



Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

Out of the Attic

Lannon's Opera House

Alexandria Times, February 17, 2011

Image: Lannon's Opera House. Photo, Library of Congress, HABS/HAER..

Lannon's Opera House stood at the southwest corner of King and Pitt streets from the mid-1880s and housed a restaurant on the first floor and theatre area on the second. Audiences were treated to dramas, comedies and musicals, as well as concerts, but the space also served as a public meeting hall.

In 1885, when former Union general and President Ulysses Grant died, Mayor John B. Smoot called a meeting at Lannon's Opera House where he issued a proclamation offering "sympathies of the Nation's loss in the death of General Grant...who defended the officers and men of the army of Virginia after the surrender," and added that "we as Virginians should give public expressions of our regret at his death."

In 1891, African-American citizens celebrated the 28th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation at Lannon's. According to publisher Magnus Robinson, "the handsome edifice was crowded, both floors groaning under the weight of the assemblage. Every orchestra chair was filled with the fair sex...the grant stage was well arranged; the scenery being grand and imposing."

The following year, members of both races turned out to see Madame Sissieretta Jones perform at Lannon's. Jones, a black concert singer who was compared favorable to international opera star Adelina Patti, entertained a "large audience" including a "large number of white citizens" at Lannon's, reported the Washington Bee.



"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.