



St. Andrew's Society of Washington, DC

The 18th Century Scottish Origins of Washington, DC: Early Scots in Georgetown and Washington City

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Introduction

When I first came to Washington from Texas in 1965, it was to attend Georgetown University as an undergraduate student. Georgetown University was founded in 1789—the same year the U.S. Constitution was ratified—by Bishop John Carroll, a signer of the new Constitution, and is located on the heights of Georgetown, on what was then the Maryland side of the Potomac River, at a fording point right above where Key Bridge now stands. So Georgetown University's history has always been entwined with that of Georgetown itself and with the early years of the American Republic.

I studied history and government (political science) at Georgetown University and for a number of years lived in Georgetown. Always interested in my Scottish roots (my maternal grandfather, John King, after whom I'm named, had emigrated to the USA from Stirlingshire in 1910), I soon became keenly aware of the Scottish origins of Georgetown and of the remnants of its Scottish foundations, in the form of the many great mansion houses still standing in Georgetown which had been built by Scottish merchants in the years just before, and just after, the American Revolution.

Oddly, the Scottish origins of Georgetown, and of Washington, DC generally, are little known in the ranks of our Society—this in contrast to the fact that the Scottish origins of Alexandria, VA, located right across the Potomac River, are well known to all of us. This article has been written in part to redress this imbalance and to acquaint our general membership with some very interesting facts concerning the Scottish origins of Georgetown and of Washington City.

The Scottish Origins of the Port of Georgetown in the Early to Mid-Eighteenth Century

As we all know well, Alexandria, VA was settled by Scottish merchants in 1749 as a tobacco port town, originally called "Belle Haven" (its first buildings located where the Belle Haven Country Club now stands, on the banks of the Potomac between Old Town Alexandria and Mount

Vernon). But it is NOT as well known that Alexandria's longtime commercial rival (for the past 260 years called "Georgetown"), located directly across the Potomac River from Alexandria, on what was previously the Maryland side, now within the confines of Washington, DC, was likewise settled by Scottish merchants, and at almost exactly the same time--in 1745--also as a tobacco port town. In fact, Scots so predominated in Georgetown in the 18th century that Georgetown's original name was "New Scotland."

The first land grant in what is now Georgetown was made in 1703, on behalf of Queen Anne, by Charles Calvert, "Absolute Lord and Proprietor of the Province of Maryland", to a Scottish immigrant, Colonel Ninian Beall. The core of this land grant, originally called "the Rock of Dumbarton", survives today as the Dumbarton Oaks Estate, located at Wisconsin Avenue and "R" Street, NW, in Upper Georgetown.

Ninian Beall was in many respects a "larger than life" personality. Born in Largs, Fifeshire, in 1625, he fought as a junior officer ("cornet") for King Charles II against Cromwell and the English at the Battle of Dunbar in 1650, was captured, sold into indentured servitude, and transported first to Barbados, then to the Colony of Maryland. After completing his term of indenture, he received a grant of 50 acres from the Maryland Assembly for bringing out other Scottish immigrants to settle here.

An experienced soldier and legendary Indian fighter, Col. Beall rose to the rank of Commander of the Maryland Provincial Militia. He died in 1717, bequeathing all his extensive Maryland property, including the Rock of Dumbarton Estate in what is now Georgetown, to his 12 children—six sons and six daughters. Thus was founded an early Scottish-American dynasty (whose descendants are still with us today), which was to shape much of the 18th century history of the Province (later State) of Maryland, the Port of Georgetown, and Washington City.

Large Scottish merchant houses based in Glasgow dominated the tobacco trade on the Potomac and Rappahannock Rivers and along the Chesapeake from the early 1740s through to the time of the American Revolution, 35 years later. These truly "international" firms employed "factors" (agents) in both Alexandria and Georgetown as well as elsewhere (like Bladensburg, MD) and sent apprentices from Scotland to work for them in these locations—both as free laborers and as indentured servants.

