



City of Alexandria
Office of Historic Alexandria
Alexandria Legacies
Oral History Program



Project Name: *Alexandria Legacies*

Title: *Interview with Richard Parker*

Date of Interview: *August 20, 1981*

Location of Interview: *Richard Parker's home, Alexandria, Virginia*

Interviewer: *Claudia Weatherford*

Transcriber: *Linda Sturgeon*

Abstract: Mr. Parker was a life-long resident of Alexandria. His father owned a grocery store in the 700 block of King Street between 1904 and 1945. Mr. Parker discusses the store, including the pickle barrels out front, the cakes popular with children and how his father initially made deliveries via horse and wagon. Other businesses in the 700 and 800 blocks of King Street are recalled, such as Lemenschawsky's shoe repair and the Hoy's stove and tinware shop. The streetcar line's route between Mount Vernon and Washington, D.C., is also vividly described.

Table of Contents/Index

Tape: *Tape 1*

Side: *Side 1*

Minute	Counter	Page	Topic
1	1	3	Introductions
2	10	3	700 Block of King Street
5	20	3	Parker and Brothers Grocery Store
12	126	5	Grocery Delivery
15	152	6	Holiday Parades
17	163	6	Making Purchases for the Store
21	194	7	Nugent's Store
23	207	7	Businesses in the 700 Block of King Street
27	382	10	Businesses in the 800 Block of King Street

Tape: *Tape 1*

Side: *Side 2*

Minute	Counter	Page	Topic
0	0	11	Businesses in the 800 Block of King Street continued
2	16	12	Streetcars Between Mount Vernon and Washington, D.C.
7	102	15	Emerson Steam Company

Introductions	
Claudia Weatherford:	This is Richard Parker, August 20, 1981, interviewed by Claudia Weatherford. The subject is King Street, and we are in the subject's home on New Orleans Drive.
700 Block of King Street	
Richard Parker:	Well, as far as I can remember Timberman's was on the corner at 701.
C.W.:	Right, that now is China Corner Restaurant.
Richard Parker:	And then 703 was Carne's. Of course they lived above that and used 703½. It goes back, I think. 705 was, far as I can recall, a Hollywood Restaurant. It just happened about—my father died in [19]78 so he would have known all about that street. My other two brothers, of course they passed away now, were younger than I, but they worked in the store, more in my father's store.
Parker and Brothers Grocery Store	
C.W.:	Oh, yeah. What was your father's name?
Richard Parker:	Clarence.
C.W.:	Clarence Parker. And was he at 707 then? Do you remember the address of that store?
Richard Parker:	He was at 713, but 715 first. See the store was at, well at first they were in the 600 block. Then they moved, they moved up to 715. And then they was probably just renting the building then, but they started to buy 713. He bought that property. And when he left 715 that's when the bakery, Shockey's Bakery came in there.
C.W.:	Moved in there—do you know what date that was?
Richard Parker:	I was real young.
C.W.:	When did he first start out in the 600 block? Was that the beginning of the 1900s?
Richard Parker:	—Well, Daddy started in 1905.
C.W.:	That would be—
Richard Parker:	1904.
C.W.:	That would be on the 600 block.
Richard Parker:	That was in the 600 block. So it must have been, must have been around—I don't know how many years ago really [inaudible]. I know when we were real small he was in 715.
C.W.:	In 715. What memories do you have of that grocery store, Richard?

