Office of Historic Alexandria
City of Alexandria, Virginia

Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as The Alexandria Times and Advertiser

Marking Time

Cloud's Mill

Alexandria Times, December 6, 2007

Image: Archaeologists using aerial photos and historic maps, like this one from the Civil War, could see that a strip of land and ditch were actually the features of the old millrace. Photo, Library of Congress.

The history of the West End is quite different from the more urban setting of Old Town, but evidence of its heritage can still be discovered through documents, artifacts and landscape. Often the historic use of a site is reflected in the names of streets, developments and parks. Indeed this is the case for The Mill Stream residential complex, which sits along North Paxton Street just south of Holmes Run.

Between 1813 and 1816, a mill was constructed along Holmes Run and while it was sometimes called Tridelphia, it was more often referred to as Cloud's Mill for James Cloud who operated it from about 1835 to 1863. Financial problems ensued during the Civil War when Union soldiers took over Cloud's Mill, and it never recovered as wheat production and milling fell off throughout Northern Virginia in the years following the war.

Cloud's Mill was powered by a millrace that channeled water from Holmes Run to the wheel. Though the mill closed in the late 19th century, evidence of the millrace remains today. In the mid-1980's, the property was slated for development. The developer, Costain Washington, modified plans so the race could be preserved, and today a millstone and interpretive plaque near Cloud's Mill Way and North Paxton mark the historic site.

"Out of the Attic" is published each week in the Alexandria Times newspaper. The column began in September 2007 as "Marking Time" and explored Alexandria's history through collection items, historical images and architectural representations. Within the first year, it evolved into "Out of the Attic" and featured historical photographs of Alexandria.

These articles appear with the permission of the Alexandria Times and were authored by Amy Bertsch, former Public Information Officer, and Lance Mallamo, Director, on behalf of the Office of Historic Alexandria.