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www.WashMapSociety.org
[EDITOR’S NOTE: The Washingtonia collection of WMS member Albert Small is a national treasure that has been donated to the George Washington University for future generations. The materials will be on rotating display in the future. The collection’s curator James M. Goode and George Washington University have provided The Portolan seventeen maps representative of the breadth of the collection. Dr. Goode has written a brief commentary describing various maps in the collection. Rather than all these maps appearing in one issue, The Portolan will carry a selection of these maps in this and the coming three issues. Mr. Small was spotlighted in the Spring 2014 issue (#89) of this journal.]

The Albert H. Small Map Collection - Part 1

by James M. Goode

Maps constitute the largest portion of Albert H. Small’s extensive collection of Washingtoniana—250 of 1,000 items. The other objects in the collection include prints, manuscripts, photographs, newspapers, and ephemera. Two of the earliest maps, the 1671 map of Maryland by John Ogilby and the 1790 hand-drawn Priggs or “Alligator Map,” are discussed in some detail in the Spring 2014 and Fall 2012 issues of The Portolan. This and later articles in this series describe other unusual Washington maps that Albert H. Small has acquired over the past 66 years. These are arranged chronologically and described briefly, while the catalog number for each is shown, as “(AS 000).”

The collection is now part of the new George Washington University Museum at the corner at 21st and G Streets, N.W., on the main campus, which opened in Washington DC in March 2015. (Contact phone 202-994-5200, web http://museum.gwu.edu/—please consult for current exhibition and hours.) The two initial exhibitions, on the founding of Washington, D.C. and the Civil War in Washington, contain many maps. The exhibitions will change periodically. A published catalog entitled The Evolution of Washington, D.C., Historical Selections from the Albert H. Small Washingtoniana Collection at the George Washington University by James M. Goode, the curator, was released in March 2015 by Smithsonian Books. [Editor’s Note: This book was reviewed in The Portolan, Issue 93 (Fall 2015).] It describes 90 illustrated items in the collection including a number of maps. Students, scholars, and researchers can use the Small Collection at the Albert H. Small Center for National Capital Area Studies at the museum.

EARLY MANUSCRIPT MAPS
The largest landowner in the new Federal City was Daniel Carroll of Duddington owned 1,800 acres located on Capitol Hill, Southwest Washington, and the present National Mall. Carroll employed local surveyor Nicholas King to draw several plats showing his other lands for sale. This manuscript map, titled Plan of Part of the City of Washington, which dates from 1795, shows the Capitol Hill area bordered by North Carolina Avenue, Pennsylvania Avenue, 7th and 13 Street, S.E (AS 506). An elaborate Rococo Revival cartouche contains the legend in the lower left. The Geography and Map Division of the Library of Congress contains several other plats by King of Carroll’s land, each with a different cartouche.

Another rare hand-drawn map from August 1814 depicts the Battle of Bladensburg, Maryland.

In this engagement the American forces were attacked and defeated during the War of 1812 (AS 534). The British then marched eight miles into Washington City and burned the Capitol, White House, and other government buildings. This is one of only three original maps drawn by a member of the conflict. Another interesting pre-Civil War map of Washington is Map of Washington City by A. Boschke, published by J. Bien of New York in 1857 (AS 295). Boschke, a German trained engineer then employed by the U.S. Coast and Geological Survey, independently drew this landmark map. It is one of the only maps ever made showing every building in the city. Measuring five feet square, it is highly decorated with a wide border with vignettes of prominent local landmarks.

FIRST PRINTED CIVIL WAR MAP
Of the 250 maps in the Small Collection, 60 deal with the Civil War—half printed during the war and half after the war. One was printed in the Confederate capital of Richmond. Perhaps the rarest of these is titled Sketch of the Seat of War in Alexandria and Fairfax County, drawn by “V. P. Corbett, Washington City, May 31st 1861” (AS 708). This privately printed uncolored lithograph is thought to be
the earliest printed map of the war. It shows the location of the first Union regiments camped in makeshift earthen works in Alexandria, Alexandria County (now Arlington County), and part of Fairfax County, Virginia to defend Washington from Confederate attack. Three groups of Union troops moved to occupy northern Virginia on May 24, 1861, the day after Virginia voted to secede from the Union: Col. Ellsworth's 7th New York Regiment went by steamship to Alexandria, Maj. Wood led his infantry across the Aqueduct Bridge from Georgetown to Rosslyn, and Col. Heintzelman moved his regiment across the Long Bridge to occupy Arlington House. This map shows these first forts built at one-half mile intervals between Alexandria and Rosslyn. The map was printed only one week after the occupation and only one. Fort Corcoran, had been named. Most of the forts were named for their regimental commanders whose troops built the forts—Hagerty, Bennett, and Runyon, as well as Ellsworth, who has killed in the occupation of Alexandria—along with Forts Albany and Jackson.

The forts, which stretched out in a north-south row centered at Arlington House, became known as the “Arlington Line.” The commander of the Union army, known as the Army of the Potomac, occupied Arlington House itself. One of these forts—Fort Ward in Alexandria—has been completely restored today and serves as a public museum. The number of these first Union forts built to protect Washington would swell in the next two years from 8 to 66. The nation’s capital became the most fortified city in the world.

The cartographer of the map, Virgil P. Corbett, along with his brothers and father, was a recent transplant from northern New York a decade earlier. The family owned farms which are shown in the center of the map near Glebe Road. By the time this map was printed it was already out of date thanks to speedy fort construction, so few copies were sold. Corbett, however, published a map five months later, in October 1861, which was widely used—Map of the Seat of War. This map shows the three battles in 1861 northern Virginia—18 July, the Battle of Blackburn's Ford at Centerville; 21st July—First Battle of Bull Run in Manassas, and 21 October—Battle of Ball’s Bluff in Leesburg: all Confederate victories. After the war the Corbett brothers returned to working their Virginia farms in present day Arlington County.

(Series to be continued....)