Richard Parker:	Well, I'll tell you it was a typical grocery store. They put a lot of fruits and vegetables out in front of the building. And they had a counter and people'd come in and they'd wait on the people, you know. They would say I want a can of this, or I want this or that and they'd go and get it and put it all on the counter. Then they'd add it up and put [inaudible] whatever they'd do and then in the back, it went all the way back to the alleyway, see, the store went from King Street all the way back to the alleyway. And in the back they would have—they used to manufacture their own sauerkraut. And they used to keep salt fish you know right there [inaudible].
C.W.:	Did they prepare that too or was that—
Richard Parker:	Well, I don't know. Then they had barrels of pickles in front. Then the cakes before—then they used to have cake boxes with different kinds of small cakes, you know. And they'd maybe have about 12 different kinds and you would go and pick your cakes out. That was popular with the children. Then he was the first merchant to have Birds Eye frozen food.
C.W.:	Do you remember when that was?
Richard Parker:	I wish'd I did. [laughs]
C.W.:	Or, the general ballpark?
Richard Parker:	But, I'll tell you what—
C.W.:	Maybe [19]30s?
Richard Parker:	Oh, it had to be. Maybe before [19]30s, I don't know—I wished somebody had interviewed him before he died because his mind was—he would live to be 93, 94—and his mind was clear as a bell, I'm telling you. It's just too bad that—
C.W.:	Full of information, like a book.
Richard Parker:	Yeah.
C.W.:	So, when you were a child did you go down there after school, or—
Richard Parker:	Well, my two brothers would—my brother next to me, Frank, he worked there for years, see. Then he finally opened up—when World War II came along he was in charge of the Commissary out at Cameron—and then after that, he opened a place out on Route 7, in Claremont—but he didn't do too good with that.
C.W.:	When did the grocery store finally close?
Richard Parker:	1945.
C.W.:	Right at the end of the war.
Richard Parker:	Now see that building is still—we're the trustees, my two sisters and I are the trustees of the mortgage you see, and—

C.W.:	I just took a picture of that building yesterday.
Richard Parker:	My sister has a painting of it, of the store, you know.
C.W.:	Does she?
Richard Parker:	Yeah. The—
C.W.:	Do you think I could, would she be willing for me to come see her and maybe take a photograph of the painting?
Richard Parker:	Yeah, you—her number is—her name is Helen S-U-R-I-N-A. [Discusses where Helen lives, how to get there, and its proximity to the interviewer's home.]
C.W.:	Oh that's interesting. Who painted it?
Richard Parker:	Some friend of hers.
C.W.:	And it was while your father was still in business?
Richard Parker:	Well, it was from a photo—she painted it from a photograph.
C.W.:	Who owns the photograph?
Richard Parker:	I guess Allen has it. I don't know.
C.W.:	Well maybe I can find out. That's interesting.
Richard Parker:	Yes, yeah.
C.W.:	That's real good. So he closed in 1945. That's a long time to be in business. Marion Redmond said that your father used to—it was a wonderful grocery—she said your father sold gourmet items and specialties—
Grocery Delivery	
Richard Parker:	Well that was a success that they had. Well, see, when my father was in business first he delivered by horse and wagon. Then they had trucks, you know, they had Dodge trucks and Ford trucks and REO Speedwagon and—
C.W.:	When did he stop delivering by horse and wagon, do you remember? When he stopped delivering by horse and wagon and started delivering by truck, do you remember when that was?
Richard Parker:	In the [19]20s. In the [19]20s.
C.W.:	[19]20s. Beautiful.
Richard Parker:	And see what they did, they—the business was off the street, a lot of it, but see they'd built up trade with the Rosemont, which at the time was exclusive suburb of Alexandria. That was before any Belle Haven, or anything like that, see. That was all. And every aft[ernoon]—they'd take the orders in the morning on the phone and deliver in the afternoon all over Rosemont. And it was a credit business. The people paid, most of

	the people paid by the month, you know.
C.W.:	Was that unusual in Alexandria, or—
Richard Parker:	I don't think it was unusual in those days, but it is unusual now [laughs].
C.W.:	It sure is. You bet. So did you ever work in the store?
Richard Parker:	Very little. Sometimes, just off and on maybe a couple of hours here and a couple of hours there, but—my brother Frank, he was the businessman. I didn't care too much for the grocery business myself [laughs].
Holiday Parades	
C.W.:	What kind of activities do you remember along King Street? Were there times when your father closed his store for special events, or—
Richard Parker:	All holidays. They closed all holidays.
C.W.:	Marion and Helen were telling me about parades. I'd never heard about them. Something called a Sunday School Parade. Do you remember those?
Richard Parker:	Oh yeah, we had—the parades were—I guess we had a lot of parades. Of course, the biggest parade was in the—was George Washington's Birthday parade. That was the biggest. But they had other parades too. I just don't recall exactly what they were—you know when you're smaller you look at the parade. You just look at the parade.
Making Purchases for the Store	
C.W.:	Where did your father get his groceries from—his vegetables and fruits?
Richard Parker:	See, he, my father, my uncle, see, Uncle Morris. See, the two were in partners. But he used to get up early in the morning and go to Washington to the big market over there. Picked out the best vegetables and things. And of course in the years they became acquainted with all the merchants, you know the wholesalers and everything over there, and that's the way they'd get good things [inaudible].
C.W.:	That's the way that worked. Did he import any of his foods from Europe or were there canned delicacies or anything like that came from far away?
Richard Parker:	Not too much of that, I don't think. He probably would handle things that he could buy. See, in those days the drummers they called them—the salesmen they called them drummers—they used to come in and take orders like, see, they'd order a case of this and a case of that. And they never delivered.
C.W.:	Drummers they're called?
Richard Parker:	Well from, mostly from Washington or Baltimore, some place like that, see. They could probably—those firms in those days would probably

