he found a tenant is not known. In any case, the distillery was in operation by the spring of 1775. An advertisement placed in the Virginia newspapers by "Roberdeau & Jackson" noted the availability of "Alexandria Rum, which they engage equal in quality, either in strength, agreeable smell, and good flavour, to any made on this continent. . . ." The terms of sale were cash or country produce delivered to the distillery.  

Although exact figures are not available, a large amount of pork was exported from the town each year. John Carlyle periodically shipped dozens of barrels of pork to Antigua in the West Indies. For example, in two voyages in 1758 he shipped sixty-four barrels of that commodity to the island. In a journal entry made in December of 1774, Nicholas Cresswell remarked on the "Great quantities of Hogs killed in town." He noted that the local merchants salted the pork and then shipped it to the West Indies. The pork, which was selling

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114 Virginia Gazette (Purdie and Dixon), Nov. 24, 1774; Virginia Gazette (Rind and Pinkney), Dec. 1, 1774.  
115 Ibid. (Purdie), Apr. 21, 1775, and (Rind and Pinkney), Apr. 28, 1775. No record has survived of a town merchant named Jackson. He was apparently Roberdeau's partner in the distillery by 1775, although no details of their partnership are known.  
at thirteen shillings and sixpence per hundred pounds, made a "considerable branch of commerce." 117

The export of locally caught herring, shad, and white fish was also a very lucrative, and growing, business. Commercial fishing in the Chesapeake was slow to develop. It was not until the third quarter of the eighteenth century that the Virginians and Marylanders began seriously to explore its potential. 118 Even then, they were handicapped by the English refusal to allow the southern colonies to import salt directly from southern Europe. The restriction was specifically designed to forestall the growth of fisheries in the region. It did not succeed entirely but it certainly slowed their development.119

George Washington is the best known of those men involved locally in the fishing trade. Although he was willing to risk his capital in the sale abroad of his catch, he apparently preferred to sell directly to a local merchant. 120 Early in 1770 he entered into an involved contract with Robert Adam. Adam agreed to take all of the annual yield of Washington's fishery at Posey's Landing, provided the catch did not exceed five hundred barrels. Adam contracted to take the fish as

119 Middleton, Tobacco Coast, pp. 207-208; Wharton, Bounty of the Chesapeake, pp. 54-58.
fast as Washington's men caught them. He also obtained the use of the fish house at the landing for an annual rental fee of ten pounds. Finally, Adam agreed to pay Washington three shillings Virginia currency a thousand for herring and eight shillings and fourpence Maryland currency a hundred for white fish. The fisheries owned by Washington and his competitors must have returned a considerable profit each year. In the spring of 1773, a fishing landing located five miles downriver from Alexandria rented for twenty-five pounds.

The Alexandria branch store of John Glassford and Company of Glasgow also bought substantial quantities of fish for export in the period before the Revolution. During the 1760s they made repeated purchases of herring from the local firm of William Shaw and Josiah Gordon. Shaw and Gordon usually received sixteen shillings a barrel for the herring they sold to Glassford and Company.

The stimulus of trade was responsible for Alexandria's rapid growth in the years leading up to the Revolution. The export of a wide range of commodities such as tobacco and foodstuffs brought considerable prosperity to the Potomac community. Her citizens also profited from their town's

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122 Virginia Gazette (Purdie and Dixon), July 29, 1773.
123 John Glassford and Company and Successors; Maryland and Virginia. Manuscript Division, Library of Congress: bound manuscripts. For the Shaw and Gordon purchases, see Container 165, p. 85. See also the Jenifer and Hooe Ledger, Apr.–Sept. 1773, p. 51, for a herring fishery run by that firm.
role as a major port of entry for finished goods, raw materials, servants, and slaves shipped to northern Virginia from Great Britain, the West Indies, and other regions.

The fact that colonial Alexandria could not sustain a viable manufacturing base provides a key to understanding the growth of that community. Early Alexandria had only a handful of true merchants. Most of those engaged in shipping and receiving commodities were acting as factors or agents for merchants outside Virginia. Because the decision-making center for her trades was located away from the colony, Alexandria was unable to develop a balanced economy. The collapse of her shipbuilding industry, after a promising beginning, offers a good illustration of this point.

Alexandria had undergone little change in the nature of its economic life since its founding in 1749. By the eve of the Revolution, the town's economic activity was still centered on the shipment and reception of large quantities of goods from a variety of areas.

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CHAPTER III

THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF ALEXANDRIA:

THE EXPANSION OF THE GRAIN TRADE

Only twenty-seven years elapsed between the founding of Alexandria and the Declaration of Independence. Yet during this brief period, the economic life of the northern Chesapeake underwent a change of major importance. The nature of the transformation is clearly reflected in the commercial development of Alexandria. Prior to the late 1760s, the merchants of the Potomac town found their greatest export profits in shipping tobacco and a series of items of lesser importance. Indian corn was the only grain carried in significant amounts from the colonial port.

Around the middle of the 1760s a shift of the first magnitude began in Alexandria's export trade. Over the space of a few years wheat and flour became major export commodities. Taken as a whole, wheat, flour, and Indian corn were clearly the most important items being shipped from the town by the mid-1770s.

Although the movement within the Old Dominion to the cultivation of grain seemed to come very suddenly, it took place only after a extended period of gestation. Commercial grain farming, long an attractive occupation in the American
colonies as a whole, spread gradually to Virginia in the eighteenth century. In the years preceding the Revolution it assumed a vital role in the economy of the northern Virginia piedmont and valley regions.

As was the case with tobacco, most of the grain shipped from colonial Alexandria was transported on the order, and at the risk, of a group of merchants located away from Virginia. The records kept by Jenifer and Hooe provide a considerable amount of information on one of the largest Alexandria firms shipping foodstuffs at the direction of a number of merchants living outside of the Chesapeake. The Potomac town's small corps of real merchants played only a minor role in the shipment of grain and flour.

There is no question that Alexandria's development was retarded by the composition of its mercantile community. Development is a relative term, however. The use of central place theory reveals that within fifteen years of its founding Alexandria was the dominant town in the Potomac River basin. That was a position it would retain until its eclipse in the nineteenth century by Washington, D.C.

I

Wheat was an attractive crop for the American colonists from the earliest years of European settlement. Special efforts were made by the farmers of New England to grow wheat. Its importance there can be judged by the fact that as early as 1640 it was receivable for taxes in some of the towns of that region. Its significance in the northern economy diminished in the eighteenth century, however. During the
course of that century the New England colonies became increasingly dependent on the other colonies, particularly Pennsylvania and New York, for their wheat supply.1

The cultivation of wheat in the middle colonies antedated the control of that region by the English. After 1626 it was mentioned frequently in the records of the Dutch settlement of New Netherland.2 With the establishment of Pennsylvania, the cultivation of wheat and the export of wheat, flour and bread truly came into their own as major aspects of the colonial American economy.

As the anonymous author of American Husbandry wrote in 1775, wheat was "the grand article of the province" of Pennsylvania.3 The dominant role assumed by wheat and its products in the export trade of colonial Pennsylvania should not be allowed to obscure the fact that a wide variety of other items was shipped from the colony in the years before the Revolution.4 Pennsylvania as a whole far outstripped the other American colonies in the combined export of wheat, flour,

1Percy Wells Bidwell and John I. Falconer, History of Agriculture in the Northern United States 1620-1860, Contributions to American Economic History (New York: Peter Smith, 1941), pp. 92-93. For an indication of the extent of that dependence, see David C. Klingaman, "Food Surpluses and Deficits in the American Colonies, 1768-1772," Journal of Economic History, XXXI (September, 1971), Table 1, p. 558, and Table 2, p. 562.


3Quoted in Lemon, Best Poor Man's Country, p. 154.

4On this point, see Bezanson, Prices in Colonial Pennsylvania, p. 9; Bidwell and Falconer, History of Agriculture, p. 93; Bridenbaugh, Cities in Revolt, p. 256; Lemon, Best Poor Man's Country, pp. 181-82.
and bread. The rapid growth of grain farming in the interior of the colony supported the rise to a position of preeminence of Philadelphia. In the eighteenth century that city became the colonial center for the export of wheat, flour, and bread to dozens of ports within and without Britain's empire. Other colonial port towns, such as Alexandria and Baltimore, also dealt extensively in the export of wheat and its derivatives. However, they did not pose a serious threat to Philadelphia's dominance of the trade in those commodities in the colonial period.

Philadelphia grew very rapidly following its establishment in the early 1680s. Its merchants drew on the rich farm country of the interior for their exports. In their desire to increase their volume of trade, they reached far to the west. As the farmers of the Chesapeake colonies began to produce surplus wheat, maize, and other foodstuffs, the merchants of Philadelphia moved to engross the trade in those commodities as well. As the colonial period neared its end, increasing numbers of ships owned by Philadelphia merchants carried goods (especially West Indian rum, molasses, and sugar) and cash to the Chesapeake in exchange for grain and other foodstuffs. This profitable trade retarded the development

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5 See Shepherd, "Commodity Exports," especially Tables 3 and 4. For a graphic demonstration of this point, see Cappon, Atlas of Early American History, p. 27.
7 Jensen, Maritime Commerce of Colonial Philadelphia, pp. 7, 77-78, 92.
of the river towns of the Chesapeake. Their economic sub-
ordination to Philadelphia and/or Glasgow, London, White-
haven, and the other commercial centers of the empire had the
effect of reducing many of them to mere shipping points.

The cultivation of wheat and other grains lagged far
behind that of tobacco in early Virginia. Although wheat
was planted in the first year of the Jamestown settlement, it
was not successful as a cash crop. Small amounts of wheat
were grown in the colony during the seventeenth century, some
of which was exported. Despite the encouragement of the
Virginia assembly, which in 1657 offered ten thousand pounds
of tobacco to anyone who would raise and export a crop of
wheat worth five hundred pounds sterling, the cultivation
of wheat in the colony did not become widespread until well
into the eighteenth century. As late as 1735, wheat and flour
were so insignificant as trade commodities that they were
not even mentioned by Governor William Gooch in a report
summarizing Virginia's exports.

Wheat farming was slow to catch on in the colony for
several reasons. First, the climate and soils of the coastal
plain were not well adapted to wheat cultivation. Second,
the virgin soil of the region was too rich to grow the crop,
although Indian corn could be cultivated successfully on

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8 Gray, History of Agriculture, I, pp. 26, 166; Harrison,
Landmarks of Old Prince William, pp. 397-98; Gaspare John
Saladino, "The Maryland and Virginia Wheat Trade from its
Beginnings to the American Revolution" (unpublished M.A. thesis,

9 Gov. Gooch to the Board of Trade, July 8, 1735, P.R.O.
C.0. 5/1370, 105.

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newly cleared land. When wheat was sown on new land, the nourishment went into the stalk, not the head. On the other hand, ground which had been planted with several crops of tobacco or Indian corn would usually grow wheat successfully. Third, planting wheat required much more work than planting most other crops, such as Indian corn. The land had to be more fully cleared; wheat was more difficult to harvest; threshing was more arduous than husking corn; and a much greater proportion of the wheat crop was required for seed. Wheat simply could not compete with tobacco or Indian corn until conditions favoring its production gradually emerged during the eighteenth century.

It is not clear exactly when the production of grain as a market crop began in Virginia. The shift to that commodity as a significant export item probably commenced during the 1730s and accelerated as the century progressed. David Klingaman has illustrated in striking fashion the growth of Virginia grain exports over the last four decades before the Revolution. Working from British customs records and the Virginia naval lists, he has compared the amounts of grain exported during the years 1737-1742 and 1768-1772. The average number of bushels of corn exported each year in the period 1737-1742 was 122,433. By 1768-1772 the average had risen to


566,672 bushels. The comparable figures for bushels of wheat were 35,428 and 254,217. Those for tons of bread and flour combined were 15 and 2,901.12

How do these figures compare with those for the other colonies? Over the period 1768 through 1772 Pennsylvania maintained its position of leadership in the export of flour. It was followed by New York, with Virginia and Maryland well behind. However, if flour is converted to a wheat equivalent and added to wheat exports, New York was not far ahead of Virginia. Using this method of computation, Klingaman has shown that Pennsylvania exported an average of approximately 1.5 million bushels of wheat annually in the years 1768-1772. The comparable figure for New York was about 530,000 bushels; for Virginia, it was approximately 403,000 bushels.13 Virginia exported far more Indian corn than either of the other colonies. It averaged nearly 567,000 bushels each year during this period, compared to about 150,000 bushels for Pennsylvania and New York combined.14

How important was the production of flour and grain in the Virginia economy? It is misleading simply to evaluate the amount of these commodities being exported each year, since

12Klingaman, "Development of Virginia's Coastwise Trade," Table 21, p. 100, and "Significance of Grain," Table 1, p. 272. A highly detailed breakdown of these and other commodities exported from Virginia and the other colonies in the years 1768 through 1772 can be found in Shepherd, "Commodity Exports," 5-76.


14Ibid., 270, and "Development of Virginia's Coastwise Trade," pp. 31-32.
most of the grain crop never left the colony. However, we do not have sufficient information even to assign an approximate cash value to the total grain crop harvested yearly in late colonial Virginia. We do know that in the years 1768 through 1772, Virginia exported an annual average of £28,824 sterling in bread and flour combined, £44,515 sterling in wheat, and £56,420 sterling in maize. It is also apparent that the gap between the colony's grain and tobacco export trades was being closed rapidly toward the end of the colonial period. The average annual value of Virginia tobacco exports rose from approximately £165,000 in 1738-1742 to about £476,000 in 1768-1772. Over the same period, the average annual value of grain exports advanced from approximately £11,500 to about £130,000. David Klingaman has concluded that there was a relative shift of resources in late colonial Virginia away from tobacco and toward grain. Further, he theorizes that the production and export of grain, not tobacco, was the dynamic element in the Virginia economy during the late colonial period.

Charts 4 and 5 on the following pages provide a general indication of the amounts of Indian corn, wheat, flour, and bread clearing the South Potomac Customs District from 1749 through 1768. Although the complete figures are not available

16 Klingaman, "Food Surpluses and Deficits," Table 1, p. 558.
18 Ibid., 277-78.
Note: The numbers on the left margin represent bushels of Indian corn, expressed in thousands.

The figures in the Chart should be regarded as approximate. There are significant gaps in the customs records, and part of the material that is available is illegible. The figures are complete for the years 1750-52, 1758, 1761-62, 1764, and 1766. 27,642½ bushels of corn were exported in the period Jan. 5 - Oct. 10, 1768. The period 1769-76 has not been included because the records are too fragmentary.

Source: P.R.O. C.O. 5/1445, /1447, /1448, /1449, and /1450.
CHART 5

EXPORT OF WHEAT, FLOUR, AND BREAD FROM THE
SOUTH POTOMAC CUSTOMS DISTRICT, 1749-1768

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<th>Year (17--)</th>
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Note: The numbers on the left margin represent barrels of flour and bread and bushels of wheat, expressed in thousands.

The figures in the Chart should be regarded as approximate. There are significant gaps in the customs records, and part of the material that is available is illegible. The figures are complete for the years 1750-52, 1758, 1761-62, 1764, and 1766. The period 1769-76 has not been included because the records are too fragmentary.

Source: P.R.O. C.O. 5/1445, /1447, /1448, /1449, and /1450.

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for many of these years, the trends followed by these commodities are clear enough.

Chart 4 indicates that extensive amounts of maize were transported from the South Potomac district after 1749. While the quantity of Indian corn being shipped fluctuated considerably in the 1750s and 1760s, the chart shows a gradual increase in the amount over this period. In 1768, a year for which the customs records are incomplete, 27,642½ bushels of corn were carried from the district.¹⁹ The customs records after 1768 are very fragmented, but they suggest that Indian corn remained an important export commodity in northern Virginia down to the Revolution. For example, 22,310 bushels of maize cleared the South Potomac Customs District over a six month period in 1774.²⁰

Chart 5 provides a graphic illustration of the gradual development of commercial wheat farming in northern Virginia. After a long period of slow and erratic growth, the amount of wheat and flour available for export suddenly rose dramatically. Nor was the sharp increase in wheat and flour exports after 1764 merely an aberration. The South Potomac customs records for October 10, 1773 to January 5, 1774 reveal that 47,993 bushels of wheat and 4,535 barrels of flour were transported from the district. In a six month period in 1774 62,320 bushels of wheat and 7,206 barrels of flour cleared the South

The amount of bread being shipped from the region in the 1770s never exceeded 422 barrels. Rye, beans, peas, and other foodstuffs were also carried from the South Potomac Customs District from 1749 to 1775. They were never shipped in very large quantities, however. These commodities were obviously not as important in the economy of northern Virginia in the late colonial period as were wheat and Indian corn.

III

The abrupt increase in the volume of wheat and flour leaving northern Virginia in the late colonial period was an event of the greatest importance in the economy of that region. Why did commercial grain farming in the area around Alexandria and to its west expand so rapidly after the mid-1760s? Those scholars who have studied this question differ widely in their interpretations. Of the various factors promoting the growth of grain farming in Virginia, one of the most important has to do with the patterns of settlement of the Shenandoah Valley and the piedmont east of the Blue Ridge.

The great majority of the initial wave of settlers in the Shenandoah Valley migrated to that area from Pennsylvania.


22 P.R.O. C.O. 5/1349, 207-8; /1350, 51-52; /1352, 133-34; and T. 1/512, 196-97.

They came to the valley for various reasons: the land was considerably cheaper and more readily available than in Pennsylvania, the region was well watered, the Indians were less of a menace there, and so on. As far as we know, the first settlement in the valley was made in the mid-1720s by Adam Miller and his wife Barbara. They were followed by increasing numbers of German migrants and, after 1732, by Scots-Irish settlers. The upper (southern) valley of the Shenandoah was primarily settled by Scots-Irish, while the lower region was occupied by Germans. It was not long before the most desirable valley land had been taken up. The population of the valley increased rapidly. By 1763 about 20,000 whites and 1,000 blacks had settled there.

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Thirteen years later, approximately 48,000 whites and 5,000 blacks had made the region their home.  

Life in the Shenandoah Valley was poisoned by the bitter Indian-white conflict that was so prominent in the early history of the region. Although there were virtually no Indians living in the valley at the time of European settlement there, a savage war between the two races began late in 1755. Washington’s correspondence provides the modern reader with a careful, yet emotional, account of the early years of that conflict. The fighting raged almost uninterrupted until 1766, devastating large sections of the valley. It continued intermittently thereafter down to the time of the Revolution. One of the inevitable byproducts of this warfare was the periodic disruption of valley commerce.

The settlers moving to the Valley of Virginia brought with them their native customs, languages, religions, and ways of farming. They were accustomed to a diversified system of agriculture based on the cultivation of grain, hemp, flax, 

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The geographer Robert D. Mitchell, whose work on the Shenandoah Valley is characterized by its thoroughness, concludes that valley farmers were heavily involved in commercial farming by the early 1750s. Tobacco, hemp, and cattle were the leading export commodities produced in the valley during the colonial period.  

The farmers of the lower valley specialized in raising tobacco, which they customarily transported to Alexandria, Dumfries, Falmouth, or Fredericksburg. Wheat did not become an important export crop until the late 1760s. By the end of the Revolution wheat had emerged as the leading commercial staple of the valley. It was also in widespread cultivation in the northern piedmont region of the colony.

Robert D. Mitchell asserts unequivocally that the valley settlers' commercial connections with the Virginia towns situated on the fall line were far more important than their trade relations with Philadelphia or Baltimore. He also

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34 See Harrison, Landmarks of Old Prince William, p. 401.
maintains that from the earliest days of its founding, Alex­
andria was the principal town receiving commodities from the
lower valley. Throughout the colonial period, Philadelphia
received large numbers of cattle driven from the valley.
However, the heavy volume of traffic on the Great Wagon
Road connecting the valley with Philadelphia made repairs on
it increasingly necessary. By 1766, traffic on the road had
become so heavy that it could not be kept open on a regular
basis. This situation prevailed until 1794, forcing the
farmers of the interior into an even greater reliance on the
Virginia fall-line towns.

The expansion of commercial grain farming in late
colonial Virginia was also related to the problem of soil
exhaustion. It has already been pointed out that ground
planted with several crops of tobacco would ordinarily produce
wheat of good quality. It is not possible to estimate
precisely the importance of this factor in persuading the
farmers of the tidewater and piedmont regions to switch from
tobacco production to more diversified forms of agriculture.

35 Mitchell, "Upper Shenandoah Valley," pp. 316 and 456, and
"Commercial Nature of the Shenandoah Valley," 111, and "Shen­
andoah Valley Frontier," 477-78 and 482-83; cf. Hart, Valley

36 Mitchell, "Shenandoah Valley Frontier," 477-78 and 483;
Parke Rouse, Jr., The Great Wagon Road from Philadelphia to
the South, Vol. XI of The American Trails Series, ed. by A.

37 James Weston Livingood, The Philadelphia-Baltimore
Trade Rivalry 1780-1860 (Harrisburg, Pa.: Pennsylvania
All that can be said with certainty is that it accelerated the growth of grain farming in the colony.\textsuperscript{38}

Another important factor promoting the rise of grain farming for export in Virginia was an expansion in demand for grain and its products among many of the Atlantic communities. After about 1700 the commercial population of the New England colonies became increasingly dependent on the colonies to the south for foodstuffs.\textsuperscript{39} For example, during the period 1714-1717, Massachusetts imported an average of 2,100 bushels of grain and 102 barrels of flour annually. Her average annual imports of those two commodities from 1761 through 1765 rose to 250,000 bushels of grain and 38,000 barrels of flour. Over the latter period Massachusetts imported 32.5 percent of her grain, but less than 1 percent of her flour, from Virginia.\textsuperscript{40} David Klingaman has tabulated the average annual quantity of foodstuffs exported by each of the Virginia naval districts to five northern colonies during the years 1760 through 1769. His figures show that negligible quantities of corn, wheat, pork, peas, beans, and tobacco were shipped to the North from the South Potomac Customs District. However, the South Potomac district led the other five districts in the export of flour (it averaged 356 hundredweight of flour per


\textsuperscript{39}Bidwell and Falconer, \textit{History of Agriculture}, pp. 142-44.

\textsuperscript{40}Klingaman, "Food Surpluses and Deficits," 563 and Tables 3 and 4 on 564-65.
Of greater significance in the export of grain was the rise in demand for that commodity in the southern European region after about 1750. A series of factors combined to increase the demand in Spain, Portugal, and other parts of the region for American grain. Although the market fluctuated, the southern European requirement for American grain increased substantially during the third quarter of the eighteenth century. Although England was not a regular consumer of American grain, the failure of its harvest in 1774 did result in the importation by that country in 1774-1775 of well over a million bushels of wheat from the colonies. However, Virginia's best customers in the area were southern Europe and the Wine Islands. Their consumption of grain and its products in general, and wheat in particular, was enormously important to the Virginia economy.

A third significant market for Virginia grain was the West Indies. Increasing specialization in sugar production there resulted in expanded purchases of American grain. The West Indian consumption of Virginia maize, bread, and flour

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41 Klingaman, "Development of Virginia's Coastwise Trade," Appendix B, Tables 1-6, pp. 129-34.
44 Just how important can be seen in Table 21, "Average Annual Virginia World-Wide Grain Exports in 1737-42 and in 1768-72" in Klingaman, "Development of Virginia's Coastwise Trade."
(but not wheat) increased dramatically from 1737-1742 to 1768-1772. 45

The growing demand for American grain and its products had a predictable effect on the selling price of those commodities. There is no price series available during the colonial period for Virginia wheat, maize, or flour. However, an excellent series based on the wholesale prices in Philadelphia of these and a number of other commodities has been prepared by Anne Bezanson, Robert D. Gray, and Miriam Hussey. 46 The Philadelphia prices for those commodities were probably close to those prevailing in Virginia. 47

The data presented in Prices in Colonial Pennsylvania reveal considerable variations in the amounts offered for wheat, Indian corn, and flour in Philadelphia from 1720 through 1775. They also show an unmistakable upward trend in the price of all three commodities during this period. 48

The average annual wholesale price of maize in Philadelphia was 1.98 shillings Pennsylvania currency per bushel over the years 1720-1729. By the period 1766 through 1775 it had risen to 3.13 shillings a bushel. The comparable figures for wheat are 3.32 and 6.42 shillings a bushel; those for flour are


46Bezanson, Prices in Colonial Pennsylvania.


48Bezanson, Prices in Colonial Pennsylvania, Chart I, pp. 12-15; Chart III, p. 50; and pp. 51-52.
10.35 and 16.97 shillings a hundredweight. \(^{49}\)

The price trend of tobacco was discussed in the preceding chapter. The prices offered for tobacco do not seem to have advanced as rapidly as those offered for wheat, flour, or corn from 1720 to 1775. The available evidence indicates that many northern Virginia planters reluctantly moved from the cultivation of tobacco to more diversified forms of agriculture because there was more money to be made raising wheat, Indian corn, beans, and other foodstuffs. \(^{50}\) Robert Carter of Nomini Hall was one of the wealthiest and most powerful of these men. By the early 1770s he was growing large quantities of grain for export. \(^{51}\) George Washington decided in the 1760s to end his reliance on the tobacco market. He found that pursuing a policy of diversified agriculture, in which the cultivation of wheat played the leading role, was more profitable than planting tobacco year after year. \(^{52}\)

The increased amounts of grain, flour, and bread available for export from colonial Virginia were apparently not the result of more efficient farming techniques. Farming methods

\(^{49}\)This information is derived from Ibid., Table 10, pp. 422-23.


\(^{51}\)Morton, Robert Carter, pp. 130-36 and 144-52.

in Virginia and the other American colonies were rather primitive, and seem to have lagged behind those techniques adopted in England during the eighteenth century. The expanded production of grain and its products in Virginia was probably due to a relative shifting of resources to those commodities and away from tobacco.

The rapid development of commercial grain farming in Virginia required governmental action in several areas. For one thing, some sort of legislation regulating the quality of flour exported was essential if those trading in that commodity were to obtain overseas customers. In a series of carefully-drawn acts, the General Assembly attempted to set rigid standards for all flour leaving the colony. Among other points, the legislation established an inspection system for flour being exported; required that each barrel carry the owner's name and that of the mill where it was ground; required that all flour be unadulterated; and required that each barrel be labelled either fine or superfine, according to its contents. A stiff penalty schedule was instituted for those found guilty of violating the statutes. There is no evidence that these laws were carefully observed in the colony.

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54 Klingaman, "Significance of Grain," 274-75.

55 Hening, Statutes at Large, V, 350-54 (1745); VIII, 143 (1765) and 511-14 (1772); IX, 250 (1772).

56 For example, see Ibid., VIII, 511-14.
as a whole prior to mid-century. The records pertaining to colonial Alexandria list no violations of the statutes.

Another area in which governmental action was rendered imperative by the expansion of grain farming was that of roads. The existing system placed the burden of clearing and maintaining roads on the individual counties. The method used in Virginia was not up to the task of providing decent roads between the grain producing regions of the colony and the river towns receiving the surplus for export.

Virginia had experimented with alternate means of building roads before the 1750s. For example, in 1691 a precedent-setting public levy was imposed throughout the colony in order to establish a road in the piedmont region. That was a military measure, however. The first road legislation of a non-military nature enacted by the General Assembly passed in 1748. In that year the assembly authorized the Prince William County justices to tax the county inhabitants so that a road could be cleared from Pignut Mountain, in what is now Fauquier County, to Ashby's Gap in the Blue Ridge. That act led to a long series of special petitions from local groups for roads through the Blue Ridge.

In the quarter century before the Revolution the House of Burgesses received a number of petitions from the inhabitants

---

58 See the section in Chapter IV below on the Alexandria area road system.
of Frederick and Fairfax Counties asking that something be done to improve the roads from the interior to Alexandria. The burgesses and their colleagues in the government apparently were genuinely concerned over the transportation problems encountered by northern Virginians. However, the time had not yet come when the government would commit its resources to improving the Virginia road system. It left the problem with the county courts to resolve.

The Fairfax County justices were particularly active in attempting to upgrade the road system west from Alexandria. They were blessed with true wagon roads that had been cut through the Blue Ridge in the Frederick County area during the French and Indian War. It was up to the county justices to maintain and expand this transportation network. They worked assiduously at the task, but their efforts often brought meager results. Noting in 1772 that the roads from the piedmont to Alexandria and Colchester were "rendered almost impassible . . . by means of the great number of waggons" using them, the General Assembly authorized the county justices

60 McIlwaine and Kennedy, Journals of the House of Burgesses, XI, 253, 266; XII, 206; Roberts, "Roads of Virginia," pp. 11 and 33-36.

61 But see Hening, Statutes at Large, VIII, 252-53, for a surveying expedition to Fort Pitt in 1766 financed by the assembly.


63 Fairfax County Order Book, May 19, 1752, p. 192; June 17, 1752, p. 206; July 21, 1752, p. 213; Feb. 20, 1754, p. 45; May 19, 1772, p. 34; Sept. 23, 1772, p. 123; Fairfax County Minute Book, Pt. 1, Dec. 19, 1758, p. 320.
to levy £45 annually on the county tithables for the next three years. The money was to be expended to repair the roads leading from both Vestals and Williams Gaps to the east. Although the statute conceded that "the ordinary method of keeping them in repair, as at present by law established, is not only insufficient, but exceedingly burthensome...," it noted that the authorization was designed only to supplement the existing system. 64

Given the deficiencies inherent in the Virginia road program, it is somewhat surprising that the routes leading from the Shenandoah Valley to Alexandria, Colchester, Falmouth, and Fredericksburg were generally open to wagon traffic. Although they were occasionally closed for extended periods, that was clearly the exception and not the rule. 65

III

The rise of grain as a major export crop had an electric effect on the development of Alexandria. The exact number of individuals and firms active in the grain export business there in the early 1770s is not known. A conservative estimate would place the total somewhere between eighteen and twenty-two. 66 In his letters to his employers, Harry Piper has left us a fine account of the trade in the Potomac community.

64 Hening, Statutes at Large, VIII, 549-51; for the county appropriations, see the Fairfax County Order Book, Nov. 17, 1772, p. 146, and Feb. 22, 1774, p. 319.

65 Piper Letter Book, Mar. 12, 1774.

66 See Appendix C, which is only a partial listing.
Piper's letters confirm that the local demand for grain and flour was strong in 1770 and that it increased as the decade progressed. Buyers were paying from four shillings to four shillings and threepence for a bushel of wheat (about fifty-eight pounds) in 1770. By 1771, the price had risen to five shillings a bushel. Apparently it did not drop below that level for the rest of the colonial period. Most surprising, the market was so good that the sellers could require payment in cash for the entire consignment. Flour went from eleven shillings and sixpence in 1770 to as high as twelve shillings and sixpence per hundredweight (one hundred and twelve pounds) before Independence was declared.

