



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

Belle Pre Bottle Company

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Image: The bottle company, ca. 1907. Photo, Alexandria Library Special Collections.

In 1899, a patent was issued for a special bottle cap and bottle lip design. A modified lip, or neck rim, allowed the paper cap to be easily removed and reinserted. The Washington, D.C.-based Belle Pre Bottle Company had plans to use the new design for milk and cream packaging, allowing users to easily open and reseal the bottles. Among Belle Pre's corporate officers was F.R. Horner, who operated the Evergreen Dairy in the District.

In early 1902, Belle Pre announced plans to build a factory on the northwest corner of North Henry and Madison streets to produce this particular bottle, and the plant opened in the fall. Spread over six acres and covering the entire block the factory was also equipped with a sawmill to produce lumber for making boxes which held the bottles. As many as 250 men and boys worked there at a time.

Within five years, the factory was reportedly producing one million bottles a month. However, whatever success Belle Pre had was short-lived. In 1912, the company closed and filed for bankruptcy, and its equipment was auctioned.

The factory resumed operations in 1917 when Old Dominion Glass Company used it following a devastating fire at its Alexandria plant. But it later closed and was only used by Old Dominion for storage of machinery and moulds. On October 24, 1921, a fire of an "incendiary origin" destroyed the Belle Pre plant seen in this c. 1907 image.



"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.