



# Alexandria Times

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## Out of the Attic

### Mushbach House

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*Image: Mushbach House, 418 North Washington Street. Photo, Office of Historic Alexandria.*

The Mushbach House, also known as the May House, stood at 418 North Washington Street for nearly a hundred years. The first owner was George A. Mushbach, a prominent attorney who served in the Virginia General Assembly, first in the House and then in the Senate. Later, Dr. Carroll H. May purchased the property and lived there with his family in the 1930s and 40s.

Constructed by William F. Vincent in 1886, the home's unique design was apparently inspired by a casino in Short Hills, New Jersey, designed by the architectural firm of McKim, Mead and White. The distinctive Queen Anne structure featured a corner tower with a triangular gabled roof. It also incorporated colonial elements like the semi-circular fanlights over the door and lower front windows. With elaborate copper moldings and the dramatic tower, the home was considered very modern and unconventional at the time.

A national association whose corporate headquarters were next door later acquired the property with the intent to tear down the Mushbach House to provide open space for its staff. In 1982, as demolition plans moved forward, preservationists were outraged and protested, appealing to the Board of Architectural Review and the press.

But the city's law required BAR approval only for structures at least 100 years old; the Mushbach House was only 96 years old and therefore not protected. Its subsequent destruction led to changes in city preservation codes. In 1984, the Alexandria City Council changed to law to require BAR approval of all demolitions in the historic districts.



*“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.*