	store any kind of products you know that the people wanted.
C.W.:	That your store, your father's store, would want?
Richard Parker:	Well, I mean he could get them through these drummers, see—
C.W.:	Drummers. They were called drummers?
Richard Parker:	Well they called them drummers.
C.W.:	So they're wholesalers—
Richard Parker:	They represented wholesale. They were really wholesale salesmen.
C.W.:	Yeah.
Richard Parker:	That's what they were.
Nugent's Store	
C.W.:	Interesting. Did your mother ever work at the store?
Richard Parker:	Yes, she worked in the beginning. In fact she was working in the store in—I don't know if she was working in the—she must have been working in Nugent's store—
C.W.:	Where was Nugent's? I don't recognize that name.
Richard Parker:	That—
C.W.:	That must not have been on King Street.
Richard Parker:	I think they were in the 1300 block of King.
Businesses in the 700 Block of King Street	
C.W.:	Way up. I don't know that block. Interesting. Did you live above the grocery store ever? Was there an apartment above your grocery store? Many of those stores had apartments above them on King Street.
Richard Parker:	There were apartments above, yeah.
C.W.:	Did you live in the apartment, or—
Richard Parker:	People lived above them, but I don't know.—My father when he of course after he bought 713 he had control, but when he was in 715 Mr. Rafferty. How'm I doing? [Tape pauses]
C.W.:	I just noticed, Richard, I said yesterday I was taking photographs along King Street and I just realized that your father was in the building, which is now the El Flamenco Restaurant. Is that right? At 715?
Richard Parker:	You see, after as far as I can remember, that after the bakery—Mr. Cockey, he opened a bakery—and I can remember that after that there was an apartment in there before the lunchroom, see, as far as I can remember, at 713. Lipps, L-I-P-P-S, had a lunch room at 713.
C.W.:	Right [inaudible]

Richard Parker:	And when they vacated that building and moved to their new restaurant at, I don't know if it was 721 or 723, I don't know, see. That's when Daddy took, went into 713.
C.W.:	I wonder when that might have been? Well, I can look it up in the city directory.
Richard Parker:	Now Mr. Doniphan, he built the Doniphan Building which at that time was, I would say was—I don't know if it was offices at first or residential, but I know afterwards that doctors and different things would be in there. There's more commercial than it was residential.
C.W.:	So which building was the Doniphan Building, then?
Richard Parker:	Now that was right on the corner.
C.W.:	Ah.
Richard Parker:	And People's Drug Store came into that building—
C.W.:	So that's the corner of—
Richard Parker:	Way back, I don't know how many years—
C.W.:	Columbus. It's a pretty building—
Richard Parker:	Excuse me.
C.W.:	Sure. [Tape stops and starts again] She says she remembers the limousine driving up in front. Okay, so we've got on the south side on the corner of the 700 block would be Howard's grocery, and then 702 is Constantinople's fruit concession—
Richard Parker:	And, I think, it was 705 Mr. Bachelor had a restaurant.
C.W.:	B-A-C-H-E-L-O-R?
Richard Parker:	B-A-T-C-H-E-L-O-R, I guess that's the way you spell it.
C.W.:	That sounds right. He had a restaurant?
Richard Parker:	Then on—
C.W.:	Was that the Virginia Restaurant by any chance?
Richard Parker:	Hm?
C.W.:	Was that called the Virginia Restaurant?
Richard Parker:	No, the Virginia was down on the corner of the 600, on that corner of the 600 block.
C.W.:	Did Mr. Batchelor's restaurant have a name, or was it Batchelor's?
Richard Parker:	That was—I don't know. I know I went to school with his son [inaudible]. Then 706 was, far as I can remember that was Ben Ezren.
C.W.:	Oh yes. The Abramsons mentioned that to me.

