



Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

Out of the Attic

The Alexandria Armory

Alexandria Times, January 28, 2010

Image: Alexandria Armory. Photo, Alexandria Library Special Collections.

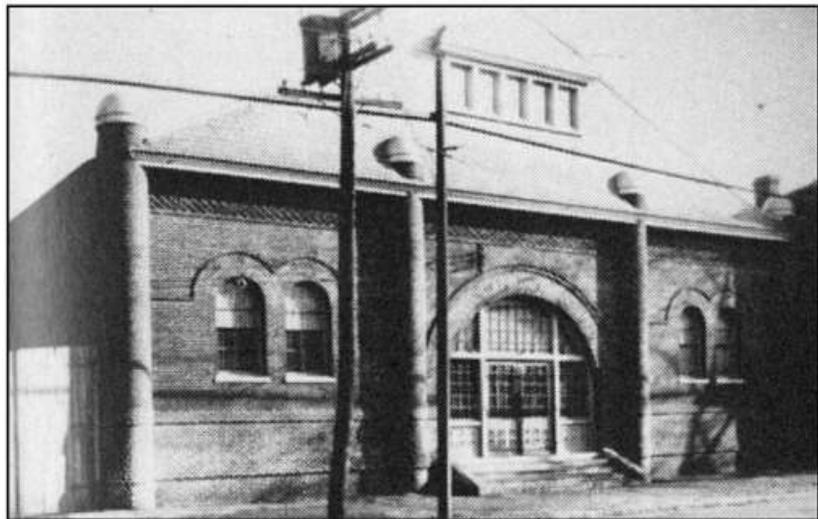
After the Alexandria Light Infantry was organized in 1878, it began planning a new armory on the east side of the 200 block of South Royal Street. In 1880, Benjamin F. Price, a local architect who had designed the Corn Exchange at 100 King St., drew plans for the armory. When completed later that spring, the armory hall measured by 90 feet by 40 feet and held 700 people.

In 1887, Alexandria architect Glenn Brown was hired to enlarge the armory and work was completed early the following year, in time for the expanded structure to host a military ball in honor of George Washington's birthday. The impressive building had a slate gabled roof and a front façade highlighted by four brick turrets.

The armory hall was a popular site for expositions, musical and dance performances and bazaars. In 1898, during the Spanish-American War, a crowd gathered to see the Alexandria Light Infantry off from the armory to a train station en route to training in Richmond, and a few months later, the armory became a rest camp for other soldiers passing through Alexandria.

After World War I, the city took over the armory and used it as a recreation center for basketball and volleyball, but also made it available to the guard unit for drills and equipment storage. In 1941, the armory served as a USO center, providing service members during World War II with social and recreation activities until a new club opened on Cameron Street.

In 1953, a fire broke out in the armory, but a steel and concrete vault prevented hundreds of ammunition rounds stored there from exploding and causing damage to other nearby properties. The armory was never rebuilt, and today the Armory Tot Lot park stands on the site.



"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.