



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

Hoffman Sugar House

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Image: Hoffman Sugar House building, Civil War-era. Photo, Office of Historic Alexandria.

In the early 19th century, two sugar refineries opened in Alexandria. The first was built in the 100 block of North Alfred Street around 1803 and the second, seen in this Civil War-era photograph, was built a few years later in the 200 block of North Washington Street by Jacob Hoffman. Hoffman was a successful merchant, selling dry goods and imported fabrics, and he was active in civic affairs, serving terms as a tax collector, councilman and mayor of Alexandria.

Between 1802 and 1810, Hoffman acquired properties on the west side of Washington Street between Queen and Cameron streets, including Lloyd House, where he lived (partially visible on the far right of this photo). Just south of Lloyd House, Hoffman established his sugar house compound, comprised of a four-and-a-half-story sugar refinery and a two-story brick warehouse and smokehouse, connected to each other by a brick wall and shed.

Sugar processing was labor intensive and hot, requiring repeated boiling in large vats. After impurities were removed, the sugar was poured into earthenware cones where it cooled and water evaporated, leaving white sugar inside the cones. Slaves performed the labor at Hoffman's refinery, with seven enslaved men and boys working there in 1820.

Around that same time, Hoffman noted a decline in business and in 1824 he sold the property and sugar refining operations ended. About 1832, teacher Benjamin Hallowell purchased the site and conducted his school there, erecting an addition with a tower. After the war, another school operated there, and demolition of at least one building likely occurred in the 1890s.



"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
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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.