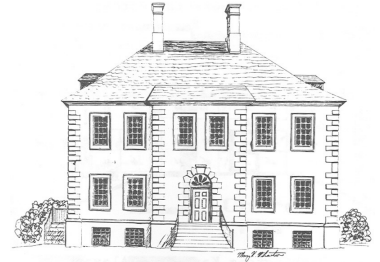


# Carlyle Connection

“It’s a fine beginning.”



## Working to Save Alexandria’s Historic Alleys

By Susan Hellman

For the past four years, a small group of volunteers has been documenting the City of Alexandria’s alleys, an essential part of the City’s fabric. The alleys played a significant role in defining the character, landscape, and social history of the City. Yet City planning, development, and historic research often overlook these assets. Studies and reports tend to focus on the built landscape of the City, while generally neglecting to include, or even mention, the alleys. Alexandria’s historic alleyways suffer from this lack of attention. Some alleys, like Shinbone Alley, were demolished for development. Others were incorporated into adjacent lots, sometimes illegally. Over the years, scores of alleys disappeared. The alley project seeks to survey and record all of Alexandria’s alleys as they exist today, in an effort to protect their very existence.

In early 2013, the Committee of Commission Chairs suggested that Lance Mallamo, Director of the Office of Historic Alexandria, establish a group to focus on alley research and preservation. Lance invited members of Alexandria’s history-focused Commissions to undertake a study of the City’s alleys. Initial participants in this informal “Alley Commission,” or alley subgroup, included Mr. Mallamo, Michael Commisso and Charles Trozzo from the Historical Restoration and Preservation Commission, Seth Tinkham from the Archaeological Commission, and Susan Hellman from the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission. Since that time, the group has expanded considerably, with volunteers from all over the City. The group consulted with Al Cox, Historic Preservation Manager in the Department of Planning and Zoning, to seek his advice in developing the methodology of the study. With Mr. Cox’s recommendation, the group decided to focus efforts on recording the existing conditions and

physical characteristics of the alleys. Researching alley ownership is not a part of this project, as the City Surveyor determines ownership of each alley.

The alley group created a survey template form for general usage in recording existing conditions. The methodology for evaluating cultural landscapes served as a model for inventorying the alleys. The survey form covers features

City of Alexandria Alley Survey

Alley Name/Street: \_\_\_\_\_  
Use section and block number to name alley (Sec.065.03, b1k/08/09). If multiple alleys exist within a block, add letters that correspond to the direction the alley runs (north-south alleys: B, C, etc. or east-west no. h, c, d, etc. (ex. Sec.065.03, b1k/08/09, a). Sequential ordering of north/south alleys should begin at the northern most alley and east/west alleys should begin at the eastern most alley.

Location Description: \_\_\_\_\_  
Use the following to describe location of alleys: cardinal directions, topographic conditions, edges of natural features or intersections of roads that contain the area of the alleys.

Historic Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
The historic name(s) best reflects the property's historic importance or was commonly used for the alley during the historic period.

Documented (extant) in 1949: Yes  No  Unknown

Land Ownership: To be determined by City of Alexandria at later date \_\_\_\_\_

Land Use: \_\_\_\_\_  
Choose all that apply - None, Driveway, Parking, Service, Patio, Other

Alignment: \_\_\_\_\_ (in feet, to nearest quarter foot)  
Alignment refers to how the alley moves through the landscape. Does it progress in a straight line (through alley or dead-end)? or make a sharp right turn/right angle? Does it climb or descend?

Spatial Organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
Describe the three-dimensional organization of the physical form of the alley (ground, vertical, overhead) as patterns characterizing the landscape as a whole (ex. finished with buildings and vegetation lining the alleys or open in character; lacking buildings, vegetation, etc.)

