



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

Duke Street home witnessed city's booms and busts

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Image: *The Dr. Craik House, 210 Duke Street. Photo, Library of Congress.*

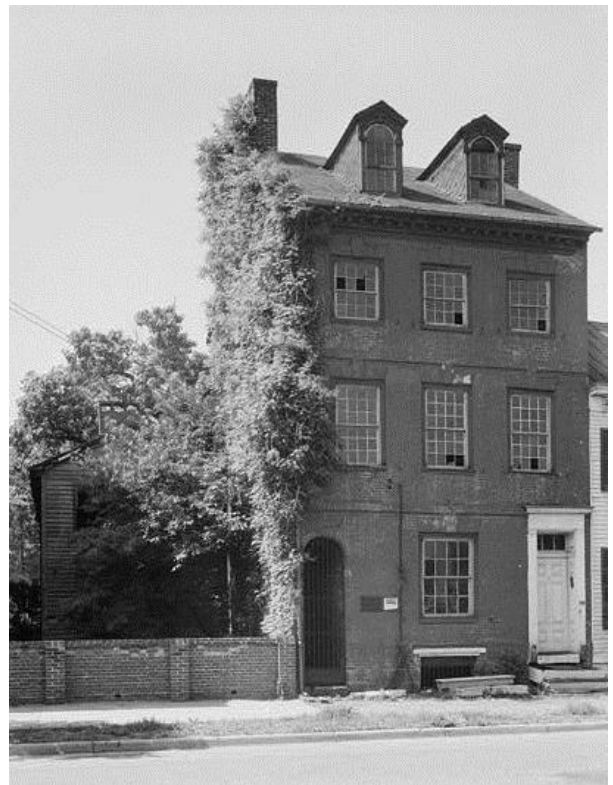
By 1860 Alexandria was a prosperous southern city, but by the end of the Civil War, its buildings and infrastructure lay in tatters. For decades, the city struggled to recover its prewar prominence, and by the early 20th century, many of the once-handsome downtown residences and commercial buildings had become an embarrassment to local residents. This was the case with the forlorn structure seen here, as photographed in the early 1920s at 210 Duke St.

The handsome dwelling was constructed by 1783 and acquired in October 1795 by Dr. James Craik. He was a comrade of George Washington during the French and Indian War and the physician who treated the mortal wounds of Gen. Edward Braddock in that conflict.

Later, Craik became a surgeon general during the Revolutionary War, and afterward, he was persuaded by Washington to move to Alexandria and set up a medical practice in the young city. He often attended Washington's medical needs and was one of three doctors at his bedside when the first president died. Craik died in 1814 and was buried in the Old Presbyterian Meeting House Cemetery.

After Craik's death, the 210 Duke St. house went through several owners, but its condition deteriorated after the Civil War. By 1920 the dwelling had been virtually abandoned — with broken windows, rotting woodwork, and vegetation covering the eastern wall to the roofline. Thankfully, perhaps in response to the start of restoration at Colonial Williamsburg by John D. Rockefeller, an appreciation of Alexandria's historic buildings and streetscapes began to emerge. The acquisition of landmarks, such as Gadsby's Tavern by the American Legion and the restoration of 207 Prince St. by Col. and Mrs. Charles Beaty Moore, showed Alexandrians how a beautiful house could still be had downtown.

By the 1930s the revitalization of what soon became Old Town had begun. The beautifully restored house at 210 Duke St. is one of the finest examples of 18th-century residential architecture in the city.



"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



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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.