



Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

Out of the Attic

Aspinwall Hall

Alexandria Times, April 8, 2010

Image: Civil War era photograph of Aspinwall Hall. Photo, National Archives.

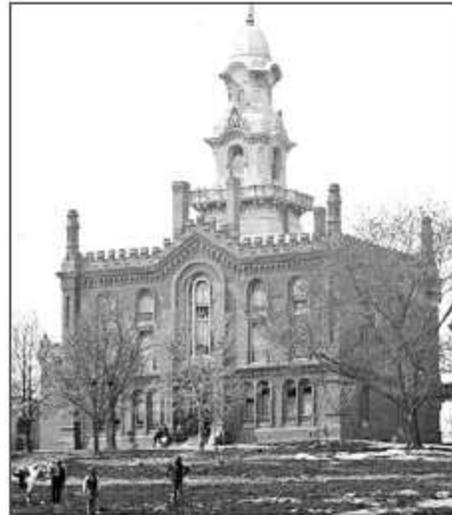
Established in 1823, the Virginia Theological Seminary acquired a sizable amount of its current property off Quaker Lane four years later. In 1857, the Episcopal educational institution announced plans to build a new structure on this site and advertised in local papers and the *Southern Churchman* publication for proposals.

The new building was to be three stories high, with a prayer hall that could hold at least 100 people, a kitchen, pantry, large dining room, and at least 24 rooms for students. The announcement also noted the building would “stand upon an eminence 256 feet above the Potomac River, overlooking the cities of Washington and Alexandria.” This location might explain the additional request that the plan “embrace a tower, cupola, or spire, arranged for a clock, and a place for observation.”

A Vermont-born architect, Norris G. Starkweather, designed the new building, which featured semi-circular arched windows and doors, corner buttresses, rounded arch openings, and a central tower with a domed cupola. It was named Aspinwall Hall in honor of two benefactors who had donated funding for an earlier building.

On October 3, 1859, Bishop William Meade formally dedicated Aspinwall Hall. Just a couple of years later, the Civil War disrupted operations at the seminary. The Union Army took over the Seminary, and Aspinwall Hall, seen in this Civil War period photograph, was used as a hospital. Seminary operations resumed after the war with some professors returning in 1865.

Aspinwall Hall is one of the contributing structures that resulted in the Seminary being added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.



“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.



**Office of Historic Alexandria
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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.