Surface Materials: \_\_\_\_\_  
Choose all that apply: bituminous surfaces (asphalt), concrete, dirt, gravel, cobblestone, walkway or brick

Entry Surface Materials (apron): \_\_\_\_\_

Landscaping Present (plants):  Historic Vegetation Present (over 50 yrs.):  Check if yes

Orientation of Buildings to Alley: \_\_\_\_\_  
Pick one - None, Rear, Side, Front, Other

Outbuilding Present (adjacent to alley):  Check if yes

Outbuilding Access to Alley:  Check if yes Outbuilding Historic:  Check if yes

Historic Small Scale Features: \_\_\_\_\_  
Describe the features which provide detail and diversity for both functional needs and aesthetic concerns in an alley (ex. Markers, manhole/cover, covers, drainage features (brick-lined swales/cornal "guts"), signs/benches, curbstones splash block, cast-iron downspout (boots), lighting, boat straps and mounting blocks/carriage steps—if located in alley, etc.)

Fences Front Alley:  Check if yes Brick Walls Front Alley:  Check if yes

Inventory Completed by: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Photographs (insert images with captions below): \_\_\_\_\_

### Survey form

such as the alley location, a description, its name (if known), how it is used, width, spatial organization, surface material, landscaping, presence or lack of outbuildings, orientation of buildings to alley, small-scale features, and

fences and walls. Each completed survey form includes photographs of each alley, and 1949 aerial views where available. Surveyors also record significant features or other items of interest not delineated on the survey form.



*Alley Locator Map with my scribbled notes. Notice the "CH" for Carlyle House in the lower center.*

In determining how to identify each alley, as most are unnamed, the alley subgroup decided to use the City of Alexandria tax map. The tax map divides the City into sections, which are color-coded on a Locator Map given to all surveyors. Each section is further divided into blocks. Thompson's Alley, for example, is located in Section 065.03, Blocks 08 and 09. A survey form for Thompson's Alley would include its Section and Blocks, as well as its name. Unnamed alleys are identified by Section and Block only. Generally, alleys less than approximately five feet wide, often referred to as "horse alleys," will not be surveyed at this time.



*L: Ramsay Alley viewed from east looking west.  
R: Ramsay Alley entry at Lee Street, detail.*

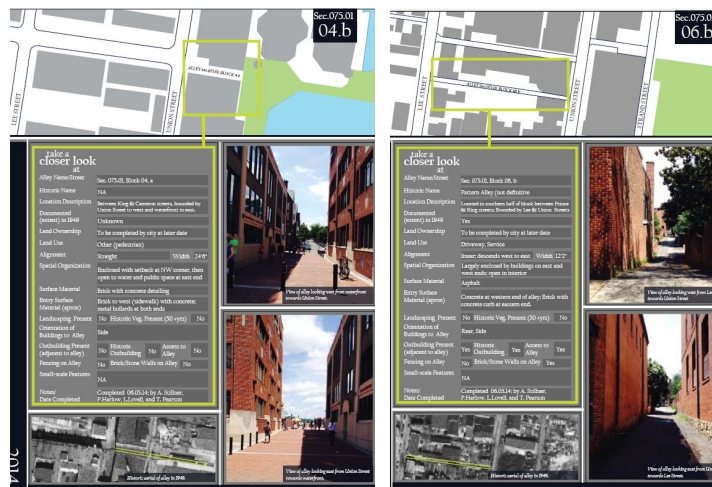
An 1871 fire destroyed many of the City's early records, making primary-source documentation difficult. Most published literature on the history of Alexandria's alleys is therefore anecdotal-based and lacking in serious scholarly research. However, these secondary sources contain some nuggets of good information from which we can glean a basic account of the alleys. When the City founders parceled the town into lots in 1749, they did not create alleys. Surveyors divided sixty-three acres into streets, two-acre squares, and half-acre lots. Streets served as boundaries for the lots, which buyers purchased in entirety. George Washington's 1749 map indicates eighty-four lots and ten streets. Over time, the General Assembly passed acts adding more land to the City, spreading its boundaries far beyond the original sixty-three acres. City-planned alleys first appeared in the development of the northeast quadrant. Original landowners added service alleys for their personal use. Owners also parceled their lots into smaller lots, selling these lots and creating alleys to access them. Some of these smaller lots were later subdivided, creating the need for more alleys. Early alleys were dirt; some were later paved with cobblestones. Several alleys in the Old and Historic District still retain their original (supposedly) cobblestones. Due to their nature as service drives, most alleys were unnamed. Maskel C. Ewing's 1845 Survey includes many of these early alleys, although the survey was taken close to 100 years after the town was created. The 1877 G.M. Hopkins City Atlas shows the proliferation of alleys throughout the City. Other primary sources include the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps from 1885 to 1958, and the City Tax Assessment Maps. Mutual Assurance Records dating from 1796 – 1807 provide further information on the location and size of many early alleys. Early land deeds are an invaluable resource in determining the existence and location of early alleys, but these must be referenced for individual parcels, not the City as a whole.

