Old Town Alexandria

Overlooking the Potomac River and within minutes of our nation’s capital, Alexandria was established in 1749. Rich in history, Alexandria was a major seaport prior to the Revolutionary War, occupied by Union troops during the Civil War, and a torpedo production site during World War II. In 1946, Old Town Alexandria was the third city in the country to create a historic district to preserve its downtown. One of the tour homes was previously owned by Gay Montague Moore, whose dedicated restoration of the Fairfax Moore House started the preservation movement in the City of Alexandria. This walking tour includes private townhomes and secluded gardens located along the tree lined streets of the historic district, refreshments and a marketplace at the Athenaeum, boutique shopping, and fine dining, which are all just steps away. In addition, the tour ticket allows access to two Garden Club of Virginia restoration projects, George Washington’s Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens and Green Spring Gardens, and to other local places of interest.

Advance Tickets: $45 pp. www.vagardenweek.org and at the Alexandria Visitors Center (221 King Street). Group tours for 20 or more people are $40 pp and available by contacting Hartley Wensing before April 16.

Complimentary light refreshments at Old Presbyterian Meeting House (323 South Fairfax St.) from 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Facilities: Alexandria Visitors Center (221 King Street) and The Lyceum – Alexandria’s History Museum (201 South Washington Street).

Marketplace at the Athenaeum, 201 Prince Street. Specialty boutique vendors located on two floors in an important example of Greek Revival architecture. There is an art gallery and vendors selling clothing, gifts, home décor, plants and accessories.

Directions: Old Town Alexandria is located just off the Capital Beltway (I-95 and I-495), which encircles the District of Columbia. Take exit 177 A-B from the Capital Beltway. Follow signs for Alexandria/Old Town and Rt. 1 North. Look for signs for the Alexandria Visitors Center, 221 King St.. From Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York, take I-95 South.

From Annapolis and the Chesapeake Bay, take Rt. 50 West. From West Virginia, take I-66 East to I-495. Interstate 270 connects the Capital Beltway to Frederick, MD and beyond. The nearest Metro station is King St. (Blue and Yellow lines). Street parking in residential areas is not recommended. Paid parking is available at Cameron St. and N. Saint Asaph St., Cameron St. and N. Pitt St., S. Pitt St. between Prince and King Streets, N. Fairfax St. at King St., N. Lee St. at King St., and S. Union St. between Prince and Duke Streets.

Important Information: All private homes on this tour are in zip code 22314. Admission to the Places of Interest is included in the Alexandria HGW ticket; however, tour tickets are not sold at these locations.

Ticket includes admission to the following:
5 private homes and gardens, refreshments at 323 South Fairfax and 5 nearby historic properties:

219 North Royal Street

It is thought James McGuire, a noted Alexandria “House Joiner,” constructed the house between 1811-1813. His signature architectural features include entrance fanlights, double parlors separated by pocket doors, side hallways, mahogany chair rails and modest balustrades. The house has a typical Federal style first floor plan, side hall and staircase, front parlors, short connecting hall to the dining room and a rear kitchen. In 1931 it was acquired by Josephine and Mangum Weeks, who were early leaders in the Alexandria historical preservation movement. They came into possession of the original copperplate of the 1798 Gilpin Map of Alexandria, which featured their property. They had a limited edition of prints made in 1944, and then the copperplate was lost. In 1933 they purchased land from the owner to the rear of their garden on which a mid-19th century carriage house stood. Until 2017 it remained in rustic condition, with dirt floor, horse stall divider and feedbox. It was fully renovated into guest quarters with original exposed roof joists and sub-roofing. The current owners renovated the rear first floor, creating the current kitchen with the original fireplace. Rizley and David Canfield, owners.

208 North Fairfax Street

The history of this house dates to the 1790s. In 1784, William Ramsey, one of the founders of Alexandria, sold a lot to William Duvall. Sometime between 1784 and 1793, Duvall built two brick homes on the lot, 208 and 210 North Fairfax. He was the proprietor of Duvall’s Tavern, located at 303 Cameron Street. In 1783, George Washington, who had just resigned his commission at Annapolis, was feted at a reception at the tavern. The two houses are notable examples of 18th century brick row houses, known as flounder houses, in Alexandria. They are turned at a ninety-degree angle to the usual street orientation of flounder buildings. There are only five flounder houses with this orientation existing in the Old Town Historic district. In 1793 the house was sold to William Downman of Prince William County for the sum of 400 pounds. Jane and Peter Erickson, owners.