On several occasions Piper expressed his astonishment at the extent of the trade. Late in 1771 he used a favorite phrase when he wrote that "the people here are running mad." He added the news that "we have I dare say 20 Stores and Shops now in this Town & more are expected, so that Goods is a great Drug, . . . the people [are] going out of Town before Day to meet the waggons to buy, I don't know where the Farce will end, some I imagine will suffer."

Piper reported in 1774 that the competition for wheat was

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67 Piper Letter Book, Dec. 11, 1770; Nov. 27, 1771; Oct. 24, 1773. See also Table 9 below.


69 Piper Letter Book, Dec. 11, 1770; Nov. 27, 1771; Oct. 24, 1773.

70 Ibid., Nov. 27, 1771. See also his letter dated Aug. 30, 1771.
so intense that each wagon approaching the town had a half dozen purchasers bidding for its contents. In commenting early in 1774 that the trade in wheat and flour was "quite overdone," he remarked that "any person who pursues this business must advance the Money some Months before the Wheat is Shipd., . . ." It is no wonder that he preferred to buy tobacco instead of wheat.

The expansion of the grain trade gave impetus in the late 1760s to efforts to build a second public warehouse in Alexandria. To be located under the bank at West Point, the warehouse was intended for use solely as a grain and flour storage center. Construction of the building, measuring forty by sixty feet, was to be financed by public subscription. The subscribers were offered six percent annual interest on their investment to induce them to support the project.

The subscription was opened on December 30, 1769. Less than ten weeks later the necessary funds had been raised. The records do not indicate the amounts earned in rental fees by the new warehouse. The facility certainly added some badly-needed storage space to supplement the existing warehouses.

Very few records kept by those colonial Alexandria merchants active in the grain trade have survived. Jenifer

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71 Ibid., Apr. 1, 1774.
72 Ibid., Mar. 12, 1774.
73 See Chapter IV below for a description of the first of these buildings.
and Hooe, a major grain exporting firm, left a very complete account of their operations beginning in January 1775. No trade records compiled by the town's genuine merchants are still in existence. However, the South Potomac customs records provide a certain amount of information on the activities of the latter group.

Those vessels owned by John Carlyle entered and cleared the South Potomac district on an irregular basis. Ordinarily from one to four of his ships would be checked each year by Richard Lee, the Naval Officer for the port. With few exceptions, Carlyle's watercraft sailed to and from the British West Indian island of Antigua. His consignments to Antigua usually consisted of lumber (primarily barrel staves), large quantities of maize, and lesser amounts of flour, bread, pork, beans, and peas. From time to time he carried a few hogsheads of tobacco to the island. His shipments of lumber tapered off in the late 1760s. His consignments of flour and bread increased steadily during and after that period. Carlyle's incoming cargos from Antigua were generally made up of rum, sugar, molasses and, in smaller amounts, limes.75

Carlyle's vessels rarely departed from the familiar West Indian trade. In 1755 he sent a schooner to Madeira with 4,800 bushels of Indian corn, 1,300 staves, and a small quantity of other items. In 1756 and 1757 his snow Alexandria carried a total of 326 hogsheads of tobacco, 2,500 staves, and a few other commodities to London. Finally, in 1771 the

75P.R.O. C.O. 5/1447, /1448, /1449, and /1450.
the brigantine *Fairfax* transported four thousand bushels of maize to Lisbon.  

Little information remains concerning the activities of the firm of Carlyle and Dalton. The South Potomac records do list several intercolonial trips to Philadelphia and Rhode Island undertaken in the 1760s by the company's vessels. Their outbound cargos consisted primarily of maize, wheat, and flour. The ships returned with parcels of British goods, coffee, wine, wheat fans, limes, and an assortment of other items.  

The South Potomac customs records also enumerate a number of voyages made by the vessels of Robert Adam and Company. Between 1766 and 1773 his ships carried maize, flour, bread, and lumber to Barbados; maize and flour to Liverpool; tobacco (eighty-seven hogsheads) to London; tobacco (forty hogsheads), flour, and flaxseed to Ayr, Scotland; and wheat and flour to Madeira.  

The nature and direction of Robert Adam's trade closely paralleled that of John Carlyle and John Dalton. Although the customs records are incomplete, it seems clear that the three men rarely shipped consignments of tobacco, preferring instead to trade in foodstuffs, lumber, and other goods. With only a few exceptions, the three also directed their trade

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78 *Ibid.*, 5/1450, 11-12 and 40; /1350, 51; /1352, 133.
away from Britain. The coasting and West Indian trades were apparently more attractive than that to the mother country. As Jacob Price noted, it was far easier for the Chesapeake merchant with limited capital to enter the West Indian trade in provisions than it was for him to send commodities to Britain. 79

The record of Jenifer and Hooe's activities from January 1775 through 1776 is so complete that it allows us to reconstruct their business dealings in considerable detail. It reinforces the image we have of a town almost devoid of true merchants. Jenifer and Hooe did not risk their capital abroad before the Revolution. Instead they operated almost invariably as a factor for various firms located outside Virginia, buying and selling on commission. Apparently they were only one of a number of local firms operating in this fashion. 80

The records of their operations provide abundant evidence that Jenifer and Hooe was a prosperous and well-established firm. With their headquarters in Alexandria, they had satellite stores in Dumfries and Port Tobacco. The firm owned five watercraft in 1775-1776. Two were sloops (the Batchelor and the Molly), two were schooners (the Sally and the John), and the last was a flat (the William). In the months before the Declaration of Independence, the firm's sloops and schooners carried goods between Alexandria and a number of foreign ports. Table 6 on the following page provides a breakdown of the

80 See the Piper Letter Book, Mar. 12, 1774.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Ship</th>
<th>Fine Flour</th>
<th>Superfine Flour</th>
<th>Wheat</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>1-26-75</td>
<td>Molley</td>
<td>40,824</td>
<td>1,056</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-22-75</td>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>11,825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-22-75</td>
<td>Grenada</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>9,129.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-26-75</td>
<td>Samuel</td>
<td>44,146</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-8-75</td>
<td>Myrtilla</td>
<td>143,146</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>8,955.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-12-75</td>
<td>Two Brothers</td>
<td>76,104</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>544.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-18-75</td>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>86,361</td>
<td>17,378</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-20-75</td>
<td>Henrietta</td>
<td>15,511</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-20-75</td>
<td>Henrietta</td>
<td>--</td>
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<td>5-30-75</td>
<td>Union</td>
<td>151,969</td>
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<td>6-23-75</td>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-13-75</td>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>10,994</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-9-75</td>
<td>John</td>
<td>84,585</td>
<td>19,963</td>
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<td>Other</td>
<td>Shipped by Order and on Account and Risk of:</td>
<td>Consigned to:</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Howell of Barbados</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Willing Morris &amp; Co. of Phila.</td>
<td>Edward Burns &amp; Sons of Lisbon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Willing Morris &amp; Co. of Phila.</td>
<td>Robert Herries &amp; Co. of Barcelona</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,341 lbs. small bread</td>
<td>John Howell of Barbados</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,154 bu. rye</td>
<td>Willing Morris &amp; Co. of Phila.</td>
<td>Lancelot Cowper &amp; Co. of Bristol</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Willing Morris &amp; Co. of Phila.</td>
<td>Gregory &amp; Guille of Barcelona</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>434.5 bu. beans; 3286 bu. Indian corn; 267.75 lb. bees wax</td>
<td>Willing Morris &amp; Co. of Phila.</td>
<td>Livingston &amp; Turnbull of Gibraltar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800 white oak hogshead staves</td>
<td>George Meade &amp; Co. of Phila.</td>
<td>Nicholas Hill of Montserrat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 bu. Indian corn</td>
<td>Thomas Meade of Montserrat</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>487.5 bu. white peas; 236 bu. red peas; 417 bu. beans; 595.5 bu. rye; 725 bu. Indian corn</td>
<td>Gregory &amp; Guille of Barcelona</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Willing Morris &amp; Co. of Phila.</td>
<td>Thomas Morris of Baltimore</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Howell of Barbados</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>878.5 bu. Indian corn</td>
<td>George Meade &amp; Co. of Phila. and James Bruley of Tortola</td>
<td>James Bruley of Tortola</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Commission Percentage</th>
<th>Amount C</th>
<th>Total Value of Shipment C</th>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.8.4 3/4</td>
<td>282.13.3½</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>71.4.5 3/4</td>
<td>2920.3.3½</td>
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<td>2.5</td>
<td>56.8.4</td>
<td>2256.14.4</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>318.19.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>86.15.9</td>
<td>3557.10.7½</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>44.16.8½</td>
<td>1838.3.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>47.16.7</td>
<td>1961.0.3½</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>4.15.11</td>
<td>100.14.1</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>13.18.11</td>
<td>292.17.0</td>
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<td>2.5</td>
<td>92.4.2</td>
<td>3780.10.5½</td>
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<td>6.1.2</td>
<td>248.10.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.1.7½</td>
<td>64.13.11½</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>No commission per agreement</td>
<td>716.18.8 3/4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Ship</th>
<th>Fine Floura</th>
<th>Superfine Floura</th>
<th>Wheatb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12-7-75</td>
<td>Molly</td>
<td>72,559</td>
<td>66,547</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-26-75</td>
<td>Batchelor</td>
<td>32,314</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-13-76</td>
<td>John</td>
<td>82,181</td>
<td>47,146</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-15-76</td>
<td>Molly</td>
<td>7,923</td>
<td>46,670</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td>851,617</td>
<td>181,382</td>
<td>43,985.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Amounts are net weight, expressed in pounds.*

*Expressed in bushels.*

*In Virginia currency.*

*Shipped by order of George Meade & Co. of Phila.*

*Shipped by order of Willing Morris & Co. of Phila.*

*Shipped by order of the Md. Council of Safety.*

*And 2,341 lbs. small bread; 3,749 bu. rye; 851.5 bu. beans; 267.75 lb. bees wax; 2100 oak staves; 487.5 bu. white peas and 236 bu. red peas; 24,107 lbs. tobacco.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Shipped by Order and on Account and Risk of:</th>
<th>Consigned to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Province of Maryland</td>
<td>Richard Harrison of Martinique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 red oak staves</td>
<td>Province of Maryland</td>
<td>Richard Harrison of Martinique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Province of Maryland$^f$</td>
<td>Richard Harrison of Martinique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 hhd. tobacco (24,107 lbs.); 1,150.5 bu. Indian corn</td>
<td>Province of Maryland$^f$</td>
<td>Richard Harrison of Martinique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8,040 bu. Indian corn$^g$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission Percentage</td>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>Total Value of Shipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>38.14.7½</td>
<td>813.6.9½</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.15.11½</td>
<td>184.15.2½</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>37.17.11</td>
<td>795.17.10</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>30.17.4 3/4</td>
<td>648.5.7½</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>572.2.0</td>
<td>20781.14.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
cargos carried from Alexandria by these and several other vessels. Insured for three hundred pounds, the Batchelor was "lost in publick Service" carrying goods for Maryland in June, 1776. The Molly was acquired by that state in March 1777 for £595.14.3/4 Virginia currency.81

The records of the firm during the years 1775-1776 list seven full-time employees working either on their watercraft or in the Alexandria store. Their pay ranged from the £66.13.4 received by Richard Harrison in 1775 down to the £7.10.0 earned by Robert Evans during the nine months from March through December of that year. Evans, a "servant boy," had been purchased by Jenifer and Hooe from John Truman for twelve pounds earlier in 1775.82 The company's records do not indicate how many persons were employed at the two satellite stores.

In addition to their regular work force, Jenifer and Hooe also contracted with a number of individuals to perform special tasks. For example, Elizabeth Falling earned £11.5.0 for her work as a washerwoman and seamstress from July 1774 to January 1776. The firm rented slaves regularly, as the preceding chapter indicated. Flats, wagons, a warehouse, and other items were leased by Jenifer and Hooe as a part of their operation.83

81 Jenifer and Hooe Ledger, June 25, 1776, p. 188, and Mar., 1777, p. 189.
82 Jenifer and Hooe Ledger and Journal, various dates in 1775.
83 Ibid., 1775-1776.
Jenifer and Hooe did not limit themselves to the export-import trade. Always willing to add to their profits, they also loaned money to several men. Their loans in the years 1775-1776 did not exceed twenty pounds per person. They invariably charged 4.9 percent interest on these transactions.

Tables 6 and 7 indicate that wheat and flour led the list of commodities purchased by Jenifer and Hooe in 1775 and 1776. From January 1775 through September of the following year they bought a fraction over 45,486 bushels of wheat, 2,573 barrels of flour, 6,849 bushels of Indian corn, and smaller quantities of other commodities. That total is particularly impressive in light of the severe frost of May 4, 1774, which heavily damaged the wheat and rye crops in northern Virginia. Jenifer and Hooe must have carried over a substantial quantity of flour and wheat from 1774; Table 6 shows that they shipped 1,032,999 pounds of flour from January 1775 through July 1776.

Evidence that Jenifer and Hooe were not risking their own capital (except in the use of their vessels) in their commodity shipments abroad is provided in Table 6. In every one of the seventeen shipments listed in that table, the Alexandria firm was exporting goods at the direction, and on

---

84 See the loans to John Ratcliff and Samuel Canby in 1775 in the Jenifer and Hooe Ledger.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount in Bushels</th>
<th>Percentage of Total</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>15,313</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>45,486.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local Merchants</td>
<td>18,290.5</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dumfries and Port Tobacco Stores¹</td>
<td>11,882.75</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flour</td>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>2,112</td>
<td>82.1</td>
<td>2,573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(466,752)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(568,633)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local Merchants</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(101,881)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dumfries and Port Tobacco Stores</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Corn</td>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>4,038</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>6,849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local Merchants</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dumfries and Port Tobacco Stores</td>
<td>2,653</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rye</td>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>1,330</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>3,458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local Merchants</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dumfries and Port Tobacco Stores</td>
<td>2,128</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹Dumfries and Port Tobacco were satellites of the main store at Alexandria.

²In the case of flour, the amount is expressed in terms of barrels, followed in parentheses by the net weight in pounds of the total number of barrels. The net weight was derived by multiplying the total number of barrels by 221.

Source: Jenifer and Hooe Ledger, 1775-1776.
the account and risk, of an individual or firm located outside Virginia. Their responsibilities were limited to collecting, processing, and shipping these commodities on a commission basis. Their regular fee for this service was five percent, but the Philadelphia firm of Willing and Morris paid only half that amount.

Table 6 also provides a clear indication of the involvement of the merchants of Philadelphia in the export operations of a major Alexandria company. Willing and Morris paid for the shipment of large quantities of wheat, flour, and other items from Alexandria. It was probably the largest, and certainly the best known, Philadelphia firm in the late colonial period. Its overseas contacts were very extensive; it had correspondents in every major port between Barcelona and Amsterdam. Willing and Morris was only one of a number of Philadelphia merchant houses buying grain and flour in Virginia and Maryland during the later colonial period. The fact that it paid only half the usual commission fee for its shipments indicates that a special relationship existed between that company and Jenifer and Hooe. The exact nature of that relationship is not revealed in the records of the latter firm.

Table 8 on the next page indicates the destination by region of the wheat, flour, and Indian corn shipped by Jenifer

---

87 Jensen, Maritime Commerce of Colonial Philadelphia, pp. 77-78.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Wheat (Bushels)</th>
<th>Percentage of Total</th>
<th>Flour (Pounds)</th>
<th>Percentage of Total</th>
<th>Indian Corn (Bu.)</th>
<th>Percentage of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iberian Peninsula</td>
<td>30,869.75</td>
<td>70.2</td>
<td>258,942</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britain and the Empirea</td>
<td>13,116</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>246,885</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>3,286</td>
<td>40.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Indies</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>572,409</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>4,029</td>
<td>50.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,078,236</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>8,040</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*aExcluding the West Indies.*

Source: Data presented in Table 6.
and Hooe from January 1775 through July of the next year. Slightly more than seventy percent of the wheat they exported went to Portugal and Spain. Great Britain and the empire, excluding the West Indies, was the destination of the rest of the wheat exported. The West Indies received the majority, 53.1 percent, of the flour exported. The remainder was distributed almost evenly between the Iberian Peninsula countries and the British empire (again, excluding Britain's West Indian colonies). Very little Indian corn was shipped by Jenifer and Hooe to Portugal and Spain. The bulk of their shipments of that crop went to Britain and the empire and to the West Indies. 88

The commodities shipped by the Alexandria company were usually paid for by incoming consignments which it sold on commission. An example can be found in a consignment to Jenifer and Hooe from George Meade and Company of Philadelphia. In the spring of 1776 they sent a large quantity of sugar, cheese, coffee, candles, soap, and leather to Alexandria for sale. The goods were valued at £684.5.2 Pennsylvania currency. Jenifer and Hooe earned a five percent commission for disposing of the goods; their commission amounted to £34.4.3 Pennsylvania currency. 89 The Alexandria firm also handled on commission


89 Hooe, Stone, and Co. Invoice Book, n.p., n.d. (dating this entry according to sequence would place it in late spring, 1776). See also the Jenifer and Hooe Ledger, Aug. 8, 1775, p. 124.
large quantities of salt and rum sent to pay for the grain and flour they exported. They did occasionally risk their own capital by sending a shipment of goods abroad for sale, or by importing items to be sold locally. Such undertakings were uncommon, however, and the amounts involved were invariably small. 90

Jenifer and Hooe did not limit themselves to the sale of necessities in their Potomac stores. They also carried an attractive variety of specialty goods, some of which were quite expensive. An inventory of their main store taken in April, 1775 listed two silver watch keys, seven gold broaches, forty-six gross of brass buttons and seventeen gross of silver, plus many other items. Heavily represented among their goods was an impressive array of ship chandlery supplies. 91

How did Jenifer and Hooe acquire the commodities they shipped from Alexandria? A number of years ago Arthur Cole underscored the lack of understanding among American historians of the process whereby colonial merchants assembled cargos for export. As he put it, "apparently, the staves and the salt fish, the flour and the pit iron walked themselves to the ports." 92 Although the records of Jenifer and Hooe do not tell the whole story, they do shed some light on the

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90 For example, see the Hooe, Stone, and Co. Invoice Book, Sept. 9, 1775, n.p.
methods used to assemble large quantities of foodstuffs for transfer abroad.

Table 7 above indicates the source of 4 major commodities regularly purchased by Jenifer and Hooe. Local merchants were those persons and firms in Alexandria and the surrounding region whose primary concern was mercantile activity of one sort or another. They, and the commodities they sold to Jenifer and Hooe over the better part of two years, are listed in Table 9 below. The entries in Table 7 labelled "individuals" reflect commodity sales to Jenifer and Hooe by persons who could not be identified as merchants or tradesmen. Table 10, which immediately follows Table 9, summarizes their commodity sales to the Alexandria firm from January 1775 through September 1776. The categories in Table 7 described as "Dumfries and Port Tobacco Stores" indicate the commodity shipments from those two sources to the company's Alexandria store.

The information assembled in Tables 7, 9, and 10 indicates that Jenifer and Hooe did not ordinarily buy wheat or Indian corn directly from the farmers who grew those crops. First, Table 7 shows that more than 40 percent of the firm's wheat (but just over 2 percent of its Indian corn) came from merchants. Second, Table 7 also shows that almost 34 percent of Jenifer and Hooe's wheat, along with 59 percent of its Indian corn, came from sales by individuals whose primary economic pursuit was agriculture, not commerce. It is apparent that a majority of those individuals, who are represented statistically in Table 10, were acting as middlemen.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Wheat (Bushels)</th>
<th>Price per Bushel</th>
<th>Commodity</th>
<th>Price per Barrel</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robert Adam</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>5/3</td>
<td>108(23,868)</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Allison</td>
<td>484.5</td>
<td>5/0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Fitzgerald and Valentine Peers</td>
<td>2,902.5</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>21(4,641)</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>205 lb. bees wax</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Gilpin</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5/1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Harper and William Hartshorn</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>127(28,067)</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henley and Caldeee</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>5/0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10 bu. salt</td>
<td>2/0 per bu.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Kirk</td>
<td>1,355</td>
<td>5/0</td>
<td>109(24,089)</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>1,338 lbs. small bread</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Muir</td>
<td>1,302</td>
<td>5/0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 bu. beans</td>
<td>3/6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payson and Triplett</td>
<td>10,083.5</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>158 bu. Indian corn</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Ramsay</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>5/0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josiah Watson</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>49(10,829)</td>
<td>10/0</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>158 bu. Indian corn</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18,290.5</td>
<td>461(101,881)</td>
<td>(see above)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 9---Continued</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a All sums are expressed in shillings and pence of Virginia currency.

b The amount of flour is expressed in barrels followed in parentheses by the weight in pounds of all the barrels. The latter figure was derived by multiplying the total number of barrels by 221.

Source: Jenifer and Hooe Ledger, 1775-1776.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity</th>
<th>Number of Persons</th>
<th>Number of Transactions</th>
<th>Average Amount Sold per Person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>450.4 bushels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flour</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>117.3 barrels ($25,930 lbs.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Corn</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>403.8 bushels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>42.1 bushels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rye</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>665.5 bushels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peas</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.6 bushels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pork</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3 barrels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5 hogsheads</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figure in pounds was obtained by multiplying the total number of barrels by 221.

Source: Jenifer and Hooe Ledger, 1775-1776.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Amount Sold per Transaction</th>
<th>Price Range (in Shillings)</th>
<th>Total Amount Sold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>139.2 bushels</td>
<td>4/0 to 5/3</td>
<td>15,313 bushels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62.1 barrels (13,728 lbs.)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>9/0 to 10/6</td>
<td>2,112 barrels (466,752 lbs.)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>310.6 bushels</td>
<td>2/0 to 2/8</td>
<td>4,038 bushels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.4 bushels</td>
<td>3/6 to 6/9</td>
<td>294.5 bushels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>443.7 bushels</td>
<td>2/8 to 3/0</td>
<td>1,331 bushels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4 bushels</td>
<td>3/9 to 4/0</td>
<td>19.25 bushels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 barrels</td>
<td>65/0 to 80/0</td>
<td>6 barrels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 hogsheads</td>
<td>no price available</td>
<td>5 hogsheads</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Weight in pounds.
in the wheat and Indian corn trade, that is, they were buying those grains from farmers in the interior of Virginia, shipping them to Alexandria, and selling them to Jenifer and Hooe.

Support for this assertion is found in the pattern of agriculture followed in the wheat-growing regions of northern Virginia and in the material presented in Table 10. It is very likely that most of those raising wheat and other grains in the piedmont and valley regions of Virginia followed a pattern of farming similar to that practised in Pennsylvania, the colony from which many of them migrated. James Lemon has provided a hypothetical annual production from an average Pennsylvania farm after 1760 (in Lancaster and Chester counties). His average 125 acre farm yielded 80 bushels of wheat and 120 bushels of Indian corn. Approximately 60 bushels of wheat and 30 bushels of Indian corn were consumed by the family raising the crops, leaving about 20 bushels of the former and 90 bushels of the latter for sale (this does not take into account the seed grain needed for the coming crop).

Table 10 above shows that the pattern of sales of wheat and Indian corn by individuals to Jenifer and Hooe does not

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93 This was certainly the case in the Upper Shenandoah Valley; see Robert D. Mitchell, "Upper Shenandoah Valley," pp. 295-301. Cf. Lemon, Best Poor Man's Country, pp. 150-67.

correspond to the surpluses of those commodities indicated in the preceding paragraph. The average amount of wheat sold per person to the firm exceeded 450 bushels in less than two years. The corresponding figure for Indian corn was over 400 bushels. The most plausible explanation for this discrepancy lies in the active role played by middlemen in the trade. Further, if the pattern of buying followed by the two satellite stores was the same as that of the main store in Alexandria, one can conclude that very little wheat or Indian corn sold to Jenifer and Hooe came directly from the grower.

It is obvious that the process whereby grains and other foodstuffs were transferred from grower to exporter was quite complex. This aspect of the economic history of Virginia will plainly require extensive study before it is clearly understood.

IV

A great deal has been made of the rather unique composition of the merchant community of Alexandria. The fact that very few true merchants resided in the Potomac town meant that both its size and its economic development would be limited. It is important to maintain a sense of perspective, however. There is no question that colonial Alexandria was the dominant urban center of the Potomac River valley. Its preeminence among Potomac urban centers is most readily established through the use of central place theory, a method perfected by urban geographers to explain the size, number, and distribution of towns.
The classic statement of central place theory is contained in a monograph by Walter Christaller published in German in 1933 and later translated into English.\textsuperscript{95} Christaller's theory has been refined by a number of scholars and is widely used today as an analytical tool to study urban development.\textsuperscript{96}

He argued that a central place could be identified by the fact that it offered goods and rendered services to the area surrounding it. The production of goods was deemed by him to be relatively insignificant as a central place function.\textsuperscript{97}

Christaller defined as the complementary region the area within which those goods marketed at a central place would be sold. He contended that the complementary region would vary according to the size of the central place. He found that careful examination of a geographic region would reveal the existence of a hierarchy of central places. Those of a lower order would have very limited complementary regions and would offer only the most basic goods and services. Those of a higher order would have much larger complementary regions. They would offer not only basic (lower order) services and commodities but would also offer more specialized (higher order) goods and services. These more specialized goods and services could not be provided profitably in lower order places.

\textsuperscript{95}Christaller, \textit{Central Places in Southern Germany}.

\textsuperscript{96}A helpful summary of central place theory and applications, along with a very complete annotated bibliography, can be found in Brian J. L. Berry and Allen R. Pred, \textit{Central Place Studies: A Bibliography of Theory and Applications} (Philadelphia: Regional Science Research Institute, 1965).

\textsuperscript{97}Christaller, \textit{Central Places in Southern Germany}, p. 20.
Thus, they were said to have greater conditions of entry (or threshold requirements) than the basic necessities offered in the lower order centers.  

Christaller maintained that the hierarchical pattern in which central places were ordered could be precisely determined. Arranging a series of central places according to market area would mean that for each place of the highest order, one would find three places of the next order, nine of the order below that, and so on. Numerically, the sequence would run 1, 3, 9, 27, 81.  

As the preceding material indicates, the hierarchy of central places consists of five levels or steps. Hamlets, with a population of less than one hundred, occupy the lowest level. Villages are next in order. Containing approximately one hundred to six hundred people, their trade area would be about seventy square miles. With a population in the vicinity of six hundred to seventeen hundred, towns would occupy the third level. Their market area would cover approximately two hundred square miles. Central places of the fourth level would consist of small cities or county seats. Their population would range from seventeen hundred up to about six thousand; their trade areas would be approximately one thousand square miles. At the fifth level would be regional capitals such as


99 See the discussions in Berry and Pred, Central Place Studies, pp. 15-16, and Berry, Geography of Market Centers, pp. 63-65.
Philadelphia and New York. With trade areas of several thousand square miles, their complementary regions would be vast.\textsuperscript{100}

Theoretically, one can predict the location of the various levels of central places with some accuracy. Granted the existence of a level plain with equal access in all directions, the complementary region of each central place should assume a hexagonal shape. Lower order centers and their complementary regions should "nest" within those regions of larger centers according to a rule of threes.\textsuperscript{101} In reality, hexagonally-shaped complementary regions are seldom encountered. The complementary regions of a group of central places are not affected by geographic considerations and communications facilities alone. The presence of a "primate" city (one that is more than twice the size of the next ranking city) can influence negatively both the range and the development of other central places in a region.\textsuperscript{102}

The towns and villages of the Potomac River basin are listed on the next page in Table 11 according to their rank

\textsuperscript{100} Berry, Geography of Market Centers, pp. 14-16. See also Christaller, Central Places in Southern Germany, pp. 66-67.


### TABLE 11

**POTOMAC RIVER BASIN TOWNS:**

**RANK IN CENTRAL PLACE HIERARCHY, 1775**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Approximate Population</th>
<th>Rank or Order</th>
<th>Dominant Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alexandria</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Shipping center (and county seat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bladensburg</td>
<td>200-400</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Shipping center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyd's Hole</td>
<td>100-200</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Shipping center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colchester</td>
<td>150-300</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Shipping center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumfries</td>
<td>250-450</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Shipping center (and county seat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgetown</td>
<td>150-350</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Shipping center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piscataway</td>
<td>100-250</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Shipping center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Tobacco</td>
<td>100-250</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Shipping center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Hamlets</td>
<td>4-100</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Various; shipping center most important</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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in the hierarchy of central places. The positions assigned in that table are based on an evaluation of a number of sources. They reflect not only the estimated population but also the approximate level of commercial activity of these urban centers.

An examination of Table 11 and Map 1 indicates that the pattern of urbanization in the Potomac basin conformed only partially to classical central place theory. Alexandria, which had barely achieved a position of the fourth rank, should have been joined by two or three towns of the third order. However, that did not occur because Alexandria had attained a position of primacy over its rivals. In achieving primacy the Potomac town tended to retard its competitors' development in much the same way that Philadelphia hindered the growth of lower-ranking urban centers in southeastern Pennsylvania.  

The advantages accruing to Alexandria by virtue of its size are readily apparent. An individual traveling to the river town could economize by accomplishing several tasks on a single trip. He might have business at the county court or with the parish vestry. He would have a wide choice of merchants with whom he could trade. Their competition helped to insure that he could obtain the best goods available in the region at reasonable prices. He could also find specialized craftsmen such as cabinetmakers and tanners in the town; their

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services were not likely to be available in the lower order villages of the Potomac basin. Probably many Virginians living in the region made Alexandria the center of their business and social life, to the detriment of the other urban centers nearby.

It is not possible to measure with precision the level of commercial activity of each of the towns and villages on or near the Potomac. However, Table 12 on the following page is useful as an instrument directly comparing the volume of ready cash sales for six branch stores of John Glassford and Company of Glasgow. The period 1765-1768 was chosen for comparison for two reasons: (i) the necessary information was unusually complete for several Glassford stores for these years, and (ii) trade disruptions (such as boycotts) during that time were relatively insignificant.

The table reveals that the monthly average of ready cash sales at the Scottish firm's Alexandria store was more than twice that of its other Potomac branches. It should be kept in mind that the mercantile community of Alexandria was considerably larger than that of Dumfries, Colchester, or the other regional villages. Thus, the Glassford factor in Alexandria faced much stiffer competition than did his counterparts in the neighboring communities.

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104 See Berry, Geography of Market Places, pp. 3 and 6; Berry and Pred, Central Place Studies, pp. 15-16; Christaller, Central Places in Southern Germany, pp. 49-50.

