



Fairfax Arms is one of two surviving 18th-century buildings from the town of Colchester on Occoquan Creek in Fairfax County. Fairfax Arms stands on lot 21 of the original town of Colchester, which was purchased May 17th, 1756 by Benjamin Grayson. Grayson was forced to mortgage the property in 1762 and 1763, during which time William Linton was renting lot 21 and operating an ordinary there. In 1767 Grayson advertised his three lots for sale and noted that they included a “dwelling suitable for an ordinary.” The present structure may be that building. The property was sold in 1772 to Hector Ross and by Ross to Alexander Henderson a year later. In 1779 William Thompson bought it. Henderson and Thompson were both postmasters of Colchester and likely conducted the postal business at the ordinary.

The building is extraordinarily well-documented, as the unfortunate Mr. Thompson had to prepare an exhaustive list of the furnishings and contents of his tavern and of the livestock in its outbuildings preparatory to mortgaging the property shortly before his death.

Thompson’s widow again advertised the lot in 1802 as “that well known property located in the town of Colchester occupied for many years as a tavern and now in possession of Dr. Blake.” It is worth noting that despite its being “well-known” and so frequently offered for sale, no name appears for it in the 18th-century documents. In 1811 county commissioners, acting to settle Thompson’s estate, sold the tavern property to Peter Wagener; in 1835 it came into the possession of Thomas Baird. At that time, its building valuation in the land tax books, \$230, was among the highest in Colchester.

Fairfax Arms

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