The most prominent Scottish merchants doing business in Georgetown during the colonial period were the firm of John Glassford & Company—Glasgow's largest tobacco merchant house. Though Glassford himself never travelled to America, he, his sons and their partners controlled a major portion of the Chesapeake tobacco trade. Through his local factors—invariably other prominent Scotsmen who had already settled in Virginia and Maryland (including Robert Fergusson at Georgetown), Glassford & Co. established a system of tobacco warehouses as well as branch stores along both sides of the Potomac—selling hardware, spirits, sugar, salt, and slaves to local settlers and buying tobacco directly from the local farmers.

A group of prominent Scottish merchants and landowners, all residents of what would later be called Georgetown, governed the town (under a formal and exclusive delegation of power from the Maryland Assembly) from the middle of the 18th century until well after the American

Revolution. These Scottish dynasties—the Bealls, Gordons, Peters, Magruders, Dunlops, Davidsons, Bowies, and others—put a clearly Scottish stamp on Georgetown during the first 50+ years of its existence.

Large parcels of land in what was to become Georgetown were already owned in 1751 by a dozen or more of these wealthy Scottish merchants—land extending from east to west, the length of what is now “M” Street, NW, down the entire length of the Georgetown waterfront, and north up the nearby hill, on both sides of what is now Wisconsin Avenue, NW—as far north as the Dumbarton Oaks Estate on what is now “R” Street, NW. Many of the mansion houses built by this and the next generation of local Scottish merchants still stand today in Georgetown residential neighborhoods—including, among others, Dumbarton Oaks (originally called simply, “The Oaks”), Dumbarton House, Evermay, Halcyon House, Pretty Prospect, Tudor Place, etc.

In 1751, the Maryland Provincial Assembly appointed eight Commissioners to formally lay out a town (which subsequently was named “George Towne”, now Georgetown) and once laid out, to govern it. Of the eight original Commissioners of George Towne, at least six were Scots (George Beall, Josiah Beall, Cpt. Henry Wright Crabb, George Gordon, and James Perrie). From 1754 until 1785, 11 “Successor Commissioners” were appointed from time to time by the Maryland Assembly to fill vacancies in the ranks of the original eight. Of these additional 11, at least seven were Scots (Robert Peter, John Murdoch, Thomas Beall, Benjamin Stoddert, Samuel Davidson, John Peter, and Adam Steuart). The Commissioners of George Towne employed a Clerk and a Surveyor to assist them in their oversight responsibilities. Of the five successive Clerks of George Towne between 1751 and 1782, the first three were Scots (Alexander Beall (1751-57), Josiah Beall (1757-74), and Robert Fergusson (1774).)

The survey of the town that would come to be called “George Towne” (later Georgetown) was completed in 1752. Portions of George Beall’s land and George Gordon’s adjacent land were found “most convenient” for the laying out of the new town. (Each gentleman was offered two lots plus the cost of condemnation, by right of eminent domain). The town was NOT named for the Sovereign of Great Britain, but rather for George Beall and George Gordon, the two Scotsmen from whose land tracts the town was created.

Meetings of the Commissioners of George Towne were held at least once annually (in private houses) every year from 1751 until 1789, when at last George Towne was incorporated. It was not chartered as a “burgh city” and was not to have elected aldermen or mayors. Instead, the Maryland colonial Assembly reserved the power to appoint its governing board—the so-called “Commissioners of George Towne”—and each of them to life terms. (Georgetown did not acquire the right to elected self-government until well after the American Revolution.)

The first Mayor of the newly incorporated Georgetown in 1790 was Robert Peter, a second generation Scot and a major Georgetown landowner and merchant. His family, builders and original owners of Tudor Place (a great mansion house in Georgetown which still stands and is now open to the public), married in with the Custis family, relations of President George Washington, and continued to live at Tudor Place in Georgetown until the 1960s.