105 See the sources listed in Table 15, especially the Carter Letter Book, March, 1775, pp. 245-46.
TABLE 12
JOHN GLASSFORD AND COMPANY:
READY CASH SALES OF VIRGINIA AND MARYLAND STORES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Store</th>
<th>Reporting Perioda</th>
<th>Number of Months in Sample</th>
<th>Total Sales</th>
<th>Monthly Average</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandria</td>
<td>Nov. 1765 through Aug. 1766</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>£685.0.5</td>
<td>£68.10.0</td>
<td>Container 164, pp. 7-11, 143-46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyd's Hole</td>
<td>Aug. 1766 through Feb. 1767</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>£223.18.0</td>
<td>£31.19.8</td>
<td>Container 166, pp. 4-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colchester</td>
<td>Nov. 1765 through Sept. 1766</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>£339.5.7</td>
<td>£30.1.7</td>
<td>Container 188, pp. 12-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumfries</td>
<td>Jan. through Sept. 1765</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>£189.12.7</td>
<td>£21.0.6</td>
<td>Container 201, pp. 4-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantico</td>
<td>Oct. 1767 through Sept. 1768</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>£312.10.3</td>
<td>£26.0.10</td>
<td>Container 219, pp. 6-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Tobacco</td>
<td>June through Nov. 1767</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>£91.10.4$b</td>
<td>£18.6.1</td>
<td>Container 83, pp. 172-73, 221</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only full months included in the reporting period except for Port Tobacco. In the case of Port Tobacco, the sales for June and November were only reported in part. The two sections were combined to make up one full month.

The total sales for Port Tobacco were £122.0.6 Mary. Maryland currency. This was converted to Virginia currency by subtracting 25% from that amount. For the use of this conversion rate, see Main, Social Structure of Revolutionary America, table on p. 289, and the Hooe, Stone, and Co. Invoice Book, Dec. 26, 1775 and Feb. 13 and Apr. 15, 1776.

Table 12 should not be taken as proof of Alexandria's primacy as a central place in the Potomac region. The table does demonstrate that the Glassford store in Alexandria was doing a much greater volume of business in the area of ready cash sales than the firm's other branch stores. The information in the table accentuates the statement that Alexandria was the major central place of the Potomac River basin and that it had a substantial complementary region.

In retrospect it is apparent that the rise of grain farming in the northern Chesapeake was of the greatest importance in the expansion of early Alexandria. Although grain farming was slow to catch on in Virginia, large amounts of Indian corn were being transported from the Potomac town by the 1750s. Wheat and flour did not become prominent export commodities until the late 1760s. Within a few years they, along with maize, were the most significant items being carried from the port town.

Even before the rise of commercial grain farming in its hinterland, Alexandria was a notable Virginia urban center. The absence of a substantial community of true merchants limited its potential for growth, however. John Carlyle, Robert Adam, and John Dalton could not by themselves provide the quality of economic activity necessary to transform their town into a major American port. Despite this shortcoming, the use of central place theory shows that colonial Alexandria dominated its trade rivals in the Potomac basin. By the mid-1760s the river town had achieved primacy over its competitors, eclipsing Dumfries, Colchester, and the other...
settlements along the Potomac
CHAPTER IV

GOVERNING THE TOWN

Since commerce served as the foundation for colonial Alexandria's growth and prosperity, it is understandable that its merchants would play a central role in town governance. Although the merchants shared control with the area planters of the Alexandria Board of Trustees, the former group did almost all of the work involving town administration. The trustees as a whole were notably reluctant to share their authority, and they oversaw personally almost every aspect of municipal affairs.

The town exhibited a significant degree of peace and stability. Among the most important factors contributing to this were the existence of a deferential society and the limited size of pre-Revolutionary Alexandria. The town trustees were fortunate in having relatively few problems with which to contend. For example, crime never rose to threatening levels during the colonial period. It was just as well that the trustees were not often called upon to deal with serious problems for the laws they attempted to enforce were commonly ignored by the townspeople.

The prosperity of early Alexandria was apparent to the most casual observer. Its enlargement in 1762 and the steadily
increasing prices paid for town real estate are indications of Alexandria's well-being. The trustees worked to maintain their town's growth by financing the expansion of its commercial facilities. Their efforts in this area illustrate the primacy of economic factors in the development of early Alexandria.

I

Twenty-six men, none of whom was paid a salary, served on the Board of Trustees prior to Alexandria's incorporation in the year 1778. The board's membership over the period 1749 to 1778 consisted of fifteen merchants, six planters, three attorneys, one shipbuilder, and one whose profession could not be determined. Estate appraisals of nine of the trustees, and the will of another, were located in the Fairfax County Will Books. As Table 13 indicates, the trustees were virtually all men of considerable means. Their estates, if sterling is converted into Virginia currency, averaged well over £1500 per man at the time of their death. They also owned an average of 5,552 pounds of tobacco and nineteen slaves. By way of comparison, the typical Virginia Justice of the Peace held twenty-five slaves.¹

Wealth is a relative thing, of course. The trustees' holdings do not begin to compare with those of "The One

### TABLE 13

**ESTATE APPRAISALS OF ALEXANDRIA TRUSTEES, 1750-1789**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date Appraisal Recorded (17--)</th>
<th>Virginia Currency</th>
<th>Sterling Currency</th>
<th>Slaves</th>
<th>Tobacco (pounds)</th>
<th>Location of Appraisal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Josias Clapham</td>
<td>5-21-53</td>
<td>107.2.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7,850</td>
<td>B-1, pp. 26-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Dalton</td>
<td>4-2-89</td>
<td>2,256.9.10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>B-1, pp. 300-2, 311-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Hunter</td>
<td>10-24-65</td>
<td>1,037.4.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>B-1, pp. 404-5, 411-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Johnston</td>
<td>2-11-67</td>
<td>1,554.10.3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>C-1, pp. 1-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Osborne</td>
<td>4-7-50</td>
<td>421.19.3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>A-1, Part 2, pp. 448-53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry Piper</td>
<td>2-22-80</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,000.0.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>D-1, pp. 162-64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Ramsay</td>
<td>9-22-85</td>
<td>530.16.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9½</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>E-1, pp. 107-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Date Appraisal Recorded (17--)</td>
<td>Virginia Currency</td>
<td>Sterling Currency</td>
<td>Slaves</td>
<td>Tobacco (pounds)</td>
<td>Location of Appraisal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawrence Washington</td>
<td>7-21-56</td>
<td>1,333.11.0</td>
<td>90.13.3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>49,965</td>
<td>B-1, pp. 113-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugh West, Sr.</td>
<td>1-20-55</td>
<td>629.5.13</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>B-1, pp. 77-80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Averages:
- 1,386.17.11
- 121.3.8
- 19
- 5,552

\(^a\) All citations are to the Fairfax County, Virginia Will Books (Archives Branch, Virginia State Library, Richmond: microfilm).

\(^b\) Because this is an estate inventory, only the slaves are included in the totals and averages.

\(^c\) The data concerning Piper's estate was taken from a will, not an estate appraisal.

\(^d\) No slaves were recorded in Washington's estate appraisal. The lack of an entry here is not included in the overall average.

Source: Fairfax County Will Books.
Hundred" analyzed by Jackson Turner Main. Main found that the one hundred wealthiest Virginia planters in the 1780s had an average of £25,000 in taxable property and 160 slaves.\(^2\)

Although modest by this standard, the assets held by the Alexandria trustees clearly placed them among the elite of Fairfax County.

This information holds no surprises for those who have studied the leadership of preindustrial towns and cities. Both within and without colonial America, the upper class customarily dominated urban government. This was particularly true of the top levels of administration.\(^3\) Naturally, there were exceptions to this rule. Some of the most fascinating of these were found in the smaller towns and cities of colonial New England.\(^4\) The exceptions were just that,


however, and in colonial America few of them could be found outside of New England.

The Alexandria trustees were characterized by their wealth, by their service to the local area, and by their length of residence in the colony (all had lived in Virginia for many years prior to their appointment as trustees). Of these factors, wealth was probably even more important than length of residence in the colony or service to the community. For example, one could become a trustee while contributing relatively little to the governance of the town or its environs. On the other hand, it is very hard to imagine a member of the middle or lower classes being selected as a trustee, regardless of his contributions to local government.\(^5\)

The form of government established in Alexandria had long antecedents in Tudor and Stuart England. The 'close' corporation came into its own during the decades of Tudor leadership.\(^6\) By the beginning of the eighteenth century, it had become the most widely used form of town government in both the mother country and her colonies. Membership in the

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\(^6\)Teaford, Municipal Revolution in America, p. 3. A close corporation uses the device of co-option rather than popular election to select the town leadership; see Griffith, American City Government, p. 16, n. 3.
corporation council was highly prized by those among the upper classes. Thus, it proved easy to attract qualified candidates willing to serve as trustees.\(^7\) This form of town government did not, however, serve as a model for the New England communities. In another exception to the rule noted above, Philadelphia was alone among the largest colonial American cities in her adherence to the close corporation form.\(^8\)

Ernest Griffith has written that the close corporation was invariably used in Virginia towns.\(^9\) That was not the case. It seems to have been adopted in Yorktown, Portsmouth, Falmouth, Cobham, and Colchester, but not in Norfolk or Richmond.\(^10\) The co-optive method of designating town leaders was thoroughly undemocratic, and eventually gave way to more egalitarian forms of government. Although that gradual process was stimulated by the Revolutionary era, the old pattern of governance persisted in many areas of the nation.\(^11\)


\(^8\)Bridenbaugh, Cities in Revolt, p. 8. The types of government found in Boston, Newport, New York, and Charles Town are discussed on pages 6-10.

\(^9\)Griffith, American City Government, p. 413, n. 2.


\(^11\)Teaford, Municipal Revolution in America, pp. 47, 64-67, and 75-76; Griffith, American City Government, pp. 198-99. See also Wade, The Urban Frontier, p. 74, for a discussion of some of the newer forms.
The Proceedings of the Alexandria Board of Trustees from 1749 to 1780 (the final meeting was called to settle the old town government accounts) show that the trustees held comparatively few formal meetings and that not much was accomplished when the group did get together. There are fewer than 140 pages of proceedings for the entire period. Nor is that particularly noteworthy when one considers that only fifty-three meetings were held from 1749 to 1778. It is highly unlikely that we are missing part of the Proceedings, since the bound journal for the period 1749-1767 has survived in its original form. Further, the volume of activity recorded in that source is duplicated in the photostated Proceedings for the period 1767-1780.\(^\text{12}\) Sentence transition from one page to the next offers more evidence that we have a complete transcript of the trustees' proceedings.

Fifty-three meetings from 1749 to 1778 averages out at fewer than two a year. It is likely that there was not a great deal the trustees felt needed doing (and in one meeting they said as much) and that a good deal of business was accomplished away from the meetings.\(^\text{13}\) From time to time there were probably slack periods in the work of town governance (and one should not forget that urban governments were much less busy in the eighteenth century than they are in the twentieth).\(^\text{14}\)

\(^\text{12}\)Proceedings of Alexandria Trustees, 1767-1780.

\(^\text{13}\)Proceedings of Alexandria Trustees, 1749-1767, Aug. 3, 1751.

\(^\text{14}\)See Teaford, Municipal Revolution in America, p. 16, for a comment on the limited role assumed by early American town leaders.
However, the surviving evidence indicates that the trustees recorded only a small part of their work and decisions in the Proceedings.

Even meeting as infrequently as they did, the town administrators occasionally had difficulty assembling a quorum. Thus, the meeting of February 27, 1749/50 found only four trustees in attendance.\(^{15}\) Possibly out of embarrassment at their lack of formal activity, from time to time the trustees set up a schedule of regular meetings on a monthly basis.\(^{16}\) It was to no avail. Each time, they soon reverted to the customary pattern of random meetings at widely-spaced intervals.

When the first meeting of the town trustees took place on July 13, 1749, the board was composed of four merchants, four planters, two attorneys, and one person—Richard Osborne—of undetermined profession. As the years passed, the balance gradually shifted in favor of the merchants. By 1758 there were six merchants and three planters on the board. Table 14 shows that the number of merchants rose to eight in 1763, with the addition of a twelfth member to the board. That number dropped to seven two years later, where it remained for most of the rest of the colonial period.

The dominance the mercantile trustees enjoyed in governing Alexandria was even more pronounced than indicated by Table 14.

\(^{15}\) Proceedings of Alexandria Trustees, 1749-1767, Feb. 27, 1749/50.

\(^{16}\) They passed legislation to this effect in 1751 and again in 1771. Ibid., May 30, 1751, and Proceedings of Alexandria Trustees, 1767-1780, Nov. 29, 1771.
### TABLE 14

**OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF ALEXANDRIA TRUSTEES, 1749-1778**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (17--*)</th>
<th>Number of Trustees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:  
- M = Merchants
- P = Planters
- O = Other (attorney, shipbuilder, unknown)

Note: There were eleven trustees from 1749 to June, 1763 and from April, 1767 to February, 1770. There were twelve otherwise.

As Table 15 shows, from 1760 on the merchants wholly controlled the board meetings. After 1760 only one planter (George William Fairfax) attended a board meeting (on December 10, 1766).

A clearly defined pattern is evident in the occupations of those who filled the various town administrative positions below the trustee level. The planters were conspicuous in their absence from these appointive positions, such as Overseer of the Streets and Landings and Ballast Master. The available evidence strongly supports the conclusion that the planters on the Board of Trustees, all of whom were members of the Virginia aristocracy, viewed their trusteeships as little more than honorary appointments. The merchants on the board were left with the responsibility for running the town.

The emergence of mercantile control of Alexandria's government was scarcely a novel development during this period of American history. Throughout the eighteenth century, the same pattern could be found in scores of American towns and cities of all sizes. Domination by the merchant class of those towns heavily involved in trade was particularly widespread.

17 For Virginia, see Spoede, "William Allason," pp. 208-10, and Thomsen, "The Merchant in Virginia," p. 147. For the area outside the colony, see Bridenbaugh, Cities in the Wilderness, p. 340, and Cities in Revolt, pp. 282-83; Richard M. Bernard, "A Portrait of Baltimore in 1800: Economic and Occupational Patterns in an Early American City," Maryland Historical Magazine, LXIX (Winter, 1974), 360; Teaford, Municipal Revolution in America, pp. 16 and 25-26; Wade, The Urban Frontier, p. 77; Warner, The Private City, p. 23; and see also Main, Social Structure of Revolutionary America, p. 219.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (17--)</th>
<th>Number of Trustees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: M = Merchants; P = Planters; O = Other (attorney, shipbuilder, unknown)

*There were no formal board meetings in 1757 or 1764.

Note: There were eleven trustees from 1749 to June, 1763 and from April, 1767 to February, 1770. There were twelve otherwise.

It must be emphasized that mercantile dominance of Alexandria's government did not lead to friction between that group and the planter class. Over the years, colonial Virginia merchants acquired a reputation as rather unsavory characters who were singularly lacking in public spirit and interested only in making money by whatever means possible.\(^\text{18}\) The history of Alexandria helps to destroy that myth and to emphasize the mutually beneficial relationship enjoyed by the town merchants and the planter class.\(^\text{19}\) To a considerable degree, planters and merchants shared the same goals. This is certainly a major reason why there were so few quarrels among the governing elite of the town.\(^\text{20}\)

The relative lack of strife among Alexandria's leadership was reflective of an absence of serious conflict in the town as a whole. Pre-Revolutionary Alexandria was certainly not immune to discord, crime, and violence. Yet these threats to the town's stability were minimal during the colonial period. There were several factors that contributed to this.

The first of these was the fact that the town trustees were a vigorous group of men whose right to govern was not questioned. Vacancies infrequently occurred on the Board of

\(^\text{18}\) For an affirmation of this theme, see Thomas Perkins Abernethy, Three Virginia Frontiers (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, 1962), pp. 16-18.

\(^\text{19}\) This point is explored in Soltow, "Scottish Traders in Virginia," 83-98.

Trustees—tenure on the board averaged twelve years, eleven months—and this continuity lent an important element of stability to the governing elite. To return to a significant point introduced earlier, that elite was part of a society based on the concept of deference.

It is essential to remember that political life in Virginia was a blend of democratic and aristocratic elements. The franchise was extremely widespread among the non-indentured white adult males of that colony. One recent estimate holds that by 1763 over 85% of the men in that category were eligible to vote. By eighteenth century standards, Virginia was democratic in the breadth of its franchise. However, it was certainly aristocratic in those chosen to run the government. It was generally accepted that the right to vote did not imply that one was also suited to represent the people. Both elective and appointive positions were regarded as the preserve of the upper classes, who alone possessed the education, the experience, and the time necessary to govern effectively.

21 The length of tenure is drawn from the material presented in Appendix B. For comparisons based on a New England town and city in which the top officials (selectmen) were elected, see Kenneth A. Lockridge, A New England Town: The First Hundred Years. Dedham, Massachusetts, 1636-1736, Norton Essays in American History (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1970), p. 125 (Table headed "The Decline in the Experiential Resources of the Board of Selectmen, 1639-1736"), and Kulikoff, "Progress of Inequality," 390.

22 The best discussion of this point in relation to early America as a whole is J. R. Pole, "Historians and the Problem of Early American Democracy," American Historical Review, LXVII (April, 1962), 626-646.


24 Sydnor, American Revolutionaries in the Making, pp.
Although the trustees were not elected in Alexandria, the same principles of deference applied there as elsewhere. It was the responsibility of the trustees to choose from among the local gentry those men best equipped to serve the town. Access to the upper class was not easy, but was always open to men of talent. An individual such as Harry Piper, who was willing to work long hours at his own and the public's business, at least had a chance of being rewarded through his elevation to the ruling class.

The widespread satisfaction this system engendered can be measured by the length of time it took Virginia politics to become democratized. The old system worked well in allowing for a relatively broad franchise and in sifting out a group of men uniquely talented at the art of governing. It also contributed to a pervasive sense of apathy among the electorate that lasted well into the 1790s.

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For a definition of the term "gentry," see Sydnor, American Revolutionaries in the Making, p. 61.

The system of deference that prevailed in Virginia also greatly affected the course of the pre-Revolutionary crisis that swept through the colony during the 1760s and 1770s. The surviving records indicate that discord among Alexandria's leaders was scarcely discernible during this period. At least in part because hard work and success were usually rewarded by elevation to a position of leadership, one does not find a struggle for power among the political insiders and their ambitious rivals for office. Additionally, the strong tradition of deference probably helped to deflect that Gary B. Nash describes as a "radical" mode of politics which he asserts was evolving in several of the larger American cities in the latter part of our colonial period.\textsuperscript{27} The structure and practice of politics in the Potomac town would in time change, but not until well after the United States had declared their independence.

A second factor that helped to minimize the difficulties encountered by the new town was the low incidence of poverty. Although this topic will be covered fully in chapter five, it is important to note here that the town leaders were spared the problem of a large body of unemployed men and women.

Yet another factor contributing powerfully to civility and the maintenance of order in colonial Alexandria was the

size of the town. In the dozen or so years after the mid-1750s, Alexandria's population declined from a high of just over seventeen hundred. From the late 1760s to the beginning of the Revolution it increased to about two thousand. Alexandria's limited size meant that the townspeople could enjoy a different and closer type of relationship with each other than could those living in the more impersonal environment of a city such as Philadelphia or New York. To borrow a theme developed brilliantly by Robert Park, "primary," or direct, face-to-face relations were still possible in Alexandria. They had not yet been replaced by the "secondary," or indirect relations characteristic of the largest colonial cities.

Close association in a primary group over an extended period results in a degree of subordination of one's own personal interests in favor of the interests of the group as a whole. Social control in a group of this type is maintained by personal influences and public sentiment, not by a set of laws.

Using a different approach, Darrett Rutman has emphasized the concept of vertical and horizontal dimension in an important study focusing on the early American community. Although Alexandria's vertical dimension, that is, the extracommunal associations of its citizens, was highly developed, so was its

28 See Table 2, note e (pages 53-54) for a discussion of the reasons underlying this decline.

horizontal dimension. The latter consisted of those local, internal relationships that were an essential part of the community. One indispensable facet of this horizontal dimension that was particularly noticeable in the relatively small community of colonial Alexandria was its familial and familiar aspect. Relationships in the town were ordinarily familiar and face-to-face, which again stressed the importance of personal influence and public sentiment in shaping individual behavior.³⁰

Maintaining these intimate relationships among the townspeople would prove to be impossible over the long run. Eventually, impersonality and "an unmerciful matter-of-factness" would replace the informality and openness of Alexandria's citizens.³¹ Secondary associations and controls, such as voluntary fire companies, fraternal organizations, and churches, would proliferate and aid in maintaining community stability and integration.³² Most of these changes would not occur until the early national period, however. For the present, the compact nature of Alexandria insulated it from


many of the problems associated with larger urban centers.

In their attempts to govern Alexandria and to solve the problems faced by the town, the trustees demonstrated a noticeable reluctance to share their authority. In light of what is known about other colonial urban centers, it is reasonable to expect that Alexandrians who were not trustees would occasionally serve in the important town administrative positions. An examination of the town offices of Overseer of the Streets and Landings and Ballast Master will show that this seldom occurred.

The position of Town Overseer of the Streets and Landings has already been characterized as extremely important. With the expansion of the town in 1763, the job was divided between two men. A pattern of irregular replacement of those serving as overseers persisted down to the Revolution. The first seven overseers were all town trustees (six were merchants and one was an attorney). It was not until 1773, when James Connell and Peter Wise (neither of whose professions are known) replaced John Carlyle and William Ramsay, that the trustees went outside their membership to choose overseers.

A position of complete exclusiveness was maintained in the office of Ballast Master. Thomas Fleming enjoyed, or was

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33 See p. 42 above for a discussion of the responsibilities of the Alexandria overseer and ballast master.

34 The seven were Robert Adam, John Carlyle, John Dalton, John Hunter, George Johnston, John Muir, and William Ramsay. Carlyle and Ramsay each served two terms.

burdened with, a long period of service as the first incumbent of that office. John Dalton replaced him in 1775 and served as Ballast Master for the remainder of the colonial period.\textsuperscript{36}

The surviving records furnish no hints regarding the reasons why the trustees chose to follow this policy of near-exclusion of outsiders in staffing the major town administrative positions. One can reasonably assume that the trustees could have found many able and qualified men willing to share the burden of administering the town. That is, they could have found them if they had been willing to look. Their reluctance to do so until the 1770s says a good deal about the nature of a society based on the principles of deference by the lower classes and rule by an elite. To turn to a different case, colonial New England provides a good example of a region in which a different set of values and assumptions conditioned the apportionment of urban administrative positions.\textsuperscript{37}

The two areas are representative of the heterogeneity which characterized colonial life on the eve of the Revolution.

II

While Alexandria's trustees concerned themselves with the details of town government, the Potomac town maintained its pattern of steady expansion. An upward trend in the value

\textsuperscript{36}\textit{Ibid.}, Jan. 22, 1775.

of real estate provides a good illustration of this point. Town lots rose considerably in value in the 1750s and early 1760s. Fewer and fewer unimproved tracts were available for purchase, and forfeitures of town lots had virtually ceased. In a series of property sales during this period, the prices paid for town lots and their accompanying buildings ranged between £26 and £120. 38

Although it is useful simply to record the prices paid for property in colonial Alexandria, a greater degree of utility is derived from directly comparing this data with that taken from other towns. Fortunately, a relatively complete record of land sales for Colchester enables us to compare the value of property in the two rival ports and to measure the rapidity of land sales.

Situated on the Occoquan river about a dozen miles southwest of Alexandria, Colchester was established by the colonial government in 1753 and settled the following year. Smaller than Alexandria, the town consisted of forty-two lots, most of which were one-half acre in size, laid out on twenty-five acres. The streets were all sixty feet wide. 39 Only twenty-one of the lots had been sold by 1760. Fifteen years later the town trustees were still selling lots from the initial group of forty-two.

38 Comparable prices were paid for property in Yorktown during this period. See Riley, "Founding and Development of Yorktown," pp. 110-20.

39 The official town survey, with brief explanatory remarks, is in the Fairfax County Record of Surveys, June, 1754, p. 44.
Map 3 Colchester, Virginia: 1754

Note: The town market was established on lot no. 16.

Source: Fairfax County Record of Surveys, June, 1754, p. 44.
The value of property in Colchester can be gauged from the prices paid for the first twenty-one lots. Alexander Henderson, a town trustee, paid the top price recorded when he bought lot number fifteen for fifteen pounds ten shillings. On the lower end of the scale, a block of five lots (numbers five, twenty-two, twenty-four, thirty-eight, and forty) sold for three pounds ten shillings each. It will be recalled that the high and low figures for Alexandria lots were £48.7.8 and £0.5.9 respectively. The three Colchester lots sold before 1760 with access to the river (numbers six, thirty-eight and forty-two) went for an average price of £4.13.10. The comparable figure for the fourteen Alexandria lots east of Water Street was £21.15.8. Finally, the average price of the twenty-one Colchester lots was £5.14.1; that of the sixty Alexandria lots listed in Table 1 was £14.4.7.  

The depressed value of property in Colchester and the fact that it sold much more slowly than land in Alexandria reflects both the current prosperity and the future prospects of the two rivals. Alexandria's superior location with regard to the western roads, coupled with her superb port facilities, made inevitable the eclipse of Colchester. In fact, the speed with which land was taken up in Alexandria generated an increasing pressure for town expansion.  

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40 The information concerning the Colchester lots is taken from the Fairfax County Deed Books, Liber D-1, Parts 1 and 2, 1756-1759.

41 But note that in 1767 when Alexander Henderson sold his half acre lot in Colchester, complete with buildings and gardens, it brought £500 sterling. Ibid., Liber G-1, Aug. 22, 1767, pp. 283-87.
to petitions and requests from "divers traders and others desirous of settling there," in November 1762 the Virginia government substantially enlarged the town boundaries.42

An Act for enlarging the town of Alexandria, in the county of Fairfax added fifty-eight one-half acre lots to the town. Alexandria’s boundaries were enlarged in an orderly fashion on three sides. As the map of the enlarged town shows, the existing grid pattern was maintained without deviation.43

In the late winter of 1763 the town fathers embarked on a modest campaign in which they publicized Alexandria’s expansion and the impending sale of the new property. Advertisements noting the sale by auction of the new lots were placed in the Pennsylvania and Maryland Gazettes. The advertisement inserted in the former newspaper also expounded the advantages of owning property in the town:

This Town is beautifully situated near the Falls of Potowmack, one of the finest Rivers in North-America; it affords good Navigation for the largest Ships in Europe up to the Town, where there is an excellent Harbour. The Country back is very extensive, and the Soil capable of producing Tobacco, Corn, Wheat, Flax, Hemp, &c in great Perfection. Its equal Convenience for transporting any Commodity to the Waters of the Ohio, is obvious to any One that will give himself the Trouble of examining the Draughts of the Country.44

42McIlwaine and Kennedy, Journals of the House of Burgesses, X, 76, 90, 111, 114, 117, 120, 165; McIlwaine, Legislative Journals of the Council, III, 1288; Hening, Statutes at Large, VII, 604-7. Again, the contrast with Colchester is illuminating; Alexandria’s rival did not expand beyond its original boundaries. The quote is from a petition received by the Fairfax County Court. Fairfax County Minute Book, Pt. 2, May 19, 1761, p. 582.

43Cf. the other Chesapeake towns described in Reps, Tidewater Towns, p. 297.

44Pennsylvania Gazette, Mar. 10, 1763; Maryland Gazette.
Because the new town land had originally been owned by Baldwin Dade and John Alexander Senior and Junior, all proceeds from the auction were to be turned over to them. The enabling legislation also provided that no one could purchase more than two lots; that the owners of marsh lots (see the map of the enlarged town) did not have to build on their lots; and that those who did buy marsh lots had to drain them promptly. Failure to comply with the latter provision would automatically result in forfeiture of the property in question to the town trustees.\textsuperscript{45}

The sale of the new property on May 9 was a great success. Those attending the auction purchased all but five of the fifty-eight lots and paid handsome prices for most of them.\textsuperscript{46} The amounts tendered ranged from the £50.10.0 paid for lot number 85 by Thomas Fleming to the £1.10.0 paid for number 141 by Catharine Hughes. The average price paid for all fifty-eight was £15.8.11.\textsuperscript{47}

The majority of the new lots had formerly belonged to John Alexander, Junior. In order to obtain the highest possible price for his property, he asked that the town trustees sell his land on credit. They acceded to his

\textsuperscript{45}Hening, Statutes at Large, VII, 604-7.

\textsuperscript{46}Lots 30 and 123-126 remained unsold until March, 1771; see the Proceedings of Alexandria Trustees, 1767-1780, Mar. 1, 1771.

\textsuperscript{47}Ibid.; Proceedings of Alexandria Trustees, 1749-1767, May 9, 1763.
request, giving the purchasers of his property twelve months to pay for their land. It should be noted that Alexander also owned a large section of land immediately to the west and south of those tracts added to the town in 1763. Although this land had been surveyed and marked in the prevailing grid pattern, it remained his to dispose of as he saw fit.

It is tempting to describe the years from 1763 to 1776 as a period in which a speculative orgy in the sale of town property took place in Alexandria. To state the case more modestly, a great deal of town land changed hands during these years. As the value of property increased, it was inevitable that half-acre tracts would be subdivided before being sold or rented in order to increase the owner's profits. Subdivision of town property antedated the expansion act of 1763. By the early 1770s it had become widespread.

Standard size lots could be divided into one-fourth or one-eighth acre tracts, but were never cut into smaller units. Of course, the sale price of these units varied according to their location and the extent to which they were improved. In 1766 Charles Turner, an Alexandria ordinary-keeper by trade, paid Robert Alexander only £9.13.4 for one-eighth of an acre situated on lot number 113. A one-eighth acre parcel

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48 Proceedings of Alexandria Trustees, 1749-1767, May 9, 1763.

49 The Fairfax County Deed Book contains scores of deeds for these smaller tracts. See especially Libers K-1 (1772-1773), L-1 (1773-1774), and M-1 (1774-1777).

purchased by Alexandria merchant George Gilpin in 1773 proved considerably more expensive. Gilpin paid John Hough, a town blacksmith, two hundred pounds for that much of lot number fifty-six. Occasionally, several one-eighth acre parcels were offered for sale simultaneously. In 1771 Henry Salkold [Salkeld], a mariner by profession, divided his two half-acre lots (numbers thirty-eight and thirty-nine) into one-eighth acre units and put them on the market. The units were, as he noted, situated on "a very valuable Acre of Ground." Aside from the purchase in 1749 and subsequent resale of his property, Salkold had no other dealings in town real estate.

