



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

Woodies on Washington Street

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Image: Woodward & Lothrop, 615 N. Washington Street. Photo, Alexandria Library, Special Collections.

Woodward & Lothrop, the Washington, D.C., department store chain, opened its first location in Virginia in 1952.

This “Woodies,” as the store was commonly known, was located at 615 N. Washington St. and occupied the block between Pendleton and Wythe streets. In 1951, the architectural firm of Starrett & Van Vleck, which had designed prominent retail stores in the New York City area, designed the Alexandria Woodies in a Colonial Revival style with brickwork in Flemish bond, entrances with broken scroll pediments; and a centered portico with columns.



The location provided adequate space for parking, an important consideration at a time when the consumers were becoming more mobile. The basement level entrance on the St. Asaph Street side was convenient for shoppers who had parked in the lot and the street level entrance on Washington Street accommodated pedestrian traffic.

In the weeks leading up to its opening, Woodies ran an advertising campaign drawing comparisons between Alexandria’s historic buildings, like Christ Church, Gadsby’s Tavern and Carlyle House, and the new department store, but also touting the convenience of a parking lot and the interior design work by Raymond Loewry Associates.

On November 28, 1952, the day after Thanksgiving, store and elected officials, citizens and school children attended the grand opening in time for the holiday shopping season.

A second Woodies in Alexandria opened at Landmark shopping center in 1965 and in 1968 chain officials announced plans to close the Washington Street store. The building became home to furniture stores W&J Sloane and later Mastercraft Interiors before being demolished in 1999 to make room for a new office and retail project. Woodward & Lothrop filed for bankruptcy in 1994 and closed or sold all its stores by the end of the following year.

“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.