

RELIC

DUMFRIES HISTORIC DISTRICT

**From:** Wilson, Donald L  
**Sent:** Friday, December 19, 2008 4:46 PM  
**To:** Hembrey, Heather; Veness, Beverly R  
**Cc:** RELIC  
**Subject:** RE: 1742 Dumfries Map

Heather - I don't know of any map of Dumfries dated 1742. The town wasn't chartered until 1749. The earliest map whose existence I've found reference to is a 1761 plat that R. Jackson Ratcliff described in *This Was Prince William* (Manassas, R.J.Ratcliffe, 1978), page 55, opposite a composite map he made in 1949. He doesn't disclose the original's location. He also mentions a survey of the town made in 1853 which uses different lot numbers for part of the town. I've checked the booklets prepared by Lee Lansing and have found mention of the 1761 map, but he doesn't say where he found it either.

Ratcliffe drew a vignette on his historic map of Prince William (an insert in his book facing page 108), that showed Dumfries in 1790. He drew it in 1946. It appears he copied the map from an original of 1790, but he doesn't say where he found it. The plat he copied has an inscription that he included: "The original Town was surveyed by Mr. G. Byrn from Mr. J. Grahams lands Sept. 21, 1749 was by the black plain lines & included the Lotts No. 1 to No. 86 Lott -- G. the corner of the old Town and beginning of the new Town or addition surveyed by Mr. B. Ewell April 21, 1761 and includes from the Lott 86 to No. 186 as by the dotted lines of the same and the Letters G-H-O-I-K-L and the meanders of the Creek to A, the beginning of the old Town by act of Assembly on the Petition of the late Colo. W. Grayson on June 1786 and left out on a resurvey made by Mr. Brooks of the whole town and Lotts. April 1789 with other alterations as wanted by the Trustees of the sd. Town of Dumfries and the streets all named. // A copy to make out and draw deeds agreeable to the sd.[?] resurvey taken by Bertram Ewell. Oct. 11, 1790. // Copy of original plat made July 25, 1946. R. J. Ratcliffe, Surveyor, Prince Wm. Co. Approx. 50% reduction." This document refers to a 1749 survey, but I don't know anyone who has claimed to have seen it.

Ron Turner prepared an index to all plats he found at the courthouse, in books or as loose maps, *Prince William County Virginia Index to Plats 1754-1956* (Manassas: R.R.Turner, 2004). It does not include the plats of Dumfries, 1749, 1761, 1790 or 1853. He does list:

"Dumfries Hotel Lot, DB [Deed Book] 99, page 083; MB [Map Book] 004, page 051." [Probably removed from the deed book.]

"Dumfries Hotel Lot, see DB 099, page 082."

"Dumfries Town; Rubleman, John George; DB 012, page 175, Dumfries Lot." [a survey of a single lot]

If the plats cannot be found at the courthouse, then they are probably in private hands. I believe the last time I talked to Lee Lansing (on the Historical Commission's last tour of Dumfries) he referred to copies or originals of early Dumfries papers that he had or that the town had. He seemed to be deliberately vague as to who owned them. If he doesn't have the original of those maps he may have a photostat. (I sort of remember him saying he borrowed a map a long time ago so he could have a copy made.)

It looks like the Weems-Botts Museum is closed until January 14, though their voice mail says they will answer email messages: [weemsbotts@msn.com](mailto:weemsbotts@msn.com). Perhaps they might have additional information.

If I find anything more, I'll let you know.

Don

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**From:** Hembrey, Heather  
**Sent:** Friday, December 19, 2008 1:54 PM  
**To:** Wilson, Donald L; Veness, Beverly R  
**Subject:** 1742 Dumfries Map

Hello Don and Bev,

Is it true that no one knows where the "original" 1742 map of Dumfries is located?  
I have only seen poor copies of the map—poor in that these are difficult to read.

Thanks to both of you, and Tish as well,

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