In a 1997 study, Ruth Lincoln Kaye recorded sixty-two named alleys and courts. This number represents a fraction of the number of alleys that exist(ed) in the City. Chataigne's 1888 city directory plays an instrumental role in providing alley names. Some of the older and best-known alleys are Ramsay, Swift, Thompson, and Wales. Lesser-known extant alleys include Biggs, Black Dog, Butts Court, and Chicken. (Don't you just love those names?)

The alley group intends to survey the entire City, beginning

with the recently-fully-surveyed (yay!) Old and Historic District. The Department of Planning and Zoning is creating an alley layer in the City of Alexandria GIS map files. Two Carlyle House garden volunteers, Gail Rothrock and Ann Davey, surveyed most of the alleys in the Old and Historic District. The alley group will move on to survey other areas of the City, with priority given to National Register districts. Ultimately, alley documentation of the entire City will become part of the Zoning Ordinance. The completed City alley survey will be bound, with copies provided to the Department of Planning and Zoning, the Office of Historic Alexandria, the Local History/Special Collections Branch of the Alexandria Library, the Circuit Court Clerk, and perhaps the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services. City employees and the general public will have access to this valuable resource. These steps provide a way to protect and preserve this important element of Alexandria’s historic fabric and open space.

Based on this inventory, the alley group has the following recommendations for the City: resolve ownership issues; improve the preservation ethic amongst City officials and citizens; name alleys to increase awareness and visibility; continue walking tours and promote new activities within alleys, i.e. block parties, fairs, etc; update National Register documentation to include alleys; promote the development of a streetscape plan that includes protection of alleys; revise local historic district guidelines to take in consideration development adjacent and within alleyways; create a new GIS layer (this is underway); expand alley survey to other historic districts; and restore or rehabilitate historic alleys.



Completed surveys

**Appendix of vanished alleys in Alexandria**

Note: This list contains named alleys only. There are numerous unnamed alleys that have also disappeared. Unless otherwise noted, Ruth Lincoln Kaye compiled the information in 1997.

**Lost Alexandria alleys with names:**

Ballinger’s (also known as Elizabeth’s) – Located approximately 300 feet east of Diagonal Road where it crosses Duke. Possibly named for a butcher who had a shop in the vicinity. The name “Elizabeth” was transferred to a street in the Carlyle, and is most likely named for Elizabeth Zimmerman, a 19<sup>th</sup> century philanthropist.

Gretter’s Alley – Ran north off of King Street in the center of the block between Royal and St. Asaph. Named for Michael and Margaret Gretter, who owned a house and ordinary adjacent to the alley. Margaret Gretter provided the shroud and pall cloth for George Washington’s funeral. See Richard Klingensmaier, “The Burial of General George Washington: The Lesser Known Participants,” *The Alexandria Chronicle*, Spring 2012.

Market Alley – Ran from Royal to Fairfax between King and Cameron, now part of Market Square.

McKinley – Originally H-shaped, projected south onto Wolfe and north onto Duke, in the block between Patrick and Henry. Possibly named for grocer James McKinley, who died in 1870, or bricklayer William McKinley, who was born in 1865.

Rickett’s – Ran north from Prince between Pitt and St. Asaph beside the property of Benjamin Rickett, who was a baker in 1797. When extant, this alley joined Crooked Alley from the east.

Sharpshin (also known as Shinbone) Alley – Ran from King Street into Market Alley. Apparently named for the silver coin that was cut into quarters. Its sharp edges abraded shins.

