



Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

Out of the Attic

The Royal, Alexandria's informal seat of power for more than a century

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Image: The Royal Restaurant, 109 N. Royal Street. Photo, Library of Congress.

One of Alexandria's longest-operating and most popular eateries is the Royal Restaurant, and for more than a century, it's been an informal center of social life in the community. Called the Royal Cafe in its early years, the business started out at 109 N. Royal St. in the Federal-style townhouse seen in this 1959 photograph.

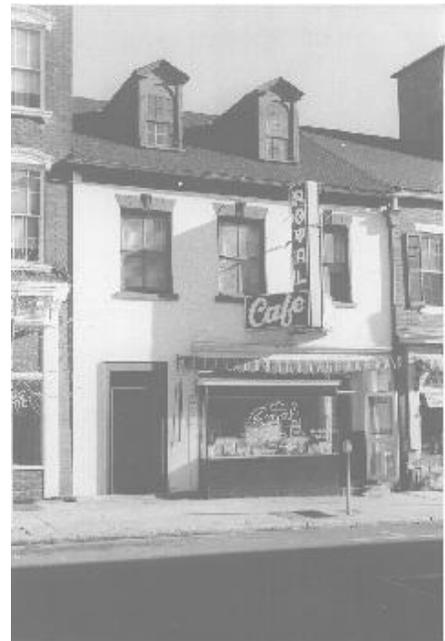
At a time when Alexandria was the major commercial and political center for Northern Virginia, the Royal capitalized on its proximity to City Hall and the established shopping and office district along King and Washington streets to attract a wide clientele. Diners were attracted by the vertical neon signage, home-cooked meals and friendly service.

During the 1940s and '50s, business thrived with busy secretaries, policemen, politicians and shoppers competing for seats in the cafe's small confines. But by the early '60s — with construction of large regional shopping centers and office complexes on the outskirts of the city — the downtown retail corridors began to witness an exodus of stores and offices.

Vacant storefronts and pawnbrokers became the rule, not the exception, and over coffee in the rear corners of the Royal, city leaders discussed plans for revitalization of the deteriorating King Street corridor.

Initially the plans envisioned the replacement of several rundown buildings around the 1200 block of King St., but gradually the focus of the major urban renewal project moved eastward to around Market Square. Ultimately scores of historic buildings were demolished, including the Royal Cafe in 1964.

Owners Richard Kyiacos and his nephew Charles Euripides found a new location at North St. Asaph and Madison streets a year later and have been successful at the location since that time. Although off the tourist beat, the restaurant still maintains its position as a favorite of in-the-know locals.



“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.