Richard Parker:	Yeah, he was in real estate but—
C.W.:	Okay, good.
Richard Parker:	Now 708 was the Quinn family. Q-U-I-N-N. 'Course, they had an entrance between [inaudible]. Then 710—
C.W.:	Did the Quinn family live there or was that a business?
Richard Parker:	Yeah, the Quinn family lived there.
C.W.:	So that was just a residence?
Richard Parker:	Yeah, they had—they lived above whatever it was. Anyway, 7, let's see, 710 must have been Vozeola's. He had a valet, you know shoeshine and hat blocking and things like that.
C.W.:	Hmm, hmm.
Richard Parker:	And 712 was Herbert Baker. He was the tailor.
C.W.:	What was his last name? Baker?
Richard Parker:	Herbert Baker, yeah. A real wit.
C.W.:	Is that right? Why do you remember that?
Richard Parker:	Let's see, 714 far as I can remember 714 was Lemenschawsky's shoe repair.
C.W.:	Boy, how do you spell their name?
Richard Parker:	L-E-M-E-N-S-C-H-A-W-S-K-Y I guess I would say.
C.W.:	Wow.
Richard Parker:	Let's see that was—it's hard for me to remember so many of them 'cause I didn't—
C.W.:	Oh sure. Well, what about these—did you ever know the Hoys? That owned the stove and tinware shop. The Hoys. Now this is down on the 600 block.
Richard Parker:	Who's that?
C.W.:	Hoys.
Richard Parker:	Oh yeah, Hoys.
C.W.:	They owned the stove and tinware shop on the corner there at St. Asaph, south side.
Richard Parker:	Hoy. H-O-Y wasn't it?
C.W.:	Right.
Richard Parker:	Yeah. Well, they were. Did they have a tin shop?
C.W.:	Yes. Tinware and stoves.

Richard Parker:	Roof tinwares. I knew a Denton Hoy. I knew Denton. He was around my age. His, I guess it must have been his father that had that business.
C.W.:	I think so, Thomas, I think, is the name. Thomas Hoy.
Richard Parker:	Yeah. I think so too. Were they on the corner of St. Asaph?
C.W.:	Yes. South side of St. Asaph and King. I just wondered, we were talking about people and I was wondering if maybe you knew them.
Richard Parker:	Yeah. There was a, it's kind of vague to me about 7—but I know that when my father was first, it must have been 720, that the delicatessen, what was that man's name? It begins with A. Apton?
C.W.:	Oh, Apters. Yeah, the Abramsons told me about that. Apters, right.
Richard Parker:	And then at 722 Dr. Cochran the dentist.
C.W.:	He was probably upstairs wasn't he?
Richard Parker:	And I know that, I don't know whether that little tavern is still there in that—
C.W.:	It's not, but the Abramson's—
Richard Parker:	They had a little tavern in there. It was either in, must have been 724.
C.W.:	Something like that. Where Geranio's is now.
Richard Parker:	Then at one time there was a shoe store at 726.
C.W.:	When would that have been?
Richard Parker:	I think it was Wolf's. I'm not sure. W-O-L-F, something like that.
C.W.:	Uh huh.
Richard Parker:	And at 728 was—Williams had a gift shop I guess you'd call it.
C.W.:	Right.
Richard Parker:	Somebody else might know more about this than I do.
C.W.:	Well, this is fine. I'm really as interested—
Richard Parker:	See, I'm trying to talk back before, far back as I can.
C.W.:	You bet, so this might be the [19]20s?
Richard Parker:	Things were different in the [19]30s, then they—
C.W.:	Sure. Well no, no it's difficult. As I said I'm as interested in both any photographs that you might have and also anecdotes or people you remember as being more interesting, or witty or prominent than other people. Things like that.
Businesses in the 800 Block of King Street	
Richard Parker:	Now, maybe I better give you a couple of names. How about, have you