Spite Alley – Not technically an alley per se due to its narrow width, but this “alley” was a seven-foot gap between the houses at 523 and 525 Queen. According to lore, the owner of the house at 525 Queen built the

narrow house now at 523 Queen to keep others from using the alley.



*Spite House, date unknown, photo credit Shorpy*

**Blocked named alleys that still exist, but are now blocked and inaccessible:**

Braddock Court – Runs east/west between N. Fayette and N. Henry, and Cameron and Queen.

Bull Dog – Behind the south side of the 400 block of S. Pitt.

Centennial Row – Between Duke and Prince, Fayette and Payne. Now has a “private” sign.

Jail Alley – Off of the north side of Princess, between N. St. Asaph and N. Pitt. It originally ran along the old jail which was on Princess. It is now blocked by new houses.

Jefferson Court – Ran south from Duke between Pitt and Royal, closed by neighborhood agreement.

Patten Alley – Ran east/west from Lee to Union between Prince and King. Named for Thomas Patten, who owned a building on the southwest corner of King and Union. An extant covered alley between 103 and 105 Prince Street once led to Patten Alley.

## News from the Educator

Since May, we have had 130 students participate in school programs. We have our new school program scheduled for mid-August. After this run-through, we will begin offering Road to Revolution on the website once more as one of our regular school tours. We also had a girl scout troop participate in our newly revamped Playing the Past program.

Read, See, Do! had its last session on July 31. This program was in partnership with Alexandria Public Library and saw a total of 44 children in attendance. Parents seemed thrilled to have such a program offered and it is possible we will make this an annual occurrence. Hands on History Tent will be in the upcoming weekend, with plans for several activities running from 10-2 on the front lawn of the site. Crafts at Carlyle is still upcoming, in September, but all supplies have been acquired along with several ideas for patterns for the children to use as examples.

We have had five group tours since May, with plans for several others throughout the fall. This summer, we’ve also had an intern helping us out with educational programs and curatorial tasks. She has updated our collections binders, which are in each room of the house, and our touch baskets. She has also helped organize Hands on History Tent and will be assisting with running the program.

~Allie Kelley

## News from the Site Specialist

It has been a busy summer with many collection projects and programming. After months of hard work, the Architecture Collection Project is completely finished. Allie, museum supervisor Lee Rodrigues, and I took on a massive inventory project in conjunction with NOVA Parks Annual Inventory to update the locations and conditions of all the objects in the Carlyle House Collection. Another project that we worked on this summer was redesigning the 2nd floor exhibits. Due to the cancellation of PBS’s *Mercy Street*, we decided that it was time to start taking down the “Who These Wounded Are” exhibit. In order not to overwhelm staff and docents with a huge change, we

decided to remove the Civil War exhibit from the Architecture Room and Upper Passage. This worked out in our favor because most of those loaned objects were up for renewal in July. On a hot July day, Susan, Allie, Lee, and I removed the exhibit from these two rooms and installed the “new” exhibit. The Architecture Room is back to normal. The Upper Passage Exhibit focuses on Carlyle Family pieces in the collection. The family Bible, silver, and wedding dresses are currently out on display. The Girls’ Room and George William’s Room will continue to tell the Mansion House and Green story until January 2018.

We hosted two teas this summer. In May we held our annual Mother’s Day Tea; both seatings sold out. About a month later we held our first ever Espionage Tea. Guests played a game where they had to figure out who amongst themselves were spies. Two of our volunteers, Jeff and Christina, reprised their roles as Frank and Emma and mingled with everyone. Starting August 8th, our very own Barbara Douglass will be teaching yoga on the Magnolia Terrace every Tuesday until October from 5:30pm-6:30pm. Each class is \$5 or you can buy 5 classes for \$20.

