



Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

Out of the Attic

West End Chicken Farming

Alexandria Times, July 23, 2009

Image: Vaccinating poultry in Lincolnia, 1931. Photo, Fairfax County Public Library Photographic Archive.

Up until the growth associated with World War II, the area today considered Alexandria's West End was largely rural. Early 20th-century farms along Seminary Road and King and Duke streets, then part of Fairfax County, benefited from the work of the county agricultural agent and innovations in farming. Lewis Wesley Carter, who operated the Grassy Knoll Poultry Farm and Hatchery in Lincolnia, touted these scientific methods in his 1942 advertisement proclaiming "Superior breeding means better products."



As an agent with the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, Harry B. Derr served Carter and other local farmers from 1917 to 1938. During that time, Derr educated farmers about the benefits of scientific agriculture, visiting hundreds of farms each year, giving talks and even a weekly radio address. He also worked to bring the latest developments to the farmers, and in the summer of 1931, he and Milligan C. Kilpatrick of the Virginia Poultry Federation visited a Lincolnia poultry farm to demonstrate a new vaccine against fowlpox. During this visit, photographed by Derr, they vaccinated nearly 500 birds.

Poultry had become such a valuable source of income that in the 1920s and 1930s, thieves stole chickens from farms and sold them in markets in Alexandria and Washington. Thieves not only targeted poultry farms on Telegraph Road and in Lincolnia but also stole chickens in Alexandria from yards along King and Patrick streets. To prevent thefts, farmers began tattooing the birds' wings as a way to identify them.

"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.