The George William Fairfax House
207 Prince Street

This block of Prince Street is considered by architectural historians to be the best preserved in Old Town. The George William Fairfax House anchors the row of brick town-homes on the North side of the street known as “Gentry Row.” The property was purchased by George Washington’s close friend and mentor, George William Fairfax of Belvoir, at the first auction of lots in Alexandria in 1749. The earliest sections of the home date from the 1750s. Portions of this original structure were recently uncovered, for the first time in over 250 years, during recent renovations. Fairfax sold the property in 1771 with a deed witnessed by George Washington. Washington’s diaries show the next three owners as frequent guests for dinner at Mount Vernon, and that he dined at 207 Prince Street in the 1780s and 1790s. This was the first house restored in Old Town when Gay Montague Moore and her husband Charles Beatty Moore purchased it in 1929. The couple helped pioneer the preservation movement in America, and are widely credited with starting the movement in Old Town. In the 1940s Mrs. Moore published a history of Alexandria and founded the first annual tour of historic homes in Old Town, which included her home. Patricia and Latane Montague, owners.
This c. 1786 home built on a Philadelphia-style plan, like many of the houses built for wealthy merchants in post-Revolutionary Alexandria, places two well-finished rooms alongside a passage. Unlike most of them, however, it locates the stairs in a short connector behind the rear room, where it adjoins the kitchen. This arrangement was known as a piazza. The property was owned by Captain John Harper, a Quaker merchant who moved from Philadelphia to Alexandria in 1773. In 1789 the home was rented to Dr. James Craik, one of the attending physicians at the death of George Washington. Its exterior finishes include carved stone jack arches above the front windows and a modillion cornice (a cornice supporting elaborate dentils). Inside, the early finishes include restrained late-Georgian woodwork with some later additions, such as the mantel in the front room. Originally, the entry led directly into the front room. Communication between the front and rear rooms was likely through a door in the present opening at the back of the passage. The most finely finished room in the home, it boasts a fully paneled fireplace wall and buffets flanking the fireplace. Its proximity to the kitchen suggests the room was for dining. John Campbell, owner.

Holland House
415 Wolfe Street

This home sits on land that is thought to have been surveyed by a young George Washington. It was built as a two-story clapboard farmhouse in 1750. In the 1780s the property was acquired by a prominent Quaker merchant and was transformed into a large brick townhouse. In the mid-1930s, Mrs. Bernice Holland, who gave her name to the house, added another wing to create a dining room. This resulted in the current L-shape configuration. This part is now known as the “Music Room.” The property is surrounded by a brick wall that ensures privacy. Pass through iron gates to the courtyard garden where a statue of Thomas Jefferson, by Colorado artist George Lundeen, takes center stage. There are original double parlors, a new spacious kitchen, and a sitting room which opens onto a patio. The owners lived in London for over twenty years and assembled an extensive collection of British paintings, watercolors and drawings. It includes work by well-known English portrait artists from the 16th through the 19th centuries, as well as Chinese porcelain from the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. Patti and George White, owners.

Places of Interest:

Carlyle House Historic Park, 121 North Fairfax St. When British merchant John Carlyle completed his riverfront house in 1753, this was the grandest mansion in the new town of Alexandria. The stone architecture, furniture and decorative finishes seen in the restored building reflect Carlyle’s status and wealth. The Garden Club of Virginia restored the front landscape to the mid-18th century period. A garden with a boxwood parterre graces the rear of the house. www.carlylehouse.org

Lee-Fendall House Museum and Garden, 614 Oronoco St. at North Washington St. Built in 1785 by Philip Fendall on land purchased from Revolutionary War hero, “Light Horse Harry” Lee, this historic house museum presents an intimate study of 19th century family life. Home to several generations of the famed Lees of Virginia (1785-1903) and labor leader John L. Lewis (1937-69), the house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. www.leefendallhouse.org

Proud Supporter of Virginia’s Historic Garden Week

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River Farm, 7931 East Boulevard Dr. The headquarters of the American Horticultural Society overlooks the Potomac River and was one of George Washington’s original properties. Comprised of 25 acres of gardens and grounds, which include perennial borders, annual beds, children’s gardens, a meadow, a woodland and picnic areas. The estate house was remodeled in the early 20th century. Large porches offer a panoramic view of the Potomac River and gardens. www.ahsgardening.org

