



Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

Out of the Attic

When the police force got too big for its britches

Alexandria Times, November 3, 2011

Image: Alexandria Police Headquarters at 400 N. Pitt Street, 1959. Photo, Alexandria Police Department

When the Alexandria Police Department was organized in 1870, its chief and 20 officers were headquartered in the east wing of City Hall on North Fairfax Street. The size of the force increased slowly until Alexandria's growth during and after World War II prompted the hiring of more officers. By 1948, the department had 76 officers to serve about 40,000 residents. Following the West End annexation in 1952, the population had doubled and the force of 110 officers had outgrown its old station house by 1957.

In November 1956, the City announced plans for a new police headquarters at the northwest corner of North Pitt and Princess streets, near the jail, on property the City used for storage. Architect Robert Adams Willgoos designed a two-story building with a full basement facing Pitt Street with parking and gas pumps in the rear. In January 1958, the City awarded a \$325,000 contract to Rust Construction to build the new Alexandria police headquarters at 400 N. Pitt St.

The project took more than a year to complete and the new station officially opened in May 1959, around the time this photograph was taken. The 14,000-square-foot red brick building had 32 rooms, including space for its records, interview rooms, identification section and a dark room for photo processing as well as holding cells. Less than 10 years later, the building was expanded with the addition of second floor space on the north and south ends.

The police department outgrew the structure and moved into a new public safety center on Mill Road in 1987. The old station and jail were demolished and new homes were built on that site. This fall, the police department moved into its fourth headquarters at 3600 Wheeler Avenue.



“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.