



# Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

## Out of the Attic

### Explore Huntley Meadows Park, a former Mason home

*Alexandria Times, May 10, 2012*

*Image: Historic Huntley, 6918 Harrison Lane in Fairfax County. Photo, Winterthur Library.*

**T**homas Francis Mason, grandson of George Mason, was a prominent member of society in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Alexandria. He was an attorney; justice of the peace; president of the Alexandria Canal Co. and Middle Turnpike Co.; member of the common council for six years; and served as mayor from 1827 to 1830.

Since Alexandria was then a part of the District of Columbia, he was also appointed the first judge of the Criminal Court in 1838 – the same year the federal courthouse was built along North Columbus Street at the corner of Queen Street. Thomas died soon after.

In Alexandria proper, Thomas lived at “Colross,” the magnificent home along Oronoco Street and between Henry and Fayette Streets, which was moved to Princeton, N.J., in the 1930s.

Around 1825 he built a small country house, called “Huntley,” just south of the city in what is today the Hybla Valley area of Fairfax County. Thomas Triplett, the proprietor of Gadsby’s Tavern from 1815 to 1817, previously owned the 1,000-acre site that was west of the road to Richmond.

Thomas took title to the land after Triplett defaulted on a property loan. Soon after, he developed an unusual complex of residential and farm buildings that trace the development of plantation life in Northern Virginia during the Federal period.

In addition to the main house are two flanking buildings, including an ice well similar in construction and size to that of Gadsby’s Tavern. From the entrance colonnade, the grounds were terraced southward, providing a magnificent view of the broad valley where barley, corn, oats, rye and wheat were sowed.

Although reduced in size from the original plantation holdings, Huntley Meadows Park is now protected by Fairfax County Park Authority as a wetland park. Huntley has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places and was recently restored to its 1825 appearance.

It will open to the public on May 19.



*“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.*