



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

Before CVS and Diversions: Fairlington Centre in 1950

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Image: Fairlington Center. Photo, Alexandria Library, Special Collections.

Between 1942 and 1944, the Defense Homes Corporation financed construction of more than 3,400 housing units to comprise the new Fairlington community, located in Arlington, to accommodate defense workers and their families. This development followed the construction of Parkfairfax, begun a year earlier in Alexandria, on the east side of what was then known as Seminary Road, but today is North Quaker Lane.

In March 1944, the City of Alexandria rezoned two tracts of land along North Quaker for commercial use and in May, officials announced plans for a new retail development to serve an estimated 18,000 people living in Fairlington and Parkfairfax, and another 9,000 residents of Braddock Heights. The first construction began north of Osage Street on a movie theater accompanied by two small stores.

In late 1945 and early 1946, construction permits were issued for Fairlington Centre (pictured), bounded by North Quaker to the west, Fern Street to the north, Centre Plaza to the south and Kenwood Avenue — originally called Cypress Avenue — to the east.

By 1950, customers at Fairlington Centre could shop at clothing stores for men, women and children, as well as hat, shoe, drug, book, jewelry, and television and radio stores. The center also had a restaurant, photography studio, delicatessen, barber shop, beauty salon, bakery and post office. In 1965, a People's Drug Store opened in the southwest corner space and later became a CVS. By 1976, when this photograph was taken, the Carpet Chalet and Alexandria Aquarium & Pet were among the businesses located along North Quaker Lane.



“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.