



# Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

## Out of the Attic

### George Washington Bicentennial

*Alexandria Times, February 19, 2009*

*Image: A Mass celebrating the bicentennial of George Washington's birth was held at St. Mary's Church on South Royal Street in 1932. Photo, Loeb Studios, courtesy St. Mary's Church.*



Alexandria has celebrated the birth of its most famous citizen, George Washington, in a variety of ways, from balls in the late 1700s to the parades that have wound through the streets since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The commemorations held in 1932 marking the bicentennial of Washington's birth were especially memorable.

Four Coast Guard cutters docked in Alexandria, and the Coast Guard Band gave a concert at the foot of the newly built George Washington Masonic Memorial, which would be formally dedicated in May. Gadsby's Tavern held an afternoon reception with the Virginia governor and an evening ball re-creating the Birthnight Ball of 1799. The traditional parade traveled 25 blocks before an estimated crowd of 100,000 spectators, President Herbert Hoover among them.

Churches, including Christ Church, St. Mary's and the Old Presbyterian Meeting House, held special worship services. The Monticello Guards planted a tree at Old Presbyterian, which had hosted memorial services after Washington's death in 1799, and President Hoover and his wife attended services at Christ Church, where Washington himself had worshipped.

St. Mary's Catholic Church held a Bicentennial Mass of Thanksgiving with 25 visiting priests in attendance. A group of Marines from Quantico led the procession from the rectory, and participants in the mass are shown on South Royal Street with St. Mary's Church in the background. This photograph, taken by Loeb Studios and a gift of St. Mary's, is on display at The Lyceum, Alexandria's History Museum, with other collections objects celebrating Alexandria's commemoration of Washington.

*"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.*



**Office of Historic Alexandria  
City of Alexandria, Virginia**

---

*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.*