



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

The Durr Home

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Image: The Durr home in Seminary Hill in 1937. Photo, Library of Congress.

Beginning in 1933, New Dealers from across the country moved to the Washington area to serve with the Roosevelt administration. Among them were attorney Clifford J. Durr and his wife Virginia of Birmingham, Ala., who made Seminary Hill their home for more than 15 years.

Cliff first worked for the Reconstruction Finance Corporation and then with the Federal Communications Commission, while Virginia became involved in social efforts supporting fair labor and targeting poverty, like the National Committee to Abolish the Poll Tax. She was a co-founder of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare and even ran for the U.S. Senate as a Progressive candidate in 1948.

Guests to their home included many young and influential people like then-Congressman Lyndon Johnson and his wife Lady Bird. They also hosted a British couple, Esmond Romilly and his pregnant wife Jessica “Decca” Mitford, one of the infamous sisters in the aristocratic Mitford family. Decca became a long-term guest when Esmond was killed in World War II and she and her baby daughter remained at the Durr home for nearly three years.

Virginia later fondly recalled their home, a farmhouse on two acres built around 1880 and seen in this 1937 photo taken the year after its roof was altered. Evidence of the recent renovation, which included removal of the center gable, is still visible. She also remembered the Seminary Hill community as a “wonderful place for children because there was plenty of space and it was safe for children” and a “delightful, absolutely lovely place to live” with “people who were genteel, extremely genteel, and not rich, but who had beautiful manners.”

After returning to Alabama in the early 1950s, the Durrs lived in Montgomery where they devoted themselves to the civil rights movement.





**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.