The first Postmaster of the newly incorporated Georgetown in 1790 was William Magruder, also a second generation Scot and also a major landowner and merchant. (Magruder's Grocers, still in operation in Georgetown, was until recently owned by one of his direct descendants.) These Magruders were MacGregors; a number of them were founding members of the American Clan Gregor Society in the United States (1908). Their Magruder descendants are numerous in Maryland and Virginia to this day. (Confederate General James Longstreet was a Magruder on his mother's side.)

In 1780, a small congregation of Presbyterians, mainly Scots, who had met informally in private houses since 1760 founded a church in Georgetown, under the leadership of Rev. Stephen Bloomer Balch, a pupil of Scots-born John Witherspoon, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Subsequently called Georgetown Presbyterian Church, it exists to this day and is the oldest continuously operating Christian congregation in Washington, DC.

Many of the Scots-born founders of Georgetown are buried in the kirkyard of Georgetown Presbyterian. (Though the church has moved locations since its founding, many of these founders' graves were relocated with it.) Its Pastor, from the time of his arrival from Scotland in 1980 until his retirement in 2002, was Rev. Campbell Gillon. During these years, Rev. Gillon was also Chaplain of the St. Andrew's Society of Washington, DC. Rev. Gillon who passed away in the summer of 2014, was Chaplain Emeritus of our Society until his death.)

Scottish Influence In the Founding and Layout of Washington City

When the U.S. Constitution was ratified in 1790, Article I, Section 8, Paragraph 17 created a federal enclave, "the District of Columbia", from land donated by both Maryland and Virginia. Both the existing port city of Alexandria and the existing port city of Georgetown were assimilated from that year onward into the newly created District of Columbia. Within the confines of this new creation by Congress (the District of Columbia), Washington City began to be constructed in 1791 on land partially purchased from gentleman farmer David Burnes, grandson of a Scottish immigrant of the same name (b. 1695.), who at his death in 1760 had owned 700 acres of prime bottom land in rural Maryland near Tiber Creek and the Potomac—land that was later to become prime real estate in Washington, DC.

It was the landholdings of David Burnes II, grandson of the Scottish immigrant of the same name, on which much of "official" Washington was to be built. He was the "obstinate Mr. Burnes" who for a long period refused to sell his extensive land holdings to President George Washington for the erection of the Federal City and the laying out of Pennsylvania Avenue. On that land, for which Burnes reluctantly accepted \$1 million from the new United States Government, now sits the south side of the US Capitol Building, the entire Washington Mall, most of the President's House (the White House), all of the Treasury Department, all of the Ellipse behind the White House, and all of Pennsylvania Avenue from the Capitol Building to the White House.

Burnes died in 1799 and was survived by a daughter, Marcia, a very wealthy heiress who in 1802 married Senator John Van Ness of New York—the first Mayor of Washington City (1830-34). They built a large mansion directly across from the White House on Pennsylvania Avenue,

on a small parcel of land still left to them after the Federal City was laid out. (This Senator Van Ness, a staunch anti-Federalist, was Aaron Burr's second in the notorious duel he fought near New York City with Alexander Hamilton in which the latter was shot and killed. Burr then fled the U.S. for points west and Van Ness was charged with being an accessory to murder—but that's another story for another day.)

Holding extensive property adjacent to Burnes was another prosperous second generation Scot—the merchant and gentleman farmer Samuel Davidson. From the sale of an extensive plot to the new Federal Government in 1790 which included what is now the north side of the White House and Lafayette Square, directly across from it, in 1792-94 Davidson built another of the great houses of Georgetown—Evermay, located at what is now 28th Street, NW. (Still a private residence to this day, Evermay was recently sold by its longtime owners, the Belin family, for the sum of almost \$30 million.)

