Office of Historic Alexandria
City of Alexandria, Virginia

Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

Mount Vernon and George Mason Schools

Alexandria Times, November 11, 2010

Image:The 2400 block of Mount Vernon Avenue in 1929. Photo, Alexandria Library Special Collections.

The current Mount Vernon Community School has its roots in the two buildings seen in this 1929 photograph taken from the 2400 block of Mount Vernon Avenue. The two-story building with the cupola, columns and portico was the Mount Vernon School, which opened in fall of 1900.

The second floor of the schoolhouse also served as a town hall for the community, which was then still an unincorporated part of Alexandria County. Later the Town of Potomac incorporated in 1908 and used it for several years. The schoolhouse was expanded multiple times, and the portico and columns seen in this image were among the renovations.

In 1917, a nearby home was converted to serve as a high school, and in 1924, the new three-story George Mason High School opened across Mount Ida Avenue from the Mount Vernon School. It had 14 classrooms, a library, cafeteria and auditorium and cost more than $100,000.

But its use as a high school was relatively short. After the City of Alexandria annexed the Town of Potomac in 1930, it made plans to build a new high school, and George Mason closed in 1935 once George Washington High was completed.

The old George Mason building served as an annex to Mount Vernon, and the structures were later connected by an addition after Mount Ida Avenue was permanently closed down between Mount Vernon and Commonwealth avenues in 1949. The original colonial-style schoolhouse, which stood where the playground is today, was demolished in the late 1960s.

"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.