The county deed books do not always indicate the extent to which town property changing hands was improved. However, it is apparent that few unimproved lots were available in Alexandria by the 1770s and that those tracts put on the market were generally quite expensive.

None of the town citizens profited on a year-to-year basis through the sale of real estate in Alexandria. A man might occasionally realize a windfall profit in the sale of his property, but that was an infrequent occurrence. The county deed books show clearly that almost all of the town property sold before the Revolution was marketed by individuals whose real estate holdings were limited to two or three half-acre tracts. Their sale of property can best be described as a very sporadic, if lucrative, process.

52 Maryland Gazette, July 11, 1771.
The rental of property within and immediately outside of the formal boundaries of the town was another matter. The available sources indicate that the practice of renting land locally did not begin until about 1770. It expanded quickly after that date and soon provided a considerable income for a few enterprising businessmen. Nine individuals rented land located in and around Alexandria to forty men in the period prior to American independence. Seven of the nine operated on a very modest level. They leased property to a total of nine men. None of the seven had more than two tenants. The remaining two landlords, Richard Arell [Arrell] and John Alexander, served the needs of the other thirty-one men. Expressed another way, Arell and Alexander together controlled 78% of the town rental business. Each of the two men made a considerable annual profit from the rental of real estate.

Arell followed the professions of merchant and ordinary-keeper. He first appeared in the county records in 1762 as an Alexandria merchant. In 1768 the county court authorized Arell to keep an ordinary in the town, a privilege that was regularly extended from year to year. He subsequently served from 1771 through 1773 as a Surveyor of the Road from Alexandria to Cameron Run. Apparently he and his wife Eleanor [Elaner] were childless.53

From 1762 on, Arell began to buy property in Alexandria. By the late 1760s he had started to sell as well as buy real

53The material used in this paragraph was taken from the Fairfax County Order Books, Minute Books, and Deed Books for the period 1762-1776.
estate. Although his sales of town property were intermittent and did not begin to equal his purchases, he continued both procedures down to the time of the Revolution. Most of Arell's profits in the area of land transactions derived from the rental, not the sale, of town property. Table 16 on the next page shows that his rental properties (lots 48, 53, 60, and 72) were extensive by the mid-1770s.

Richard Arell profited considerably from his land holdings. All indications are that each of the eleven men listed as renters in Table 16 continued to rent from Arell through the year 1776. In that year, their landlord earned $373.50. Using the standard conversion rate of six shillings Virginia currency to the dollar, Arell realized £112.1.0 in rents in 1776. 54 Expressed in a different fashion, the eleven sections leased by Arell returned an average annual rent of £10.3.7 to their owner.

John Alexander, Junior, a member of the planter aristocracy of Stafford County and a major owner of property in the vicinity of Alexandria, turned an even greater profit on the rental of his land. Although he did not hold office in Alexandria, his brother Gerard served as a town trustee from 1749 until his death in 1761. John Alexander and his wife Susanna had at least one child; their son Charles played an active role in

54 For the use of that exchange rate in Alexandria and its environs, see the Maryland Gazette, Nov. 24, 1768 and Jan. 5, 1769, and also the Fairfax County Deed Book, Liber M-I, Aug. 19, 1775, p. 187. Main, Social Structure of Revolutionary America, p. 289, gives the same rate of exchange. See also Albert F. Voke, "Accounting Methods of Colonial Merchants in Virginia," Journal of Accountancy, XLI (July, 1926), 4.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location of Property (Lot No.)</th>
<th>Renter</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Date Rental Commenced</th>
<th>Annual Rental Fee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>William Allison</td>
<td>Joiner</td>
<td>12-17-1773</td>
<td>$30.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Angel Couter</td>
<td>Butcher</td>
<td>6-16-1773</td>
<td>$25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Thomas Davis</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>4-3-1775</td>
<td>$74.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Philip Dawe</td>
<td>Silver and Copper Smith</td>
<td>5-16-1774</td>
<td>$17.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>George Gilpin</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>5-14-1772</td>
<td>$40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>John Hawn</td>
<td>Wheelwright</td>
<td>9-15-1775</td>
<td>$25.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Lawrence Hooff</td>
<td>Cartwright and Butcher</td>
<td>4-3-1775</td>
<td>$20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Martin McDermott</td>
<td>Shoemaker</td>
<td>4-3-1775</td>
<td>$24.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>James Rumsey</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>4-29-1772</td>
<td>$50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Benjamin Shreve</td>
<td>Hatter</td>
<td>12-17-1773</td>
<td>$50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>Lewis Weston</td>
<td>Ship Carpenter</td>
<td>4-3-1775</td>
<td>$18.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**                                                                 $373.50

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*Refers to the rental of only one section, not the entire lot.*

*Rent payable in silver dollars.*

**Source:** Fairfax County Deed Books, Libers K-1 (1772-1773), L-1 (1773-1774), and M-1 (1774-1777).
Fairfax County government during the Revolutionary period. Alexander was not always an easy man to get along with; in 1760 he destroyed a warrant issued against him by Justice of the Peace John Carlyle, for which he was ordered to give security of fifty pounds guaranteeing his good behavior for a year and a day.\(^55\)

It will be recalled that Alexander owned a block of land on the south and west sides of the property added to Alexandria in 1763. He demonstrated the instincts of a good businessman when he devised a method for developing this property that proved to be immensely profitable.

Alexander decided to rent his two strips of land that adjoined the town boundary. As Table 17 on the following page shows, in December, 1774, he leased thirteen one-half acre and four one-third acre lots to twenty townsmen. Alexander not only required the annual payment of a substantial rental fee; he also insisted in all but one case that the renter(s) build a house on his property. The stipulation in the rental agreement provided for the construction of a twenty square-foot house built of brick or stone or of a wooden frame. The house had to have at least one brick or stone chimney, and had to be completed within two years of the initial agreement. For his part, Alexander graciously agreed to extend

\(^{55}\)The material used in this paragraph was taken from the Fairfax County Order Books, Minute Books, and Deed Books for the period 1749-1776, and from Robert A. Rutland, ed., The Papers of George Mason, 1725-1792, 3 vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), I, xxx. For the destruction of the warrant, see the Fairfax County Minute Book, Pt. 2, Nov. 18, 1760, p. 533.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location of Propertya</th>
<th>Renter(s)</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Date Rental Commenced</th>
<th>Annual Rental Feeb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W. of Lot 106</td>
<td>Windser Brown and John Finley</td>
<td>Merchants</td>
<td>12-19-1774</td>
<td>£6.5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. of Lot 116</td>
<td>John Cannon</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>12-19-1774</td>
<td>£20.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. of Lot 102</td>
<td>William Carlin</td>
<td>Tailor</td>
<td>12-19-1774</td>
<td>£6.6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. of Lot 96</td>
<td>Jacob Cox</td>
<td>Tobacconist</td>
<td>12-19-1774</td>
<td>£10.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. of Lot 97</td>
<td>Thomas Davis</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>12-19-1774</td>
<td>£7.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. of Lots 94-95</td>
<td>John Fitzgerald, Valentine Peers,</td>
<td>Merchants</td>
<td>12-20-1774</td>
<td>£39.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Andrew Stewart, William Herbert</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. of Lot 104</td>
<td>John Hamilton</td>
<td>Joiner</td>
<td>12-19-1774</td>
<td>£6.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. of Lot 101</td>
<td>William Hartshorne</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>12-19-1774</td>
<td>£4.3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. of Lot 110</td>
<td>William McKnight</td>
<td>Cabinetmaker</td>
<td>12-19-1774</td>
<td>£9.5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. of Lot 102</td>
<td>William Munday, Sr.</td>
<td>Joiner, House Carpenter</td>
<td>12-19-1774</td>
<td>£3.0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. of Lot 112</td>
<td>Patrick Murray</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>12-20-1774</td>
<td>£13.5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. of Lot 108</td>
<td>James Parsons</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>12-19-1774</td>
<td>£9.15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. of Lot 99</td>
<td>Edward Ramsay</td>
<td>Joiner</td>
<td>12-19-1774</td>
<td>£3.11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. of Lot 98</td>
<td>John Saunders</td>
<td>Joiner, House Carpenter</td>
<td>12-19-1774</td>
<td>£4.15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. of Lot 100</td>
<td>Andrew Wailes [Wales]</td>
<td>Ordinary-keeper, Brewer</td>
<td>12-19-1774</td>
<td>£4.10.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 17-Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location of Property</th>
<th>Renter(s)</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Date Rental Commenced</th>
<th>Annual Rental Fee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W. of Lot 118</td>
<td>Peter Wiss</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>12-19-1774</td>
<td>£65.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>£154.11.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a* Refers to unnumbered lot adjacent to each lot indicated below.

*b* In every case except that of W. Hartshorne, the rental agreement included a provision that the renter(s) must build a house on the property (usually 20 square feet, and of brick, stone, or wood).

*c* Each of these lots was 1/3 acre in size.

*d* This amount represents the rental price of both lots.

*e* Only 2/3 of the tract indicated was rented.

the town streets in order to provide his tenants access to Alexandria.  

The income from his rental property more than compensated Alexander for his labor. In 1775 alone, his seventeen lots brought him a gross profit of £154.11.0. That averaged out at £9.1.9 per lot. On top of that income, his tenants were busy clearing his property and building houses on the lots. Of course, the houses remained on the premises when those who built them moved on.

It is difficult to find a better example than this of the sheer vitality of colonial Alexandria. With the exception of the property adjacent to lots ninety-four and ninety-five, Alexander's land was located in an area of only marginal desirability. Yet the townsmen quickly rented it at exorbitant cost when presented with the chance to do so. Although the pattern of high rental levels for real estate was duplicated in several of the largest colonial American urban centers, it was unique to Alexandria in the Potomac river basin.

One further point on the activities of Richard Arell and John Alexander deserves emphasis. Both men epitomized the growing business or entrepreneurial element in the colonial Chesapeake so capably described by Aubrey C. Land in two highly

56 For example, see the agreement between Alexander and Windser Brown and John Finley in the Fairfax County Deed Book, Liber M-1, Dec. 19, 1774, pp. 78-82.

57 These figures are derived from the material presented in Table 17.

58 On rental levels in other colonial urban centers, see Bridenbaugh, Cities in Revolt, pp. 225-27.
important articles. An ambitious man, Richard Arell realized that expanding his business operations was one path, albeit a risky one, to social and economic advancement. Equally ambitious, John Alexander found a perfect way to supplement his income as a planter. He not only realized a considerable sum through the rents he charged his tenants; he also added to the value of his property by requiring those leasing from him to improve his land within a stated period or leave. Both men shared two traits in common: a strong desire to add to their store of worldly goods, and the creativity to seek out novel ways to achieve that end.

The increasing value of real estate in and around Alexandria serves to emphasize the steady growth experienced by the town in its colonial period. In the earlier years of Alexandria’s expansion, a minimum of emphasis was placed on the development of its physical sector. This can be seen in the revocation of those laws requiring either the improvement or the forfeiture of town property. As more settlers relocated in the town, the climate of opinion began to change. Rents increased substantially, as did the prices of property placed on the

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61 For the _final_ legislation along these lines (in 1764), see McIlwaine and Kennedy, *Journals of the House of Burgesses*, X, 279, 284, 292, 295, 309; McIlwaine, *Legislative Journals of the Council*, III, 1330; and Hening, *Statutes at Large*, VIII, 49-51.

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market. By the end of the 1760s the pressure generated by the townspeople to make more land available for settlement had become intense. Responding to the change in sentiment, the trustees moved in a rather conservative fashion to solve the problem.

In a meeting held in February, 1770, the Board of Trustees noted that those owning land in the marsh area of the town had done nothing to drain their property. It instructed the owners to drain their lots within one year. It also informed them that the job would be completed by the town at their expense if they refused to comply with the order. Nine days after the first meeting the trustees moved the deadline up. They ordered the drainage of the marsh lands completed within three months.62

If one can judge by the action taken early in 1772 by the trustees, their earlier edicts accomplished nothing. In March, 1772, the trustees asked the House of Burgesses to pass legislation that would force the owners of lots situated in marshy areas of Alexandria to drain them at their own expense. The town leaders found a receptive audience in the lower house, which quickly drafted a bill to this effect. With the approval of the governor and his council, An act to encourage the further settlement of the town of Alexandria became law in April, 1772.63 The law dealt with the status of a

62 Proceedings of Alexandria Trustees, Feb. 7 and 16, 1770.
63 McIlwaine and Kennedy, Journals of the House of Burgesses, XII, 241, 280, 289, 295, 304, 310, 316; McIlwaine, Legislative Journals of the Council, III, 1471; Hening, Statutes at Large, VIII, 613-15.
wharf built at West Point in the town and with the drainage of marsh lots. With regard to the latter point, the statute noted that allowing the lots to remain undrained and unimproved undermined the health of the townsfolk and delayed the settlement and expansion of the town. It ordered the owners of the lots in question to bear the expense of draining them and to complete the job within two years. It warned that failure to comply with the law would result in forfeiture of the property.

A little more than two years had passed when in 1774 the trustees and inhabitants of Alexandria again petitioned the burgesses. They observed that the pressure of increased trade and population in the town had led to a shortage of housing. They then requested of the burgesses a bill that would increase the size of the town; that would require the drainage (again) and improvement of marsh lots; and that would compel the owners of unimproved lots to build on them in a "reasonable" time. After a long delay the burgesses referred the petition to their Committee of Propositions and Grievances, where it died.

The indifference with which these drainage laws were received is somewhat puzzling. Perhaps this reaction will make better sense if it is seen in a broader perspective. Writing a number of years ago, the greatest scholar in the field of colonial town government commented:

64McIlwaine and Kennedy, Journals of the House of Burgesses, XIII, 119.

65Ibid., 262-63.
Even in comparison with the notoriously lax conditions of the present day, the actual enforcement of the various [colonial town] by-laws and ordinances was ridiculously ineffective... Probably the majority of the by-laws in the majority of the towns were virtually unenforced after a year or two, except for occasional revivals.

The right of the trustees to govern was not questioned. However, obedience to the laws they enacted and/or attempted to enforce was another matter. As a result, the trustees and their subordinates were often unsuccessful in their attempts to obtain obedience to the law. Fortunately, Alexandria was so small, and the functions of town government so limited, that selective compliance with the laws did not seriously hinder the development of the town or gravely jeopardize the health and safety of its citizens.

III

In turning to the day-to-day work of overseeing municipal affairs in Alexandria, one is struck by the small number of men engaged in this activity. It was noted on page 42 that the only regularly staffed positions in the town were those of Ballast Master, Overseer of the Streets and Landings, and Town Clerk. Of the three, only the town clerk drew a salary. He earned an average of about thirteen shillings a year.67 The county and parish officials were responsible for maintaining order in Alexandria and caring for the town poor.

What might be referred to as "odd jobs" were handled by

66 Griffith, American City Government, p. 402.
67 Proceedings of Alexandria Trustees, 1749-1767, June 17, 1756.
individuals paid for their work with funds drawn ultimately from the town treasury. Thus Henry Gunnell, a member of the Fairfax County gentry, received nine shillings and seven-pence halfpenny for carrying a packet of documents to Winchester; nineteen shillings and onepence for the purchase of two and one-half gallons of rum and sugar used for a "treat at Summer's;" and twelve shillings and sixpence for rum and sugar consumed at a militia muster. The payments were made by the firm of John Carlyle and John Dalton, who acted on behalf of the town trustees. The trustees in turn reimbursed Carlyle and Dalton for these cash disbursements. Since we do not have a complete record of Carlyle and Dalton's payments for occasional services rendered to the town, it is not possible to measure the magnitude of these disbursements. However, it is safe to conclude that a substantial amount of money changed hands over the whole of the colonial period.

Of all the functions performed by the town administrators, the job of opening new streets and of keeping the existing ones clean and in good repair was undoubtedly the most difficult and time-consuming. Assigning this task to a group of Overseers of the Streets and Landings accorded well with

68 Although the payments were for services rendered in February, 1759, they are listed in the Proceedings of Alexandria Trustees, 1767-1780, in two entries dated Feb. 11 and 14, 1759.

69 This estimate is based on a reading of the accounts reproduced in Ibid., pp. 101 and 103.

70 That was true in many other early American urban centers as well. See Bridenbaugh, Cities in the Wilderness, pp. 152-58, and Wade, The Urban Frontier, pp. 83-84.
historical precedent. Colonial Virginians had drawn heavily on the system used in the mother country in establishing their own procedures for the construction and maintenance of roads.\textsuperscript{71} By 1705, the Virginia system had been clearly defined and would undergo only minor revisions for the rest of the colonial period.\textsuperscript{72}

The road legislation enacted in 1705 placed the responsibility for building and maintaining roads on the officials of the county courts. The justices of each county court were authorized to divide their county into road precincts. Each precinct would have a "surveyor of the highways," appointed annually by the court. The surveyor would be responsible for building and maintaining roads, bridges, and causeways within his precinct.\textsuperscript{73}

Naturally, the surveyor could not be expected to perform the work by himself. He was empowered to call upon the able-bodied workers of the precinct to work on the roads. On the request of the surveyor, the local parish vestry ordered the parish tithables to work upon road projects. The surveyor supervised the work gangs, who were required to contribute their time. Those who shirked their responsibilities were fined by the county court.\textsuperscript{74} Occasionally, projects such as

\textsuperscript{71}Roberts, "Roads of Virginia," is the standard source in this area; see pp. 16-17.
\textsuperscript{72}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 25-26.
\textsuperscript{73}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 17-19 and 26.
\textsuperscript{74}On the widespread use of compulsory labor on colonial roads, see Richard E. Morris, \textit{Government and Labor}, pp. 6-7 and 9, and Zuckerman, \textit{Peaceable Kingdoms}, p. 217.
larger bridges had to be undertaken that were beyond the capabilities of the road crews. In those cases the surveyors were authorized to contract with skilled workmen to do the job. The county bore the added expense through the initiation of a county levy.\textsuperscript{75}

It did not take long for the Fairfax County Court to decide that the new town of Alexandria called for a slight modification of the existing system. In 1753 it exempted the inhabitants of the town from their regular duty of assisting the local precinct surveyor. The town tithables were divided equally among the Overseers of the Streets and Landings in an effort to maintain Alexandria's thoroughfares.\textsuperscript{76}

If the presentments made by the Fairfax County Grand Jury are a reliable guide, the overseers and their work crews discharged their responsibility in mediocre fashion. In a typical example, the Grand Jury presented the town overseers to the county court in May, 1762, for not keeping the streets and landings adequately repaired.\textsuperscript{77} Presentments of this sort recurred periodically. However, fines for the nonperformance of one's duty in this area were infrequently levied. This suggests that the job was rarely done anywhere in a completely satisfactory manner. In fact, Alexandria would have been unique if she had possessed a set of unobstructed streets.

\textsuperscript{75}Roberts, "Roads of Virginia," pp. 18-19 and 26-27.

\textsuperscript{76}Fairfax County Order Book, 1753, p. 343; Proceedings of Alexandria Trustees, 1749-1767, May 30, 1763.

\textsuperscript{77}Fairfax County Minute Book, Pt. 2, May 19, 1762, p. 711. No evidence has survived regarding the composition of these work crews.
As a number of early American historians have noted, the roads of many other colonial towns and cities were often cluttered with debris.  

Part of the problem in this and other areas of public concern lay in the inadequate financial resources available to the town leaders. The trustees could occasionally afford to pay a man to dig a series of ditches along the streets, or to cut a road in the town. However, they lacked the funds necessary to improve and maintain their streets on an ongoing basis or to provide for paving and street lighting. They, the overseers, and the work gangs did about as well as could be expected under the circumstances.

Although the trustees were accorded the right to maintain their streets and wharves and to regulate the flow of traffic on them, supervision of the ferries serving the town was the prerogative of the colonial assembly and the county court. In 1702 the General Assembly designated itself the supervisory agency over all ferries operating in Virginia waters. It subsequently gave each of the county courts the power to


79 For examples, see the Proceedings of Alexandria Trustees, 1767-1780, 1754 (no day or month given), p. 101.

80 The problem of obtaining adequate operating funds was a major one for most colonial towns. See Griffith, American City Government, pp. 305 and 321; Bridenbaugh, Cities in Revolt, p. 219; and Land, "Economic Base and Social Structure," 643, and "Economic Behavior in a Planting Society," 483-84. On the rapid progress of street paving and lighting projects in the major colonial American cities during this period, see Bridenbaugh, Cities in Revolt, pp. 29-30, 238, and 241-43.
establish and regulate ferries during those periods in which the assembly was recessed. 81

By mid-century the Potomac was well-serviced by ferries. One scholar has identified fifteen of these watercraft working the river by 1748. 82 As one of the stops on the Post Road, Alexandria always enjoyed the luxury of a regular transportation link across the river to Maryland. It took an hour to cross the mile and one-half wide Potomac where it separated the two colonies at Alexandria. 83 For at least part of the period before the Revolution ferries originating in both Virginia and Maryland served the town. 84 Complaints were occasionally registered that the ferrymen charged too much and worked too little, but on the whole the river facilities seem to have been satisfactory. 85

Alexandria was preeminently a commercial town oriented toward collecting, shipping, receiving and distributing material transported by ocean-going vessels. Given this fact,


82 Evans, Notes on Shipbuilding and Shipping, p. 41.


84 Maryland Gazette, Aug. 18, 1768; Virginia Gazette (Rind and Pinkney) June 1, 1775.

85 Maryland Gazette, Aug. 18, 1768.
the erection and maintenance of a set of wharves there was an absolute necessity. The town leaders would undoubtedly have preferred that the larger mercantile firms doing business in Alexandria build their own private wharves. As it turned out, the trustees offered major incentives in an effort to achieve this goal. Unfortunately for them, a pair of public wharves was also necessary. The board's willingness to appropriate large sums in order to complete these wharves is a good indication of the importance attached to developing the commerce of the town. 86

By the early 1750s Alexandria had a public landing but it lacked a wharf. Concerned by this shortcoming, the county court ordered Hugh West, Senior, the Tobacco Inspector for the town's public warehouse, to build one. After repeating their order several times to no avail, they gave the job to four prominent Alexandrians. The wharf, located at West Point, was completed sometime in the 1750s. The county appropriated twenty-two thousand pounds of tobacco to cover its cost. 87 In March, 1759, the House of Burgesses ordered that the tobacco be refunded to its original owners and that the wharf be paid for and maintained with funds derived from a series of wharfage fees. The burgesses also directed the town trustees to collect the fees and oversee their

86 Alexandria was not unique in this regard. See Wade, "Urban Life in Western America," 20, and The Urban Frontier, p. 79, and also Warner, The Private City, pp. 99 and 207.

87 Fairfax County Order Book, Jan. 1, 1752, p. 182; May 18 and 19, 1753, pp. 368 and 373; and Nov. 20, 1754, pp. 164-65.
The trustees followed the burgesses' instructions and maintained the public wharf at West Point throughout the 1760s. Early in the decade they agreed with Thomas Fleming, a shipbuilder and shipfitter who would later become a trustee, on an addition to the wharf. Fleming contracted to widen it twenty-six feet and to keep the wharf in good repair for seven years. He earned one hundred pounds for his services.

The West Point wharf must have taken quite a beating during those years. By 1772 it was described as being "in a ruinous condition, occasioned chiefly by ships and other vessels heaving down by and mooring at the said wharf; . . . ." In the same year the Alexandria trustees forwarded a petition concerning the wharf to the House of Burgesses. They asked that it be vested in the trustees and that they be allowed to tax those vessels mooring there. They noted that they would not tax any ships carrying tobacco from the public warehouse. Legislation to this effect was passed soon thereafter. The wharf was vested in the trustees; they were given the power to tax shipping using it, excepting only

88 McIlwaine and Kennedy, Journals of the House of Burgesses, IX, 93 and 99.


90 Hening, Statutes at Large, VIII, 615.

91 McIlwaine and Kennedy, Journals of the House of Burgesses, XII, 242.
"country craft" and those vessels carrying tobacco to or away from the public warehouse; the money derived from the tax was to be used to repair and enlarge the wharf; and the citizenry were to be exempted from any future levies required for the wharf. The trustees subsequently established a sliding scale of wharf fees that encouraged vessels using the facility to load and unload as quickly as possible.

The heavy volume of shipping entering and clearing the port eventually led the trustees to construct a second public wharf at the south end of the bay. It was not long before the Point Lumley wharf, which paralleled a county wharf, was reported to be dilapidated. Following a petition to the burgesses, the trustees were authorized to join the two wharves and repair them. This was to be accomplished by following the same guidelines established for the West Point wharf renovation project. Completed by the end of 1773, the job cost one hundred and fifty pounds.

The town records also indicate that two private wharves were built during the colonial period at the owners' expense. The firm of Carlyle and Dalton obtained permission to build a wharf at the foot of Cameron Street in 1759. The trustees waived the customary tax levied on projects of this sort, on the condition that the town be allowed the use of half of the

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92 Ibid., 273; Hening, Statutes at Large, VIII, 613-15.
94 Ibid., Mar. 1 and Nov. 6, 1771; July 17, 1773; and an entry on p. 105 dated only 1773.
landing. Several years later John and Thomas Kirkpatrick received the board's approval for a warehouse and wharf they wanted to build just north of Queen Street. The trustees decided to tax the two men the nominal sum of five shillings a year for these improvements and to give them a ninety-nine year lease. The two wharves thus provided virtually no direct income to the board, but they did enhance the town's port facilities.

In addition to the fees derived from those vessels using the public wharves (and although we have no record of the amounts raised, it is likely they were used entirely to maintain the docks), the town also profited from the construction of a public warehouse. The firm of Carlyle and Dalton arranged for the building of the warehouse, which was completed by the beginning of 1761. Located on Point Lumley, it cost the town £271.9.0 to build and required an extra £7.13.5 in repairs eleven years later. Andrew Wales and at least one other man of undetermined identity rented it in the years before the Revolution. Together, they paid the town at least £260.7.0 in rental fees. The total amount paid in rent was almost surely much higher than this figure. However, the figure indicated is the only amount we can actually verify from the sources. Renting the warehouse was

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95 Proceedings of Alexandria Trustees, 1749-1767, July 18, 1759 (Carlyle and Dalton), and Dec. 10, 1766 (the Kirkpatricks). There is no way to gauge the quality of either the public or the private wharves.

96 Ibid., Feb. 2 and 10, 1761; Apr. 4, 1767; Proceedings of Alexandria Trustees, 1767-1780, Jan. 5, 1772.
not inexpensive. Andrew Wales paid thirty-five pounds a year for that privilege in the period from 1768 to 1774.\textsuperscript{97} The public warehouse was probably both a sound investment for the town and one that more then paid for itself in the years leading up to independence.

In these decisions, as in all their deliberations, the trustees decided as a group on the course of action most likely to benefit the town. The give and take of debate, the arguments that occasionally arise when a group is discussing a controversial question of policy, and the routine differences of opinion that sometimes occur are not even alluded to in the trustees' proceedings. Their records are strongly reminiscent of those kept in the "peaceable kingdoms" of prerevolutionary New England that were so ably analyzed by Michael Zuckerman.\textsuperscript{98} If their decisions were indeed arrived at in a spirit of concord, they were occasionally received in a spirit of ill grace by those being governed. To illustrate this point, and to indicate the self-serving manner in which the trustees sometimes operated, an incident that occurred in the late summer of 1760 is worth noting.

As the trustees' record tells the story, a "dispute" over a question of public access arose in the town. Specifically, the owners of lots thirty-one (Gerard [Garrard] Alexander), thirty-six (John Dalton), forty-one (John Carlyle),

\textsuperscript{97}Proceedings of Alexandria Trustees, 1767-1780, Dec. 24, 1768; Oct. 19, 1769; Mar. 1 and Nov. 29, 1771; Nov. 27, 1772; Mar. 30 and Dec. 2, 1773.

\textsuperscript{98}Zuckerman, \textit{Peaceable Kingdoms}, especially pp. 65, 67-69, and 185-86.
and forty-six (William Ramsay) claimed the right to build warehouses directly in front of their river-front lots and to extend their property on out into the Potomac. Thus, they insisted that they had the right to block public access to Water Street, which lay in theory between their lots and the river. Their opponents, whose identities are not known, argued that no one had the right to close off free access to the street.99

The dispute was quickly settled when the board ruled that the four lot owners had "the benefit of extending the said Lotts into the River as far as they shall think proper without any obstruction from . . . Water Street." The seven trustees who made that ruling were Gerard Alexander, John Dalton, John Carlyle, William Ramsay, George Johnston, John Hunter, and Robert Adam.100

If that seems a little high-handed, the trustees were ordinarily more careful to avoid conflicts of interest. Illustrative of this point is a board meeting held in April, 1767, and attended by eight trustees. Three of the eight produced claims against the town for various services rendered. The amounts involved came to £63.19.17½. The board prudently decided to postpone approval of the claims until the next meeting, since too few disinterested trustees were in attendance.101

100 Ibid.
101 Ibid., Apr. 4, 1767.
Although the board members sometimes confused the public interest with their own, they did sustain an effort to protect the health and safety of their fellow townspeople. For all their work, the trustees were generally ineffective in these areas. Luckily, the problems they faced were rarely serious enough to pose a substantial threat to the people of Alexandria.

Other than epidemics, the greatest peril faced by Alexandrians was the scourge of fire. Fire constituted an especially grave problem in built-up areas, and its hazards had long been recognized in the urban settlements in America. As early as 1648 a substantial fine was levied on those citizens of New Amsterdam who insisted on building their chimneys of wood or plaster. By the 1740s a series of comprehensive fire codes had been enacted by the governing bodies of all of the large cities of British North America. The codes, which borrowed heavily from their European counterparts, did not eliminate entirely the disastrous fires which periodically swept through American towns and cities. However, in those centers in which the codes were carefully drafted and strictly enforced, the menace of fire gradually diminished.

The importance of fire codes and the need to enforce

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102 Duffy, Public Health in New York City, p. 12. See also pp. 12-13 for a comprehensive fire ordinance enacted there in 1657.

103 Bridenbaugh, Cities in the Wilderness, pp. 55-61, 367, and 472, and Cities in Revolt, pp. 98-105, and 292-96, are masterful surveys of this topic.
them was understood in the colonial Chesapeake. Yet one gains the impression that the existing codes were generally adhered to only during and immediately after times of crisis. Alexandria is a case in point. The legislation founding the town clearly forbade the use of wooden chimneys. Only six years had passed before the trustees felt compelled to order the owners of all houses and shops possessing wooden chimneys to replace the latter immediately with ones constructed of brick or stone. They threatened to call the sheriff in to pull down the illegal chimneys if the necessary alterations were not completed quickly. Occasionally thereafter the trustees had to caution (and sometimes threaten) the owners of low, dangerous, or improperly constructed chimneys. Their vigilance in this area would undoubtedly have been greater had their town experienced a major fire in the years before the Revolution. Happily, it did not.

