



Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

Out of the Attic

Electricity was overrated at West End School

Alexandria Times, May 5, 2011

Image: The West End School, ca. 1925. Photo, The George Washington Masonic Memorial, all rights reserved, photography reproduction by Arthur W. Pierson, Pierson Photography.

Although another school dating from the 1880s had the same name, this West End School was built in 1908. At the time, it was west of the Alexandria city limits and was part of Fairfax County's public schools. In April, Richmond architect Charles M. Robinson met with school officials about his plans for the new school to be located a two-acre site on a hillside overlooking Duke Street. In addition to West End, Robinson and his firm would design more than 400 schools, as well as hospitals, churches and college buildings across Virginia.



The West End School was a two-story brick structure with a hipped roof, and when originally constructed at a cost of \$9,000, it had three classrooms, a principal's office and an assembly room, but no electricity. In its first years, West End had lower grades and some high school instruction. In 1915 the City of Alexandria annexed Braddock Heights and the surrounding area, including the West End School. At the start of the next school year, of the approximately 1,000 students attending Alexandria's public schools, 77 were at West End, and in 1916, that number rose to 96. One room was likely converted to a classroom about this time, as students there in the 1920s recall having four classrooms.

During the same time, construction began on the George Washington Masonic Memorial, and in 1923 the City agreed to sell the school property to the Memorial association for just over \$7,000, with the condition that the City could use the school for two more years. The school, seen in the photograph taken around 1925, remained open during the Memorial construction due to lack of classroom space across Alexandria. Shortly after the Maury School opened in Rosemont in 1929, the West End School closed. It was demolished in the mid-1930s.

"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.