



Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

Out of the Attic

George Mason Hotel

Alexandria Times, February 12, 2009

Image: The George Mason Hotel, 1920s, N. Washington and Prince streets. Photo, Library of Congress.

Ground was broken for the 105-room George Mason Hotel in 1925, followed by weeks of demolition to remove the half dozen buildings that stood at the northwest corner of Prince and South Washington streets. Construction of the six-story brick building took seven months and cost an estimated \$500,000. The hotel officially opened in February 1926 with four days of celebratory events, including a parade, banquet, dance and fireworks.

The hotel boasted a modern kitchen, with electrically-heated ovens and grills, an electrically-powered dishwashing machine, and a potato peeler that operated on electricity, cleaning and peeling a half peck of potatoes every 90 seconds. The ground floor facing Washington Street provided space for a coffee shop and offices, and the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce moved its headquarters there within weeks of the hotel's opening.

The George Mason Hotel, seen in this late 1920s photo, was a popular site for civic meetings, special events and tourists, especially with the construction of the George Washington Memorial Parkway in the 1930s. But in the late 1960s, as new hotels were built and the Beltway carried visitors around Washington, business dropped off. In 1971, the George Mason Hotel filed for bankruptcy and soon closed. It was boarded up for several years as a series of potential owners explored re-opening the hotel, possibly as a youth hostel or as a visitor center during the American Bicentennial.

Finally it was purchased, renovated and converted to office space. It was sold again in 1998, and the following year it became known as the Charles B. Wang International Children's Building when the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children opened its headquarters there.



“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.