



Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

Out of the Attic

Luna Park

Alexandria Times, February 21, 2008

Image: The Luna Park lagoon, pavillion and Shoot the Chutes, Photo, Office of Historic Alexandria.

Today, a small street across from Potomac Park Shopping Center is named Luna Park Drive, but the real Luna Park – a 40-acre amusement park – was actually located just north of Four Mile Run.

The Luna Park concept, like other amusement parks of the time, depended on a location along a trolley or electric railroad line that would make it easy for people in the city to visit the parks. Washington Luna Park opened in 1906, following similar parks in New York, Pittsburgh and Cleveland between 1902 and 1906.

The local Luna Park cost \$350,000 to build and featured thousands of electric lights, live music, rides and animal acts, as well as Asian, Arabic, Byzantine and other exotic architectural elements.

Boasting the world's largest carousel, Luna Park also offered attractions like the Temple of Mystery, a fun house called Chateau Alphonse, a roller coaster, shooting gallery, dancing pavilion and Ferris wheel. But the most memorable ride was Shoot the Chutes, a water flume that plummeted down a steep track into a man-made lagoon.

A large bandstand showing daily concerts, and ball fields and park amenities made the site a popular one for family picnics. With civic, church and business groups holding parties there, daily attendance could exceed 10,000.

Although problems like flooding and escaped animals sometimes occurred, the park was a huge success in its first years. A large fire around 1916 reportedly caused extensive damage, and the park, which saw declining attendance in later years, closed down soon after.



“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.