Another famous Scot of importance in early Washington, DC was David Stuart (b. 1753, d. circa 1814). Born in Scotland, Stuart studied medicine and languages at the University of St. Andrews. Emigrating to America, he established a practice in Alexandria, and in 1783 became a relative of George Washington's when he married Eleanor Calvert Custis, widow of Washington's stepson, John Parker Custis. (A number of letters from Washington to Stuart exist, concerning family matters and Virginia politics.) Stuart served as a representative to the Virginia House of Delegates and also to the Virginia Convention of 1788 that ratified the U. S. Constitution. In 1790 Stuart was appointed by President Washington as one of the three Commissioners of the Federal City to oversee the siting and planning of the new capital—which was called by the Commissioners “Washington City.” He served on the Commission until at least 1793.

Yet another very famous Scottish-American resident of early Washington City was Colonel Benjamin Stoddert—like David Stuart, one of the three Commissioners appointed by President Washington to plan the location of the Capitol Building and other key Federal Government buildings. But Stoddert's reputation far exceeded that of his two colleagues on the Commission: The grandson of an early Scottish immigrant to Maryland, Benjamin Stoddert (b. 1751) was a major figure in the early years of the Republic. Starting life as a merchant in his father's firm in nearby Bladensburg, MD, he saw action as a cavalry officer during the American Revolution. After being seriously wounded in the field, Stoddert was appointed Secretary to the Continental Board of War. A staunch Federalist and close friend of General (later President) George Washington, after the war Stoddert was appointed by Washington as one of the three Commissioners to site and plan the key federal buildings in the new Nation's Capital. It was Stoddert who conceived the name for the new capital city: “Washington City.”

In 1783, Stoddert established a tobacco export business in Georgetown, together with business partners Uriah Forrest and John Murdoch; it was an extremely successful venture and made him a wealthy man. In 1798, then President John Adams appointed Stoddert to be the first Secretary of the Navy; he held that post until 1801—during which time he built up the Navy and oversaw action against France in the Caribbean.

A wealthy man, Stoddert lived and entertained in Georgetown, where he built Halcyon House (at 34th & Prospects Streets, NW), still standing. (The gardens at Halcyon House were designed by Pierre L'Enfant, the main architect of the new federal city. Among its more famous owners, in recent years, was Kathryn Graham, longtime owner of The Washington Post.) Stoddert's tobacco business, like most commercial activity in the Port of Georgetown, suffered a severe decline because of the War of 1812 and the consequent British embargo on American exports. Stoddert died in 1813 and is buried in nearby Seat Pleasant, MD.

General James MacCubbin Lingan was another prominent Scottish-American who played a major role in post-Revolution Georgetown and the new Washington City. Born in 1751 in Frederick County, MD, General Lingan was of Scottish ancestry on his mother's side—hence his middle name—and also related to the wealthy Carroll family of colonial Maryland. A tobacco merchant in Georgetown before the American Revolution, at its outbreak he was commissioned a lieutenant and saw combat in a Maryland regiment at the Battle of Long Island (largest battle of the war). Suffering a serious bayonet wound, he was captured by the British in late 1776 at Fort Washington and he spent the rest of the war in a prison ship, refusing offers freedom and a commission in the British Army from Admiral Sir Samuel Hood, a distant relation, who visited him in confinement.

After the war, Lingan was released and returned to Georgetown, where he farmed an estate called Harlem, after the famous battle in which he fought—sometimes called Harlem Heights, not Long Island. He was a founding member of the Society of the Cincinnati.

After the Constitution was ratified, Lingan was appointed Tax Collector for the Port of Georgetown by President Washington and he then relocated to a house he built for himself at 17th and "M" Streets, NW (no longer standing). A staunch Federalist, for a time he published *The Federal Republican* out of a print shop in Georgetown, which in its editorials opposed a second war with Britain. On the eve of the War of 1812, an anti-British mob stormed the print shop in Georgetown. In the violent riot which followed, General Lingan was beaten to death amid cries of "Tory! Tory"—despite him exposing to the mob the evidence of the bayonet wound in his chest from many years before.

