

# Remembering Benjamin Thomas Lynched in Alexandria August 8, 1899



Constructed in 1827, the Alexandria jail was located at the northeast corner of Princess and North St. Asaph streets. After the jail closed in 1987, the west façade was preserved and incorporated into new homes standing today.

*Grigg-Lamond Photo Collection, Alexandria Library Special Collections*



## Remembrance Planning Committee

Amy Bertsch, Gretchen Bulova, Jeff Davidson, Audrey Davis, Rose Dawson, Quardricos Driskell, Mark Farkas, Darrlynn Franklin, Taft Quincey Heatley, Linda Howard, Michael Johnson, Leslie Jones, Jean Kelleher, Lotte Lent, Laura Macaluso, Letty Maxwell, McArthur Myers, Tiffany Pache, Shelli Ross, RaAlim Shabazz, David Spinrad, Sarah Whelan and Kennetra Wood.

*Thank you to the members of the Soil and Marker Committee as well as the Research Committee for their dedicated and thoughtful work on the development of this marker and remembering the life of Benjamin Thomas.*

*Special thanks to Walt Steimel for his generous support of ACRP and for providing a marker easement to further tell the Benjamin Thomas story.*

For more information about the Alexandria Community Remembrance Project and the 2023 Remembrance for Benjamin Thomas, use the QR Code to the right:



Do you have a family connection to the lynchings that occurred in Alexandria? If you are comfortable sharing this information, please reach out to [Audrey.Davis@alexandriava.gov](mailto:Audrey.Davis@alexandriava.gov) or visit [Alexandriava.gov/historic](http://Alexandriava.gov/historic).

*Your participation in today's event constitutes your consent to be photographed, filmed, and/or otherwise recorded and to the release, publication, exhibition, or reproduction of any and all recorded media of your appearance, voice, and name for any purpose whatsoever in perpetuity in connection with the ACRP and its initiatives, including, by way of example only, use on websites, in social media, news and advertising.*



# Remembering Benjamin Thomas August 8, 2023

## ACRP Thomas Remembrance Acknowledgement Statement

Benjamin Thomas came to his death at the hands of a white mob, citizens of Alexandria and neighbors to Benjamin, his mother Elizabeth, and the Thomas family.

White Alexandrians wrongfully accused Benjamin Thomas. They listened to a 7-year-old white child – his accuser – but they did not give Benjamin Thomas an opportunity to speak. They refused to listen to the Black community who warned of a lynching. Law enforcement disregarded their pleas and escalated the conflict. Alexandria’s white community reacted by lynching Thomas, who was 16 and innocent.

The mother of the child who accused Thomas said: “the young man was not guilty.”

**Public Acknowledgement:** *(please read aloud if you identify as white)*

*We hold the 1899 leadership of Alexandria responsible for failing to protect Benjamin Thomas and for failing to prosecute the perpetrators.*

*We further hold Alexandria’s white community of 1899 responsible for:*

- *the racial terror torture and killing of Benjamin Thomas;*
- *the terrorizing of their Black neighbors;*
- *and their actions and inactions on August seventh and eighth.*

*We acknowledge that our predecessors failed this boy, his family, and betrayed their fellow citizens.*

*We hope to begin to rectify this past injustice by:*

- *giving back Mr. Thomas’ story;*
- *telling the truth of our shared history;*
- *and by committing to a future Alexandria that welcomes diversity and provides equality and justice to all.”*



## Alexandria Community Remembrance Project Alexandriava.gov/Historic

Welcome	Reverend Professor Quardricos B. Driskell, Beulah Baptist Church
Marker Unveiling	Gretchen Bulova, ACRP Co-Chair Audrey Davis, ACRP Co-Chair Walter E. Steimel, Jr.
Remarks	Hon. Sean Casey, Sheriff
Thomas Narrative	Mahmoud Abu Koroma, Alexandria City High School Student
Remarks	Reverend Dr. Taft Quincey Heatley, Shiloh Baptist Church
Poem	“Take Him Out!” Written by Rev. A. A. Lott, August 26, 1899 Inspired by the August 8, 1899 lynching
	<i>Please join in the public procession to lynching location, led by drummer, Korey London. Walk on the St. Asaph Street Sidewalk and turn left on King Street.</i>
Wreath Laying	Hon. Amy Jackson, Vice Mayor Hon. Sean Casey, Sheriff James Parajon, City Manager
Group Acknowledgement	Led by Jean Kelleher, Assistant City Manager, Director of the Office of Human Rights
Concluding Remarks	Reverend Dr. Taft Quincey Heatley, Shiloh Baptist Church

