

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Alexandria Historic District (2017
Update Regarding the Murray-Dick-
Fawcett House)

Name of Property

Alexandria, VA

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation Page 1

The Alexandria Historic District in the City of Alexandria, Virginia, was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1966 and listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register in 1968. A National Register nomination for the historic district, with larger boundaries, was approved in 1969. At the time of its listing, an inventory of contributing and non-contributing resources was not required to be included in the district nomination. The historic district nomination was updated in 1984 to include a statement of significance and inventory for twentieth-century resources within the district boundaries. However the district still lacks a comprehensive inventory of all resources within its boundaries. This additional documentation has been prepared to provide a brief overview of the historic district’s integrity and to assign a status of “contributing” to a recently researched architectural resource, today known as the Murray-Dick-Fawcett House (100-0097; 100-0121-1131), within the district. When originally listed in the VLR and NRHP, the Alexandria Historic District boundaries were delineated as being within a multi-sided polygon shown on a USGS topographic map. The historic boundaries *have not been changed* as a result of this nomination update.

Numbered sections below are keyed to the current version of the NRHP nomination form. In Section 7, the updated information includes a brief summary of the Alexandria Historic District’s architectural character and a description of the recently documented Murray-Dick-Fawcett House. Section 8 describes the resource’s direct association with the historic district’s Architecture area of significance. Seven photographs of the architectural resources and open space on the property are provided following the narrative discussion below. Also included herein are current maps that show the district’s precise historic boundaries on a street map background, which augments the original NRHP nomination’s topographic map, and a map that shows the location of the Murray-Dick-Fawcett House.

Section 7.

Located on the banks of the Potomac River just south of Washington, D.C., the Alexandria Historic District is significant as an example of an early American shipping port, dealing primarily in the export of tobacco and grain, with a remarkably dense concentration of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century architectural resources. The architecture reflects a wide spectrum of building materials, construction methods, and architectural styles, ranging from vernacular work done by local craftsmen to the finest products of Continental artisans. Construction materials include wood, brick, stone, and log, used in industrial warehouses, shops and commercial establishments, churches, schools, and residences. The historic district today retains a high level of integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association.

Tobacco was critical to the early development of Virginia’s economy because of tremendous demand for the leaf in Europe, so much so that tobacco was actually used as a form of currency into the nineteenth century. Ports on Virginia’s major rivers, including the Potomac, were critical to the transportation network that sent tobacco to England and brought wealth in return. The town of Alexandria was named for early speculators John and Phillip Alexander, and officially chartered by colonial Virginia’s House of Burgesses in 1748. Initially, development was largely driven by tobacco merchants and the shipping

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Alexandria Historic District (2017 Update Regarding the Murray-Dick-Fawcett House)
----- Name of Property Alexandria, VA
----- County and State N/A
----- Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation Page 2

industry, who erected warehouses, factories to produce supplies such as rope and barrels, chandleries and other commercial enterprises, and numerous smaller buildings to house and entertain those engaged in trade.

Alexandria was formally incorporated in 1779 and designated a Port of Entry, around the time that priority began to shift toward shipping grain from Virginia and Maryland’s western counties. The city remained the commercial hub and principal seaport of Northern Virginia through the mid-nineteenth century, but diminished in prominence after the Civil War.

Murray-Dick-Fawcett House (DHR No. 100-0097, also 100-0121-1131)

The Murray-Dick-Fawcett House fronts onto Prince St, at the corner of Prince and St. Asaph Streets. The property contains the main dwelling, a one-story wood-frame building constructed in several phases beginning ca. 1775, a brick garage built ca. 1970, and a small garden enclosed by a late 20th century brick wall.

According to the 1936 Historic American Buildings Survey (“HABS”), the Murray-Dick-Fawcett House was constructed ca. 1775 by Patrick Murray; recent dendrochronology evidence indicates the beams of the house were felled in that year. The earliest section of the house is a 1½-story dwelling designed in a hall-chamber plan, set on a raised brick and stone foundation over a well with a single interior brick chimney heating the west room and half story. The exterior was originally clad in shiplap wood siding, and roofed with hand-cut rounded wood shingles; some of this material remains on the west elevation and under subsequent roof layers. Many original and early-19th century window sash remain, most with original glass. The interior features fine woodwork such as molded architraves, chair rails, paneled doors, and cabinets in the hall, as well as an enclosed winder stair. In 1785, Murray enlarged the house with a single-story shed-roofed frame addition to add two rooms onto the main level of the house and converted the winder stair to an open single run.

