



Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

Out of the Attic

Westminster Building

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Image: Westminster Building. Photo, Library of Congress, HABS/HAER.

The Westminster Building at the northeast corner of Prince and South St. Asaph streets was constructed in the early 20th century as an annex to the Second Presbyterian Church, which was then located on the corner across St. Asaph Street. The building, officially located at 521-523 Prince Street, was designed to house community programs sponsored by Second Presbyterian.

The cornerstone-laying ceremony was held on October 9, 1912, with the congregation looking on. The Alexandria-Washington Masonic Lodge led the program and according to the *Alexandria Gazette*, they used the ‘historic Washington trowel,’ which had been used to lay the cornerstone of the U.S. Capitol in 1793. A box containing religious papers, a copy of the lodge’s by-laws, and current newspapers and coins was placed inside the cornerstone.

The Westminster Building opened the following spring at a cost of approximately \$30,000. The two-story building with a raised basement featured red brick with limestone trim, and its west side extended nearly halfway down St. Asaph Street. The basement housed a gymnasium, the first floor was used for Sunday School, and the second floor held a large assembly hall.

The Westminster hosted special events and conventions, like the Order of the Eastern Star state conference and entertainment for soldiers stationed at nearby Camp A.A. Humphreys, which later became Fort Belvoir. In the fall of 1918, the Westminster was called into service as an Alexandria Red Cross hospital during the influenza epidemic, with male and female patients kept on separate floors.

In the 1960s, Second Presbyterian moved to Janneys Lane and the Westminster Building was later demolished as part of urban renewal plans.



“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.