



Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

Out of the Attic

The Bluemont Branch

Alexandria Times, September 30, 2010

Image: The Bluemont Branch, construction of the Russel Road extension, around 1916. Photo, National Archives and Records Administration.

The Alexandria, Loudoun & Hampshire Railroad was established in 1847 to connect Alexandria with the Shenandoah Valley.

Construction progressed slowly and due to financial problems, the line never reached farther west than Bluemont in Loudoun County.

Following multiple changes in ownership, this line became part of Washington & Old Dominion Railway service in 1912. Southern Railway controlled service between the station at North Fairfax and Princess streets and Potomac Yard, and W&OD's service on the Bluemont began at Potomac Yard. From there, the tracks ran northwest through Del Ray and then turned west, north of where Beverley Hills is today. It continued west, traveling just south of West Glebe Road, and into Arlington County along the Four Mile Run valley to Bluemont Junction, which was linked to Rosslyn, Great Falls and Washington, D.C.

Between 1912 and 1916, the W&OD transitioned from steam to electric power, and electrification of the easternmost section, from Bluemont Junction to Potomac Yard, was not completed until 1916. This photograph, showing construction of the Russell Road extension under the railroad, was taken around that time.

The Bluemont Division, as it was then known, transported passengers and freight, and provided mail and milk service. But freight revenues were most profitable and by the mid-1920s, generated more than passenger, milk and mail combined. Still the W&OD Railway suffered, as many businesses did in the Depression, and in 1932 was placed in receivership. In the following years, full service to Bluemont was abandoned. In 1943, Southern Railway purchased the line from Potomac Yard to Loudoun, and in 1951, passenger service ended.

Today, the Mount Jefferson Park and Greenway near Hume and Raymond avenues run where the part of the Bluemont Branch once did.



"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
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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.