In 1796, the house was purchased by John Thomas Ricketts and William Newton. Newton resided in the house and added a brick service ell onto the north elevation. The ell is 1½ stories, laid in 3:1 common bond, and extends along the east property line to the alley. The HABS drawings show this ell contained a kitchen, smokery (meat room), laundry, and “necessary” toilet facility. The toilet is an especially important survival because of its relative rarity, and also because it retains evidence of historic separations for servants or enslaved workers, women, and men. The upper half story was used as domestic living quarters.

By 1816, the house had been purchased by John Douglas Brown, who removed the entrance porch and sealed the south cellar entrance, orienting the house toward a door in the east gable end that had been added ca. 1784. These alterations were made necessary after Prince Street was re-graded and widened, leaving the porch awkwardly jutting out over the street.

According to Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, the adjoining open-space parcel currently used as a garden was historically a commercial property. Between 1891 and 1959, it was occupied by a grocery, a

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Alexandria Historic District (2017 Update Regarding the Murray-Dick-Fawcett House)
----- Name of Property
Alexandria, VA
----- County and State
N/A
----- Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation Page 3

“Chinese laundry,” and a two-story brick school/office building used by the Second Presbyterian Church (located at 601 Prince St). The latter school/office is believed to have been torn down after 1959 and before the current garage building was constructed ca. 1970. The existing garage is a detached, one-story brick building, fronted by large carriage doors with massive replica iron hardware.

The main dwelling was altered ca. 2002 by the addition of a kitchen wing on the north elevation that parallels the historic service ell, creating a small courtyard at the northeast corner of the lot. The 2002 wing contains a kitchen with a large brick chimney and a bath. The addition made use of an existing door and has little impact on the historic fabric of the main dwelling.

Section 8.

The Murray-Dick-Fawcett House is one of the earliest surviving vernacular houses in Northern Virginia, and was in existence during the period of Old Town Alexandria’s greatest commercial success. In addition, the property retains an extraordinary degree of integrity and remains largely unaltered since the first quarter of the 19th century.

The original 1749 boundary of the Town lay slightly to the east of what would become 517 Prince St, but the lot was included in the subsequent 1763 annexation. Patrick Murray purchased three of the four half-acre lots on the square bordered by King, Prince, St. Asaph, and Pitt Streets, and commissioned a house near one corner. The fourth lot on the block (now 508 Pitt St) was purchased by George Washington for investment purposes, whereupon he built a small tenant house. In the 1770s and 1780s, Patrick Murray was a successful blacksmith and owner of a livery stable on St. Asaph Street, but was later forced to sell his property to cover debts to the estate of Samuel English. The executors of the estate rented the property, then sold it in 1794 to Dr. Elisha Cullen Dick. Dick was notable as one of the physicians who attended George Washington at his death, and as a prominent local citizen. Dick sold the property in 1796 to two King Street merchants, John Thomas Ricketts and William Newton, who added the brick service wing.

John Douglas Brown purchased the house in 1816, and his descendants lived in the house until 2002. In 1936, the building was recorded for its historic and architectural significance by the Historic American Buildings Survey (“HABS”) of the Department of the Interior.

The interior of the house reflects eighteenth century domestic life in its proportions, methods of construction, and feeling. The historic fabric of the interior is largely unchanged, retaining original plaster walls, fine woodwork, original wood flooring, hand-forged hardware, and brick hearths. The house represents a microcosm of a middle-income family dwelling, with typical living, dining, and sleeping areas, as well as informal kitchen, sculleries, storage, and servants’ quarters. The service wing, with its dedicated meat room, wash room, and necessary facilities is an especially important survival, because these types of functional areas were first, usually constructed as separate outbuildings, and second, often demolished or replaced as technology and living styles changed. The house is still

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Alexandria Historic District (2017
Update Regarding the Murray-Dick-
Fawcett House)

Name of Property

Alexandria, VA

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation Page 4

occupied as a dwelling and has been sensitively updated to include modern baths, utilities, and a kitchen wing built using traditional post-and-beam construction, but retains its essential historic character. The property has occupied a prominent location within the historic district for over two hundred years, and is further significant as the only extant vernacular, middle-class frame dwelling of its period in the district, and one of the few remaining examples of such in any urban setting in Virginia.

