

Alexandria Times

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Alexandria Black History Museum reopens

The Alexandria Black History Museum will return to normal business hours the first week of March. The museum has been closed for almost three years due to the COVID-19 pandemic and some much-needed renovations. The museum is located in the historic Parker-Gray District, and the buildings as well as the exhibits are tributes to Alexandria's rich African American history. The main building contains the Robert H. Robinson Library, which was built as a segregated library after the 1939 sit-down strike led by Samuel Tucker highlighted the fact that the Alexandria Library services excluded Alexandria's African American residents.

The Robert H. Robinson Library opened in April 1940 and served the needs of Alexandria's African American residents until July 1962. In the winter of 1959, the Alexandria Library quietly integrated its services for adults and high school students. The Robinson Library continued use as a segregated children's library until 1962, when the Alexandria Library system was fully integrated.

In 1983, thanks to the efforts of the Parker-Gray Alumni and the Alexandria Society for the Preservation of Black Heritage, the former library

was repurposed as the Black Alexandria and Parker-Gray Alumni Historic Resource Center. The building was later renamed the Alexandria Black History Resource Center before it received its current name in 2004.

City Council put the Office of Historic Alexandria in charge of operating the Resource Center in 1987 and funded an addition to the building that opened in 1989. In 1995, the Alexandria Black History Museum added the Alexandria African American Heritage Park and the Watson Reading Room to its portfolio. The Heritage Park is on the site of an African American cemetery. The Watson Reading Room houses a non-circulating collection of books and periodicals on African American life, history and culture.

Despite the temporary closure of the museum buildings during the last three years, the Alexandria Black History Museum continued to serve city residents and visitors during the pandemic by hosting concerts, workshops and lectures virtually. Some highlights include concerts by the Washington Revels, Kwanzaa How-to Workshops and a behind-the-scenes look with the African American Heritage Trail Committee on their establishment



PHOTO/THE OFFICE OF HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA

The Alexandria Black History Museum.

of the African American Heritage Trail.

The committee unveiled the Trail's southern route on Feb. 4. During the closure, the Alexandria Black History Museum also played a pivotal role in establishing the Alexandria Community Remembrance Project, including the pilgrimage to Montgomery, Alabama that took place from Oct. 6 to 10, 2022.

The reopening of the Alexandria Black History Museum will also unveil a new exhibit titled: Preserving Their Names: The Black Lives Remembered Collection. The new exhibit

documents Alexandria's response to the murder of George Floyd and the continuing work to preserve the names of Black lives lost. We look forward to welcoming guests back in person to the Alexandria Black History Museum!

Starting on March 2, the Alexandria Black History Museum's hours will be Wednesdays and Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays from 1 to 5 p.m.

Out of the Attic is provided by The Office of Historic Alexandria.