

## Tracing the Past

### In Remembrance of Joseph McCoy

Acknowledge the events of April 23, 1897, and remember Alexandria native Joseph McCoy by walking the streets and noting the places where he lived, worked and may have been arrested. Travel to Market Square to the police station where Joseph first heard of the charges he faced, which he denied, before eventually confessing. The young Black man twice experienced intense fear as an enraged white mob came after him with murderous intent. Then walk his last terrified steps to Cameron and Lee Streets. There, honor him by saying his name, apologize for Alexandria's history of racial terror and promise to work to ensure a just future for all people.

#### 1. **400 Block of S. Alfred Street.**

Joseph McCoy was raised in The Bottoms neighborhood of Alexandria by his grandmother Cecelia McCoy. The 1880 Census showed that Cecelia and one-year old Joseph, lived at 491 S. Alfred Street. Today, the Heritage at Old Town apartments span the length of the block across from where the McCoy home once stood.

#### 2. **Corner of Church and S. Washington Street.**

On the Northeast corner of Washington and Church Streets, across from the Catholic Cemetery was the Lacy homestead where Joseph McCoy was employed when he was accused by Lacy. McCoy assisted Lacy with many tasks such as cleaning and maintaining the stables and caring for the horses. One version of events states that Lt. James Smith found McCoy at the Lacy property cutting firewood. He told an investigator sent by Virginia's Governor, that he hadn't told McCoy he was under arrest, but convinced the youth to go to the station house with him by implying it was for his own protection. McCoy never returned.

#### 3. **4 Muire's Alley**

In February 1897, Rachel Chase, who was related to Joseph McCoy, married Samuel Gairy (sometimes spelled Gary or Geary) and lived at Number 4 Muire's Alley, located just behind 714 Franklin Street.

One of the first newspaper reports about the crime said that McCoy was arrested at Rachel and Samuel's house.



#### 4. **126 N. Fairfax Street: The Alexandria Police "Station House"**

The Station House was located on the east side of City Hall. Today, you can still see



the words etched above what was an entrance with double doors. Joseph McCoy spent his last hours alive in a cell in this building. This is where he reportedly confessed to criminal assault against Lacy's daughter and where a white mob twice attacked the building before apprehending McCoy and dragging him to the corner of Cameron and Lee streets where they tortured and hanged him.

*From the Alexandria Gazette, April 23, 1897.*

### **5. The SE Corner of Cameron and Lee Streets.**

On this corner, on an old iron lamp post that is no longer standing, a mob of at least 500 white people hanged Joseph McCoy. On the way to the site, they clubbed and beat him, after tying him up, they shot him several times and pelted him with cobblestones. After he was cut down, a large man crushed his skull with an ax.

### **6. 606 S. Washington Street**

The McCoy family belonged to Roberts Memorial Chapel. Rev. William Gaines, who was the pastor, performed the funeral service for McCoy.

As a home to one of the oldest African American congregations in Alexandria, this site is significant to Alexandria's African American heritage.

