



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

Maury Elementary School's bumpy road

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Image: Maury Elementary School, 600 Russel Road, ca.1929. Photo, Library of Virginia..

In August 1927, the City of Alexandria acquired property in Rosemont to build a new school. The land was located on the west side of Russell Road, just south of Morgan Place, later known as Rucker Place. The new school was needed because the old West End School had been sold to the George Washington Masonic Memorial Association and the Jefferson School was crowded.

That fall, Washington Irving Dixon, assistant architect for the State Board of Education in Richmond, oversaw the plans for the new school. Construction for the one-story design was estimated to cost \$40,000, but when the bids came in between \$14,800 and \$32,000 over, the project had to start from scratch. In spring of 1928, Farmville Manufacturing Company won the contract but the Alexandria City Council still had to authorize more than \$9,000 to make up the difference. The final design accommodated about 225 students and included six classrooms, an auditorium and a small library.

As the new building neared completion in early 1929, around the time this photograph was taken, Alexandria officials announced it would be called the Maury School in honor of Matthew Fontaine Maury, a 19th-century naval officer and oceanographer from Virginia. The school board hosted an essay contest to encourage students to write about Matthew Fontaine Maury. Just four years earlier, an elementary school in Arlington was renamed for Maury, too.

The Maury School was officially dedicated on March 13, 1929, with an evening ceremony featuring a musical performance and the reading of the winning essays. In the 1940s, the school was expanded twice, and in 1960, plans for a wing to the north required that Rucker Place, which had reached Russell Road, be closed off at Johnston Place.



“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.



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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.