



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

Ever wonder where Wonder Bread began? On Lee Street.

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Image: Corby Brothers Steam Bakery, 200 block North Lee Street. Photo, Souvenir Virginia Tercentennial of Historic Alexandria, Virginia, 1907.

In 1892, Albert D. Brockett purchased property in the 200 block of N. Lee St. to establish the Alexandria Steam Bread Bakery. A new building and ovens were built just south of Thompson's Alley and by August, the bakery could produce 300 pies a day. But the major product was bread which was sold at a Market Square stall and delivered to grocers.

During its operation the Alexandria Steam Bread Bakery had different managers, and one of them, Charles F. Schneider had a product that bore his own name. In 1900, Schneider's Princess Bread was advertised as "delicious, nutritious, wholesome, and absolutely pure and clean."

At the same time, the Corby Brothers in Washington, D.C., who held a patent for making bread dough, competed for business with daily deliveries to Alexandria. In 1901, Corby advertised that "Housewives are emancipated from the never-ending task of bread-making" with its Mother's Bread that "teems with nutriment."

In November 1904, Brockett sold the Lee Street property to the Corby's, who immediately announced its "new bakery enterprise" in an ad that described its bread as "delicious as cake – and it's more nutritious than meat." Within three years, around the time this photograph was taken, Corby's Alexandria bakery had 25 employees and produced 2.4 million loaves of bread annually. With operations in Washington and Alexandria, Corby claimed to be the largest bread shippers in the nation.

By 1925, Corby had 45 employees in Alexandria but the Lee Street operation closed down after Corby merged with the Continental Baking Corporation, and Mother's Bread was replaced with Wonder Bread. The old Lee Street bakery was later used as a storage warehouse and today is known as the Old Town Market.



"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.