



# Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

## Out of the Attic

### The Hugo Black House

*Alexandria Times, January 5, 2012*

*Image: 619 S. Lee Street. Photo, Library of Congress.*

Around 1800, Thomas Vowell, Jr., a prominent Alexandria merchant, built a new home along what was then called Water Street. It later became South Lee Street. The brick house was on the west side of the street between Gibbon and Franklin streets and measured about 30 feet across and 40 feet deep. An 1817 advertisement described other buildings on the property including a large kitchen and smoke house, and along Franklin, a brick stable and carriage house.

The two-and-a-half story building had a gabled roof with paired dormers on the front and rear, Flemish bond brickwork and a front stoop of Aquia sandstone. Situated on a hill and facing east, it originally had a clear view of the Potomac River. In 1842, Edgar Snowden, a member of the Snowden family that owned and published the *Alexandria Gazette*, purchased the property. It remained in the same family until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. By the 1920s, there was a rear wing addition as well as a smaller one to the south.

In 1939 Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black and his wife moved from Seminary Hill to the home at 619 South Lee St. Two years later, they opened their home for a historic house tour. The Blacks' grounds included a landscaped terrace, rose garden, grape arbor and tennis courts, which were located on the far west side of the property. In 1969, Justice Black and his second wife obtained a preservation easement for their home and land with the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission.

Justice Black died in 1971 a few years before this photograph was taken, and the property, often called the Hugo Black House, was sold but remains protected today.



*“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.*