Although not as serious a menace as that of fire, pigs and other stray animals roaming the town streets remained a nuisance throughout the colonial period. Again, the problem was anticipated in the founding legislation which required that all hogs kept within the town limits be penned. The


106 Proceedings of Alexandria Trustees, 1767-1780, Feb. 16, 1770; Nov. 29, 1771.
General Assembly had a wealth of historical precedent on which to draw in this area. Animals wandering through the streets of colonial towns and villages had been the subject of an abundance of legislation, most of it ineffective.\(^{107}\)

In its efforts to solve the problem of stray animals, Alexandria conformed to the same pattern established by its contemporaries. In short, the town fathers proved totally unable to control the animals that wandered at random through the streets. Orders, threats, pleas, petitions—all were issued in vain.\(^{108}\) The situation remained unchanged through the end of the colonial period.

Although stray animals cluttering the roads irritated many of the townspeople, the emotions they elicited paled in comparison with the terror that accompanied the periodic regional outbreaks of typhoid or smallpox. Alexandria was a reasonably clean town. A comment made in 1755 notwithstanding, its citizens also enjoyed an abundant supply of wholesome water.\(^{109}\) Perhaps it was for these reasons, along with its relatively small population, that the town was not afflicted as often as its larger contemporaries by the epidemics so

\(^{107}\) Berkley, "Port of Dumfries," 105-6; Bridenbaugh, Cities in the Wilderness, p. 19, and Cities in Revolt, p. 32; Carr, "Metropolis of Maryland," 133; Duffy, Public Health in New York City, pp. 10-12, 29, 47, 49; Riley, "Suburban Development of Yorktown," 535-36.


\(^{109}\) In that year someone advised General Braddock that the town water "was very unwholesome." Morton, Colonial Virginia, II, p. 666.
common in the eighteenth century. However, it did not escape them altogether.

Although epidemic diseases such as smallpox, yellow fever, and typhoid aroused the greatest degree of concern in colonial American towns, endemic diseases such as dysentery and tuberculosis were much more deadly. Smallpox had a special reputation as a killer, and its control was a major priority in every colonial town. The bitter controversy that followed the use in 1721 of inoculation, or variolation, in an attempt to check the spread of smallpox in Boston is well known.

The fact that inoculation for smallpox gradually gained acceptance in the American colonies should not be allowed to obscure the violent resistance that ordinarily accompanied its use. It was commonly held that inoculation spread the disease, and that was reason enough for many Americans to try to restrict the practice or eliminate it altogether. Marylanders were much more tolerant of the technique than most of their colonial neighbors. By the early 1770s inoculation was generally accepted and, if the newspaper entries advertising


111 Blake, Public Health in the Town of Boston, pp. 52-73, is an excellent account of the controversy.

the services of doctors using the procedure are any guide, widely used in Maryland.\textsuperscript{113}

Perhaps because inoculation was believed to spread the disease, or possibly because each of the several forms of inoculation was potentially lethal, most Virginians looked askance at the procedure. Prior to 1770 a few inoculations had been performed in the colony. However, in June of that year the General Assembly effectively ended the practice when it passed legislation severely penalizing anyone importing variolous matter with the intention of inoculating others.\textsuperscript{114} Thus, the citizens of Alexandria were restricted in their use of the inoculation technique when the only recorded smallpox epidemic to strike the colonial town materialized in 1773.

Judging by the few scraps of evidence concerning this episode that have survived, the epidemic struck the town with devastating force. Early that summer the Fairfax County Court gave John Carlyle, William Ramsay, and Robert Adam a free hand in fighting the outbreak. The court even permitted them to license individuals to practice inoculation within Alexandria. Apparently the time for preventive measures had largely passed when that decision was made. Harry Piper reported that autumn on the progress of the epidemic. He wrote that "we have been remarkably sickly for some time, \&

\textsuperscript{113}See the Maryland Gazette, Oct. 8, 1767; Mar. 28, 1771 (two different individuals); Mar. 17, 1774; and the Pennsylvania Gazette, Mar. 14, 1771.

\textsuperscript{114}Blanton, Medicine in Virginia, pp. 61-62.
indeed it still continues, many in this Town have Died....)
Although he had not contracted smallpox, he remarked that he had nevertheless been gravely ill with his "old complaint, the Bilious Cholic."115

Piper and his fellow Alexandrians were acutely aware of the killing power of virulent diseases. Although the smallpox epidemic of 1773 apparently decimated the town, an outbreak of typhoid that occurred several years earlier was, luckily, contained. Naturally, it left the townspeople badly shaken.

The episode began on August 28, 1767, when the ship Ruby arrived in Alexandria with a consignment of 133 indentured servants. Harry Piper, who was consigned the shipment by the firm of Dixon and Littledale, found the cargo to be "in general very healthy." The servants sold quickly; the last was purchased on September 14. The trouble started soon thereafter. As Piper tells the story, several of the seamen contracted "jail fever," as typhoid was then called.116 Piper does not indicate whether they recovered. The next to fall ill with the disease was the Ruby's captain, Mr. Smith. The Alexandrians were so frightened by this time that Piper decided to use several of the ship's crew to nurse the captain. We do not know if Captain Smith or any of his crew died, but the fear that pervades Piper's correspondence can

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116 Blanton, Medicine in Virginia, p. 51.
almost be felt. Though Alexandria's citizens might not have agreed, their town was quite lucky to have experienced as few epidemics as it did during the colonial period.

Maintaining order in early Alexandria certainly never became a major problem. While the Potomac town had its share of crime in the years before the Revolution, violence rarely played a part in the offenses committed there. Indeed, the incidence of crime seems low when one recalls that Alexandria was a major commercial center through which a significant transient population passed each year. It appears that the factor primarily responsible for the relatively high degree of order in Alexandria was its limited population, a point which was discussed earlier in this chapter.

In contrast with many of the larger colonial cities which had their own municipal peace officers and courts, Alexandria had neither a local police force nor an autonomous court. The Fairfax County Court bore ultimate responsibility for keeping the peace throughout the county and for trying and punishing lawbreakers. The county justices arranged for the repair, cleaning, and staffing of the county court and jail facilities. The expenses incurred in these areas were met by the county levy imposed annually on all

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117 This episode is related in two letters written by Piper to Dixon and Littledale; see the Piper Letter Book, Sept. 14 and Oct. 24, 1767.

The county sheriff was directly responsible for maintaining order in the county, for overseeing the operations of the county jail, and for bringing lawbreakers to justice. Burdened with a difficult job, he was assisted in Fairfax County by several constables. Appointed by the county court, the latter had coordinate power with the sheriff in several areas as well as special authority of their own. Paid in fees, the constables were given a number of responsibilities. Probably the most important of these was the duty of preventing disturbances of any kind. It transpired that the constables were the busiest of the various peace officers working in colonial Alexandria. Finally, the county court also paid a large number of men "for patrolling" in the county. In times of stress, as in the French and Indian War, as many as a dozen men would be retained for this duty. Individuals thus engaged do not seem to have been involved in keeping the peace in Alexandria.

It was observed earlier that the county court and prison facilities were transferred to Alexandria in 1753. The old prison was inadequate and, if the protests routinely entered by the county sheriffs are any indication, so was the new one. Between 1749 and 1761 six newly appointed Fairfax County sheriffs repeated virtually identical statements.

119 Flippin, Royal Government in Virginia, pp. 312-17 (the office of sheriff) and 318-19 (the office of constable).

120 For example, see the Fairfax County Minute Book, Oct. 20, 1756, p. 39.
As the incoming sheriff put it in 1755, "Charles Broadwater Gent. sheriff protests against all damages which may happen by occasion of the Insufficiency of the Prison." 121

The Fairfax Justices of the Peace were well aware of the inadequacies of the county jail and endeavored continually to remedy its defects. The jail, which consisted after 1763 of a two story brick building with a floor measuring twenty by thirty-six feet, and its accompanying facilities were repaired and enlarged a number of times between 1753 and 1770. 122 The repairs certainly did not render the facility escape-proof: prisoners broke out of the jail at least five times between 1753 and the Revolution. 123 The jail located in Alexandria was neither more nor less secure than its counterparts in the other regions of the American colonies. Colonial jails were notably flimsy structures, and escapes from them occurred regularly. 124

121 Fairfax County Order Book, Sept. 17, 1755, p. 408. For the other statements see the same source, June 21, 1749, p. 20; May 24, 1753, p. 400; Oct. 17, 1753, p. 468; and the Fairfax County Minute Book, Pt. 1, Sept. 19, 1759, p. 417; and Pt. 2, Sept. 18, 1761, p. 650.

122 See the Fairfax County Order Book, Aug. 23, 1753, p. 443; Feb. 21, 1769, p. 86; Apr. 16, 1770, p. 5; May 22, 1770, p. 26; June 19, 1770, p. 43; the Fairfax County Minute Book, Pt. 2, June 18, 1761, p. 609; and the Maryland Gazette, Oct. 20, 1763.

123 See the Fairfax County Order Book, Oct. 11, 1753, p. 468; the Fairfax County Minute Book, Pt. 2, Mar. 15, 1753, p. 824; the Virginia Gazette (Rind) June 20, 1771; and the Maryland Gazette, Aug. 9, 1764 and July 18, 1771.

from the beginning of 1755 through 1760 the Maryland Gazette recorded fourteen escapes from the jails of the two Chesapeake colonies.¹²⁵

The underlying problem lay in the function the colonial jail was designed to fulfill. The Virginia act passed in 1684 requiring that "a good strong and substantial prison, after the forme of Virginia houseing be built, and continued in each county" was not enacted with the intention of creating a series of sturdy jails designed to house prisoners over extended periods.¹²⁶ Constructed similar to, but more substantial than, the average house, Virginia jails were erected for the purpose of detaining those "caught up in the process of judgment."¹²⁷ Consequently, in Virginia as elsewhere in the colonies it seemed wasteful to build elaborate, escape-proof structures.

Ordinarily the colonial authorities either fined or physically punished those unfortunate enough to wind up on the wrong side of the law.¹²⁸ When the Fairfax County Court found Hubbard Prince guilty of forcibly removing Jacob Dogeth from the county jail and whipping him, it ordered Prince to

¹²⁵Maryland Gazette, Jan. 2, Jan. 30, May 29 (two escapes) and Sept. 25, 1755; Aug. 26, 1756; Oct. 27, 1757; Mar. 9, July 13, Aug. 17, and Aug. 24, 1758; Jan. 3, June 12, and Oct. 23, 1760.

¹²⁶Hening, Statutes at Large, III, 14-16.

¹²⁷Rothman, Discovery of the Asylum, pp. 48, 52-53, and 55.

deposit a twenty pound bond with the court and to find two men who would each provide ten pound bonds for security. The bonds would be held for a year and a day; if Prince's behavior was deemed satisfactory during that period, they would then be returned. The punishment was virtually identical when the court convicted Elenor Flax of stealing a child's shift and several other items from William Ramsay. The justices set her personal security at fifty pounds and also required her to find someone who would provide a twenty-five pound bond insuring her good behavior. The probationary period remained a year and a day.\(^{129}\)

Although those who broke the law in Alexandria could usually expect either to be fined or to be required to post a bond for their good behavior (which was a fine in itself, of course), the Fairfax justices could be much more severe in their sentences. When William Edges, a convict servant owned jointly by John Carlyle and John Dalton, was convicted of receiving a sheep from a slave owned by John Alexander, he was given thirty-nine lashes on his bare back at the public whipping post near the jail. Apparently Edges threatened Alexander immediately after the whipping, because the next day Alexander appeared before the court and "demanded Security of the peace of William Edges." The court ordered Edges to find two individuals who were each willing to post a ten pound bond guaranteeing his good behavior for the usual

\(^{129}\)Fairfax County Order Book, May 21, 1771, p. 213 (Prince); Fairfax County Minute Book, Pt. 2, July 23, 1761, p. 630 (Flax).
period.  

Given the hit-or-miss nature of law enforcement in those days, criminals often escaped before they could be arrested. Horses were a favorite target of quick-witted thieves in Alexandria because of their value and transportability. The available evidence indicates that, once stolen, a horse was rarely recovered. James Connell, an Alexandria citizen, suggests one reason why this was so in an advertisement he placed offering a five pound reward for the return of his gray horse. "The thief," Connell observed, "was seen to take him away in the Day time, and was seen after a considerable Way on the Road to Lancaster, in Pennsylvania. He is an ill-looking tall young Fellow. . . ."  

Although there were probably no murders committed in the colonial town, there may have been two exceptions. First, on April 10, 1769, the body of a white man who had been murdered was found floating in the Potomac just offshore of Alexandria.  

Second, a so-called slave conspiracy in 1767 allegedly resulted in the poisoning of several white men. The latter incident was discussed in the second chapter on pages ninety-six and ninety-seven.  

130 Fairfax County Order Book, Aug. 19 and 20, 1771, pp. 234 and 236.  

131 Pennsylvania Gazette, Sept. 6, 1759. For other examples of horse theft in Alexandria, see the Maryland Gazette, Sept. 19, 1771, and the Virginia Gazette (Rind), July 12, 1770 and Sept. 26, 1771.  

132 Virginia Gazette (Purdie and Dixon), Apr. 27, 1769; the Virginia Gazette (Rind), Apr. 27, 1769, gives April 14 as the date of discovery.
Lesser violations of the law heavily outnumbered the more serious crimes committed in Alexandria. Drunkenness, gambling, selling liquor without a license, behaving ill, and swearing profanely were irritants with which the authorities simply had to cope as best they could. The following set of presentments by the Fairfax County Grand Jury on May 20, 1772 is representative of the range and number of minor offenses committed by the townspeople:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Offense</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philip Daws</td>
<td>selling rum without a license</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Latimer</td>
<td>drunk on Sunday May 17th and behaving ill on that day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen Latimer</td>
<td>drunk on Sunday May 17th and &quot;swearing profanely four times by God&quot; in the last two months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Lyons</td>
<td>drunk on Sunday May 17th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Marvill</td>
<td>drunk on May 17th and 19th and behaving ill on both days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah Perry</td>
<td>keeping a disorderly house and being a nuisance in her neighborhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Ward</td>
<td>selling spirituous liquor without a license</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strangely, these cases were never disposed of in subsequent county court meetings. Incidentally, forty-two presentments in all were made by the grand jury on the same day.

Although crime did increase gradually as the town grew, the maintenance of order in colonial Alexandria was never a serious problem. Crime was an irritant that was never

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133 Fairfax County Order Book, May 20, 1772, pp. 41-43. The grand jury normally met semiannually in May and November.

134 See p. 81 for two comments by Harry Piper on the level of crime in the colonial town and on an instance of counterfeiting there.
allowed to interfere with the tasks of making money and living as graciously as possible.

In many ways life in Alexandria accurately reflected the prevailing social order in Virginia. The decisions of the town trustees, who were drawn from the upper levels of Fairfax society, were rarely challenged by a citizenry living within the confines of a deferential society. In governing the town, the trustees were as reluctant as any rural vestry to share their power. In fact, they virtually monopolized the various administrative positions that made up town government.

In a community sustained by commerce, it is not surprising to find heavy mercantile representation on the Board of Trustees. Although members of the planter class also enjoyed substantial representation on the board, they became less important in town governance with the passage of time. However, this did not signal the beginning of discord between the ruling classes of Alexandria. Both planters and merchants realized the primacy of commercial activity in the life of the town, and both groups shared many of the same values.

Alexandria's growth was rapid and its prospects must have seemed limitless to those living there on the eve of the Revolution. Its townspeople had to contend with the sort of problems endemic to all colonial towns: fire, street cleaning, stray animals, and so on. The trustees were never able to devise satisfactory solutions to these difficulties, but Alexandria's limited size helped to make
the situation less threatening.

Alexandria's size seems also to have been an important factor in making it a relatively peaceful and harmonious community. The intimate, face-to-face relationships that were possible in the early town probably served to moderate the amount of unlawful and disorderly activity found there. The fact that Fairfax County, which surrounded the town on three sides, had very little serious crime undoubtedly contributed to the tranquility characteristic of colonial Alexandria.
CHAPTER V

THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
OF COLONIAL ALEXANDRIA

The nature and evolution of social and cultural activity within early Alexandria reveal many traditional aspects of Virginia society. In a number of cases the existing social institutions of colonial Virginia, such as the Anglican parish vestry, were adopted to provide for the inhabitants of the new town. The social and cultural development of the Potomac community can most effectively be understood in the broader context of colonial Virginia society.

Jacob Price has expounded a thesis regarding the social growth of early American port towns that is relevant at this point.¹ Price notes that the location away from a port town of the decision-making center for its trades would probably render that center little more than a shipping point. Price concludes that this would in turn have the effect of limiting the development of service activities within the town. Although it is probable that the presence of a sizable community of true merchants would have brought an expansion of the range of service activities available in Alexandria, it is difficult to assess the precise importance of this factor in

¹Price, "Growth of American Port Towns." His conclusions are discussed above on pages 60-62.
the growth of the Potomac town. In any case, the influence of the social and cultural institutions of colonial Virginia seems to have been decisive in shaping the nature, if not the extent, of this aspect of life in early Alexandria.

Even the most cursory examination reveals the presence of a diverse cultural and social order in colonial Alexandria. The Anglican and Presbyterian churches were the focal points of society within the community, and the former was responsible for a wide range of what might be termed social service activities. By the eve of the Revolution the town had developed a limited offering of formal educational opportunities for its more favored inhabitants. Horse-racing was a popular form of amusement for the town's inhabitants, and lotteries were organized to raise badly-needed revenues for various town projects. The number of ordinaries licensed to operate within the community increased gradually, underscoring Alexandria's role as a leading commercial and social center. Finally, local voluntary organizations, which were beginning to appear at the end of the colonial period, testify to the growing maturity of the Potomac settlement.

Social life in Alexandria centered on the town churches. Although the Anglican and Presbyterian houses of worship had to compete with secular amusements, they were not seriously challenged in the colonial period as the focal points of community life. This was due not only to the fact that

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2This was true of early American towns in general; see Smith, As A City Upon A Hill, p. 157, and Bridenbaugh,
religious and social impulses drew the townspeople to the churches; it was also a result of the comparatively limited number of secular amusements available to Alexandrians. The special importance of the Anglican church in community life was a product of the vital role it played in local affairs. Indeed, life in early Alexandria would have been both harsher and more impersonal without the mellowing influence of the local parish of the Church of England.

Since the Anglican faith was the established religion in Virginia, new territory in the colony was quickly divided into parishes. So it was that in 1732 Truro Parish joined the already-existing Hamilton Parish in Prince William County. When the General Assembly divided Prince William County in 1742, the boundaries of the newly created Fairfax County and Truro Parish coincided exactly. That arrangement prevailed until 1765, when Fairfax Parish was formed from a part of Truro Parish. Alexandria lay entirely within the boundaries of the new parish, which also included the northern and eastern sections of the county.\(^3\)

Alexandria may have acquired the governmental facilities of Fairfax County at an early date, but many years passed before a church was built in the town. Church services probably began there in 1753 when the Truro Parish

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\(^3\) Slaughter, History of Truro Parish, pp. 2-3, 17, and 37-42; Hening, Statutes at Large, VIII, 157 (this is the act establishing the boundaries of Truro and Fairfax Parishes); Cappon, Atlas of Early American History, p. 39, "Religious Congregations in Virginia 1775."
vestry ordered the parish minister, the Reverend Charles Green, to preach every third Sunday in the town. This arrangement lasted well into the 1760s when the vestry of the newly-formed Fairfax Parish opted for a more permanent arrangement.

At that point (early in 1766) the new parish had two churches. The Little Falls Church was established at the Falls of the Potomac while the location of the Lower Church is not known today. The vestry decided to build two new churches, one beside the Little Falls Church and the other in Alexandria. In a meeting held in mid-November 1766, the parish vestry ordered the churchwardens to ask for bids on the two churches to be built. They specified that each was to include 2400 square feet of floor space, to have galleries, and to be constructed of brick. James Wren contracted to build the church at the Falls of the Potomac and James Parsons undertook the construction of the building that subsequently was named Christ Church. Each man was to be advanced two hundred pounds to proceed with the projects, but both were required to post bonds guaranteeing the completion of the work.

Several years went by, and still the church in Alexandria remained uncompleted. Finally, with its patience

4 Slaughter, History of Truro Parish, p. 30.


completely exhausted, the Fairfax vestry summoned Parsons. It offered to pay all of the expenses he had incurred to that point in exchange for his agreeing to terminate the contract. He refused but they insisted. In late May of 1772 the existing contract was broken and the vestry asked for bids to complete the church. Parsons and John Carlyle jointly won the bidding, earning £220 for finishing Christ Church early the following year.7

In the fall of 1774 John Alexander, Junior, a Stafford County planter (see pages 199 and 201 and Table 17 on pages 202-3), donated to the parish the one acre tract on which the church was built. By that time a two-story vestry house had been completed and a glebe house measuring twenty-eight by forty-two feet was almost ready for the parish minister.8 The Rev. Charles Green of Truro Parish held services in the town from 1753 until his death in 1765. His successor in the parish was the Rev. Lee Massey. The first minister of Christ Church, Fairfax Parish was the Rev. Townshend Dade, who served from 1765 until his resignation in 1777.9

Given the large numbers of Scots resident in Alexandria, it was only natural that Presbyterianism would be well

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8 Fairfax County Deed Book, Liber M-1, Oct. 10, 1774, pp. 35-37 (the Alexander gift); Fairfax Parish Vestry Book, Mar. 17, 1766, pp. 4-5, and Sept. 26, 1771, p. 32 (the vestry house), Mar. 15, 1773, p. 42, and June 16, 1775, p. 52 (the glebe house).
established there. Although very little is known about the Presbyterian services held in the town before the mid-1770s, it is apparent that the members of this faith met in a number of temporary locations to celebrate the sabbath. Prior to the early 1770s the Rev. David Thom, a native Scotsman, ministered to the needs of the congregation. Upon his death in 1772 his place was taken by his son William, who died the following year. From 1773 until 1780, when the Rev. Isaac Stockton Keith was installed, the Presbyterian congregation in Alexandria was without a permanent minister.

In light of the strong Scottish presence in the town, it is a little surprising that no formal attempt was made to build a Presbyterian meeting house there until 1774. In July of that year Richard Arell, a town ordinary-keeper (see pages 198-99 and Table 16 on page 200), sold to the incumbent Presbyterian minister and his successors a half acre of town land. The land, situated on lots ninety and ninety-one, was sold for one shilling sterling with the stipulation that a Presbyterian church be erected there. Arell's stipulation was assented to, but the meeting house was certainly not completed until the latter half of 1775 or even later.

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12 Fairfax County Deed Book, Liber L-1, July 12, 1774, pp. 215-17.

13 Maryland Gazette, May 11, 1775. Two sources give
By that time (1775), the Presbyterian congregation in Alexandria was one of ninety-five situated in the colony. ¹⁴

The surviving evidence indicates that the Great Awakening, which was strongly felt in many areas of Virginia in the late colonial period, had no immediate effect on the religious life of the town. This finding is in accord with the conclusion reached by William B. McGroarty. ¹⁵ Although Presbyterians may not have been the only religious dissenters living in colonial Alexandria, we have no evidence that dissenters of other faiths resided there.

It was noted above that the Anglican church played a particularly important role in local affairs. Each of the parishes scattered throughout the colony had its own vestry, a group of twelve of the most important men of the region. While the freeholders of the parish elected the initial group of vestrymen, vacancies on that body were filled co-optively. ¹⁶ Each year the minister and the vestry chose two churchwardens from among the vestry membership. The churchwardens functioned as a sort of executive arm of the vestry,


¹⁶ Hening, Statutes at Large, II, 44-45; Bridenbaugh, Seat of Empire, p. 12.
administering the business of the parish and presenting cases requiring the attention of the vestry. Although the vestrymen donated their time, their responsibilities were not small. They were charged with seeing to the moral, spiritual, and physical well-being of all those resident within their jurisdiction. Thus, they appointed and dismissed the parish minister, levied and collected parish tithes, administered the poor laws, investigated cases of immoral behavior and disorder, and supervised the charitable affairs of the parish. Although their responsibilities in certain areas, such as presenting to the county court those accused of violating the moral laws, tended to diminish as the eighteenth century progressed, the vestrymen and the churchwardens had a crucial role in regulating parish affairs.

The vestrymen and churchwardens of Truro and, later, Fairfax parishes were occasionally required to bind out poor, illegitimate, and orphan children so that the latter would not become a burden on the parish levy. In Truro and Fairfax parishes as elsewhere, binding out children constituted one of the vestry's most important functions. It


was thus handled with great care. It was the responsibility of the county court to oversee all such arrangements, as it did in 1751 when the churchwardens of Truro Parish bound the children of the late John Withers Harper to Hugh West, Senior. West, a trustee of Alexandria, agreed to have his wards taught the trades of a carpenter and a cooper.

Occasionally an Alexandrian was found guilty of neglecting his children. The law directed the parish churchwardens to remove the children from the custody of their parents in such cases and to bind them as apprentices to a responsible member of the community. William Munday of Alexandria lost custody of his three children in 1759 because he neglected them. They were bound to Benjamin Sebastian, a town attorney and ordinary-keeper, who agreed to teach Munday's two boys to read and write and to work as carpenters. Following the usual custom, no trade was specified for Munday's daughter Jane, but when Cloe Stephens, a thirteen-year-old orphan, was bound by the churchwardens to Naomy Ramsay of Alexandria, Ramsay agreed to teach her ward to read, write, do needlework, and make mantuas.

With a continuing stream of young men being bound out

19 Hening, Statutes at Large, II, 298; III, 371-76; IV, 208-14; V, 449-54; and VI, 32-33; Jemegan, Laboring and Dependent Classes, pp. 179 and 187; Morris, Government and Labor, p. 16.

20 Fairfax County Order Book, Mar. 27, 1751, p. 130.

21 Hening, Statutes at Large, IV, 208-14; Fairfax County Minute Book, Pt. I, May 17, 1759, p. 344.

as apprentices, problems were sure to arise from time to time. The vestries in colonial Virginia and their counterparts elsewhere were careful to insure that the terms of the indenture were being observed by the master and that the apprentice was being adequately provided for. When a vestry discovered a violation of an indenture it usually interposed its authority very quickly. Thus, at the request of the Truro Parish churchwardens the county court revoked the agreement binding Jonathan Welsh to Alexandrian John Crook. Crook, the court observed, had failed to teach Welsh to read and write. At the churchwardens' request the court bound Welsh to John Carlyle, who agreed to teach him the trade of a mariner and also to instruct him in reading and writing.23

The parish vestry was also responsible for helping to maintain high moral standards within the community. More was involved here than simply the desire to uphold virtue in Alexandria. For example, an increase in the number of illegitimate children in the parish would mean an added burden to be borne by the parish tithables. The churchwardens promptly reported moral lapses to the county court, which generally moved rapidly to dispense a brand of justice that was often tainted by its severity.

The law provided that any woman convicted of bearing an

illegitimate child had to pay fifty shillings or five hundred pounds of tobacco with cask to the parish churchwardens. Sometimes the offender could afford to pay the fine, as was the case with Mary Anderson of Truro Parish. Occasionally the reputed father would pay the fine for his mistress, as Alexandrian Roger Chew did for Elinor Robertson. At times neither alternative was viable, in which case the sheriff was compelled to give the offender twenty-five lashes on her bare back "well laid on" at the public whipping post. Catharine Fling was one of a number of women who suffered that punishment in the Potomac town.  

The offenses discussed above are typical of the type of cases dealt with by the Fairfax vestry and county court. Although gaps in the relevant parish and county records and the lack of a complete list of town inhabitants during the colonial period prevent a more systematic examination of this material, there are a few tentative conclusions that can be drawn from the sources.  

One is that, while immoral behavior was not uncommon in early Alexandria, conduct of that sort evidently did not constitute a major problem for the local authorities. An average of four or five illegitimate children were born each year in Fairfax Parish during the period from 1765 to 1776 (each was ordinarily bound

24 Hening, Statutes at Large, IV, 208-14; Fairfax County Order Book, Apr. 2, 1752, p. 190 (Mary Anderson), and June 19, 1754, p. 110 (Catharine Fling); Fairfax Parish Vestry Book, Nov. 28, 1769, p. 22 (Elinor Robertson).

25 The place of residence of an individual involved in an action being considered by the county court or the parish vestry is not ordinarily given in the county or parish record books.
quickly as an apprentice). It is not possible to determine precisely how many of these children were born in Alexandria as opposed to the rest of the parish. Although the total fluctuated from year to year, there was no observable increase in the number of either white or mulatto illegitimate children born during this time span.\(^{26}\) The surviving evidence suggests that immoral behavior within the town never rose to a point where it caused substantial concern on the part of the inhabitants.

II

It appears that poverty was another minor, albeit persistent, problem in early Alexandria. Although maintenance of the poor required a steady flow of public funds, the incidence of poverty in the Potomac town seems to have remained low throughout the colonial period. In that regard Alexandria was typical of colonial Virginia as a whole. In a memorable phrase, Robert Beverley called the colony "the best poor Man's Country in the World." In a study published nineteen years after Beverley's, Hugh Jones stated the matter in a more prosaic fashion: "The plenty of the country, and the good wages given to workfolks occasion very few poor, who are supported by the parish, ..."\(^{27}\) The assessment

\(^{26}\) This is based on a reading of the Fairfax County Order and Minute Books and of the Fairfax Parish Vestry Book. Jernegan, Laboring and Dependent Classes, pp. 187-88, finds a great increase in the number of illegitimate mulatto children born in eighteenth-century Virginia.

made by Beverley and Jones has been confirmed by contemporary scholars who have noted the limited extent of poverty in Virginia and the other American colonies.28

Although poor relief was handled differently in each of the major colonial regions, it was regarded everywhere as a function of the individual community.29 In the New England colonies the town government and the county courts accepted the responsibility of caring for the poor. In the southern colonies the Elizabethan poor laws of 1597 and 1601 were copied almost exactly in the establishment of a poor relief system administered by the parish vestries. Finally, in the middle colonies a method of caring for the poor gradually evolved that blended elements of both the southern and the New England systems.30

As the foregoing paragraph indicates, the parish vestries in colonial Virginia were solely responsible for

28 Howard Mackey, "Social Welfare in Colonial Virginia: The Importance of the English Old Poor Law," Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church, XXXVI (December, 1967), 358; Main, Social Structure of Revolutionary America, pp. 239 and 271-72; Bridenbaugh, Cities in Revolt, pp. 211 and 420.