	talked to Linsey Demaine?
C.W.:	No, not yet.
Richard Parker:	Contact him. His father started a funeral business way back in the 800 block. And, of course he's a funeral man now too. But, far as I know he's still living. And—
C.W.:	How do you spell his name? D-E-M—
Richard Parker:	D-E-M-A-I-N-E. I think that's the way you spell it.
C.W.:	Okay, good. Was that in the 700 block, or—
Richard Parker:	That was in the 800 block.
C.W.:	Uh huh, that's what I thought.
Richard Parker:	And some of the Mickleback family—
C.W.:	Uh huh.
Richard Parker:	They were in the furniture business you know.
C.W.:	Uh huh. Would that be 800 block?
Richard Parker:	That was 800 and 900—they were in the 900 block first but they made a pretty big building in the 800 block. And, I'm trying to think who else.—oh, [inaudible] and Everly. See they have the funeral home used to be right there in the 800 block too. But then at Braddock Road and Quaker Lane where you know where that—well, Mr. Everly could probably give you some information too about things.
C.W.:	Good. Do you remember anything about the 800 block?
Richard Parker:	Well, 801 was Thomas grocery.
C.W.:	Ah ha. Boy, that's three grocery stores in—
Richard Parker:	Yeah.
C.W.:	Did these grocery stores differ from—
Richard Parker:	Well, see what happened, Daddy and Helmuths was real close because Daddy didn't have the meat, see, and Helmuths always supplied all the meat.
C.W.:	So there was cooperation between the two.
Richard Parker:	Yeah, that's right. Let's see, 803 was Graham and Arden.
C.W.:	Realtors.
Richard Parker:	Real estate. 805 was the Monticello Hotel. And 807 was Wheatley's Funeral Home. It seems to me that there were homes, I can't say for sure. I thought there were homes between that and Richmond Theater.
C.W.:	Could have been. Let's see. Yeah, which is now the Old Town Theater.

Richard Parker:	I think they built that other building after. I don't know exactly when that building went up at 811 or 813. I don't know. You can probably find out from somebody about that.
C.W.:	Sure.
Richard Parker:	You know there's the Richmond Theater and then Demaine's funeral home.
C.W.:	Gee, right in the same block.
Richard Parker:	I can't remember too much about—there were some small stores on the end of the block.
C.W.:	So Demaine's was between the corner and the theater?
Richard Parker:	See, they didn't—Demaine's didn't go all the way to the corner, see. It was a couple more little stores I think in there.
C.W.:	I can look that up in the city directory, find out exactly where Demaine's was.
Richard Parker:	Yeah.
C.W.:	But, that's interesting isn't it that there would be a Wheatley's funeral home and Demaine's funeral home in the same block? I think that's real interesting.
Richard Parker:	Well, see the answer to that is transportation. See, when your population is centered, you know, well say from Rosemont to the river and from Franklin Street or from Montgomery on the north. People could walk if they didn't have transportation, they could walk to where they wanted to go. So when transportation became more plentiful see then they start moving out. Then of course, the businesses start moving out too. [pause] The thing that hurt my father more was the—he went through World War II with all of his regulations, the stamps and all—he just finally got to where it was too much for him. Too much red tape and he worked hard.
C.W.:	I'm sure he did. So those stores along there, the grocery stores for instance, took food stamps, or ration stamps?
Richard Parker:	They had—oh yeah it was—'cause the gasoline, you had to have stamps to get the gasoline, you know. In fact, I sold my car. I couldn't get enough gas to warrant paying for the tax and it was—
Streetcars Between Mount Vernon and Washington, D.C.	
C.W.:	Hmm. Do you remember the streetcars along King Street?
Richard Parker:	Hmm?
C.W.:	Do you remember the streetcars?
Richard Parker:	I remember them, sure. The streetcars were between Mount Vernon and

