



Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

Out of the Attic

Reliance Homes

Alexandria Times, September 25, 2008

Image: Reliance Homes on Duke Street, early 1970s. Photo, City of Alexandria.

Due to the limited construction of new homes during the Depression and the increase in veterans and their young families seeking homes after World War II, housing in the late 1940s was in great demand. Manufacturers of prefabricated homes touted their product as the ideal solution, offering a fast delivery for an affordable price.

Reliance Homes in Lester, Pa., produced prefabricated houses of steel and aluminum, featuring radiant heating

and six rooms that sold for less than \$10,000. In 1949, these metal homes were offered for sale in a new community along the north side of Duke Street, west of Quaker Lane. Around the same time, Reliance Homes were also constructed in the Fairdale neighborhood along Backlick Road in Fairfax County.

Advertised as “Modern Methods – Modern Living – Modern Equipment” and marketed to veterans, they featured an enameled steel kitchen equipped with a refrigerator, four-burner electric range and stainless sink. Most had flat roofs and optional carports, as seen in this early 1970s tax record photograph.

About two dozen Reliance Homes were built in the Alexandria community, which later became known as Delta, occupying a small triangle comprised of North Donelson Street, Taft Avenue and the 3700 block of Duke Street. In recent years, several of them have been sold, torn down, and replaced by large, two-story luxury structures. Sometimes mistaken for Lustron homes, about half of the original Reliance dwellings remain.



“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.