



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

Next-door neighbors and nothing alike

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Image: 322-324 King Street. Photo, Library of Congress.

This quaint Victorian Gothic building once stood at 324 King St. and was constructed in the late 18th century as the westerly portion of the adjoining structure at 322 King St. Built for business purposes, the two buildings shared not only their front facade, but also a common central chimney and rear flounder wing used as a workshop and warehouse space. The shop at 324 was the emporium of renowned silversmith Benjamin Barton, one of several outstanding silver artisans working in Alexandria, a list that included Charles A. Burnett, Adam Lynn and John Adam, who created the famous “I Adam” silver line several doors east.

In the mid-1800s the Federal style facade was drastically altered to distinguish the building from its plainer partner and reflect the growing popularity of Gothic Revival influences. These changes involved closing up two of three window bays on the second floor and adding a central, peaked gable shielding arch window above a single casement and recessed double-door entryway. Large projecting shop windows flanking the entrance further adorned the first floor and a large cornice supported by heavy braces and an arched pediment.

By the 1940s, the building at 322 had been used for decades as a barbershop, with several replacements of the red-and-white striped pole at the same location adjacent to the entrance. The 324 portion was then used by Frederick G. Ayers, who advertised his multiple services in bicycle repairs, gun sales and as a locksmith. In the 1960s, when this photograph was taken, the rundown building housed a real estate agency. The photo also documents the remains of the party wall from the three-story Lockett’s Hardware building at 320 King St., dating from the early 19th century.



“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.