



Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

Out of the Attic

The inception of Parkfairfax

Alexandria Times, October 14, 2010

Image: Parkfairfax, 1950s. Photo, Frederick Suffa, Courtesy of William Suffa..

Alexandria's population, like that of the rest of the Washington area, swelled during the 1940s due to the increase in the wartime workforce and post war baby boom. New housing construction surged around Washington to accommodate the growing population, and one of the largest projects was Parkfairfax in north-central Alexandria.

The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, which had experience in construction and management of apartment complexes in other parts of the country, broke ground on Parkfairfax in 1941. Unlike Parkchester in the Bronx, N.Y., and Parcmerced in California, which included high-rise buildings, Parkfairfax would have only garden apartments.

The 285 two- and three-story structures were built into the existing topography and occupied a relatively small percentage of the actual acreage. The varying elevations are visible in this mid-1950s photograph taken on Preston Road and facing east toward Valley Drive.

In the spring of 1943, the Parkfairfax leasing office opened on Gunston Road. Average monthly rents ranged from \$61.25 for a one-bedroom unit to \$90 for a three-bedroom. The first residents moved in in October 1 and within a few months, all 1,684 apartments had been leased. A new school of prefabricated construction opened that October on part of the original 200-acre Parkfairfax property. Metropolitan Life donated the parcel to the City of Alexandria, and the school was named in honor of Major General Charles Barrett of the Marine Corps, who was killed in World War II that same month.

Parkfairfax was converted to condominiums in the 1970s and today occupies 132 acres. The Parkfairfax Historic District was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1999.



“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**

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.