



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

Early Years of Appomattox

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Image: The statue around 1920. Photo, Library of Congress.

Appomattox, a seven-foot bronze statue, was erected in 1889 at Prince and Washington streets where 800 Alexandria troops had mustered on May 24, 1861. To honor Alexandria's Confederate dead, the R.E. Lee Camp of Confederate Veterans commissioned the statue, and M. Casper Buberl sculpted Appomattox based on John A. Elder's painting of a soldier on the battlefield.

To ensure the statue would never be moved, the R.E. Lee Camp sought state legislation in 1890. It read in part that the "monument shall remain in its present position as a perpetual and lasting testimonial..." and continuing, "...its erection shall not be repealed, revoked, altered, modified, or changed by any future Council or other municipal power or authority."

The statue and monument originally stood on roads of dirt and cobblestone that were improved in 1897 with asphalt. In 1901 the land around the monument was enhanced with grass, granite curbing and a floral bed. Four gas lamps lighted the plot, which measured 60 by 40 feet. For several years, an ornamental iron fence surrounded it but by the time this photograph was taken around 1920, the fencing had been removed.

As traffic increased, the park-like grounds around the statue were reduced and in 1923, the land was rounded into a circle with a diameter of approximately 20 feet. In the early 1930s, construction of the George Washington Parkway, which incorporated the full length of Washington Street, had the greatest impact. Landscaping was eliminated, leaving a small circle of grass and a simple curb around the monument base.



"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.



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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.