



Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

Out of the Attic

Carver Theater

Alexandria Times, December 10, 2009

Image: Carver Theater, Queen and Fayette streets, 1965 and 2009. Photo, Alexandria Library Special Collections (then); David Sachs (now).



In 1947, a team of theater operators began plans to open a movie theater, shops and a restaurant for African American patrons. Located at the southeast corner of Queen and Fayette streets, the Carver Theater was designed by John Zink, an architect who designed more than two dozen movie houses in the Mid-Atlantic, including the Capitol Theater, a block away at Queen and Henry streets.

When the Carver opened on a freezing night in February 1948, city officials and theater owners welcomed a crowd estimated at 1,000. Lena Horne, Humphrey Bogart, Hattie McDaniel and George Raft, whose film *Intrigue* was the first to play at the Carver, all sent congratulatory telegrams. Murals painted on the auditorium walls illustrated the life of George Washington Carver, for whom the 700-seat theater was named.

A strip of businesses opened in the 1100 block of Queen Street, which included a barber shop, a men's clothing store, a billiards room and a restaurant. The Carver was not only a popular entertainment venue but also served as a meeting space for members of the African American community. Medical officials held tuberculosis and health screenings there, and Roy Wilkins, head of the NAACP, spoke to hundreds of local members at the Carver.

In 1963, movie theaters in Northern Virginia were desegregated and African Americans could now see films at the Reed, Virginia and other Alexandria theaters previously open only to whites. The Carver closed and in late 1964, the theater was renamed King's Palace. This photograph, taken in the spring of 1965, shows King's Palace and adjacent businesses, including the Carver Men's Shop. King's Palace closed later that year and then became home to Antioch Church.



**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.