With a break from summer adult programming, we have been able to get a head start on planning our fall programming. Our 2nd Annual Mansion House Whiskey Tasting will take place on Saturday, September 30th from 7pm-9pm. Sponsorships are available for \$200 a person. We want to thank Sheri & Red Cavaney as well as Kim Anderson for being sponsors for this event. Regular tickets are available online for \$100 per person. We will be hosting a Scottish Heritage Day on October 14th from 12pm-4pm. The Granfling School of Highland Dance will be performing. Our final fall program will be Zombies Escape, which will be a timed entry event where guests will have to successfully solve five puzzles to “survive” the zombies and receive a prize bag. We’ll also be partnering with Footsteps to the Past to provide storytelling in front of the house. We hope to see you all at these great events!

~Kerry Mitchell

## Upcoming Events

### General Braddock’s Sash

**Thursday, August 3rd, 6:30 p.m.**

**Rubenstein Library, Mount Vernon**

Learn about the sprang braiding technique from weaver Carol James, who created a replica of General Braddock’s sash for Carlyle House. Free.



### Hands on History Tent

**Saturday, August 5 & Sunday August 6; 10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

Join us for a nautically-themed day of fun!

### Yoga on the Magnolia Terrace

**Tuesdays (most), Aug 8—Oct 31 , 5:30 - 6:30 p.m.**

Join yoga instructor Barbara Douglass for an hour long Vinyasa Flow Yoga . Please bring water, a towel, and yoga mat. \$5 per class or \$20 for 5 classes.

### Crafts at Carlyle

**Saturday, September 16 and Sunday, September 17; 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

Children will paint their own version of a floorcloth, a popular 18th Century floor covering. Free.

### Mansion House Whiskey Tasting

**Saturday, September 30; 7:00 p.m.**

Join us for a fun evening as we taste extraordinary whiskeys paired with delectable food. Local historian, Rich Gillespie, will share stories of the Civil War in Va. \$100.

### Scottish Heritage Day

**Saturday, October 14; 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

Celebrate Scottish Heritage at the oldest stone house in Alexandria, home of John Carlyle. Free

### Zombie Escape

**Saturday, October 28; 6:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.**

Use your problem-solving skills to navigate your way through zombie-infested territory to claim necessary supplies and make it back to your base safely. \$20

**See our website for more details.**

**Follow us on Facebook and Twitter!**

## Friends Board

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*Kerry Mitchell*  
Site Specialist  
*Allie Kelley*  
Educator

*Carlyle House Historic Park is accredited by  
the American Alliance of Museums.*



## News from the Site Manager

I hope you're all having a lovely summer. As you saw from Kerry's and Allie's reports, we have been very busy over the past few months, as usual, and we have lots of upcoming programs and events. We hope to see you at several of them.



*As always, the garden looks beautiful. Many thanks to Becky Super and her volunteers!*

We enjoyed getting together with many of you at the Annual Meeting in June. It's wonderful to converse in person instead of via email or over the telephone. I'd like to extend a warm welcome to our newest Friends Board member, Holly Hanisian. Please introduce yourself to her at an upcoming event.

There appears to be some level of confusion between the Annual Appeal and the membership drive. The two are separate. We mail out membership renewals in February. The Annual Appeal goes out in September or October. We completely understand the misunderstanding, and the Friends Board will address this issue prior to the fall Annual Appeal. We want to make being a member of the Friends of Carlyle House as simple as possible, and don't want to irritate you with too many mailings. I am confident that the Board will come up with a clear solution to the issue.

Speaking of the Annual Appeal, we have news on two fronts. We expect to have the Braddock uniform, form, and sash ready to put on exhibit in the coming months. You funded this project in the 2014 Annual Appeal. The sash is completed, and the topic of a lecture at Mount Vernon this Thursday. Please see "Upcoming Events." As a result of the 2016 Annual Appeal, we have been in discussions with an exhibit designer who will help us update the cellar exhibit spaces. We hope to get the new exhibit in place in October.

Finally, I'd like to thank NOVA Parks for their continued support. They financed a new tent for the Magnolia Terrace this spring, and will be funding the bulk of the cost to replace our rusted railings and crumbling steps at the entries to the museum. Although we raised approximately \$3500 towards this project in ACT for Alexandria's annual Spring2ACTION day of giving, that sum does not cover the entire cost. Huzzah to NOVA Parks!

~Susan Hellman