



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

Establishing Ivy Hill Cemetery

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Image: Ivy Hill Cemetery, 2823 King Street. Photo, Alexandria Library, Special Collections.

In the early 19th century, the Alexandria Common Council prohibited opening new cemeteries. As a result, many churches established new burial grounds in a cluster along Wilkes Street. Around the same time, about a mile beyond Alexandria's city limits, another site was being used as a family burial ground. But in the mid-1850s, this location, northwest of town, became Ivy Hill Cemetery.

In 1854, a group of proprietors organized a new cemetery to be initially funded by stock sales. In June, a site of about 23 acres, described by a local paper as a "beautiful tract of land," was selected. At the time, plans called for the new cemetery to have a keeper's house, chapel and receiving vault. For each \$25 share, subscribers would be entitled to a lot, but with no more than four lots per person, and the sale of other lots would fund improvements.

In March 1855, once the sale was finalized, stockholders met and elected a president and board of directors. At that point, nearly 80 burial lots had already been sold at this new cemetery on a hillside near Timber Branch, but it was not officially called Ivy Hill Cemetery until later that year.

On June 18, 1856, Ivy Hill Cemetery was formally dedicated in a ceremony featuring hymns and prayers. Guests could take advantage of a special horse-drawn omnibus, which departed from the corner of King and Washington streets every 15 minutes that day. On November 17, 1856, Ivy Hill dedicated a monument near the entrance in memory of seven firefighters killed a year earlier. Several members of the Alexandria Fire Department have been buried there since, including the recently departed Joshua Weissman.

This early 20th-century photograph shows the main Ivy Hill building that still stands today at 2823 King St.



"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.