Yet another famous Scottish-American of early Washington City was Colonel Washington Bowie, b. 1776 to Allen Bowie, a major property-owner in Frederick County, MD and himself the grandson of Scottish immigrant John Bowie, who arrived in Maryland in 1706. (The Bowies were a leading family in colonial Maryland and afterwards; Ogden Bowie was Governor of Maryland in the late 1800s and the town of Bowie (in Prince George's County, the third largest town in Maryland) was named after him.) Washington Bowie was the god-son of President George Washington, who was present at his christening. The famous frontiersman Colonel James ("Jim") Bowie, who died at the Alamo, was a distant cousin. By 1810, Washington Bowie had grown up to be a prosperous tobacco merchant in Georgetown, a colonel in the Maryland Militia, and one of the wealthiest men in the newly built Washington City. He was also one of the founding vestrymen of St. John's Episcopal Church, built in 1797 in Georgetown and in continuous operation (at its original "O" Street, NW location) to this day.

Two of the Founding Fathers of our Nation who were of Scottish descent played major roles in Washington after the Constitution was ratified and the Federal Government moved to the new Washington City from New York. These were Alexander Hamilton and James Monroe.

Born in the British West Indies on the Island of Nevis in 1757, Alexander Hamilton emigrated to New York City in 1772, where he attended King's College (now Columbia University). Commissioned a Captain of Artillery in the Continental Army at the outbreak of the war with Britain, Hamilton served throughout the war with General Washington, becoming his aide-de-camp. Hamilton endured the winter at Valley Forge and commanded an American artillery battery at the Battle of Trenton, on Christmas Eve, 1776—a major turning point in the war. He served on active duty until 1781 and commanded the artillery at the siege of Yorktown. Returning to New York City to practice law at the end of the war, Hamilton was one of the authors of *The Federalist Papers*. He served in the New York Assembly and was a member of the New York State Committee to ratify the U.S. Constitution in 1788.

Called to Washington City by his mentor, President Washington, Hamilton became the first Secretary of the Treasury and served in that capacity from 1789 to 1795—during which time he lived in Washington City and founded the U.S. Mint, the U.S. Coast Guard, the National Bank (predecessor of the Federal Reserve)—modeled on the Bank of England—and the Federalist Party. Remaining extremely close to President Washington throughout his term in office, Hamilton actually wrote Washington's famous Farewell Address.

Remembered as Jefferson's great rival and antagonist, Hamilton was throughout his life very proud of his Scottish heritage and as a young man was a devout Presbyterian. His correspondence, late in life, with the Duke of Hamilton, head of his clan, survives; one of the Duke's younger sons actually came to America under Hamilton's sponsorship. And Hamilton ascribed his lifelong abolitionist views to his Presbyterian upbringing.

As every schoolboy knows, Hamilton was killed in a duel with Vice President Aaron Burr in Weehawken, NJ—directly across the Hudson River from NYC—in 1804. (At the time, duelling was illegal in NY, but not in NJ.) Hamilton never built a house in Washington City but instead returned to New York in 1795 to build his estate, The Grange, which still survives. Though we declare ourselves to be a nation built on Jeffersonian principles, in fact we have evolved much more closely to Hamilton's vision for America—a militarily and economically strong, industrialized nation made up mainly of large cities, not of small towns and yeomen farmers.

The Federal Government as we know it is also largely the creation of Hamilton's vision. Strangely, there exists only one monument in DC to Alexander Hamilton: A bronze statue of him stands on the south side of the Treasury Building, right next to the White House.

James Monroe was a very different man from Alexander Hamilton—but like him, proud of his Scottish heritage. Born in Westmoreland County, VA, Monroe's paternal great grandfather had emigrated there from Scotland circa 1660. The son of a prosperous planter, Monroe studied at Campbelltown Academy under Rev. Archibald Campbell of Washington Parish, VA, going on to attend the College of William & Mary. In 1775, he dropped out of college to join the 3rd Virginia Regiment of the Continental Army. Between 1780 and 1783, he studied law

under Thomas Jefferson, whose protégé he was. An Anti-federalist, Monroe served as Governor of Virginia and later, American Ambassador to France, where he helped to negotiate the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Elected President of the United States in 1816 with 80 percent of the popular vote, he was easily re-elected in 1820.