29 Albert Deutsch, "The Sick Poor in Colonial Times," American Historical Review, XLVI (April, 1941), 560; Smith, As A City Upon A Hill, pp. 194-95.

overseeing poor relief. Those Alexandrians unable to support themselves were provided for by the Truro Parish vestry up to 1765 and by the vestry of Fairfax Parish after that time. The churchwardens were given the responsibility of identifying those needing relief and of making the necessary disbursements of money and supplies. In Truro and Fairfax Parishes, and throughout the colonies, the most common form of poor relief assistance was the simple payment of out-relief. The cash or supplies could be given directly to the person needing assistance; alternately, they could be disbursed to an individual who would agree to care for someone who was unable to care for himself. In a pair of transactions typical of those found in the Fairfax Parish Vestry Book, Matthew Bradley received one thousand pounds of tobacco for the maintenance of his disabled son and Nicholas Garrett earned eight hundred pounds of tobacco for looking after an illegitimate child.

Because the care of its poor was not a function of the town government, it is not possible to say exactly how many of the townspeople were receiving poor relief. However, the Fairfax Parish vestry records do indicate the number of parishioners being aided during the period 1765 through 1776.

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31 Hening, Statutes at Large, I, 433.
33 Fairfax Parish Vestry Book, Oct. 16, 1766, pp. 5-6.

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That information is provided on the following page in Table 18.

The data furnished in Table 18 is helpful in estimating the approximate number of Alexandrians on poor relief. As Table 19 shows (it immediately follows Table 18), during the late colonial period a little less than half of the inhabitants of Fairfax Parish resided in the town of Alexandria. On the average, just under eleven parishioners received poor relief annually over the entire period. It is thus reasonable to estimate that perhaps five or six Alexandrians a year were assisted by the parish authorities in the twelve years before the Declaration of Independence.

Let us assume, however, that all of those on poor relief in Fairfax Parish resided in Alexandria. That would still mean that less than two percent of the townspeople were receiving poor relief over the period indicated. The third quarter of the eighteenth century saw a sharp increase in the numbers of the poor living in the larger colonial cities. Boston was particularly hard-hit; the level of poverty there in 1771 has been estimated at about seven percent. Although the number of Fairfax parishioners receiving aid fluctuated considerably during the last twelve years of the colonial

TABLE 18
NUMBER OF PERSONS RECEIVING POOR RELIEF:
CHRIST CHURCH, FAIRFAX PARISH, 1765-1776

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Persons</th>
<th>Year (17--)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
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<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fairfax Parish Vestry Book, 1765-1776. Although it is not specifically stated in the vestry book, this information undoubtedly reflects the totals for all of Fairfax parish, and not just the region served by Christ Church.
TABLE 19
COMPARISON OF POPULATIONS OF ALEXANDRIA
AND FAIRFAX PARISH, 1768-1771

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population of Alexandria</th>
<th>Population of Fairfax Parish&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Percentage of Parishioners Residing in Alexandria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1771</td>
<td>1,806</td>
<td>3,846</td>
<td>47.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1770</td>
<td>1,717</td>
<td>3,744</td>
<td>45.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1768</td>
<td>1,614</td>
<td>3,447</td>
<td>46.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>The population of Fairfax parish was computed by multiplying the number of parish tithables by three; see Greene and Harrington, American Population, p. xxiii.

Source: Table 2, Chapter I (Alexandria population); Fairfax Parish Vestry Book (Fairfax parish tithables).
period, there is no discernible upward trend in their numbers. The very small percentage of parishioners on relief testifies to the healthy state of the region's economy. In a period when the growing numbers of poor tormented the authorities in the larger colonial towns, the problem remained a minor one in Alexandria.

Table 20 on the next page provides further proof of the economic well-being enjoyed by most Fairfax parishioners. The percentage of the levy allotted to poor relief is particularly noteworthy. From 1765 through 1775 it never rose to 15 percent of the total, and it averaged only 7.8 percent for the entire period. That percentage is much less than half of the average comparable figure for a large number of Virginia parishes surveyed by Howard Mackey. The reasons for this difference are not entirely clear. As Mackey's data indicate, it is not due to the fact that the annual levies for the parishes he surveyed averaged less than those of Fairfax Parish. The expanding economy of colonial Alexandria was almost certainly a factor in the low level of relief payments. It is likely that the town's prosperity was such that work was always available for those seeking it. It seems that it was even harder to find a poor man in Fairfax Parish than it was to locate one in many, and perhaps most, other Virginia parishes.

In Alexandria as in most of the other towns in colonial America, the sick poor were usually boarded out with a

Due to a certain amount of confusion regarding the precise amounts actually allocated for poor relief in 1776, these figures have not been included in the averages. Allocations in monetary pounds are all in Virginia currency, as is the case throughout this dissertation unless otherwise indicated. Allocations in Virginia currency before 1776 have been converted to pounds of tobacco in order to compute percentages. The

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Tithables</th>
<th>Total Levy</th>
<th>Amount Alotted to the Poor</th>
<th>Poor Allotment As a Percentage of the Total</th>
<th>Individual Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1776</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5,930 and £59.1.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1775</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1774</td>
<td>1,524</td>
<td>60,960</td>
<td>4,244 and £1.7.6</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1773</td>
<td>1,385</td>
<td>74,790</td>
<td>3,540</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1772</td>
<td>1,361</td>
<td>61,245</td>
<td>2,811 and £0.12.7½</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1771</td>
<td>1,282</td>
<td>64,100</td>
<td>8,337</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1770</td>
<td>1,248</td>
<td>62,400</td>
<td>5,738</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1769</td>
<td>1,205</td>
<td>60,250</td>
<td>8,301 and £4.5.0</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1768</td>
<td>1,149</td>
<td>68,940</td>
<td>2,550 and £23.17.6</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1767</td>
<td>1,121</td>
<td>63,897</td>
<td>3,823</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1766</td>
<td>1,017</td>
<td>66,105</td>
<td>4,615</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1765</td>
<td>1,013</td>
<td>47,611</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Averages</td>
<td>1,255</td>
<td>60,027</td>
<td>4,405 and £2.15.6</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>48.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Expressed in pounds of tobacco.

\(^b\) Due to a certain amount of confusion regarding the precise amounts actually allocated for poor relief in 1776, these figures have not been included in the averages. Allocations in monetary pounds are all in Virginia currency, as is the case throughout this dissertation unless otherwise indicated. Allocations in Virginia currency before 1776 have been converted to pounds of tobacco in order to compute percentages. The
TABLE 20--Continued

conversion rates used were based on the yearly prices offered by Harry Piper for tobacco in the Potomac River region as indicated in his Letter Book, 1768-69, 1772, and 1774.

Source: Fairfax Parish Vestry Book, 1765-1776. As noted in Table 18, this information almost certainly reflects the totals for all of Fairfax parish.
neighbor who agreed to serve as a nurse. In Virginia the parish vestry paid for the services rendered.\textsuperscript{36} In 1774 the Fairfax Parish vestry paid Margaret Piper one hundred and fifty pounds of tobacco for nursing a sick woman and for burying a child.\textsuperscript{37} Several years earlier the parish had decided to provide more systematic care for its sick poor. In 1765 it had ordered the churchwardens to contract with a doctor to care for those indigent parishioners who were too sick to look after themselves. Although Wyndham Blanton notes that Dr. William Rumney was retained by the vestry that same year, the records provide no evidence that Rumney or any other physician was paid to care for the sick poor.\textsuperscript{38} Instead, Margaret Piper and others like her continued to nurse the parish indigent.\textsuperscript{39}

There is some evidence that the level of poverty in Virginia was increasing more rapidly than the colony's population toward the end of the colonial period.\textsuperscript{40} Certainly the colonial government believed that to be the case, and in

\textsuperscript{36}Deutsch, "Sick Poor in Colonial Times," 566; Hening, Statutes at Large, IV, 208-14 and VI, 31-33; Mackey, "Operation of the English Old Poor Law," 37-38.

\textsuperscript{37}Fairfax Parish Vestry Book, Nov. 24, 1774, p. 50.

\textsuperscript{38}Ibid., Nov. 30, 1765, p. 3; Blanton, Medicine in Virginia, p. 362.

\textsuperscript{39}Cf. the establishment of a hospital for the sick poor of Philadelphia as described in William H. Williams, "The 'Industrious Poor' and the Founding of the Pennsylvania Hospital," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, 97 (October, 1973), 431-43.

\textsuperscript{40}Hening, Statutes at Large, VI, 475-78; Seiler, "Anglican Parish Vestry," 326-27.
1755 it authorized the parish vestries to build workhouses for the poor. It also empowered the churchwardens to place all public beggars in the workhouses and to set them to work on useful tasks. Workhouses and almshouses for the poor were a popular solution to a vexing problem and they were widely used in eighteenth-century America. Toward the end of the 1760s a minor boom developed in the construction of workhouses in Maryland. In less than twelve months bids were asked for the construction of three county houses "for the Use of the Poor and Vagrants..." Not to be outdone, the Fairfax vestry soon ordered its churchwardens to agree with someone to care for the poor. It also commanded them to rent a house for the parish indigent, if they thought it necessary. Nothing came of the latter authorization, and it was just as well. The savings produced by the Virginia workhouses proved to be temporary in nature, and most of the latter were abandoned during the Revolutionary era.


42 Maryland Gazette, May 11, 1769; Feb. 22 and Apr. 5, 1770 (the quoted material is in the Feb. 22 edition).

43 Fairfax Parish Vestry Book, Nov. 25, 1771, p. 36.


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III

The educational opportunities available to Alexandrians conformed to a pattern common to most of the larger towns of the colonial Chesapeake. The family was the most important agency in both the transfer of culture and the area of popular education. In the American colonies as a whole the family assumed an educational significance that far surpassed that of its English counterpart.\textsuperscript{45} Edmund S. Morgan has written that most Virginians obtained whatever schooling they received at home. That education ordinarily came from their parents or, much less frequently, from a private tutor.\textsuperscript{46}

Apprenticeships were commonly resorted to in Alexandria as a method of equipping a young man with the skills necessary to make a good living. Several examples of the practice were provided earlier in the chapter. The system of apprenticeship was particularly important in the education of the poor children of the town. It was also heavily


\textsuperscript{46} Morgan, \textit{American Slavery-American Freedom}, p. 374. Very few English children went to school during the preindustrial period; see Laslett, \textit{The World We Have Lost}, p. 110.
relied on throughout Virginia as a means of educating such children. 47

Formal education in Alexandria was available only to those able to afford it. The more affluent townspeople could either hire a tutor to instruct their children or send them to a private school. There is no evidence that any tutors offering instruction in areas other than music taught in colonial Alexandria. Those citizens who wanted individual instruction for their children probably sent them to a tutor residing nearby. The Reverend David Griffith would have been a likely choice as a private instructor. Griffith, who in 1780 became the minister of Christ Church in Alexandria, was the minister of Shelburne Parish, in neighboring Loudoun County, in the 1770s. He also tutored several young men each year; in 1774 and 1775 he accepted nine students. The parents of eight of the young men paid twenty pounds per child for a year's education. The fee, which was twenty-five pounds for the ninth pupil, included room and board. 48

Private instruction in one of the local academies was the other alternative in Virginia available to those townspeople who desired and could afford formal education for their children. There was a publicly-supported grammar school attached to the College of William and Mary (it was the only

47 Jernegan, Laboring and Dependent Classes, pp. 153, 171. See also the excellent discussion of apprenticeships in Morgan, Virginians at Home, pp. 22-25.

one of its kind in the colony), but that was a long way from home.\(^49\) A suitable education for their children was deemed essential by the men and women who dominated the economic and cultural life of the Potomac town. The young Scottish expatriate John Carlyle spoke for many of his fellow residents when he wrote that "If I am blessed with children those shall have English education & not be allow'd to imbibe the principles looked upon here to be polite (such as drinking and gaming)."\(^50\) The only way that Alexandrians could insure absolutely that their children would receive the proper education would be to build their own school and hire their own schoolmaster. That was more easily said than done, for many years passed before the town finally obtained its own school.

Sufficient funds to build the private school were not available until the completion of the lottery of 1760. The Fairfax County court had already authorized the construction of a school house on the court house lot. The building was completed by 1762, when the county justices approved the erection of a shed next to the school house to be used to store fire wood.\(^51\) William Ramsay's name appeared beneath an advertisement for the school in 1763:

\(^{49}\)Morgan, Virginians at Home, pp. 8-9, 11-13, and 22. There were also a few free schools in Virginia; for two examples, see Hening, Statutes at Large, VI, 388-89, and VII, 317-20.

\(^{50}\)John Carlyle to his brother, Jan. 25, 1747/48, Carlyle Papers.

\(^{51}\)Fairfax County Minute Book, Pt. 1, May 17, 1759, p. 345, and Feb. 19, 1762, p. 687.
The Subscriber has engaged a young man (from Scotland) to instruct 14 boys; he comes well recommended for his Industry, Sobriety, and Knowledge in the Languages.

In order to make up this Number, the Subscriber will engage for a few Gentlemen's Sons, Schooling, Board, Washing and Lodging, and plenty of Fire-Wood provided, as long as may be necessary each Season. 52

The town treasury provided part of the funds necessary to construct the school. John Pattinson was paid £106.6.1 for his work on the project. Large amounts of town money were also appropriated to repair the school house, which was dilapidated by 1767. A total of £135.17.6 was disbursed in that year for that purpose. 53 Apparently the school continued in operation through the end of the colonial period.

In addition to its private school master, Alexandria also had a pair of aspiring music teachers. In the late spring of 1775 Thomas Sterling and Thomas Hookins advertised their willingness to teach "any number of boys the Military Musick of the Fife and Drum; and also [to] supply any Persons with musick for said instruments." Their terms were a one-half guinea entrance fee and one guinea per month for each instrument taught. 54

52 Maryland Gazette, July 14, 1763; Ramsay's italics.

53 Proceedings of Alexandria Trustees, 1767-1780, April 4, 1767. See also the Proceedings of the Alexandria Trustees, 1749-1767, Feb. 2, 1767. Cf. the schools established in Norfolk in this period discussed in Wertenbaker, Norfolk, pp. 24-25. It is apparent that a "Latin," or college-preparatory school, had been established rather than an "English," or business-oriented school. For "Latin" and "English" schools, see Main, Social Structure of Revolutionary America, p. 244.

54 Virginia Gazette (Purdie and Dixon), June 17, 1775 (supplement) (note that the supplement is out of sequence; it
Alexandria's grammar school and music teachers could be compared with the large number of private teachers advertising for business in Annapolis. Between 1754 and 1772 fourteen Annapolis teachers placed advertisements in the Maryland Gazette. Three noted that they were opening evening schools in the town. Also, in 1766 the Registrar of the Annapolis Free School advertised for an usher capable of teaching English. Although the advertisements did not guarantee the existence of schools, they certainly indicate a different magnitude of schooling available. Annapolis's population was estimated at 1,113 in 1768, and at 1,326 in 1775. Drawing from the statistics presented in Table 2 on pages 53 and 54 of this dissertation, the comparable figures for Alexandria were 1,614 and about 2,000. Annapolis, despite its limited population, could support a large number of private teachers because its role as the capital (and political center) of Maryland gave it the ability to sustain a wide range of services. On the other hand, the larger population of Alexandria supported only one grammar and one music school. The town's lifeblood was commerce. The location elsewhere of the decision-making centers of its trades meant that only a narrow spectrum of service activities, follows the June 24 edition).

55 Maryland Gazette, 1754 to 1772. For the free school advertisement see the June 5, 1766 edition. See also Cremin, American Education, p. 400.

56 Papenfuse, In Pursuit of Profit, p. 14, Table 1-1. Cf. the much higher estimate in Bridenbaugh, Cities in Revolt, p. 217.
of which educational facilities were one part, would develop locally. However, the limited number of services available to Alexandrians did not restrict the townspeople in their enjoyment of a broad range of recreational pursuits.

Of all the leisure activities sanctioned by the law, horse-racing was probably the most exciting to Alexandrians. Horse-racing in the Old Dominion was more than simply an enjoyable pastime. It served as an important channel of communication between the various levels of society, and functioned as a bond helping to unify the people of early Virginia. The sport enjoyed a great deal of popularity in the northern Chesapeake. In 1761 alone, six Maryland race tracks advertised contests in which purses ranging from twelve to thirty pounds Maryland currency would be awarded.

Alexandria had its own race track. The date of its construction is not known, but it was certainly in place by the end of the 1750s. Many of the great men in town had a hand in managing the races held there annually. William Ramsay, Robert Adams, John Hunter, John Carlyle, John Dalton, Charles Digges, and John Kirkpatrick assured that the

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58 Maryland Gazette, Apr. 30, Aug. 20, Sept. 24 (three race tracks), and Oct. 10, 1761.

59 Throughout Virginia the gentry commonly presided over these contests; see Isaac, "Preachers and Patriots," in Young, The American Revolution, p. 136.
scheduling would be handled properly and that the races would be contested honestly. Although some of the horses were raised locally, others were imported. In the summer of 1762 the firm of Carlyle and Dalton advertised the sale of three colts and three fillies recently arrived from Whitehaven, England. All six animals had distinguished pedigrees. 60

Racing meets were usually held at the Alexandria track over a period of two or three days. The purses ranged from fifteen pounds on up to the fifty pounds awarded the winner of the "Annual Purse." Several qualifying heats for each race were ordinarily run on the track, which was just over eight-tenths of a mile in length. An entrance fee in the vicinity of fifteen to thirty shillings was required for the lesser purses. The owners of horses entered in the "Annual Purse" competition paid the handsome sum of seventy shillings for the right to compete. 61

After the races the winners could commiserate with the losers in any one of several ordinaries that graced the young town. The importance of public houses in the life of colonial towns has long been recognized. In Alexandria and elsewhere they served as places of refuge for travellers and as centers where one could both relax and transact business. 62 Professor Carl Bridenbaugh has described the colonial

60 Maryland Gazette, July 29, 1762.
61 Ibid., Mar. 27, 1760; Apr. 30, 1761; and Apr. 15, 1762.
ordinaries as the most thriving of all urban institutions. He has also asserted that they often competed with the local churches, tending to usurp many of the latters' social and recreational functions. Because of their importance in early American life, they were carefully regulated throughout the colonies.

The government of Virginia passed a stringent law in 1705 that was designed to regulate closely the operations of ordinary keepers. Basically, it provided that individuals had to be licensed by their local county court before they could keep an ordinary; that licenses, which required a thirty-five shilling fee, had to be renewed annually; that the ordinary owner could not allow unlawful gambling or drinking on the premises; and that the intent of the law in allowing ordinaries had to be complied with, that is, adequate food and quarters had to be provided for both the traveller and his horses.

The Fairfax County Justices of the Peace energetically enforced the law. Each year they heard and acted on a number of complaints against local ordinary keepers. Probably the most common offense they considered was the crime of selling liquor without a license. A conviction ordinarily resulted in a fine of about one hundred and fifty pounds of tobacco. Violations of this section of the law increased steadily in both Alexandria and Fairfax County as the end of

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63 Bridenbaugh, Cities in the Wilderness, p. 426, and Cities in Revolt, p. 156.
64 Hening, Statutes at Large, III, 396-97.
the colonial period drew nearer. Although in the 1750s the Fairfax County Grand Jury rarely presented more than one or two persons for selling liquor illegally, by the early 1770s it averaged eight to ten presentations for this offense each time it met. 65

The problem of unlawful gambling in the public houses of Alexandria and its environs was a serious one, and the county justices reacted with predictable severity when a case of this sort reached them. The punishment rarely varied. If convicted, the offending landlord customarily lost the right to keep an ordinary. 66

Table 21 on the following page indicates that the county officials had their hands full in regulating the ordinaries of colonial Alexandria. The overall trend in the number of licenses issued to potential ordinary keepers is slowly upward, and it parallels the increase in population of the Potomac community.

Too much liquor dispensed in the ordinaries sometimes led to embarrassing incidents that were probably regretted later. Francis Dade, a long-time town attorney, was at least consistent in his behavior. He cursed the county justices whether he was drunk or sober, in the town public houses or out of them. Seemingly always irascible, and never publicly penitent, he outdid himself in an outburst

65 This is based on a reading of the Fairfax County Minute and Order Books for the period 1748 through 1776. See the Fairfax County Order Book, Nov. 22, 1770, pp. 154-55.

66 For example see the case of James Ingo Dozer in the Fairfax County Minute Book, Pt. 1, Sept. 18, 1756, p. 20.

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### TABLE 21

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Note: Information was not available for the years 1764 through 1767 and 1774 through 1776. Only partial information was available for the years 1763 and 1768.

Source: Fairfax County Order Book, 1749-1756 and 1768-1774, and Fairfax County Minute Book, 1756-1763.
that occurred in May, 1769. According to the testimony of two witnesses, Dade "last night at a public Ordinary abused the Justices of the Court calling them partial sons of bitches, [and said] that he would have their Bars cropt and he would turn them out of Commission. . . ."67 Strangely, the court never took public action against Dade, although they carefully recorded his comments.

The public houses in which Dade and his fellow citizens amused themselves were highly valued pieces of property. Alexandria ordinaries infrequently changed owners, although from time to time one might be put on the market as a rental property. William Ramsay rented out the George Tavern, a superbly equipped public house, twice in the 1760s.68 A few ordinaries were sold before the Revolution. In the early 1760s the public house known as the "Long Ordinary," situated on lots twenty-eight and twenty-nine, changed hands several times. It must have been a good-sized building for its day. Measuring twenty-four feet across and ninety feet in length, it had twelve large rooms, each equipped with its own fire place. The building also had a substantial cellar, kitchen, and meat house. The ordinary, including gardens and stables, sold for £262.0.0 in 1762.69

67Fairfax County Order Book, May 16, 1769, p. 135. See also two other incidents involving Dade in the same source; one is on the same date and page, and the other occurred on Mar. 21, 1769, p. 99.

68Maryland Gazette, Mar. 20, 1760, and Aug. 9, 1764.

Few if any Virginians would have disagreed with the proposition that public houses played an essential part in the life of the colony. However, many would have voiced their discontent with the various corrupt activities, such as gambling and drunkenness, that were tolerated in too many ordinaries. Then as now, resourceful minds searched for ways to turn to useful ends those leisure activities which many regarded as sinful. The public lottery proved to be a happy compromise that allowed men to gamble in the public interest.

Public lotteries were great money-makers in Alexandria and a large number of other colonial towns and villages. In a tally that is by no means exhaustive, twelve lotteries for various worthwhile projects were counted in the pages of the Maryland Gazette from 1752 through 1774. They were held to finance every conceivable type of public improvement, from dredging operations in the Patuxent River to finishing a church steeple in Philadelphia. Reading over these accounts tends to confirm Ernest Griffith's observation that colonial lotteries were almost always used as a means of financing capital expenditures, and not as a method of raising local operating revenues. Although public lotteries were comparative latecomers on the colonial scene, they were widely resorted to as a fund-raising device during the last twenty-five years.

70 Maryland Gazette, Dec. 14, 1752; Mar. 1 and Nov. 1, 1753; Mar. 9, 1758; May 10, 1759; Feb. 28 and Dec. 18, 1760; June 18, 1761; June 8 and Nov. 2, 1769; Apr. 2, 1772; and June 16, 1774.
years of our colonial period.\textsuperscript{71}

At least two, and probably three, lotteries were successfully held in Alexandria in the years before the Revolution. One other was attempted in 1751 but completely failed. William Buckner McGroarty, an amateur historian who wrote several excellent studies on Alexandria and the area surrounding it, described the 1751 lottery as the first of its kind ever held in the colony.\textsuperscript{72}

The sponsors of the lottery in that year planned to put the money they raised to good use, intending to build a market house and a church in the new town. Had the lottery gone according to plan, they would probably have had more than enough money to do both. In fact, that may be the reason the drawing was never held — it was simply too ambitious.

The eleven organizers of the lottery, among whom were the leading citizens of Alexandria and Fairfax County, planned to sell eight thousand tickets at two pieces of eight each. The equivalent amount of a ticket expressed in Virginia currency was about twelve shillings and sixpence, not an insubstantial sum.\textsuperscript{73} The sponsors expected to realize a gross profit of fifteen percent on the drawing, or

\textsuperscript{71}Griffith, \textit{American City Government,} pp. 304-5; see also Teaford, \textit{Municipal Revolution in America,} p. 55.

\textsuperscript{72}McGroarty, \textit{The Old Presbyterian Meeting House,} p. 66.

\textsuperscript{73}For currency conversion rates, see the Fairfax County Order Book, Feb. 20, 1756, p. 480; Thomson, "The Merchant in Virginia," pp. 239-40, n. 61; and Voke, "Accounting Methods of Colonial Merchants," 4.
approximately £750 in Virginia currency. 74

The lottery, which received a good deal of publicity, was heavily advertised in both the Virginia Gazette and the Maryland Gazette. The first series of advertisements appeared in January, 1751, in the Virginia Gazette. The winning tickets were to be drawn in May, with a top prize of five hundred pieces of eight.

The day appointed for the drawing came and went, but no prizes were awarded. The organizers explained that a postponement until November was necessary because they had "met with considerable Hindrance from the Surmises and base Insinuations of some ill disposed Persons,..."75 The sponsors added that the public had become so aroused by the rumors surrounding the lottery that they had refused to support it. It seems that several stories were making the rounds. One was that the drawing would not be conducted fairly, while another held that only those living in the vicinity of Alexandria would be notified that they held winning tickets.

That spring and summer the lottery managers attempted to dispel the rumors surrounding the drawing. Their advertisements in the regional newspapers assured the skeptics "That the Whole will be conducted with strict Justice and Impartiality, without any sinister Views whatever." They also announced that the winning lottery numbers would be

74 Ibid.
75 Maryland Gazette, May 29, 1751.
The lottery could not be rescued, however, and its sponsors had to provide refunds to all those who had purchased tickets. Although its failure was blamed on "malicious Insinuations and Reports," it is more likely that the lottery managers simply took on more than they could handle. Never again would they or their successors try to sell the equivalent of four thousand pounds sterling in lottery tickets.

It was not until 1760 that the townspeople tried a second time to raise money through a lottery. They had learned at least one lesson from their previous experience. This time only three thousand tickets, each valued at ten shillings Virginia currency, would be sold. Most of the proceeds, £1,250, would be distributed among the winners. The remaining £250 would be used to enlarge and repair the public wharf and to build a grammar school. Ten Alexandria trustees were appointed to manage the lottery and to supervise the drawing, which was scheduled to be held in early September.

As it turned out, the drawing was postponed twice: once because all the tickets were not yet sold and once because several lottery managers were attending a meeting.

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76 Ibid., and also July 24, 1751; Virginia Gazette (Hunter), June 27, 1751.

77 The episode can be followed in the Maryland Gazette, Apr. 24, May 29, and July 24, 1751, and Feb. 27, 1752, and in the Virginia Gazette (Hunter), Jan. 10 and 17, June 27, and Nov. 7, 1751.
of the General Assembly. To everyone’s relief, the drawing was finally held in December, 1760, and the prizes were distributed immediately afterward.78

Two other lotteries were held to finance town projects before the end of the colonial period. One, conducted in 1765, raised an unspecified amount to be used to build a church and a markethouse.79 A final, and probably successful, lottery was undertaken in 1768 in order to raise £450 to buy an organ for the new church and to continue work on the markethouse. The advertisement for that lottery addressed itself to those who criticised such endeavors:

Many Schemes of Lotteries, for various Purposes, and of various Constructions, are offered to the Public, they are indeed become common; by many it is reckoned a Species of Gaming, it may be so, yet certainly this is the most justifiable, perhaps laudable, because for Public Uses.80

That defense of public drawings brings an important point to mind: in an age when the financing of large urban projects was extremely difficult to arrange, public drawings provided a major source of funds.

This chapter on the social and cultural development of colonial Alexandria would not be complete without mentioning the town’s first permanent voluntary associations. Temporary organizations had been formed from time to time for specific

78 The progress of the lottery can be traced in the Maryland Gazette, Apr. 30, Sept. 4, Oct. 9, and Nov. 13, 1760, and Jan. 1, 1761. Five tickets from this lottery are located in the Ramsay Papers.


80 Maryland Gazette, Nov. 24, 1768.
purposes, such as holding a lottery. However, the Friendship and Sun Fire Companies, which were organized respectively in 1774 and 1775, were intended to last indefinitely.

The founders of the Friendship Fire Company have been described as the most responsible members of the community. That may be so, but the only member whose identity we are reasonably sure of is George Washington. On his return from the meeting of the First Continental Congress held in Philadelphia in 1774 he brought a fire engine for the use of the company. The engine was paid for at least in part by donations; in a ledger entry in June of the following year the local merchant firm of Jenifer and Hooe posted a debit figure of one pound "contributed towards the purchase of a Fire Engine." 82

There is nothing unique about the use of a fire engine or the formation of voluntary fire companies in Alexandria in the late colonial period. For instance, Norfolk had a fire engine in service by the early 1750s, and voluntary associations of various types were in vogue in all of the larger colonial cities. 83 As for the membership of the Friendship Fire Company being composed of the most responsible men of Alexandria, fire clubs could be very exclusive organizations. John Adams noted in 1774 that "It is of some

81 Powell, History of Old Alexandria, pp. 48-49.
82 Jenifer and Hooe Ledger, June 27, 1775.
Importance in Boston to belong to a Fire Club and to choose and get admitted to a good one.**

What is interesting about these first voluntary organizations in Alexandria is the time of their formation. The town's population had grown to about two thousand in 1775 and was expanding steadily. The emergence of voluntary associations was in part a reflection of the growing impersonality that was gradually supplanting the intimacy of an earlier Alexandria. Voluntary organizations helped to maintain a sense of intimacy among the townspeople and could also be an effective way to respond to the increased number of problems accompanying town growth. It was not until the 1790s, however, that they became widespread in the Potomac town.

The effect of a number of long-standing Virginia social and cultural institutions on the growth of early Alexandria is very evident in the perspective of time. Alexandria before the Revolution was clearly not a major American city, although it was of great importance in the Potomac River basin and the surrounding region. The town lacked both the size and the maturity necessary to develop a distinctive social and cultural order. Instead, its inhabitants relied heavily on the familiar customs and traditions of Virginia in their efforts to establish and maintain a viable cultural life. However, one finds a great deal of variety in the

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84 Adams is quoted in Brown, "Emergence of Urban Society," 42.

