



## Upcoming Events:

September 11

### Film: "Blacks without Borders"

This groundbreaking documentary takes a heartfelt look at the emotional journey of a group of African Americans who called it quits in the U.S. to start a new life in South Africa, chronicling 12 modern-day globetrotters who have uprooted their lives in pursuit of their dreams and are finding that America is not the only land of opportunity. The film provides a candid and touching tale of sacrifice, hardship and great rewards by U.S.-born citizens as they adjust to the cultural differences and combat negative perceptions that America may garner in other parts of the world. (70 minutes)

Alexandria Black History Museum, 902 Wythe Street.  
[www.alexblackhistory.org](http://www.alexblackhistory.org)

*Continued...*

**This newsletter  
was designed and  
produced by**

**SAPPHIRE BLUE  
DESIGN**

*Your Old Town graphic  
design source.*

Call Tania for a consultation  
on your next project!  
[www.sapphirebluedesign.com](http://www.sapphirebluedesign.com)  
**703-459-4595**

## What's in a Name?

### Portner's Landing by Christa Watters

*In which we consider another of  
North Old Town's street or place names...*

Portner's landing, a townhouse and condominium complex in the 600 block of North St. Asaph Street, commemorates Robert Portner, one of Alexandria's most important brewers and the site of his brewery, which extended across St. Asaph and up to Washington Street (cellars were found under the old Woodward and Lothrop building).

Robert Portner was a German immigrant who arrived in New York in 1853 to seek his fortune. He was 16, knew no English, and went to work as a retail clerk for his older brother Louis. With 5 years' education at a military academy, Robert learned quickly – both English and business practices. By 1855 Louis sent him to work in sales for his Williamsburg tobacco factory.



By 1865, Portner founded Portner & Company at the corner of Payne and Fayette streets with three other men who shared his interest in profiting from the increased demand for beer arising from the many Union troops in the area. Prior to this time, most breweries in the city were small artisanal companies that produced only 100 to 150 barrels a year. Between 1862 and 1965, Portner and two other Alexandria breweries were ...*Continued*

## Who Owns the Waterfront

*by Roger Waud*

Many entities have jurisdiction over various parts of the City's waterfront, and this complicates the City's ongoing waterfront planning efforts and plan implementation.

Regarding the waters of the Potomac River, the City has jurisdiction from the shoreline out to the "pier head line" which is the boundary with DC. Many of the City's piers end at the defined pier head line, such as the dock in front of the Torpedo Factory. DC "owns" the water on its side of the pier head line while the Federal government owns the land beneath the river.

Jurisdiction over waterfront land is more complicated. Owning all the land beneath the river, as of January 24, 1791, the Federal government declared the legal boundary between DC and the Commonwealth of Virginia to be the high water mark on the Alexandria water front. At that time the Alexandria shoreline ran in an arc from about Ford's Landing up towards Lee street and

north up to about Third street. Over the years since Alexandria has added landfill in that area to extend commercial activity.

Now for the complications. In 1931 the Supreme Court ruled that the legal boundary between DC and Virginia is the high water mark of January 24, 1791. So, claiming all of the waterfront land east of the 1791 high water mark, in 1973 the Federal government brought litigation against the City and the owners of the properties created by the landfill. In 1979 the Federal government and the City agreed on a joint planning process with public participation. This led to the Alexandria Waterfront Draft Joint Land Use Plan of 1981. The Plan helped the City, the Federal government, and most of the private landowners reach "settlement agreements" restricting how land can be used. Several properties have not yet reached settlements, including Strand properties between Waterfront Park and Robinson Terminal South, and the Old Dominion Boat Club.

For more information go to:  
[www.alexandriava.gov/waterfront](http://www.alexandriava.gov/waterfront)



## What's in a name?...Continued

producing up to 9,000 barrels a year. When the war ended, the three breweries folded, but Portner started over. He purchased the site on North St. Asaph Street and constructed a large modern brewery and cellars. Portner was well capitalized, so he could use modern equipment and refrigeration methods to take advantage of economies of scale. The brewery eventually became the largest employer in Alexandria. The brewery prospered until Virginia adopted Prohibition in 1916, when he repurposed the buildings.