While living in Washington, both before his presidency and afterwards, Monroe occupied a Federal style house which still stands. Located diagonally across Pennsylvania Avenue from the World Bank, the Monroe House is on the national historic register and is now the home of the Arts Club of Washington.

The City of Alexandria and Arlington County—Part of Washington, DC for Half A Century

From 1790 until its retrocession to Virginia in 1846, the City of Alexandria, plus what was formerly called Alexandria County (now Arlington County, VA), were part of the newly created District of Columbia. This was a key period of half a century, during the formative years of our National Government.

Reportedly Alexandrians soured on being part of the District of Columbia when both the U.S. Capitol Building and the President's House (i.e. the White Houser), plus all other Federal Government buildings, ended up being erected on the Maryland side of the Potomac, in what was to become Washington City. (An early plan advanced to build the U.S. Capitol Building on the high point of Alexandria that is now home to the Masonic Temple, where President George Washington later served as Master Mason, was rejected by the first Congress.) In addition, it was perceived by Virginians that the Port of Georgetown was receiving favorable commercial treatment over that given to the Port of Alexandria, right across the river—even though both pre-existing towns had been incorporated into the new District of Columbia.

The Old St. Andrew's Society of Alexandria in the District of Columbia

Also during this period, the St. Andrew's Society of Alexandria flourished. Founded just a few short years before the creation of the District of Columbia and defunct within a decade after retrocession of Alexandria and Arlington County to Virginia, for almost all of its recorded history the St. Andrew's Society of Alexandria—the predecessor organization to our current Society—operated within the territorial confines of the District of Columbia.

According to surviving newspaper local accounts, the St. Andrew's Society of Alexandria was founded in 1787. Its first President was Robert Hunter, a Scottish merchant who was later Mayor of Alexandria and a confidant of President George Washington. (Hunter is buried in the graveyard of the Old Presbyterian Meeting House in Old Town, Alexandria.)

The last mention of a meeting of the old St. Andrew's Society of Alexandria occurred in 1851. During 56 of the 64 years of its recorded existence (1787-1851), the St. Andrew's Society of Alexandria operated in a town which was part of the District of Columbia. This clearly qualifies it to be called the “predecessor society” of our current St. Andrew's Society of Washington, DC.

A Saint Andrew's Society in Olde George Towne?

Whether there ever existed a St. Andrew's Society of Olde George Towne, as existed right across the river in neighboring Olde Towne Alexandria, is a matter that requires original research. But with some diligent effort, the answer to this question can probably be arrived at.

Many primary source documents relating to the Scottish origins of Georgetown and Washington City still exist in public archives in Georgetown and elsewhere in Washington, DC (at the newly restored and reopened Georgetown Library, at the Washington Historical Society, at the Library of Congress, at the Georgetown Presbyterian Church, etc.), and should be reviewed by members of our Society to answer this question about whether an early St. Andrew's Society ever existed in Georgetown in the 18th century. (Among other things of interest, all the extensive business records of John Glassford & Sons, Glasgow's largest merchant house, are housed in the Library of Congress, right here in Washington, DC. They doubtless hold a wealth of information about the earliest Scots in Georgetown, all of whom were involved in one way or the other in the tobacco trade.)

The existence of an early (18th century) St. Andrew's Society in Georgetown is extremely likely, given the clear Scottish origins of the town of Georgetown (originally called "New Scotland"), its complete economic and political domination for the first 50+ years of its existence by a wealthy group of first- and second-generation Scottish merchants and landowners, and the fact that Scots tended to establish St. Andrew's societies wherever they settled in significant numbers.

Because Scottish immigrants tended to establish such societies wherever they settled, is it likely that so many Scots gathered in Georgetown for so many generations failed to follow this pattern, too? No, it is not likely! So if the usual pattern were followed in the 1750s – 1780s in Georgetown, this would have been the FIRST St. Andrew's Society of Washington, DC.

