



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

Fruit Growers Express

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Image: Fruit Growers Express. Photo, The Lyceum Collection/Office of Historic Alexandria.

From the river to the rails, Alexandria has long been a transportation center, and the Fruit Growers Express, which constructed and repaired refrigerated railroad cars, was a major part of its railroad history. The FGE was formed as a separate company in 1920 after the federal government ordered Armour and Company to sell its fruit-shipping subsidiary following an antitrust decision.

FGE's Alexandria operations were originally located at busy Potomac Yard and due to competing needs for space and FGE's growth, the company made the decision in 1925 to move to the Cameron freight yards located southwest of Telegraph Road and Duke Street. FGE was able to purchase 70 acres of surrounding property, which was then located in Fairfax County, just west of the Alexandria city line in a community called Cameron Park.

Construction on the new facility continued throughout 1926 and roads south of Duke Street extended, as it was then called, were built to reach the FGE facilities. Robert M. Colvin, superintendent of Potomac Yard, Edward A. Sweeley, mechanical superintendent of FGE, and Edward J. Roth, general manager of FGE, were honored with streets bearing their names.

At its peak, FGE could produce as many as 1,000 refrigerated cars a year. It also suffered several fires, including one in 1947 that destroyed 14 cars and damaged another two dozen. The following year, a fire damaged warehouses made of connecting Quonset huts. Quonset huts are still visible in the center of this photograph taken around 1971, which looks east from South Quaker Lane. The large building with "FGE" on its roof became Alexandria's DASH bus headquarters in the winter of 1990-91, and FGE's facilities in Alexandria closed in 1994.



"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



**Office of Historic Alexandria
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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.