



Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

Out of the Attic

Lighting the way for \$400 a year

Alexandria Times, April 7, 2011

Image: Jones Point Lighthouse, early 20th century. Photo, E.B. Thompson Collection, District of Columbia Public Library.

The Jones Point Lighthouse, seen in this early 20th-century photograph, was constructed in the 1850s to help guide boats along the Potomac River. Under the authority of the United States Lighthouse Board, the federal government acquired a small lot on Jones Point from the Manassas Gap Railroad in 1855. That September, the Lighthouse Board appealed for proposals to build a new lighthouse there, specifically a “framed building resting on a brick foundation” with “horizontal dimension being 38 by 19 feet” and “having a circular tower on top for the support of the lantern.”



The new structure was taking shape by mid-November and in December George L. Deeton was appointed as keeper of the lighthouse with an annual salary of \$400. The cast iron lantern was accessible from an iron catwalk encircling the lantern room. In May of 1856, the lighthouse was illuminated for the first time.

In 1861, the Corps of Engineers built a retaining wall around the property and in the process, covered a cornerstone that had been placed in 1791 to mark the southern point of the District of Columbia. Five decades later, the boundary marker was uncovered and then surrounded by a concrete box.

In 1926, when a light on a tower replaced the function of the lighthouse, the federal government deeded the lighthouse to the Mount Vernon Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. But because the surrounding land was used for military purposes and restricted in the interest of national security, it was nearly impossible for the DAR to access the lighthouse, which fell into a state of disrepair. In the 1980s, the DAR and the National Park Service came to an agreement that permitted restoration of the lighthouse.

“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
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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.