To date, it appears that this research has never been attempted by anyone on behalf of our Society—despite the existence of many books about the Scottish origins of Georgetown and of Washington City, and the relatively easy access to many primary source records right here in our Nation's Capital. Why not? Regardless, it is high time to undertake this research challenge!

A New St. Andrew's Society of Washington, DC Founded Shortly Before the Civil War

A new St. Andrew's Society of Washington, DC was founded in 1855 in the District of Columbia by Scottish immigrant William Robertson Smith (b. 1828), and five other Scottish-Americans. Smith served for decades as President of the Society. For 60 years he also served as the well-known Superintendent of the Botanic Gardens, located at the foot of Capitol Hill, which is where the Society always met (In his offices). Smith was a vocal opponent of the Civil War in the years leading up to it and from his writings appears to have been a Southern sympathizer, though not a secessionist. After the war, he fervently opposed placing the monument to General Ulysses Grant on land that was previously part of his Gardens. In the end he lost, which deeply embittered him toward the Congress, his employer. Smith was a close friend of Andrew Carnegie and a Mason. At his death he donated his extensive collection of first-edition works of Robert Burns to the Scottish Rite Masonic Temple on 16th Street in Washington, DC—where it resides to this day.

In their day, both of these societies operated exclusively within the District of Columbia. There is no record of ANY overlap in time between the old St. Andrew's Society of Alexandria and the new St. Andrew's Society of Washington, DC. In fact there is a four-year gap between the last recorded meeting of the former and the first-recorded meeting of the latter.

We know the names of the six founding members of the new DC Society in 1855, though we do not know the names of any of the last-remaining members of the older Society in 1851. Could there have been overlap?

It has been asserted by some that none of the founding members of the new Society belonged to the older Society, which may well be true. But apart from the President, William Robertson Smith, who was a recent immigrant from Scotland, this has not been proven. And absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.

The Modern St. Andrew's Society of Washington, DC - Created by Law in 1908 as A District of Columbia Nonprofit Corporation

Yet another "re-foundation" of our Society occurred in 1908, when FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME the St. Andrew's Society of Washington, DC was incorporated. All the "modern" features and practices of our Society—such as our current Code of Bylaws, the requirement of regular meetings, a broad-based membership, annual election of officers, etc.—date back only to this 1908 re-founding. Though the five Society incorporators in 1908 included William Robertson Smith (by then an elderly man), the others (William Fraser Small, William Ramsay, John McGregor, J.H. Small, Jr., and Archibald McLechlen) were different persons from those who with Smith founded the 1855 Society.

As a matter of law, all corporations are "persons," and their legal life span is "in perpetuity" from the date of their incorporation onward, unless later formally dissolved. That means that all corporations have a birth day. So by law, the official birthday of our "current" Society is May 18, 1908 (the date of its incorporation), at Noon—NOT 1855, as has been asserted by some.

Concluding Thoughts

Unlike Alexandria, its one-time commercial rival directly across the Potomac, Georgetown remains a part of the District of Columbia to this day (1790 – 2012). It lost its status as a separate town within DC in 1871 and was administratively merged with Washington City into what, after that date, came to be called simply "Washington, DC."

The old Scottish merchant aristocracy of Georgetown—its founding families who as we have seen long dominated its politics, as well as its economy, into the early decades of the 19th century—were by the time Abraham Lincoln assumed the presidency in 1861 gone from positions of power and influence. Most had been slave owners, and though very few went south at the outbreak of the Civil War, and despite the fact that slavery remained legal in Washington, DC until 1865, these old Georgetown families were generally distrusted by the newly ascendant Republican Party for being Southern sympathizers. Thus, they did not receive appointment to municipal offices by the Lincoln Administration, which favored new men. And

with the end of the tobacco trade to Britain after the War of 1812 and the subsequent demise of the C&O Canal (which started at Georgetown and ran West) at the dawn of the railroad age, their economic power—and Georgetown's— was gone forever.

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