



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

Old Dominion Glass Company

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Image: Old Dominion Glass Company. Photo, Souvenir Virginia Tercentennial of Historic Alexandria, Virginia, 1907.

In the early 20th century, four glass factories – Belle Pre Bottle, Virginia Glass, Alexandria Glass and Old Dominion Glass – operated in Alexandria. Old Dominion's complex with furnaces, sand pits, a warehouse and stables covered nearly six acres along Montgomery Street between North Fairfax and North Lee streets, where railroad tracks bordered the plant.

Old Dominion Glass opened in 1901 and employed about 250 people. In 1902, three brothers working there set a single workday record for blowing and packing 329 dozen plain beer bottles, surpassing the record of 309 dozen set by three workers in Ohio. The factory, seen in this photo from 1907, also produced small vials for use by pharmacists and containers as large as 15 gallons.



Old Dominion Glass operated shifts during the day and night, employing whites and blacks, adults and children. The company's use of child labor attracted the attention of photographer Lewis Hine who in 1911, while working for the National Child Labor Committee, photographed boys at Old Dominion Glass as young as 10 or 11 years old. A year later, the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry reported the company had been fined \$25 for violating child labor laws.

The factory was prone to fires but it was one originating at a nearby fertilizer plant in 1925 that severely damaged the glass company. Prohibition and the closure of breweries had already caused a drop in business, and following the devastating fire, the Old Dominion Glass Company closed down.

“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.



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