



Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

Out of the Attic

Alexandria Courthouse

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Image: District Courthouse for Alexandria, D.C. Photo, Alexandria Library Special Collections.

As part of the District of Columbia in the early 19th century, support and funding for construction of certain facilities in Alexandria, like a new jail and courthouse, came from the federal government. Robert Mills, who had been appointed the architect of public buildings by President Andrew Jackson in 1836, designed the District Courthouse for Alexandria, D.C.

The Greek Revival building was constructed in 1838 on a half-block lot on the west side of North Columbus Street between Queen and Princess streets. The structure had windows on all sides, and twin curved staircases rose above a high basement. The façade featured an elevated two-story portico with Doric pillars, and the cupola housed a bell that rang to announce court days. It was built of brick and also had brick interior walls, making it largely fireproof.

In 1847, this federal building was deeded to Alexandria once the city rejoined the Commonwealth of Virginia. In 1870, the separate entities of the City of Alexandria and Alexandria (now Arlington) County were established. With local cases being handled in the court at City Hall, the courthouse on Columbus Street became known as the Alexandria County Courthouse. Many county residents found that the old courthouse was too far away and wanted a new courthouse. The last county cases were heard there in the fall of 1898 as a new courthouse opened near Fort Myer that winter.

The old courthouse was used as a magistrate's office and as a polling place before the property was sold. The courthouse was demolished in 1906 and the following year, seven new homes stood on its former grounds.



"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
City of Alexandria, Virginia**

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.