



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

Tor thorwald

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Image: Tor thorwald, also known as Morven. Photo, Alexandria Library Special Collections.

Carlyle House, the grand home of prominent 18th-century resident John Carlyle, is preserved today as a historic site and museum, but his country estate Tor thorwald survives only in memory and a few photos. This plantation, located where Fairlington stands today, dated to about 1756 and covered more than 600 acres. The mansion house, constructed before 1770, was three stories high and built of brick. Tor thorwald, named for an ancient Scottish castle, included a detached kitchen, barn, stables, a fruit tree orchard, an overseer's house, and shops for a weaver and a blacksmith.

According to one historical account, local residents later mispronounced the estate's name, calling it Tothorworld or "the other world," so Carlyle descendants changed the plantation's name to Morven.

The property remained in the Carlyle family until around 1870 when Courtland H. Smith acquired it and other nearby land, and opened Hapton Stock, a horse farm. A fire destroyed a barn in 1899, killing several animals including prized horses. Smith's son, Courtland Hawkins Smith II, was a champion horseman who married a Carlyle descendant and operated the farm until around 1908 when he moved to Loudoun. The land was later sold off in smaller parcels and part of it was used as a landing field, but the mansion house, in great disrepair, remained. When the start of World War II saw a huge increase in the Washington, D.C., workforce, the property was developed into the residential community of Fairlington and the old brick home was razed.



"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.