George Washington’s Mount Vernon. Eight miles south of Alexandria on the George Washington Memorial Pkwy, and situated on the Potomac River. The home of George and Martha Washington. From the end of the American Revolution in 1783 to his election to the presidency in 1789, Washington replaced outbuildings, reshaped gardens, created new lawns, planted trees and even realigned roads and lanes. With funding from Historic Garden Week, the Garden Club of Virginia has helped to restore Mount Vernon’s bowling green, one of the major landscape features on this vast plantation. The Mount Vernon Ladies Association, owners. www.mountvernon.org

Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Rd. This public garden and historic site includes a recently restored Beatrix Farrand garden design from 1942. The Garden Club of Virginia restored the stone wall and the perennial border in front of the boxwood hedge that defines the back garden. Circa 1784, John Moss built the brick house on 304 acres of farmland. Michael and Belinda Straight purchased the house and 33 acres in 1942. They engaged Beatrix Farrand to design the crescent-shaped stone wall with a boxwood hedge, and later added a variety of trees and shrubs. The Straights deeded their home and 16 acres to the Fairfax County Park Authority in 1970. Today it is a 33-acre garden with over 20 demonstration gardens which visitors are invited to explore together with the Historic House, ponds, Virginia native plant garden and newly renovated glasshouse. (703) 642-5173 or www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/greenspring.

Gunston Hall, 15 mi. south of Alexandria off U.S. Rt. 1 on Rt. 242. This 550-acre National Historic Landmark was the home of George Mason (1725-1792), author of The Virginia Declaration of Rights. The estate consists of a Georgian mansion, c.1755, and reconstructed kitchen, dairy, laundry and schoolhouse. The Potomac River is viewed from the historic boxwood garden. During April the conceptual plan for the restoration of the river-side garden will be on display. While not a current restoration project of the Garden Club of Virginia, the GCV assisted Gunston Hall with landscaping work from 1949-53. www.gunstonhall.org. Open 9:30 am to 5 pm. www.gunstonhall.org.
ANNUAL HISTORIC PLANT & GARDEN SALE  
APRIL 27–MAY 27  
The same plants grown on Washington’s estate can now adorn your garden! Find historic trees, shrubs and heirloom seeds—each carefully nurtured in Mount Vernon greenhouses. Check out our vast selection of garden-themed merchandise including our line of planters and garden furniture. The sale is located just outside the main gift shop. No admission is required.

PLANT & GARDEN SALE PREVIEW NIGHT  
APRIL 26, 5:30PM–8PM  
Show your Garden Week ticket to attend this exclusive event. Shop early, enjoy light refreshments, and chat with our horticulturists about our gardens and the new General’s Choice Plant Line.

BEHIND THE SCENES TOUR  
MAY 18 & 19  
Ever wonder how we keep the gardens and landscape at Mount Vernon looking beautiful? See what goes on behind the scenes. Join members of the horticulture staff on a 90-minute tour of our production facilities and gardens. Rain or shine. Visit mountvernon.org to reserve your spot. Fee applies.

Hosted by  
The Ashland Garden Club  
Chair  
Ann Martin  
ashland@gardenweek.org  
Co-Chair  
Nancy Wood  
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Tour Information  
Tickets: $30 pp. Children ages 6-12 are $15. Available on tour day at 304 College Ave. and Tour Headquarters, Ashland Christian Church, 301 South James St.  
Advance Tickets: $25 pp. www.vagardenweek.org. Tickets available until 5 p.m. on April 25 in Ashland at Ashwood Gardens and Nursery, ReFunk It and Ashland Meat Co. at Cross Brothers; tickets also available at The Glassworks by Alex in Atlee. Cash or check accepted.

L Lunch: Pre-ordered box lunches from Sallie Bell for $16 each. Ashlandchristianchurchva.com for reservations and details. Reservations required by April 13. Available from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Ashland Christian Church, 301 South James St.

Facilities: Ashland Christian Church, 301 South James St. and Duncan Memorial United Methodist Church, 201 Henry St.

Refreshments: Complimentary and served from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. on the garden porch at 306 College Ave.  
“A Bird Gardening” from 1 to 3 p.m., in the garden of 323 Duncan St. A Virginia Master Naturalist will share information and discuss ways to make a yard bird friendly, including tips on plantings as well as elements that encourage a variety of birds.

P Parking: On-street parking in the tour areas and available at Ashland Town Center at England St., as well as Henry Clay Elementary School across the street from Ashland Christian Church, 301 South James St.