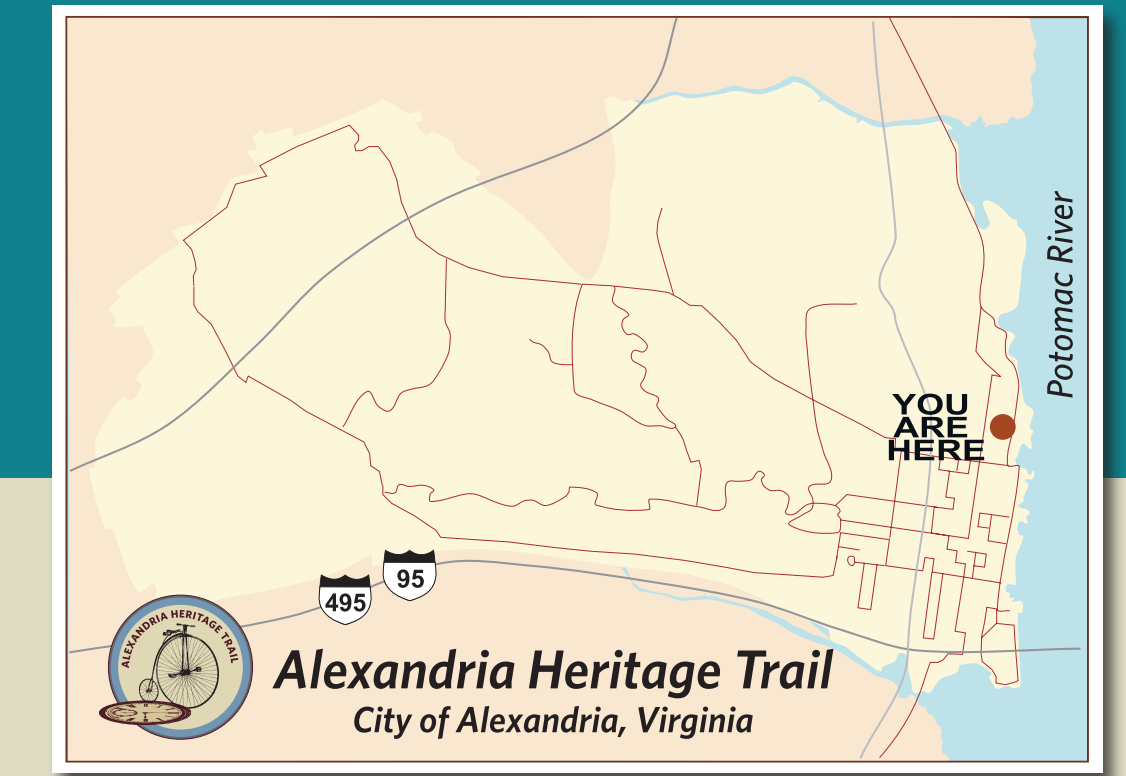


The Alexandria Canal Company, 1830 – 1886



Beneath this block lies Lock and Pool No. 2 of the Alexandria Canal. Construction of this seven-mile section of the canal began on the 4th of July, 1831 under the direction of Captain William Turnbull of the U.S. Army Topographical Engineers, and assisted by Lieutenant Maskell C. Ewing. Ewing served as both the Chief Engineer for the construction of the canal and as a surveyor for the Town of Alexandria from 1838 to 1846.

The canal was 50-to-60-feet wide and four feet deep, and initially ended within a 190-foot-wide turning basin (aka the Spa Spring Basin) between Washington and North Pitt Streets. The four lift locks and three pools between Montgomery and First Streets, including those beneath this block, were still under construction at this time. The canal boat “Pioneer” made the first trip from Georgetown to the “Spa Spring” canal basin on December 2nd, 1843, carrying officials from the Canal Company and Alexandria to mark the opening of the canal for commerce.

3^d March.
Opicca 18 cords wood
W. Cost Johnson 200 bbls flour 500 bush corn
200 bush oats
Com. Alcott 261 bbls flour 317 bush ship
stuff 10 bush corn meal, 15 bush
potatoes
Hugh Smith 590 bbls flour 5 tons hair
W. C. Johnson of Catochin
290 bbls flour 8 bush beans 25 bush
oats, 17 bush clover seeds 1350
pieces staves, 2 bbls apple,
W. H. Harrison 234 bbls flour 300 bush
ship stuff 1 bbl lard.
5th March Col. Crockett 500 bbls flour 25 kegs nails 1/2 ton
of iron - Victoria 700 bush corn 200 bush oats
Francis Thomas 291 barrels flour.

Excerpt from Lieutenant Maskell C. Ewing's notebooks, dated March 3rd and 5th, 1845, listing the names of canal boats and the goods they transported. For example, the last entry above, lists that the *Colonel Crockett* was carrying 500 barrels of flour, 25 kegs of nails, and 1/2 ton of iron; the *Victoria* contained 700 bushells of corn and 200 bushells of oats; and the *Francis Thomas* carried 291 barrels of flour. (Image courtesy of the National Park Service, Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park).



"Plan of the town of Alexandria, D.C. with the environs: exhibiting the outlet of the Alexandria Canal, the shipping channel, wharves, Hunting Cr. &c." Red outline shows the block you are standing on. (Maskell C. Ewing, T. Sinclair, and Edw. B. Stelle 1845, courtesy of Library of Congress).

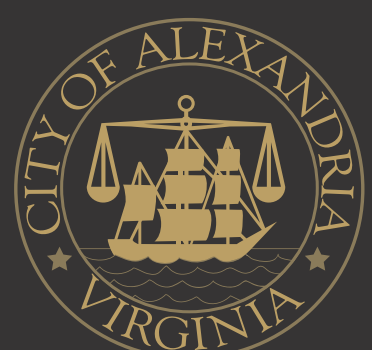
Completed in 1845, the three locks and four pools were constructed of wood and lined with large slabs of stone. Iron gates controlled the flow of water between them, which reached a depth of 15.5 feet and allowed the boats to drop from 38 feet above sea level at the turning basin down to the mouth of the canal at the Potomac River.

Dorely's work closed
Reach excavating South of Lock 2
& hauling to the S. Bank of Spa
Spring Basin having engaged
13 carts
23 men 1 super.
1 Plough team
with Mr. Miller measuring the Day
working done by D. & Easty
Day rather windy, but mild.
Had the wall of outlet lock
rammed with gravel.

Excerpt from Lieutenant Maskell C. Ewing's notebooks, dated Monday, 3rd March 1845, describing the excavation of the basin south of Lock 2 with spoils hauled to the "Spa Spring" basin for removal by boat. (Image courtesy of the National Park Service, Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park).

The canal was an early success, and its arrival directly influenced the commercial development of the northern edge of Alexandria. The canal brought the raw materials and products of the hinterland into the city, and industrial development sprang up near the canal after its completion to take advantage of the new transportation network.

Shortly after the canal's completion, the Alexandria, Loudoun, Hampshire railroad arrived, precursor to the Washington & Old Dominion, passing by the east side of this block on Lee Street. By 1886, repairs to the canal became too costly, and other forms of transportation became more popular. The canal closed and became an unofficial dump, while the railroad survived until 1968.



CITY OF ALEXANDRIA EST. 1749