85 Wirth, "Urbanism as a Way of Life," 22-23.
social and cultural life of the colonial town.

By the time of the Revolution Alexandria was both expanding and losing the intimacy that characterized its early years. The increasing impersonality was a significant factor in the establishment of the town's first voluntary associations, which were in part a manifestation of the eventual demise of a more closely-knit community.
CHAPTER VI

ALEXANDRIA AND THE COMING OF THE REVOLUTION

As the colonial period neared its end, the merchant community of Alexandria intensified its efforts to promote town growth. One of the keys to commercial expansion lay in increasing the trading area served by the town. This involved both the improvement of transportation facilities to the interior and the opening of the mountain and transmontane regions to colonial settlement. It was only natural that a number of Alexandrians would be involved in projects intended to achieve these ends. Two of the foci of their efforts were the Ohio Company, formed in 1749, and the Potomac Company, founded in 1772. Despite the work of their agents and investors, neither company enjoyed much success before the Revolution.

In the same years that many Alexandrians were working to expand their town's complementary region, a crisis was brewing that threatened to shatter the colonial port. The growing difficulties with Great Britain forced the town merchants to take a stand on the various trade boycotts instituted during the 1760s and 1770s and, ultimately, to decide on the question of their loyalty. Loyalism had considerable latent potential in a town containing a number
of merchants who had no intention of settling permanently in Virginia. However, several forces operated to block the emergence of a Loyalist faction in Alexandria and to turn the town into a Whig stronghold.

The Alexandria economy was significantly affected by the revolutionary crisis. Those merchants whose livelihood consisted of exporting tobacco saw their business almost completely disrupted during the mid-1770s, while those engaged in exporting foodstuffs fared reasonably well. Although the town's import trade was hurt by the political and economic turmoil, the townspeople as a whole do not seem to have suffered during these years.

The preparations made by the Alexandrians for the war were extensive, if not altogether effective. Although Alexandria's citizens endured a number of hardships in the course of the Revolution, the town's economy and population expanded notably during the rest of the century. The Potomac community became a major American grain processing and export center, a position which it held until well into the following century.

I

Organized in 1747 by Thomas Lee, the Ohio Company was one of the most important of the early land companies in western Virginia. Its founders and earliest members were primarily from the Northern Neck of the colony. Among them were several Alexandria trustees: George Mason, George William Fairfax, and Lawrence and George Washington. All
four men were members of the gentry class; all were, or soon would be, prominent area planters and men of great wealth.¹

Soon after its formation the company petitioned the crown for a grant of five hundred thousand acres south of the Ohio River. They asked that two hundred thousand acres be granted immediately, with the balance to follow if the company built a fort and settled one hundred families in the region within seven years. The crown agreed to the request early in 1749 and the company moved soon thereafter to survey and populate its two hundred thousand acre tract. By 1754 its transmontane region was in the early stages of settlement by white colonists.²

The French and Indian War which began in 1754 proved disastrous to the Ohio Company. The company had based its expectations of profit on trade with the people of the region (Indians, initially, and later, Virginians and other colonists) and on the sale of land to those emigrating to its property. The war disrupted the company trade and drove the settlers back across the Appalachians. The Ohio Company's financial prospects did not improve with the coming of peace, as the Royal Proclamation of 1763 enjoined colonial settlement

¹Morton, Colonial Virginia, II, p. 573; Rutland, Papers of George Mason, I, 4. Three good brief accounts of the Ohio Company can be found in Rutland, I, 3-10; Osgood, American Colonies, IV, pp. 287-90; and Eugene M. Del Papa, "The Royal Proclamation of 1763: Its Effect upon Virginia Land Companies," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LXXXIII (October, 1973), 406-11.

²Rutland, Papers of George Mason, I, 5-7; Del Papa, "Royal Proclamation of 1763," 408.
on Indian lands west of the mountains.\(^3\)

During the rest of the 1760s George Mercer, the company's personal representative in London, attempted unsuccessfully to persuade the king to renew the grant made to his employer. The Ohio Company's territory was not reopened to settlement until the early 1770s.\(^4\) Although a few members worked energetically thereafter to entice their fellow colonists to settle in the region, little was accomplished before the Revolution.\(^5\) American settlement of the Ohio lands would have to wait until the post-Revolutionary period.

George Mason and his fellow trustees clearly realized that the success of their Ohio venture was directly related to the development of adequate transportation facilities between the transmontane region and the outside world. The prospect of good quality land at reasonable prices would not in itself attract large numbers of emigrants. However, the addition of an adequate water or road network to speed the movement of surplus crops to market would provide a considerable stimulus to settlement of the Ohio lands. It was natural that the Ohio Company trustees would want the surplus commodities from the transmontane region to funnel

\(^3\)Rutland, *Papers of George Mason*, I, 7-8; Del Papa, "Royal Proclamation of 1763," 408-9.

\(^4\)Rutland, *Papers of George Mason*, I, 8-10; Del Papa, "Royal Proclamation of 1763," 408-9.

through the Potomac River basin. The company trustees found considerable support for this aspiration among the merchants of the Potomac River towns. It is easy to see why the merchant community of Alexandria would be in the forefront of those seeking to open trade arteries with the interior. Whether or not the Ohio Company profited, improved transportation lines into the mountain and transmontane regions would almost surely lead to an increase in the flow of grain and other commodities through the town. It was for this reason that Philip Alexander, John Carlyle, John Dalton, William Ellzey, William Ramsay, and several other Alexandrians joined George Washington and George Mason as trustees of the Potomac Company.

Although support of the Potomac Company waxed and waned during the last four decades of the eighteenth century, its mission remained unchanged. It was created to open to watercraft the upper reaches of the Potomac River as far as Fort Cumberland. This was to be accomplished by cutting a passage through or around the Falls of the Potomac and by removing obstacles from the river above that point. 6

Discussions centering on the various ways of opening the upper Potomac to vessels began in the early 1760s. 7 Although both Marylanders and Virginians were involved in what promised to be an expensive project, nothing was accomplished beyond

6 See Hening, Statutes at Large, VIII, 570-79; the Maryland Gazette, Feb. 11, 1762; and Rutland, Papers of George Mason, I, 222, 225.

7 Maryland Gazette, Feb. 11, 1762.
the planning stage until 1772. At that point the Virginia General Assembly authorized the formation of a company to undertake the task. 8

The legislation establishing the Potomac Company required that ten subscribers each provide one hundred pounds for a general construction fund. When that was completed the subscribers were authorized to elect a company president and eleven directors who would oversee the company's operations. The government permitted the company to hold a very ambitious public lottery designed to raise operating funds. The company was empowered to sell one hundred thousand pounds in lottery tickets and to keep ten percent of the profits. 9

Comparatively few of those professing support for the Potomac Company's scheme were willing to underwrite its efforts with their own money. The public lottery was not held, and the directors experienced difficulty in obtaining funds. The company was simply not attractive to those with money to invest. 10 Perhaps the reluctance of potential investors was due in part to the lack of a clear plan of action by the company. For example, the directors could not decide whether to blast a passage through the Falls of the Potomac or to bypass the rapids by digging a canal. It was not until 1774 that the latter course was selected by the

8 Hening, Statutes at Large, VIII, 570-79.
9 Ibid.
company leadership. The man whom they chose to carry out the scheme was not one to inspire confidence in the minds of those skeptical about the company's future.

John Ballendine was a long-time Fairfax County resident whose reach occasionally exceeded his grasp. His personal finances were badly managed; in 1770 his creditors succeeded in having him jailed for non-payment of debts. Commenting on the company's choice of a project supervisor, George Washington conceded that Ballendine had "a natural genius to thing's of this sort, . . ." He then went on to say "I cannot help adding, that, his Principles have been loose; . . ." Moving as if determined to confound the skeptics, Ballendine and a large group of men began working late in 1774 on a canal bypassing the Potomac rapids on the Maryland side. The war interrupted their efforts, however, and the project of clearing the upper Potomac was not resumed until the mid-1780s.

It is significant that the Potomac River project was hampered by the refusal of the Maryland government to pass legislation similar to that enacted by the Virginia General Assembly. Apparently the merchants of Baltimore were anxious

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11 Thomas Johnson to George Washington, June 18, 1770, in the American Historical Review, XXVIII (April, 1923), 506; Maryland Gazette, Jan. 12, 1775; Virginia Gazette (Purdie and Dixon), Jan. 7, 1775.

12 Fairfax County Order Book, Apr. 16, 1770, pp. 4-5; Fitzpatrick, Writings of George Washington, III, 82-83.

to avoid giving any form of assistance to their rivals on the Potomac. In George Mason's opinion the Baltimoreans were clearly responsible for blocking the Potomac bill he and many others desired.\textsuperscript{14}

While the merchants of Alexandria sought ways to improve the existing transportation routes to the interior, they found that their private and public lives were becoming increasingly complicated by the emerging revolutionary turmoil. In Alexandria and elsewhere the merchants were caught squarely in the middle of the confrontation between colonies and mother country. On the one hand, the nature of their profession as well as their trade contacts abroad pushed them in the direction of moderation, if not Loyalism, in the dispute; on the other, their need to remain on friendly terms with their neighbors led many of them to characterize the passage of the Stamp Act, the Townshend duties, and other parliamentary legislation of this type as extremely unwise. Precarious as it was in this situation, the position of the merchants in Virginia was made even more difficult by the deep-seated feelings of hostility held by a substantial number of planters toward men primarily interested in trade.

It may be that, as Thomas Abernethy has written, "in all societies dominated by a rural aristocracy there is a tendency for the planter to despise the trading class."\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{14} Fitzpatrick, \textit{Writings of George Washington}, III, 81; Rutland, \textit{Papers of George Mason}, I, 224.
\textsuperscript{15} Abernethy, \textit{Three Virginia Frontiers}, pp. 17-18.
Many of those Virginians who made their living working the soil openly expressed their contempt for the "plodding Fellows" engaged in mercantile pursuits. In a particularly strident attack against the "tyranny of the merchants," an anonymous planter appealed to his fellow Virginians to free themselves from the snares of that class. He complained that the planters supported the merchants "in luxury and wantonness, while we and our families want even the common necessities of life." He added that those engaged in commerce in Virginia "neither value you, or your country, any farther than to serve their present wants and purposes; for no sooner are they feathered than (like birds of migration) they fly away, and laugh at the silly sheep whom they have fleeced." 16

Perhaps the aversion felt by many Virginians (and Marylanders) toward tradesmen was linked to a dislike of cities and towns. 17 In any case, the antipathy was very real. It led many colonists to scrutinize with great care the activities of the merchant class during the struggle between Britain and its American colonies.


II

While opposition to the Stamp Act was not as violent in Virginia as in several of her sister colonies to the north, it was nevertheless very forcibly expressed. Vessels continued to clear Virginia ports during the crisis, with each carrying a certificate noting that stamps were not available. Although trade suffered greatly during the winter of 1765-1766, almost all of the colony's merchants joined in the resistance to the legislation. All indications are that the merchant community of Alexandria solidly endorsed the movement to defeat the act. Writing from Whitehaven, England, William Ramsay rejoiced at the revocation of the stamp legislation. In his view the act "was repealed at the clamor the distress and importunity of the manufacturing towns in great Britain - nothing cou'd have put the importance of the Colonies to their Mother Country, in so clear a light. . . ." From this point forward it was clear in the minds of virtually all Virginians, as well as their fellow colonists in North America, that the British government could not tax them without their consent. Benjamin Franklin's

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skillful performance before the Committee of the Whole of the House of Commons in January, 1766, seems to have confused at least a few merchants in America, however. His remark before that body that he saw a "very great" difference between internal and external taxes is perhaps what led Harry Piper to imply three years later that the colonists would willingly submit to external taxation.

The passage by Parliament in 1767 of the Townshend Acts led to another show of resistance by the colonists. The movement to bar from the mainland colonies those articles taxed by Parliament (glass, lead, paper, paints, tea, and silk) spread gradually to Virginia. Meeting in the Raleigh Tavern in Williamsburg on May 17 and 18, 1769, the former burgesses of the colony agreed to a Nonimportation Association. Those who subscribed to the pact, which borrowed heavily from the Philadelphia Merchants Association of March, 1769, agreed not to import goods subject to a revenue duty (excepting only paper selling for eight shillings or less per ream); not to import a long series of luxury items from Britain or the European continent until the situation changed; not to

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buy slaves imported after November 1; and so on. No organizations were established by the associators to enforce the boycott.

Very little is known concerning the reaction of the Alexandria mercantile community to the Association of 1769. Harry Piper's Letter Book is the only remaining source in this area, and Piper's letters to Dixon and Littledale seem to be contradictory in part. In a letter dated June 8, 1769 in which he advised his employers of the pact, he wrote that "as I am no Importer of Goods, I have with a great number signed the Association, which perhaps you will think I might as well have let alone, . . ." However, on April 3, 1770 he noted that "very few of the Traders here have Signed the Association, . . ." Piper is less confusing regarding the extent to which the Association was supported by the local merchants. December, 1769 found him fearful that the agreement would "hurt Mr. Muir very much, as he understands the Scotch Factors here have all wrote for Goods as usual." The

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22 Rutland, Papers of George Mason, I, 94-96, 100-101, 103-5; Schlesinger, Colonial Merchants, 136-38; Selby, Chronology of Virginia, p. 9. The terms of the Association can be found in Van Schreeven, Revolutionary Virginia, I, pp. 73-77.

23 Piper Letter Book, June 8, 1769. The names of the other Alexandrians who signed the Association are not known. It is assumed that Piper was referring here to those merchants signing the Association.

24 Ibid., Apr. 3, 1770. Piper is referring to the Association of May, 1769, as the Virginia Nonimportation Association of 1770 was not signed until June 22 of that year.

25 Piper Letter Book, Dec. 18, 1769. John Muir sold the
Association had become totally ineffective by mid-May of 1770; in Piper's words, "I perceive all the Stores on this side [of the Potomac, presumably] have imported goods as usual, & hitherto no notice have been taken of them."²⁶

The collapse of the Association in Alexandria and the Potomac region duplicated events in the rest of Virginia. The voluntary nature of the pact certainly contributed to its demise. Piper's correspondence emphasizes the fact that a large number of merchants simply ignored the agreement, undercutting those who chose to honor it.²⁷

Although the 1769 Association failed ignominiously, it was resurrected in June of the following year and strengthened considerably in the process. A committee of inspection was authorized for each county; each was instructed to publish the names of all those violating the pact; and those merchants who refused to observe the agreement were to be boycotted.²⁸ Twelve Alexandria merchants were among those signing the new Association.²⁹

merchandise shipped by Dixon and Littledale to Alexandria; see above, pp. 83-84.

²⁶Piper Letter Book, May 12, 1770.


²⁸Schlesinger, Colonial Merchants, p. 198; Van Schreeven, Revolutionary Virginia, I, pp. 79-83. The latter source has the text of the agreement on the pages indicated.

²⁹They were Robert Adam, William Balmain, John Carlyle, Thomas Carson, John Dalton, George Gilpin, Jonathan Hall,
Writing several weeks after the adoption of the Association of 1770, Piper informed his Whitehaven employers that it "is almost generally Signed, & I dare say will be Strictly carried into execution. . . ." In forwarding a copy of the agreement, he cautioned Dixon and Littledale to take care not to violate its provisions. Those who ignored the Association would be singled out for retribution: "the Persons who ship the [oulawed] Goods, as well as the Importers[..] are exposed in Print by the Committees of Inspection." Piper made it abundantly clear in a letter dated near the end of September that the Fairfax County committee was operating with great vigilance.

As time passed, however, the Fairfax County committee grew increasingly lax in its enforcement of the Association. Piper reported to Whitehaven in mid-May 1771 that the latest ships' manifests had not been examined. Early in June he remarked that "there seems to be little or no regard paid to the Association. . . .," and advised his employers to ship goods "without taking any notice of it." By August, 1771, what he termed "the D——d Association" had been formally


Piper Letter Book, Aug. 2, 1770; see also his letter dated July 26, 1770, and Fitzpatrick, Writings of George Washington, III, 21.

Piper Letter Book, Sept. 28, 1770; cf. Schlesinger, Colonial Merchants, p. 244. The committee in Fairfax County was composed of John Dalton, George Mason, George Washington, Peter Wagener, and John West. The first three men were Alexandria trustees.

Piper Letter Book, Feb. 9, May 13, and June 4, 1771.

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The Association in Fairfax County, which started so well in the second half of 1770, did not collapse because of apathy on the part of its members. Its committee of five demonstrated their vigilance when on April 16, 1771, they inspected two consignments of goods shipped from Glasgow to Alexander Henderson of Colchester and William Balmain of Alexandria. Both Henderson and Balmain, who were cleared of violating the Association, complained about the loose enforcement of the agreement in the Chesapeake colonies. They noted that those merchants such as themselves who honored the pact were hurting both their customers and their business. Henderson and Balmain insisted that survival dictated their abandonment of the Association ("however contrary to their own sentiments," as the two men put it), excepting only those articles such as tea which were being taxed. 34

None of those on the Fairfax County committee challenged the position taken by Henderson and Balmain. The committee members acknowledged that the pact was being regularly violated outside Fairfax County. It made no sense, they concluded, for the local merchants to be placed at a competitive disadvantage in this matter. 35 Although the

33Ibid., Aug. 3, 1771. Even after the General nonimportation agreement was terminated by the Virginia associators on July 18, 1771, those items still taxed by parliament remained outlawed; see Thomson, "The Merchant in Virginia," p. 334.

34Virginia Gazette (Rind), July 18, 1771.

35Ibid.
issue faded in the summer of 1771 with the abrogation of the
general nonimportation agreement, an important lesson had
been learned by the Fairfax County associators and their
fellow colonists: no agreement of this sort would work
unless it was accompanied by sanctions aimed at those who
violated its provisions. Further, the sanctions would have
to be vigorously and universally enforced in order to bring
about the desired results. The Continental Association of
1774 would prove that the colonists had profited from their
mistakes.

Many Virginians blamed the merchant class for the collapse
in 1771 of the Nonimportation Association. The passage
by Parliament in 1774 of the Coercive Acts, and the vigorous
response by the Virginians and their neighbors to this
provocation, led inexorably to a crisis over the question of
loyalty in every merchant community.

News of the passage of the Boston Port Act reached
Virginia in the spring of 1774. Deeply troubled by the
draconic legislation, Virginians moved swiftly to establish
a commercial boycott that would force the mother country to
reconsider its action. The inhabitants of Fairfax County
held a general meeting on July 18 at the court house in
Alexandria to consider the most effective course of resistance.


37 The events of 1774 in the colony as a whole are discussed
thoroughly in Thomson, "The Merchant in Virginia," pp. 348-60,
and in Coakley, "Virginia Commerce during the American
A set of resolutions was adopted by those attending the meeting. Among other points, it called for the selection of a congress of all the colonies "to concert a General & uniform plan, for the Defence and preservation of our Common rights, ..."; for a boycott starting September first of virtually all British goods; for Virginia merchants not to advance the prices of their goods; for them to take an oath binding them to enforce the boycott; and for the temporary prohibition of the slave trade to the colony.\(^{38}\)

The meeting adopting the Fairfax Resolves was, according to George Washington, its chairman and presiding officer, virtually unanimous in its approval of the measures.\(^{39}\) Yet the lack of opposition to the Resolves was deceptive; Bryan Fairfax wrote that there were "a great many" present who opposed the action taken there, but who refused to speak out "because they thought it would be to no Purpose."\(^{40}\) John Dalton, an Alexandria merchant and trustee, was one of those who disliked the Resolves. Fairfax reported that Dalton felt that Parliament was forced to proceed as it had in the Boston Port Act. Alexander Henderson, a prominent Colchester merchant, told Fairfax that other, stern measures by the

\(^{38}\)The resolves are reproduced in Rutland, Papers of George Mason, I, 201-9, and in Van Schreeven, Revolutionary Virginia, I, pp. 127-33.


\(^{40}\)Bryan Fairfax to George Washington, Aug. 5, 1774, in Fitzpatrick, Writings of George Washington, III, 237. Bryan Fairfax was the son of William Fairfax and the brother-in-law of John Carlyle. In 1789 he became the minister of Christ Church in Alexandria.
British "might be necessary considering the factious conduct of the people of Boston." Those were private conversations, however, and were transmitted in confidence by Fairfax to George Washington. Apparently no Alexandrian or resident of Fairfax County was willing to speak publicly against the measures.

The Fairfax Resolves served as the model for the Virginia Association which was drafted in August, 1774, by the First Virginia Convention. The Virginia Association was in turn very influential in determining the nature of the Continental Association established on October 20, 1774, by the First Continental Congress. The Continental Association called for a boycott of British goods effective December 1, 1774; provided for the termination of the slave trade after that date; stipulated that nonexportation of goods to Britain, Ireland, and the West Indies would begin on September 10, 1775, unless the offending British legislation was rescinded; and called for the creation of local committees in every county, city, and town of the united provinces to enforce the Association.

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41 Ibid.

42 The terms of the Virginia Association are reproduced in Van Schreven, Revolutionary Virginia, I, pp. 231-35. A useful précis of the Association can be found in Schlesinger, Colonial Merchants, pp. 368-70.

294.
Committees were quickly established throughout Virginia
to implement the Association.

The agreement was vigorously

enforced in the colony during the fall of 1774 and the
following winter.

Few men were rash enough to try to

circumvent the pact or even to criticise it.

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Virginia's

harassed governor wrote in December, 1774 that "the Associa­
tions. . • are now enforcing throughout this country with the
greatest rigour."

He added that the local committees dealt

harshly with those who refused to comply with the agreement*
they invited "the vengeance of an outrageous and lawless mob
to be exercised upon the unhappy victims." ^
The violence that accompanied the enforcement of the
Association in Virginia was visible proof of the intense
emotional and intellectual involvement of those opposing the
crown.

Thaddeus Tate has observed that the basic issue in

the coming of the Revolution in Virginia was the conflict
over constitutional rights. 46 Britain's attempt to reduce
44
Coakley, "V: ginia Commerce during the American
Revolution," pp. r and 98? Schlesinger, Colonial Merchants,
pp. 535-36; Larry ' vman, "The Virginia County Committees of
Safety, 1774-1776," /irginia Magazine of History and Biography,
4c
-'Peter Force, ed., American Archives* Consisting of a
Collection of Authentick Records, State Paoers, Debates, and
Letters and Other Notices of Publick Affairs, the Whole Forming
a Documentary History of the Origin' and Progress of the North
American Colonies; of the Causes and Accomplishment of the
American Revolution; and of the Constitution of Government for
the United States, to the Final Ratification Thereof. In Six
Series (Washington* Published by M. St. Clair Clark and Peter
Force under authority of an act of Congress, 1837-1853)* ^th
Ser., I, 1061-62 (Lord Dunmore to the Earl of Dartmouth, Dec.
24, 1774).
^Thaddeus W. Tate, Jr., "The Coming of the Revolution
in Virginia* Britain's Challenge to Virginia's Ruling Class,

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the power of a firmly entrenched ruling class in Virginia was seen as part of a sinister plot to destroy freedom in both England and America. The Coercive Acts provided the final proof that the British government had embarked on a carefully drawn plan to enslave the colonists. Writing to an unnamed English correspondent in the summer of 1774, William Ramsay expressed a view widely held by his fellow countrymen:

We are astonished on this side the Water that you seem so unconcern'd at the gigantic strides Arbitrary Power is making amongst you. It walks forth at noon day in great pomp and her leaders are caressed Whilst they are destroying the best constitution under Heaven.

He concluded with the observation that "a people so united as we are, are not easily enslaved." The controversy within the empire was not simply an abstract question which men could discuss dispassionately. Virginians were prepared to take whatever measures were necessary in order to avoid enslavement by Britain.

Insuring the success of the Association in Fairfax

1763-1776," William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd Ser., XIX (July, 1962), 340-43. Isaac Harrell's interpretation, which is in basic agreement with that of Tate, also stresses the importance of economic factors; see his Loyalism in Virginia: Chapters in the Economic History of the Revolution (Durham: Duke University Press, 1926), pp. 5-6 and 29.


County would require both the vigilance of the local committee and the cooperation of every county resident. The mercantile community of Alexandria constituted a problem of unknown dimensions in the smooth functioning of the pact. In retrospect it is obvious that there were several factors impelling the merchants of the Potomac town either to uphold the Whig position in Virginia or to remain neutral in the controversy. One of these was the vigorous enforcement of the Association in Fairfax County.

It was generally understood in Alexandria that the lax enforcement characterizing the associations of 1769 and 1770 would not be repeated. John Fowler, an Alexandria merchant, violated the Association early in 1775 when he instructed his employees John Blatt, Jr. and Charles Marshall to sell a consignment of goods in the colony at a mark-up of one hundred percent. Informed by John Peyton that this violated the Association, Marshall foolishly replied that "every man

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49 Although the identities of those serving on the Fairfax committee are not known, they may have been the same men who served on the committee enforcing the Fairfax Resolves of 1774. Among the latter group were six prominent Alexandria merchants: Robert Adam, John Carlyle, John Dalton, George Gilpin, William Hartshorne, and William Ramsay. Van Schreven, Revolutionary Virginia, I, p. 133.

50 Piper Letter Book, Nov. 11, 1774; Bowman, "Virginia County Committees," 325, 328, 336-37; and Cresswell, Journal of Nicholas Cresswell, pp. 43-44 (Oct. 19, 1774). Cresswell's extreme Anglophilia requires that his comments concerning the Revolutionary crisis in Alexandria be taken very cautiously. He traveled to the Chesapeake in 1774 from his native Darbyshire. Only 24, he planned to settle in the vicinity of Alexandria if things worked out in his favor. They did not, and after labelling his opponents "Presbyterian rascals," "scoundrels," and members of "the mobility," he escaped in 1777 to his native England. See Cresswell, pp. 44, 57-58, 128, and 138.
had a right to sell his goods for as much as He could get," and added "that the country was nothing to me, and that I expected no benefit from it." He subsequently apologized in the *Virginia Gazette*, noting that he had signed the Association and would adhere closely to it in the future. Fowler's punishment, if any, was not indicated. Although there may have been other instances of Alexandria merchants contravening the Association, no evidence along these lines has survived.

The goodwill so carefully cultivated by the merchant class was another factor which helped to neutralize support for the crown by that group. Many of the town merchants had labored to win the patronage of the local planters. Over a period of years they had built up a clientele of regular customers. A reckless move or a thoughtless remark might result in the destruction of a close business relationship. The wiser course would be to wait for the storm brought on by the Coercive Acts to blow over, just as its predecessors had done.

The large numbers of Virginians indebted to them also militated against rash action by the merchants of Alexandria. The amount of credit extended by British firms to their customers in Virginia grew dramatically in the generation preceding the Revolution. In 1764 John Glassford of Glasgow estimated that the merchants of that city had £50,000 outstanding in the Chesapeake region. That debt did not

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51 *Virginia Gazette* (Rind and Pinkney), Jan. 19, 1775
contract over the next ten years.\textsuperscript{52}

The British financial crisis of 1771-1773 led those mercantile houses carrying American debtors to instruct their factors to collect as many debts as possible. The Virginia factors had to proceed gingerly for fear of alienating their regular customers.\textsuperscript{53} Difficult under the best of circumstances, the task was rendered almost impossible by the lapse of the Fee Bill in April, 1774. From that time forward the Virginia justices refused to hear suits involving the recovery of mercantile debts.\textsuperscript{54} The debts owed to those British houses doing business in Alexandria were anything but inconsequential. The Glasgow firm of Colin Dunlop and Sons and Company reported in 1798 that those trading at its Alexandria store before the Revolution had contracted debts totalling £5,209.11.4 sterling. The firm of Glassford and Henderson certified after the Revolution that those in debt at their Alexandria store owed £3,735.18.5 sterling on August 1, 1776.\textsuperscript{55} Those Alexandria merchants attempting before the Revolution to collect money owed them had to proceed very circumspectly. They were not the kind of men


\textsuperscript{55}P.R.O. T.79/23 (unpaged MS dated Sept. 14, 1798; C. Dunlop and Sons); P.R.O. T. 79/23 (unpaged, undated MS headed "American Loyalist Claims": Glassford and Henderson).
who rallied to the Loyalist cause during the crisis.56

A number of the local merchants were drawn toward the Whig position because of their strong emotional attachment to Alexandria. Men such as Robert Adam, John Carlyle, John Dalton, John Muir, Harry Piper, and William Ramsay may not have come to northern Virginia with the intention of settling permanently, but that was the way things turned out. They were no longer young men by the 1770s. Alexandria was their home; it would have been terribly difficult for them to leave and start over again in another part of the empire. Further, the fact that men who were numbered among the leaders of their community chose to support the patriot cause must have had a demoralizing effect on the town Loyalists.

The factors discussed to this point seem to have had the effect of depleting the ranks of those Alexandria merchants who supported the Loyalist cause. Violent methods were used to silence those who remained obdurate in their defense of the crown or who attempted to violate the terms of the Association.

Nicholas Cresswell noted in his journal that physical coercion was being employed in Alexandria as early as October, 1774 by patriots against merchants found guilty of violating the Association. He wrote that some of the merchants "have been tarred and feathered, others had their property burnt and destroyed by the populace."57 Cresswell noted in Alexandria

56 Harry Piper found it virtually impossible to collect debts from 1774 on; see his Letter Book, Aug. 31, 1774, and Apr. 4 and 7, May 10, and June 6, 1775.

57 Cresswell, Journal of Nicholas Cresswell, pp. 43-44

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in February, 1775 that "it is as much as a person's life is worth to speak disrespectfully of the Congress." He added that tarring and feathering were common punishments for avowed Tories.

Several months after the Association had taken effect (the exact date is not known), John F. D. Smyth, a loyal Englishman, visited the Potomac town. He found that

Although there were a number of gentlemen of loyal principles in this place with whom I was very well acquainted, yet I could not associate with them, nor could we even converse together only with the utmost caution and privacy, lest I should be discovered, and we all should fall victims to the lawless intemperance and barbarity of an ignorant frantic mob.59

Smyth's true sentiments were soon discovered. He wrote that he and George Mason were dining quietly in Alexandria when the latter suddenly "desired me to take particular notice of an unfortunate loyalist, tarred and feathered by the mob, who were that instant carrying him along as a public spectacle, emphatically observing that it nearly concerned me." Smyth narrowly escaped the same punishment in town later that evening.60

It is apparent from the comments of men such as Bryan Fairfax and John Smyth that king and parliament had a number

(entry dated Oct. 19, 1774).

