



# Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

## Out of the Attic

### Franklin and Armfield Office

*Alexandria Times, May 20, 2010*

*Image: The Slave Pen, 1315 Duke Street, during the Civil War. Photo, Andrew J. Russell, Library of Congress.*

The building at 1315 Duke Street was originally built around 1812 as a residence for General Robert Young, commander of Alexandria's militia who died in 1824. This three-story brick building then became the headquarters for one of the largest slave traders in America.

In 1828, Isaac Franklin and John Armfield formed a partnership, which bought and sold people through the interstate slave trade. Though importation of people for slavery into the U.S. was outlawed in 1808, the domestic trade flourished. As the need for slave labor in the Chesapeake region waned with the decrease in tobacco production, demand for slave labor grew in the Cotton Belt. Franklin and Armfield took advantage of this trend, acquiring slaves who were then shipped south where they could demand a much higher price.

It is estimated that in the early 1830s, Franklin and Armfield saw profits of more than \$100,000 per year from the domestic slave trade. The brick building served as the Franklin and Armfield office and behind it was a yard surrounded by a high, whitewashed brick wall, which served as a holding pen for slaves. Men were kept in a section of the yard on the west, and women and children were in the eastern section.

Franklin and Armfield began to withdraw from trading in the late 1830s and by 1858, their old slave pen operated as Price, Birch, and Co. Evidence of the later business is visible in this Civil War period photograph, when it served as a Union jail. Today the building is owned by the Northern Virginia Urban League, which opened the Freedom House Museum in 2008 to educate visitors about slavery.



*“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  
City of Alexandria, Virginia**

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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.*