PHOTO LOG

1 of 7. Murray-Dick-Fawcett House, oblique from the corner of St. Asaph and Prince Sts.

2 of 7. Murray-Dick-Fawcett House, south elevation.

3 of 7. Murray-Dick-Fawcett House, west elevation.

4 of 7. Murray-Dick-Fawcett House, oblique of east elevation.

5 of 7. Murray-Dick-Fawcett House, west elevation of north additions.

6 of 7. Murray-Dick-Fawcett House, south elevation of garage outbuilding.

7 of 7. Murray-Dick-Fawcett House, open space looking south.

LIST OF MAPS

NRHP and NHL Boundaries of the Alexandria Historic District (Map 1 of 2)

Location Map – Murray-Dick-Fawcett House (Map 2 of 2)

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number Additional Documentation Page 5

Alexandria Historic District (2017
Update Regarding the Murray-Dick-
Fawcett House)

Name of Property

Alexandria, VA

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



1 of 7. Murray-Dick-Fawcett House, oblique from the corner of St. Asaph and Prince Sts.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation Page 6

Alexandria Historic District (2017
Update Regarding the Murray-Dick-
Fawcett House)

Name of Property
Alexandria, VA

County and State
N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



2 of 7. Murray-Dick-Fawcett House, south elevation.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation Page 7

Alexandria Historic District (2017 Update Regarding the Murray-Dick-Fawcett House)
----- Name of Property Alexandria, VA
----- County and State N/A
----- Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



3 of 7. Murray-Dick-Fawcett House, west elevation.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number Additional Documentation Page 8

Alexandria Historic District (2017
Update Regarding the Murray-Dick-
Fawcett House)

Name of Property
Alexandria, VA

County and State
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Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



4 of 7. Murray-Dick-Fawcett House, oblique of east elevation.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation Page 9

Alexandria Historic District (2017
Update Regarding the Murray-Dick-
Fawcett House)

Name of Property

Alexandria, VA

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



5 of 7. Murray-Dick-Fawcett House, west elevation of north additions.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation Page 10

Alexandria Historic District (2017
Update Regarding the Murray-Dick-
Fawcett House)

Name of Property

Alexandria, VA

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



6 of 7. Murray-Dick-Fawcett House, south elevation of garage outbuilding.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number Additional Documentation Page 11

Alexandria Historic District (2017
Update Regarding the Murray-Dick-
Fawcett House)

