



Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

Out of the Attic

Key Motel

Alexandria Times, May 7, 2009

Image: Key Motel, 6022 Duke Street, at the Shirley Highway interchange. Photo, Office of Historic Alexandria.

Shirley Highway, constructed in the early 1940s, provided residents and visitors easier access to the Pentagon and Washington. After the West End annexation became effective in 1952, part of Shirley Highway, or Route 350 as it was also known, traveled through Alexandria, just as U.S. Route 1 and the George Washington Memorial Parkway did in the eastern part of the city. To accommodate travelers, dozens of motels, including the Key Motel, opened along these busy roads in Alexandria, Arlington and Fairfax.

The Key Motel was located at 6022 Duke Street, at the Shirley Highway interchange with Route 236, and was owned by brothers Lewis S. and Jerome W. Keyes. The brothers also had a neon sign company, which very likely produced the motel's memorable sign. A similar establishment, the Lincolnia Motel, was located nearby, on the north side of Duke Street. Both motels were targets of robberies in the 1950s, with the Key being held up four times in seven years, and police shot and killed one suspected robber during a stakeout at the Lincolnia Motel in 1954.

In the early 1960s, work began to expand Shirley Highway, widening it and improving it so that it would meet national interstate highway standards. Around the same time, development dramatically changed the land around the Key Motel. New apartment buildings and a large shopping center called Landmark were constructed. The Key Motel was eventually closed and in 1966, new apartments were constructed. Today, the Key Towers Apartments occupies the site where the Key Motel once welcomed guests.



“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.