



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

Old Presbyterian Graveyard

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Image: Old Presbyterian Graveyard, 1920s. Photo, Library of Congress.

The Old Presbyterian Meeting House was first organized in 1772 as a congregation. A few years later its sanctuary opened on South Fairfax Street, with the churchyard serving as a burial ground. Among those buried there were John Carlyle and members of his family, George Washington's physician James Craik, and William Hunter, Jr., a mayor of Alexandria and founder of the St. Andrews Society.

In the decades that followed, there was a split in the church and a second congregation formed its own church. The original congregation never regained its standing and the First Presbyterian Church closed. By the end of the 19th century, the old Meeting House was rarely used, and though the Second Presbyterian Church acquired it, the property fell into disrepair.

Its cemetery was also neglected. By the time this photo was taken around 1920, few of the gravesites remained marked. In 1925, preservationists and Second Presbyterian members launched a major campaign to restore the church and the cemetery. In the summer of 1926, the Alexandria American Legion Post 24 cleaned up the cemetery. Using shovels and rakes furnished by the City of Alexandria, the men cleared out trash, removed weeds, straightened tombstones, and whitewashed the fences.

The American Legion also honored an unknown Revolutionary War soldier whose remains were first discovered a hundred years earlier when St. Mary's Church, also visible in this image, was being built. In 1928, on Washington's birthday, the Legionnaires dedicated an inscribed tablet in tribute to the soldier. Four years later, a brick wall built around the cemetery and funded by the Sons of the American Revolution was dedicated.

The Old Presbyterian Meeting House was fully restored, and the site is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.





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

“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.