



# Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

## Out of the Attic

### Alexandria: always a dog town

*Alexandria Times, January 21, 2010*

*Image: Animal Welfare van, early 1950s. Photo, Office of Historic Alexandria.*

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, before a rabies vaccine had been invented, Alexandria officials were concerned about the danger dogs posed to the public and tried to control the dog population in several ways. Since at least the 1880s, dogs were required to be licensed, but in 1902, when the annual fee was \$1, only about 250 of the estimated 1,000 dogs in Alexandria were licensed.

In 1907, the city began requiring that all dogs be muzzled and any non-muzzled dogs were to be captured and impounded. When citizens protested, the mayor modified the order and allowed well-behaved, licensed dogs under their owners' control to remain muzzle-free. Dogs in violation were rounded up and those not claimed within 48 hours were killed. The following year, a man unable to pay a \$3 fine for having an unlicensed dog opted to serve ten days on a chain gang to earn his dog's freedom.

Collection of non-muzzled and unlicensed dogs was the responsibility of the dog catcher, and in 1913, the city council appropriated \$100 for a dog catcher's wagon and a horse. But there was no shelter to hold the dogs and seized dogs were usually held in the jail yard, sometimes inside the police station itself, and later, in the 1940s, on the property of the former poorhouse on Monroe Avenue.

When a rabies vaccine became available, local health officials oversaw rabies control efforts. In 1925, Council required that all dogs be vaccinated and a clinic was held, offering the vaccine for 75 cents per dog. In 1946, the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria was organized and opened its own shelter on South Payne Street in the early 1950s, around the time that this photograph was taken.





**Office of Historic Alexandria  
City of Alexandria, Virginia**

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*“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.*