This information is taken from "Robert Portner and his Brewing Company," by Timothy J. Dennee. You can read further at: <http://oha.alexandriava.gov/archaeology/ar-publicsummaries.html>

## Naming of Oronoco Street

by Tom Soapes

Oronoco was a variety of tobacco that probably originated in the Orinoco River Valley in Venezuela. Traders brought it to this area in the 1600s, and it grew throughout the Chesapeake Bay colonies. Because its flavor was too strong for English tastes, it was thought inferior to other varieties. However, it was in great demand in Europe and was profitable for planters. Merchants stored casks of tobacco in warehouses (part of a series of waterfront warehouses starting at Duke Street) at the foot of the street now named Oronoco for loading onto ships headed for Europe. Thus, the street took its name from the business that operated there.

## Air vs Air by Susan Wobst

When I was weighing whether to move to Canal Place in North Old Town, I was shown the coal pile at Mirant. I wasn't worried. After all, I had spent years in Russia "importing" EPA-approved practices like global courses in environmental economics; Smoke School for training professionals, residents and children in the visual identification of pollution at plants; equality of place at the community table for business, citizens and government.

In Volgograd, Russia, a city with aluminum smelter, steel mill, oil refinery and a citizenry with serious health problems related to air quality, we demonstrated low cost solutions to air issues that brought tangible improvements in health and economy. The newly formed Center for Environmental Training drew people from all sectors to its seminars. The freshly energized Russian Orthodox Church—an important community stakeholder—participated.

SO<sub>2</sub>, sulfates, CO, NO<sub>x</sub>, PM<sub>2.5</sub> – that was Volgograd and other industrialized Russian cities. But this SO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub>, P<sub>2.5</sub> was in my new backyard. And it was coming from an ancient yet still profitable plant, Mirant, that had escaped the Clean Air Act through "grandfathering."

My colleague, Barbara Felitti, a specialist in environmental engineering who worked in Russia as well, recalled what she thought the first time she saw the Mirant coal-fired power plant: "My first reaction was shock that such a polluting facility was legally allowed to operate in the US. After all, I wasn't in a developing country but in a city that is located just outside of our nation's capital. Particulates from this type of facility have serious and well documented health impacts which cause increases not just in illness but in death."

Maybe North Old Towners could have one of our Russian counterparts show us those inclusive and successful practices originating in the US. Let's see how we fair with them. Air vs Air!

## NOTICE is for you

**We Inquire:** *Staying connected with changes and issues that affect North Old Town.*

**We Inform:** *Circulate information to our members through newsletters and circulars enabling you to be heard.*

**We are Open:** *Welcoming varying views of our role in North Old Town.*

**We Discuss:** *Remaining involved in finding alternative solutions and being tolerant of our neighbor's perspectives.*

**We Meet:** *Membership meeting three times a year, and a winter party in February.*

## Membership - Join NOTICE

Single \$15, Family \$25, Sponsor \$50, Angel \$150+

NOTICE is a 501-C3 organization. Dues are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

## Mail this form and payment to:

NOTICE; P.O. Box 25571; Alexandria, VA 22313

## Upcoming Events:

September 18 & 19  
**Colonial Market & Fair at Mount Vernon**  
18th Century crafts are demonstrated by Colonial attired artisans. Stalls selling items too. 9am-5pm

September 11 & 12  
**Alexandria Festival of the Arts**  
Outdoor gallery and sale along King Street.  
Sat 10-7, Sun 10-5. Free

September 23  
**NOTICE Member/Community Meeting**  
History of Waterfront by Pam Cressey. City's Preparedness for Civil Emergency by Mark Penn. Marina Towers, Potomac Room, 7-9 p.m.

September 25  
**69th Annual Historic Home Tour**  
Tour six city restored homes. 10am-3pm.

October 1-3  
**Fall wine festival and sunset tour, Mt Vernon**  
Wine, blues, reenactments and wine cellar tours.  
6-9pm, reservations required.

## Thank you to all 'Take NOTICE' contributors!

Roger Waud

Christa Watters

Sally Anne Greer

Anne Kaupp

Tom Soapes

Tania Leach

## Contact NOTICE

703-838-7603  
contact@notice-alexandria.org

## Become a member

Keep up-to-date on what's going on in the neighborhood!  
[www.notice-alexandria.org](http://www.notice-alexandria.org)