58 Ibid., p. 57; see also pp. 46 and 128.


60 Smyth, Tour in the United States, II, pp. 205-7 (Smyth's italics).
of supporters in Alexandria. Yet no Loyalist movement emerged in the colonial town. Any manifestations of loyalty to the crown were ruthlessly suppressed by men grimly determined to avoid the fate of their Negro slaves. In reality, the Tories in Alexandria never had a chance against their Whig rivals. Although an exact count is not possible, the former group certainly did not approach the patriot force numerically. As was the case elsewhere in Virginia, the Alexandria Loyalists were either unable or unwilling to organize against their opponents. In the end, the king's supporters in the Potomac town and in the colony as a whole were little more than a nuisance to the patriots.\textsuperscript{61}

With the outbreak of fighting in April, 1775 the merchants of Alexandria had to decide whether to leave or to remain in Virginia. The town's small group of true merchants, some of its secondary traders, and a few of its more substantial factors stayed where they were. These men shared certain characteristics: all were long-time town residents, most had profited during their stay in Alexandria, and virtually all had become involved in local government. Among them were Robert Adam, John Carlyle, John Dalton, Jonathan Hall, John Muir, Harry Piper, and William Ramsay. It is probable that many of the others, and particularly the factors of Scottish firms, left the colony. Unfortunately, we do not know the identities of those who emigrated. A petition

drafted in 1787 to the Virginia House of Delegates and signed by eighty-one Alexandria merchants bears the signatures of only eight men known to be active in the town prior to American independence. The Alexandria economy was significantly affected by the revolutionary crisis, and that must surely have played an important part in the decisions of the local factors to stay or to leave.

The impact of the struggle between Britain and her American colonies on the economy of Alexandria can best be analyzed if it is divided into the categories of export and import commodities. The trade in tobacco, long a mainstay of the town's export business, was sharply reduced during this period.

Harry Piper, who was one of the principal tobacco buyers in Alexandria (see above, pages 71-83), found it extremely difficult to do business by the mid-1770s. Only small amounts of tobacco suitable for export were available locally in the fall of 1773. In the spring of 1774 Piper wrote that the local planters "appear to be determined to plant very little this Year." He surmised that the decline in tobacco production was due to the low price of the leaf and to a substantial increase in the price of wheat. Piper assumed that tobacco planters in the Potomac region would either refuse to grow any more of that crop until the

62 "Inspection of Wheat," William and Mary Quarterly, 2nd Ser., II (October, 1922), 288-91.
price rose or would switch over to cultivating wheat.  

Piper's fears were realized during the rest of 1774. He wrote his employers that tobacco was scarce in the region, and little was being planted. Table 3 on pages 73-74 shows that the resourceful factor managed somehow to ship an extraordinary amount of tobacco to Whitehaven in 1774: 722 hogsheads of tobacco weighing 737,574 pounds were dispatched. However, Piper made only one shipment in 1775 when the Wells cleared for Whitehaven carrying 340 hogsheads of tobacco weighing 358,805 pounds. The advent of non-exportation on September 10, 1775 greatly disrupted the tobacco trade, as it closed the traditional market for Chesapeake tobacco. The British tobacco fleet would not return to America until after the war. In the meantime, the small amount of local tobacco that was shipped to places such as Martinique could not begin to fill the void created by the Revolution.

In contrast to tobacco, the export trade in small grains and flour continued to do well during the years leading up to the Revolution. The expansion of the grain trade in late colonial Alexandria was discussed above on pages 137-39; it

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64 Piper Letter Book. Sept. 26 and Oct. 24, 1773, and Mar. 12 (the quoted passage) and Apr. 27 and 28, 1774.

65 Ibid., Aug. 9 and Dec. 20, 1774. See also his letters dated May 10 and Dec. 5, 1775.

66 See Table 3, p. 74 of this dissertation.

67 Coakley, "Virginia Commerce during the American Revolution," p. 115.

68 See Table 6, pp. 145-46 of this dissertation.
appears that this aspect of the town's export business was the crucial element in maintaining the health of the local economy. 69

Further, the trade in grain and flour was not affected by the events of the mid-1770s to nearly the same extent as was that in tobacco. The Continental Association's ban on exports after September 10, 1775 did not apply to the exportation of grain to southern Europe - and that region was the primary market at the time for Chesapeake wheat. 70 The loss of the British market was an unpleasant event for the Alexandria firm of Jenifer and Hooe, but it was hardly fatal. The company could very likely find other markets to take up the slack. In fact, in the summer and fall of 1775 the Continental Congress encouraged those exporting produce to seek markets in various parts of the world in order to facilitate the war effort. 71 The firm of Jenifer and Hooe did its share when in 1775 and 1776, at the order of the Province of Maryland, it shipped large quantities of flour and other commodities to Martinique. 72

Less is known about the effect of the Revolutionary crisis on the import trade. However, it seems clear that those Alexandria merchants dealing in imported goods faced

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69 See Tables 7, 9, and 10 on pp. 149, 155-56, and 157-58 of this dissertation.

70 Saladino, "Maryland and Virginia Wheat Trade," pp. 150-51; Table 8, p. 151 of this dissertation.


72 Table 6, pp. 145-46 of this dissertation.
difficult times in the 1770s. Harry Piper reported in mid-
summer, 1773 that town real estate prices had dropped
sharply. They were down even further a year later, which
led him to reflect that in "these troublesome times, People
are more backward in buying; . . ."73 By October, 1774 Piper
advised Dixon and Littledale that "affairs are in such
confusion here, that nothing will sell at present-" Two
months later he urged his employers not to send any goods to
Alexandria until further notice. Finally, in September,
1775 he wrote that the local economy was as stagnant as
ever.74

Piper was undoubtedly trying to give Dixon and Littledale
an accurate picture of the Alexandria economy, but his
assessment is a little gloomy. Table 18 of this dissertation,
which indicates the number of Fairfax Parish residents
receiving poor relief from 1765 through 1776, actually shows
a slight decline in the parish poor in the later years of
this period. Although the Fairfax Parish poor allotment
increased in 1776, this may be just an aberration.75 The
final years of the colonial period were difficult ones for
many Alexandria merchants, but there is no evidence that the
townspeople as a whole suffered during this time. Yet all
of the citizens of the Potomac town who espoused the Whig
cause were threatened by the deteriorating political

74 Ibid., Oct. 11 and Dec. 20, 1774; Sept. 1, 1775.
75 See Table 20 of this dissertation.
situation.

The growing crisis gave impetus to efforts to strengthen Alexandria's defenses. During 1775 George Washington drilled the local militia company with increasing frequency outside the town. The townspeople greatly feared that a British army, led by Lord Dunmore or General Gage or another commander, would march on Alexandria. The town was in a state of near-panic that fall when stories that a large British force was about to move on Alexandria swept through the region. The destruction at that time of Falmouth by the British convinced many Alexandrians of the wisdom of moving temporarily to the interior. Lund Washington reported to General Washington in January, 1776 that women, children, and many valuable goods were being carried from the town. He added that although few of the local militiamen were armed, all were ready for a fight.

The so-called "Connolly Plot," which could have resulted in the destruction of Alexandria, heightened tension still further. The British plan called for John Connolly, the crown's governor at Pittsburgh, to raise a battalion of Loyalists in the western regions. He and his

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forces would then march from Pittsburgh to Alexandria in the spring of 1776, where they would join forces with Lord Dunmore's men. Fortunately, Connolly and several of his men were captured late in November, 1775. Perhaps it was the news of the plot that led the Virginia Committee of Safety to station three companies of regular soldiers in Alexandria. The men were replaced in mid-June of 1776 by two militia companies from Loudoun County.

Although attempts were made by the patriots to fortify the river below Alexandria, little of a positive nature was accomplished. The Potomac was simply too wide and too deep to permit the creation of an effective defensive screen. It was the town's good fortune that the British did not test its defenses in the months preceding the Declaration of Independence.

Alexandria was a well-established town when the struggle between Britain and her colonies entered its final stages. During the last years of the colonial period a number of its most prominent citizens had joined with others outside the town in an attempt to open the mountain and transmontane

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81Fitzpatrick, Writings of George Washington, IV, 200-201; Palmer, Calendar of Virginia State Papers, VIII, 110; Rutland, Papers of George Mason, I, 264-65, 267-68; Virginia Gazette (Purdie), Feb. 23, 1776.
regions to the west to settlement and commerce. The fact that their efforts did not succeed was due in large part to the coming of the Revolution.

The period leading up to the Revolution proved to be a severe testing time for the town merchants. Their responses to the trade boycotts of the 1760s and 1770s were observed closely by the local patriot groups. It seems clear that many of the Alexandria merchants privately viewed with distaste the positions taken by the town Whigs. This dislike for what some of the merchants characterized as extremism must have been widespread by the 1770s, as the trade disruptions of those years left few merchants unscathed.

Yet even the colonial reaction to the Intolerable Acts of 1774 did not result in public opposition by the mercantile community of Alexandria. In fact, very few men within the town declared their allegiance to the crown or even questioned the wisdom of the Whig position. For a variety of reasons Loyalism was never a viable movement in the Potomac settlement. With the advent of war the merchant community seems finally to have divided openly; the more prominent and politically active merchants remained in Virginia, while many of the factors of British firms probably emigrated.

The approach of the Revolution had an unsettling effect on the Alexandria economy. The tobacco merchants were hard hit by the events of the 1770s, while those men who exported flour and grain did much better. The import trade was stagnant during these years, but the townspeople as a group were apparently not seriously affected.
Alexandria's preparations for war were somewhat uneven in nature; fortunately, the British remained well away from the Potomac community in the period prior to American independence.

III

Looking back over the first twenty-seven years of Alexandria's existence, several notable points stand out. One is the rapidity with which the Potomac town grew. Consisting in 1749 of little more than a group of huts clustered around a tobacco warehouse, Alexandria had become the leading town of the Potomac River basin by the end of the colonial period. In fact, it was more than twice the size of its nearest rivals, Colchester and Dumfries.

A second significant point is the importance of economic factors in the development of Alexandria. The primary reason for the town's existence was trade; its commercial activity involved the shipment of tobacco, foodstuffs, and other commodities and the import of a variety of processed goods. The town was superbly situated to dominate the trade of northern Virginia, and its growth paralleled the opening to settlement and cultivation of the colony's Piedmont and Valley regions. By the end of the colonial period Alexandria was both the administrative (Fairfax County) and religious (Fairfax Parish) center of its local area. Yet without trade it would probably have been no larger than either Colchester or Dumfries.

Commercial activity made Alexandria into the leading
town of northern Virginia, yet the composition of its merchant community limited its possibilities for growth. The Potomac community had only a handful of true merchants. Most of those residing there who have been called merchants were in reality factors of firms located away from the Chesapeake. The fact that the decision-making centers for its trades were situated away from the town had a stultifying effect on its development. It meant that Alexandria would not achieve a diversified service, industrial, or maritime capacity such as that found in the larger American cities. However, while the river settlement was basically a shipping and distribution center for goods, it was nevertheless a very prosperous town.

Alexandria's limited size (its population was a little under two thousand by the 1770s) seemed to contribute to its stability. Also important in this regard was the fact that Alexandrians were a part of the deferential society characteristic of eighteenth-century Virginia. The politics of deference required that the leading men of the town take a hand in local governance. The town Board of Trustees was dominated by local merchants and planters who did their best to oversee the orderly expansion of their community and to enforce the colonial laws and local ordinances.

The cultural and social growth of early Alexandria can best be understood if they are examined in the light of the existing Virginia society. In no other area of the colonial town's development are the traditional elements of life within Virginia more clearly seen. In some ways Alexandria
on the eve of the Revolution was a distinct, and perhaps unique, urban center; in other ways, it was little more than a reflection of the existing order in Virginia.

Alexandria made several contributions to the American cause during the Revolutionary War. In addition to functioning as a collecting point for foodstuffs, the town became an important flour-milling center.\(^{82}\) It may also have served as a place of detention for captured soldiers; a number of prisoners of war escaped from the town jail early in 1777.\(^{83}\) A hospital in which American soldiers were treated was maintained in the community during the war. Doctors Sheubel Pratt and William Rumney provided medical care there, as did a Doctor Rickman. Many Virginia and North Carolina troops died at the hospital after they were inoculated under the supervision of Rickman.\(^{84}\)

Although the Alexandria economy was hurt by the war, the town recovered quickly after the fighting ended.\(^{85}\) Its flour-milling facilities expanded rapidly, as did the number of town merchants engaged in the grain and flour export business. In 1787 eighty-one Alexandria merchants petitioned the Virginia House of Delegates asking for the appointment of only one Inspector of Flour and one Inspector of Bread at

\(^{83}\) Virginia Gazette (Purdie), May 30, 1777.
\(^{84}\) Blanton, Medicine in Virginia, p. 283.
each shipping point within the state. The town's population grew steadily after the war; 2,748 were resident there at the time of the first census in 1790. Alexandria's government became elective at the time of the town's incorporation in 1778, reflecting the democratic spirit of the times.

By the post-Revolutionary period the Alexandria economy was heavily dependent on the shipment of flour and grain and on the importation and distribution of processed goods. Even the collapse of the tobacco market after 1785 did not seem to affect the town. For a number of years after 1790 the Shenandoah Valley was one of the most important wheat and flour producing regions of the South, and prodigious quantities of foodstuffs grown there were shipped through the river town.

Yet the future, which had appeared so promising to Alexandrians before 1800, began to darken with the advent of the new century. The Quasi-War with France resulted in the capture of a number of vessels owned by the town's citizens,

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87 See Table 2 of this dissertation.

88 Teaford, Municipal Revolution in America, pp. 47, 64-65, and 75-76.


90 Mitchell, "Upper Shenandoah Valley," p. 373, and "Shenandoah Valley Frontier," 470, 473, and Figure 6 on 482.
and the trade blockade during the War of 1812 hurt the local economy. A severe yellow fever epidemic ravaged the town in 1803 and was followed by an outbreak of cholera in 1832. Alexandria also experienced disastrous fires in 1810 and 1824. Probably most important over the long run, the town's share of the wheat and flour trade began to decline relative to that of its rivals. The failure of the Potomac Canal project to link Alexandria with the new wheat producing regions west of the Appalachians was more than just a symbolic defeat. It meant that the town's merchants would be limited to processing and shipping the grain and flour produced in its immediate vicinity and in the Virginia Piedmont and Valley regions. Alexandria's significance as a port town thus diminished as the areas from which she drew her primary export commodities became less important in American agriculture. By the 1840s the river town was just one of a number of pleasant, and unexceptional, northern Virginia communities.

# APPENDIX A

## INITIAL OWNERS OF ALEXANDRIA LOTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lot No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Occupation, if known</th>
<th>Date of Indenture</th>
<th>Price (in Current Money)</th>
<th>Date, if Lot Forfeited</th>
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<td>Merchant</td>
<td>9-20-49</td>
<td>11.5.9</td>
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<td>?</td>
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<td>Date of Indenture</td>
<td>Price (in current money)</td>
<td>Date, if lot forfeited</td>
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<td>9-20-49</td>
<td>14.10.3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>John Alexander</td>
<td>Gentleman</td>
<td>9-20-49</td>
<td>16.2.6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Adam Stephen</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3-28-52</td>
<td>12.7.3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Laurence Washington</td>
<td>Planter</td>
<td>9-20-49</td>
<td>33.6.6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Laurence Washington</td>
<td>Planter</td>
<td>9-20-49</td>
<td>17.4.0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>George Mason</td>
<td>Planter</td>
<td>3-28-52</td>
<td>7.10.6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>William Strother</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3-28-52</td>
<td>7.10.6</td>
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</tr>
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<td>55</td>
<td>George Mason</td>
<td>Planter</td>
<td>3-28-52</td>
<td>8.12.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>William Fairfax</td>
<td>Planter</td>
<td>3-28-52</td>
<td>18.16.3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>William Fairfax</td>
<td>Planter</td>
<td>3-28-52</td>
<td>18.16.3</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>58</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>John Peyton</td>
<td>Gentleman</td>
<td>3-28-52</td>
<td>7.10.6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>John Peyton</td>
<td>Gentleman</td>
<td>9-20-49</td>
<td>8.12.0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Occupation, if known</td>
<td>Date of Indenture</td>
<td>Price (in Current Money)</td>
<td>Date, if Lot forfeited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Rev. John Moncure</td>
<td>Minister</td>
<td>3-28-52</td>
<td>0.5.9</td>
<td>9-9-54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>Willoughby Newton</td>
<td>Gentleman</td>
<td>11-20-49</td>
<td>20.19.3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Willoughby Newton</td>
<td>Gentleman</td>
<td>11-20-49</td>
<td>20.19.3</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Augustine Washington</td>
<td>Gentleman</td>
<td>3-28-52</td>
<td>8.1.3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>Augustine Washington</td>
<td>Gentleman</td>
<td>3-28-52</td>
<td>8.1.3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>William Henry Terrett</td>
<td>Planter</td>
<td>9-20-49</td>
<td>5.7.6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
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<td>67</td>
<td>William Henry Terrett</td>
<td>Planter</td>
<td>9-20-49</td>
<td>5.7.6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>Hugh West, Jr.</td>
<td>Attorney</td>
<td>8-21-52</td>
<td>4.6.0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>Nathaniel Harrison</td>
<td>Gentleman</td>
<td>3-28-52</td>
<td>24.19.6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>Nathaniel Harrison</td>
<td>Gentleman</td>
<td>3-28-52</td>
<td>24.19.6</td>
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<td>71</td>
<td>Henry Fitzhugh</td>
<td>Gentleman</td>
<td>3-28-52</td>
<td>17.4.0</td>
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<td>72</td>
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<td>73</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>74</td>
<td>Pearson Terrett</td>
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<td>8-21-52</td>
<td>5.7.6</td>
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<td>75</td>
<td>Pearson Terrett</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8-21-52</td>
<td>5.7.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>Hugh West, Jr.</td>
<td>Attorney</td>
<td>8-21-52</td>
<td>4.6.0</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>Nathaniel Chapman</td>
<td>Gentleman</td>
<td>3-28-52</td>
<td>30.7.4½</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>Nathaniel Chapman</td>
<td>Gentleman</td>
<td>3-28-52</td>
<td>30.7.4½</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>Ralph Wormley</td>
<td>Planter</td>
<td>3-28-52</td>
<td>10.15.0</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>John West, Sr.</td>
<td>Planter</td>
<td>8-20-52</td>
<td>6.9.0</td>
<td>9-9-54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>John West, Sr.</td>
<td>Planter</td>
<td>8-20-52</td>
<td>6.9.0</td>
<td>9-9-55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Occupation, if known</td>
<td>Date of Indenture</td>
<td>Price (in Current Money)</td>
<td>Date, if Lot Forfeited</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>Giles Rogers</td>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>6-25-50</td>
<td>6.9.0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>Giles Rogers</td>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>6-25-50</td>
<td>6.9.0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>Francis Hagus and</td>
<td>Blacksmith (Hough)</td>
<td>9-20-52</td>
<td>4.6.0</td>
<td>-</td>
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</table>

Source: Fairfax County Deed Books, 1749-1760. Deeds for twenty-one of the lots sold are missing. They are probably included in a 137 page gap in the Deed Books. The break covers the period from Nov. 10, 1752 to June 19, 1753. No sales of lots by the trustees from the initial block of eighty-four are recorded in the Deed Books following this break.
# APPENDIX B

**ALEXANDRIA TRUSTEES, 1749-1778**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Period of Trusteeship</th>
<th>Other Offices Held</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robert Adam</td>
<td>1756-1778</td>
<td>1(1758-1778)</td>
<td>Merchant (partner, firm of Carlyle and Adam, wheat and tobacco agents, 1760)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerard Alexander</td>
<td>1748-1761</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Merchant; Militia lieutenant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philip Alexander</td>
<td>1748-1754</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Attorney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Carlyle</td>
<td>1748-1778</td>
<td>1(1750-1778); 2</td>
<td>Merchant (partner, firm of Carlyle and Dalton, 1744-1777); Militia colonel; Commissary for Ohio expedition, 1754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josias Clapham</td>
<td>1753-1754</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Conway</td>
<td>1778-1778</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Merchant; Militia captain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Dalton</td>
<td>1750-1774</td>
<td>1(1757); 2, 3(1765-1773)</td>
<td>Merchant (partner, firm of Carlyle and Dalton, 1744-1777); ordinary keeper; Militia captain; Fairfax Parish Churchwarden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Digges</td>
<td>1761-1765</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George William Fairfax</td>
<td>1748-1778?</td>
<td>1(1749-1773); 4d</td>
<td>Planter; Militia colonel; Fairfax County Burgess (1756-1758); Virginia Council member (1768-1773)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord Thomas Fairfax</td>
<td>1748-1777</td>
<td>1(1749-1769)</td>
<td>Planter; Proprietor of Northern Neck of Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Period of Trusteeship</td>
<td>Other Offices Held</td>
<td>Remarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Fairfax</td>
<td>1748-1756</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Planter; Militia lieutenant; Prince William County Burgess (1742-1743); Virginia Council member (1743-1757)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Fleming</td>
<td>1765-1778</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Shipbuilder and shipfitter (1763—1778)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan Hall</td>
<td>1770-1774</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Hunter</td>
<td>1754-1765</td>
<td>1(1758-1763)</td>
<td>Merchant; Army Commissary-General, French and Indian War; Militia colonel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Johnston</td>
<td>1752-1766</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Attorney; Militia captain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Kirkpatrick</td>
<td>1765-1767</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Merchant; Secretary to Col. George Washington (1755)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert McCrea</td>
<td>1778-1778</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Merchant (in firm of McCrea and Mease)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Mason</td>
<td>1754-1776</td>
<td>1(1749-1776); 2; 4</td>
<td>Planter; Militia colonel; Truro Parish Churchwarden (1760—1771); Fairfax County Burgess (1758-1761); Fairfax County Delegate to Va. House of Delegates (1777-1778)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Osborne</td>
<td>1748-1749</td>
<td>1(1749)</td>
<td>Profession unknown; Militia major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Pagan</td>
<td>1748-1752</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Merchant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry Piper</td>
<td>1763-1778</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Merchant (employee of Whitehaven, England firm of Dixon and Littledale)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Period of Trusteeship</td>
<td>Other Offices Held</td>
<td>Remarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Ramsay</td>
<td>1748-1778</td>
<td>1(1749-1778); 2</td>
<td>Merchant (factor for Whitehaven firm of W. and T. Gilpin, and partner of J. Dixon; see Appendix D below); Overseer of Alexandria Academy (1756-1760); Lord Mayor of Alexandria (1761)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Washington</td>
<td>1766-1778</td>
<td>1(1768-1778); 2; 4</td>
<td>Planter, Fairfax County Burgess (1759-1774); Virginia Delegate to First (1774) and Second (1775) Continental Congresses; Comm. General, Continental Army (1775-1783)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawrence Washington</td>
<td>1748-1752</td>
<td>1(1750-1752)</td>
<td>Planter, Militia major, Fairfax County Burgess (1742-1749)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugh West, Sr.</td>
<td>1748-1756</td>
<td>1(1754-1756); 4</td>
<td>Attorney, Fairfax County Burgess (1752-1754)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a1: Fairfax County Justice of the Peace, followed in parentheses by years of active service (during period 1749-1778).

b2: Member of Fairfax Committee of Safety.

c3: Fairfax Parish Vestryman.

d4: Truro Parish Vestryman.
APPENDIX B—Continued

## APPENDIX C

**ROBERT CARTER OF NOMINI HALL'S LIST OF MERCHANTS AND FACTORS RESIDENT IN ALEXANDRIA, MARCH, 1775**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Trade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robert Hooe &amp; Richard Harrison</td>
<td>Wheat purchasers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Andrew] Steward &amp; ___ Hubard</td>
<td>Wheat purchasers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Allison</td>
<td>Wheat purchaser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Sadler</td>
<td>Wheat purchaser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Adams &amp; Co.</td>
<td>Wheat purchaser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____ Henly &amp; ____ Caldee</td>
<td>Wheat purchasers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Hayburne</td>
<td>Wheat purchaser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Kirke</td>
<td>Wheat purchaser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Gilpin</td>
<td>Wheat purchaser and flour inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Kilpatrick</td>
<td>Wheat purchaser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____ McCawley &amp; ____ Mayes</td>
<td>Importers and wholesalers of British goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Wilson</td>
<td>Sells British goods and buys tobacco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Locke</td>
<td>Sells British goods and buys tobacco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Muire [Muir]</td>
<td>Sells British goods and buys tobacco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josiah Watson</td>
<td>Imports goods for Philadelphia and buys tobacco and wheat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Dove &amp; Co.</td>
<td>Distillers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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APPENDIX C--Continued

aForenames are supplied where they are known.

# APPENDIX D

## ALEXANDRIA MERCHANTS ACTIVE DURING THE PERIOD 1749-1776

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Period of Activity</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James Adam</td>
<td>1772- ?</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Adam [Adams]</td>
<td>1756-1776</td>
<td>Alexandria trustee; partner of John Carlyle (1760); purchased lots 56, 57, 58 on 9-23-1772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander</td>
<td>1749-1761</td>
<td>Also an ordinary keeper (1768-1773); major town property owner (see Table 16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Arell</td>
<td>1762-1776</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Balmain</td>
<td>1771- ?</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Barrett</td>
<td>1761- ?</td>
<td>Extended £1,032.19.6 sterling loan to Gilbert Bain on 7-3-1761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windsor Brown</td>
<td>1774- ?</td>
<td>Partner of John Finley (1775)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew Campbell</td>
<td>1768- ?</td>
<td>Purchased lot 13 on 3-21-1768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Carlyle</td>
<td>1749-1776</td>
<td>Alexandria trustee; partner of John Dalton (1744-1777) and of Robert Adam (1760); purchased lots 41, 42 on 9-20-1749, lot 66 on 12-17-1754, and lot 28 (with John Dalton) on 3-2-1757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Carson</td>
<td>1771-1773</td>
<td>Partner of John Muir (1772-1773); purchased lot 124 on 12-17-1771; deceased 1773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josias Clapham</td>
<td>1753-1754</td>
<td>Alexandria trustee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Period of Activity</td>
<td>Remarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Copithorn</td>
<td>1757- ?</td>
<td>Owned wholesale and retail store in Alexandria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyrus Copper</td>
<td>1772- ?</td>
<td>Purchased one-half of lot 39 on 5-23-1772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Craig</td>
<td>? -1760</td>
<td>Deceased 1760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archibald Cunningham</td>
<td>1773- ?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Dalton</td>
<td>1749-1776</td>
<td>Alexandria trustee; partner of John Carlyle (1744-1777); purchased lots 36, 37 on 9-20-1749, and lot 45 on 2-1-1776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Digges</td>
<td>1761-1765</td>
<td>Alexandria trustee; purchased lot 1 on 5-21-1760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Finley</td>
<td>1774- ?</td>
<td>Partner of Windser Brown (1775)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Fitzgerald</td>
<td>1773- ?</td>
<td>Rents, with Valentine Peers, Andrew Stewart, and William Herbert lots 94, 95 on 12-20-1774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Fowler</td>
<td>1774- ?</td>
<td>Partner in firm of George and John Fowler (1775- ?), selling imported goods; buys section of lot 22 on 5-20-1774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Fowler</td>
<td>1774- ?</td>
<td>(See G. Fowler entry above; J. Fowler was not involved in lot section purchase)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Gilpin</td>
<td>1772- ?</td>
<td>Rents section of lot 46 on 5-14-1772; purchases section of lot 56 on 6-13-1773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan Hall</td>
<td>1772- ?</td>
<td>Alexandria trustee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Period of Activity</td>
<td>Remarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Harper</td>
<td>1773- ?</td>
<td>Purchased sections of lots 56, 57, 58 on 6-14-1773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Hartshorne</td>
<td>1774- ?</td>
<td>Purchased section of lot 65 in 1774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Hendricks</td>
<td>1774- ?</td>
<td>Purchased lot 116 on 4-8-1774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Herbert</td>
<td>1773- ?</td>
<td>Emigrated to Virginia in 1773; partner of Andrew Stewart (1774- ?); purchased, with Stewart, lot 21 and part of lot 20 on 7-30-1774; see J. Fitzgerald entry above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert T. Hooe</td>
<td>1775-1776</td>
<td>Maryland resident; partner of Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer (1775-1785)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Hunter</td>
<td>1754-1765</td>
<td>Alexandria trustee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Hunter</td>
<td>1775-1776</td>
<td>Rented part of lot 66 on 8-19-1775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel of St. Thomas</td>
<td>1775-1776</td>
<td>Maryland resident; partner of Robert T. Hooe (1775-1785)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Kirkpatrick</td>
<td>1755- ?</td>
<td>Alexandria trustee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Kirkpatrick</td>
<td>1773- ?</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Loxham</td>
<td>1761- ?</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry McCabe</td>
<td>1771- ?</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert McCrea</td>
<td>1774-1776</td>
<td>Purchased, with Robert Mease and his brother Matthew Mease (a Philadelphia merchant) parts of lots 56, 57, 58 on 7-28-1774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Period of Activity</td>
<td>Remarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Mease</td>
<td>1774-1776</td>
<td>(See preceding entry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Muir</td>
<td>1756-1776</td>
<td>Alexandria trustee; attorney (1756); partner of Thomas Carson (1772-1773)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Pagan</td>
<td>1749-1752</td>
<td>Alexandria trustee; purchased lots 2, 48 on 9-20-1749; emigrated from Virginia to Britain in 1752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valentine Peers</td>
<td>1774- ?</td>
<td>See J. Fitzgerald entry above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry Piper</td>
<td>1749-1776</td>
<td>Alexandria trustee; factor and attorney for Whitehaven, England firm of Dixon and Littledale; purchased lots 4, 40 on 9-20-1749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Ramsay</td>
<td>1749-1776</td>
<td>Alexandria trustee; factor (or junior partner?) in Alexandria for Whitehaven firm of William and Thomas Gilpin (1749-1751); partner of John Dixon (Cumberland County, England merchant), 1755-1757; purchased lots 46, 47 on 9-20-1749, and lot 34 on 3-25-1752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Stewart</td>
<td>1774- ?</td>
<td>Partner of William Herbert (1774- ?); see J. Fitzgerald and W. Herbert entries above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josiah Watson</td>
<td>1772-1776</td>
<td>Purchased part of lot 58 on 4-15-1775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Wilson</td>
<td>1770-1775</td>
<td>Sailed for Whitehaven in summer, 1775</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fairfax County Order Books; Fairfax County Minute Books; Fairfax County Will Books; Fairfax County Deed Books; Proceedings of Alexandria Trustees, 1749-1767 and 1767-1780.
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VITA

Thomas Milton Preisser


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