



Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

Out of the Attic

The best fruit, 'segars' and military training around

Alexandria Times, September 29, 2011

Image: St. John's Academy. Photo, Office of Historic Alexandria.

Located at the southeast corner of Duke and South Columbus streets, this building was likely constructed in the late 1820s and was the residence of Abijah Janney. When offered for sale in 1841, it was described as a “substantially built” brick two-story dwelling with 10 rooms and several outbuildings, including a stable, bath and kitchen with a water pump at the kitchen door. According to the ad, the garden abounded with the “best selected fruit trees, shrubs and flowers” which rendered the property “truly desirable.”

In 1849, Caleb Hallowell, a nephew of Alexandria educator Benjamin Hallowell, acquired the property and opened a school.

The building was enlarged and by 1859 was described as having three stories, 40 rooms, and an observatory.

During the Civil War, Hallowell sold the property and it was leased out as a hotel, the Magnolia House. This establishment advertised to travelers that it offered “the best of everything,” like ale, porter, liquor and “choice segars.”

In 1884, St. John's Academy, a military school that first opened in the 1830s at Duke and South Royal streets, relocated here. Its cadets regularly drilled nearby and marched in area parades. Between 1833 and 1892, more than 1,500 students had attended St. John's. But enrollment dropped, and St. John's closed in late 1895, probably not long before this photograph was taken.

In the 20th century, this Greek revival structure with a large octagonal cupola served as a residence and apartment building. In the early 1980s, it was converted to condominiums and today is known as St. John's Square.



“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.