Name of Property

Alexandria, VA

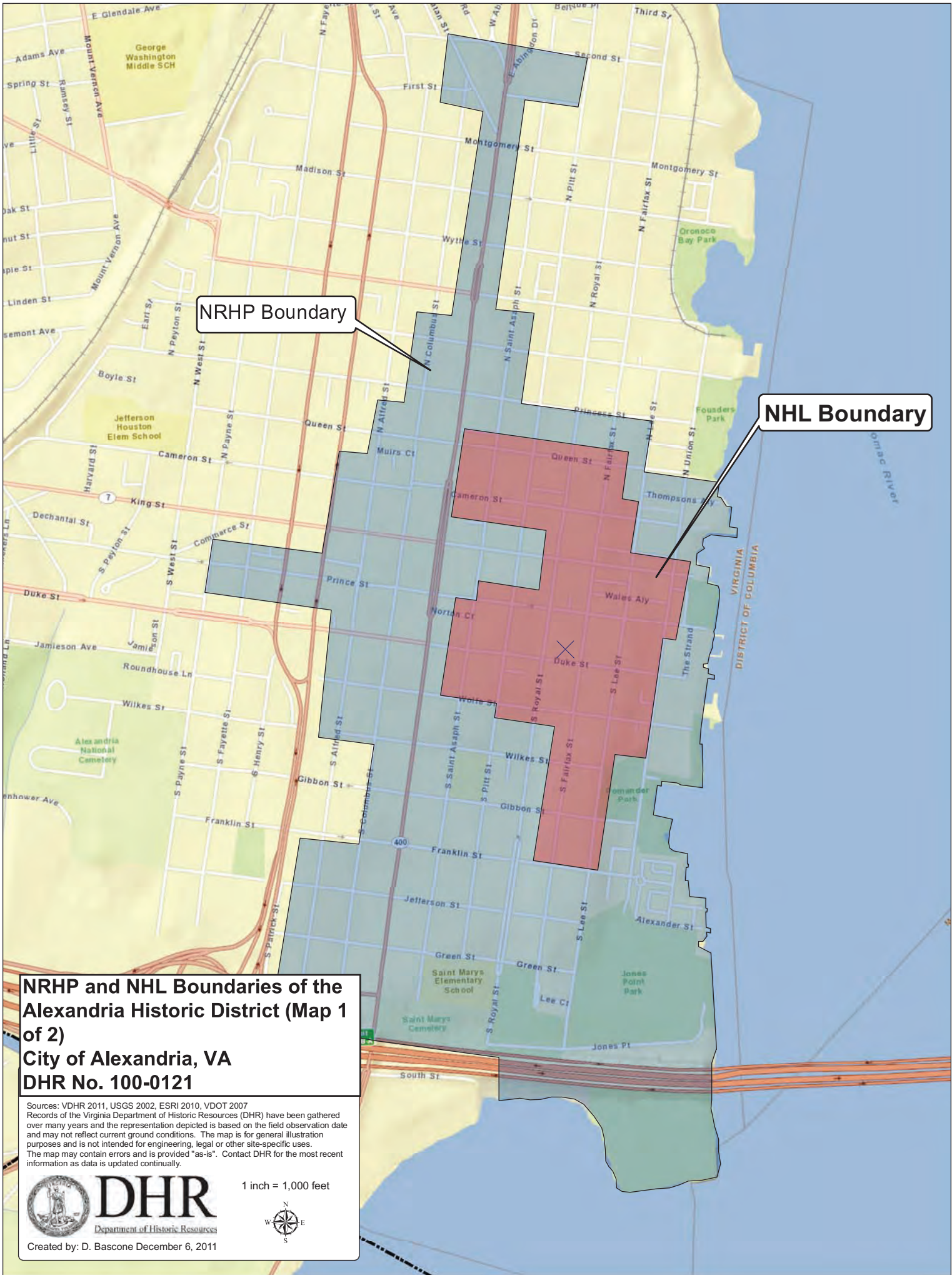
County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



7 of 7. Murray-Dick-Fawcett House, open space looking south.



NRHP Boundary

NHL Boundary

NRHP and NHL Boundaries of the Alexandria Historic District (Map 1 of 2)
City of Alexandria, VA
DHR No. 100-0121

Sources: VDHR 2011, USGS 2002, ESRI 2010, VDOT 2007
 Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years and the representation depicted is based on the field observation date and may not reflect current ground conditions. The map is for general illustration purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. The map may contain errors and is provided "as-is". Contact DHR for the most recent information as data is updated continually.



1 inch = 1,000 feet



Created by: D. Bascone December 6, 2011



LOCATION MAP - MURRAY-DICK-FAWCETT HOUSE (Map 2 of 2)

Alexandria Historic District 2017 Update Regarding the Murray-Dick-Fawcett House

City of Alexandria, VA

DHR No. 100-0121

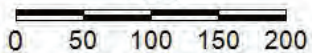
Location Coordinates:

Latitude: 38.803970

Longitude: -77.045790



Feet



1:2,257 / 1"=188 Feet

Title:

Date: 4/26/2017

DISCLAIMER: Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years from a variety of sources and the representation depicted is a cumulative view of field observations over time and may not reflect current ground conditions. The map is for general information purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. Map may contain errors and is provided "as-is". More information is available in the DHR Archives located at DHR's Richmond office.

Notice if AE sites: Locations of archaeological sites may be sensitive the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and Code of Virginia §2.2-3705.7 (10). Release of precise locations may threaten archaeological sites and historic resources.