



# Alexandria Times

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## Out of the Attic

### The magnificence of First and Citizens National Bank

*Alexandria Times, August 23, 2012*

*Image: First and Citizens National Bank, Pitt Street. Photo, Office of Historic Alexandria.*

The grandeur of one of Alexandria's most monumental interior spaces was another sacrifice of the King Street urban renewal project in 1968, when the First and Citizens National Bank building was demolished. The bank was established around 1864 as the First National Bank. By 1908, President Charles Hoof, who began his career with the bank as a teller, started promoting the need for a larger building symbolizing stability.

The result of Hoof's vision was a magnificent Classical Revival banking temple designed by Alexandria resident Milton Dana Morill, of the Washington, D.C., firm Vogt and Morill. The impressive structure, built by local builder Charles J. Cassidy Co., opened to the public June 21, 1909.

The front facade of the one-story bank was finished in white Pennsylvania marble and instantly conveyed the conservative philosophy of the financial institution. A Doric pediment, supported by abbreviated pilasters, shielded an entablature with an arched opening and ornamental keystone. Bronze entrance doors and a large arched window in the center were a primary focal point.

Within the magnificent interior, the barrel-vaulted ceiling rose 50 feet above the marble floor and was constructed by Guastavino tile vaulting. This technique simultaneously formed the interior decorative ceiling surface and the building support for the roof above. The room was flooded with natural light from a large skylight, eliminating the need for suspended illumination.

A bank vault, situated directly opposite the entrance, was installed in the earliest stages of construction so that the rest of the structure was actually built around it. A watchman's room was placed atop the vault for constant observation.

The bank was built in a central downtown location, sharing the block between Pitt and Saint Asaph streets with its direct competitor, Citizens National Bank. The two banks eventually merged in the early 1960s. Other notable neighbors of the bank included Warfield's Drugstore, Ridgley and Jones Haberdashers, and Poppa George's, the local nirvana for hot dog and chili lovers.



*"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.*