	Washington [D.C.]. And when you got on the streetcar—where we lived in the 1500 block, they would come—the streetcar would come down Cameron Street. You see what they had was a—when they came in from Washington it came in through Rosemont where the, out there where the Union Station was, where Commonwealth Ave., see—they would come in through that route. They would come down King Street to Royal and then go off south to Mount Vernon and come back and come back up King Street to Columbus and they would turn right on Columbus and then that was to one block to Cameron Street and turn left. They would continue on Cameron Street to the end of the 1500 block, then they'd make a left hand turn, come down back on King Street. Now they would have two—there were two sets of tracks from the 1500 block to, going towards Union Station, that would turn right and continue out Commonwealth, what is now Commonwealth Avenue.
C.W.:	When did they stop using the streetcars?
Richard Parker:	Must have been in the [19]30s. I would say that we still had—when the buses first started that's what really put the streetcars out. [Pause]
C.W.:	Richard, I saw those pictures the other day in your den. How many pictures do you have? Several pictures along King Street that I might be able to—
Richard Parker:	I don't know, I got some other pictures I think.
C.W.:	Do you think we could look at those and see if—
Richard Parker:	Uh huh, yeah. [Shuffling noises]
Richard Parker:	This is 1516.
C.W.:	Ah, so 1514 is on the left and 1516 is—
Richard Parker:	These were built in 1913. But the homes, now these, see those two frames there?
C.W.:	Yes.
Richard Parker:	I was probably born the house closest to the edge—they were moved around from this. They [inaudible] here. They were moved around to that side of Peyton Street.
C.W.:	Oh.
Richard Parker:	That's the first street now going this way, see.
C.W.:	Yes.
Richard Parker:	And the Coca Cola plant was put up there. Now the property back, see all back ends, belonged to my father and uncle.
C.W.:	Oh, here's the one. This is the one I saw the other day I was interested in. Lipp's Lunch. There it is.

Richard Parker:	Just lift it up—
C.W.:	It's a little heavy and I didn't want to drop it. Oh, good. This is even non-glare glass. We might be able to get a good picture of this. And this was taken about—
Richard Parker:	See that was where the lunch—
C.W.:	Yeah, Lipp's Lunch. Isn't that marvelous. When was this taken?
Richard Parker:	This was the People's Drugstore here.
C.W.:	Right-o. About what year was this one taken, Richard? Do you have any idea?
Richard Parker:	Hmm?
C.W.:	What year this on was taken? This picture was taken?
Richard Parker:	It's probably on that—let me see if I can find it [rustling of paper]. I think it's—[pause] This is my mother—this was my mother and that's my brother, my sister and that's me, and that is Carol.
C.W.:	I see.
Richard Parker:	Brother—these—that's my mother [inaudible]. She was scared of the—
C.W.:	Oh yeah.
Richard Parker:	This was taken when she was 70. She was 80 years old when this was taken.
C.W.:	Isn't that—my goodness. Those are wonderful pictures.
Richard Parker:	1956.
C.W.:	Yeah.
Richard Parker:	1966.
C.W.:	Uh huh.
Richard Parker:	Look here—
C.W.:	That's still a nice picture I'd like to take a copy of that. Who, is this? Your mother?
Richard Parker:	That's my mother and that's my brother Frank.
C.W.:	She's holding brother Frank.
Richard Parker:	This one must've been 1914. Probably taken in 1914.
C.W.:	Wow, and that says what? Cocoa? The sign in the window says cocoa?
Richard Parker:	Yeah, that was on some kind of advertisements, I guess, in the window.
C.W.:	And what was your mother's first name?
Richard Parker:	Helen.

C.W.:	Helen. So Helen and Clarence Parker—
Richard Parker:	She was Helen Hope Hall.
C.W.:	Helen Hope Hall, what a name. Lovely. [lengthy pause]
Richard Parker:	Does it work?
C.W.:	Yeah, it does. It's got that funny end on it. I don't know why— Sometimes it goes in and sometimes it doesn't. I should just clip this thing off. I don't know why they make them like that. [pause]
Emerson Steam Company	
Richard Parker:	[inaudible; referring to photograph] They didn't even know it was Emerson Steam Company. They just put it in there as a former automobile place, or something. But this is taken back, this picture here, now this goes way back. This was taken from the rear of the 200 block of South Peyton Street and that towards the Union Station. You see that building there, the big—this building here is the Emerson Steam Company, which is going to be torn down so far on Diagonal Road there, out towards Union Station.
C.W.:	Right. Wow, what a shame. [pause] [Tape stops and re-starts] In 1908 the Parker store, which was then called Parker and Brothers, was at 607 King Street. There's a letter written on stationery with a heading of Parker and Brothers and that's dated in 1908 so that's how I tied that down. [End]