



# Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

## Out of the Attic

Before being hanged for treason, Mary Surrat was educated here

*Alexandria Times, May 12, 2011*

Image: The Dr. Murphy House, early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Photo, Inova Alexandria Hospital.

Most often referred to as the Dr. Murphy House, the structure at the southwest corner of Duke and Fairfax streets served as a school, a residence, a physician's office and an infirmary in the 19th century. The Sisters of Charity established a school for girls there in the early 1830s. The parochial school, associated with St. Mary's Church and known as the Academy for Young Ladies, offered day and boarding students instruction in grammar, writing, arithmetic, geography, history, French, bookkeeping, drawing and needlework.

One of those students was Mary Elizabeth Jenkins, known as Mary Surratt after she married. She was later accused of conspiring in the plot to assassinate Abraham Lincoln. Surratt was convicted and hanged after being found guilty.

After the school closed, the property became the primary residence and medical office of physician Francis J. Murphy. In addition to treating patients, Dr. Murphy served as the local coroner and public health officer, gave lectures on physiology and anatomy at The Lyceum and composed and published poetry. When his own health began to decline in the early 1870s, Dr. Murphy rented his home out.

When Julia Johns and others organized the Alexandria Infirmary Association, the Dr. Murphy House was leased as the first Alexandria Infirmary. It opened in March 1873 and had three doctors, a nurse and support staff. The Alexandria Infirmary remained at this site for a year before being relocated to another building. In 1902, the Alexandria Infirmary became the Alexandria Hospital.

Dr. Murphy died in 1877 and left the house to the St. Vincent de Paul Society. It was used as a residence in the early 20th century when this photograph was taken and demolished in 1953.



*"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.*