



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

The Hydraulian Engine House

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Image: Hydraulian Engine House, 209 N. Royal Street, early 1900s. Photo, Alexandria Library Special Collections.

The Hydraulian Fire Company was organized in 1827, and in 1856 the company's new engine house was erected in the 200 block of North Royal Street. This two-story structure on the east side of the block had a three-story hose tower in the rear and a stable in the adjacent lot to the north. It underwent multiple modifications, with changes to the interior brickwork in 1868 and replacement of much of the building's front in 1872.

Joseph Hopkins drew up a new design for the front façade, which the local paper declared would be "an architectural ornament to that part of the city," once complete. As work began, the old wall was found to be seriously damaged but due to legal disputes between the contractor and Hydraulion, it would be several months before the new front was completed.

In 1897, the Hydraulion Fire Company moved into a new engine house on North Patrick Street and the old facility fell into disrepair. In the early 1900s, around the time this photograph was taken, neighbors complained to the City that the unused structure was an eyesore. After the Hydraulion Fire Company disbanded in 1903, its veterans wanted to acquire their old engine house as a meeting place. The City declined and sold it in 1908 to butcher Wilbert C. Baggett who used it briefly for cold storage before leasing it out.

Contractor Samuel D. DeVaughan purchased it in 1911 and used it for his offices, with traditional storefront windows and doors replacing the arched entrances on the first floor. The former firehouse at 209 North Royal Street was again remodeled for use as a home and today it remains a private residence.



"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.

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.