



# Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

## Out of the Attic

### An 'unusually attractive' art deco structure

*Alexandria Times, December 15, 2011*

Image: *The Virginia Public Service Co., Washington at Prince Street, ca. 1990. Photo, Library of Congress.*

In the 1920s the Virginia Public Service Co., an electrical utility company, had five geographical division offices to serve customers throughout the state.

In 1929, VPS announced plans to build a new Northern Virginia office at the northwest corner of Prince and South Washington streets. That spring, Chicago architect Frank D. Chase submitted plans for a three-story art deco structure, the first new building planned along Washington Street since its designation as part of the George Washington Parkway.

The construction contract was awarded to a Newport News company, and on May 29, 1929, Mayor Albert Smoot turned the first shovelful of dirt at a ground-breaking ceremony. The VPS building, estimated to cost \$200,000, would not only be modern in appearance, but in functionality and comfort, with electricity providing heat that could be adjusted by floor and office and a clubroom and kitchen with electrical appliances for workers.

The VPS building, completed the following year, was described by a local paper as "unusually attractive." The facade featured a polished granite base, Indiana limestone exterior with a carved stone frieze panels, steel frame windows, and an ornate metal and glass doorway with detailed grillwork topped by an iron sunburst design. The Washington and Prince street elevations have vertical ornamentation beginning above the second floor and carved medallions near the corners below the roofline.

VPS later merged with the Virginia Electric and Power Co., which remained at the same location until 1950. Since then the building has been used for government offices, military recruiting, retail, as seen in this photo taken around 1990, and most recently, a bank.



*"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**

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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.*