



Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

Out of the Attic

There were lords among us in Alexandria

Alexandria Times, September 20, 2012

Image: The Lord Fairfax House, 607 Cameron Street. Photo, Library of Congress.

The Lord Fairfax House at 607 Cameron St. is one of the city's most treasured. The Fairfax family was one of the great land-owning families of Virginia, and at one time their holdings comprised one-fifth of the state's. Fairfax County is named in honor of Thomas, the sixth Lord Fairfax, or Baron Cameron, who inherited land-holdings of more than 40,000 acres in that region of Northern Virginia.

William Yeaton, on land originally leased from Charles Alexander, built the Cameron Street house in 1816. Yeaton, a New Hampshire ship merchant and architect, had come to Alexandria around 1800 and was well known as the designer of George Washington's tomb at Mount Vernon.

The home was later acquired by Bryan Fairfax, an ordained clergyman who served briefly as a rector of Christ Church until he succeeded to the title as the eighth Lord Fairfax. His son, Thomas Lord Fairfax, became the ninth Baron Cameron and used the house as a winter residence, summering at the family estate "mount Eagle" about two miles southwest of Alexandria. Upon his death in 1846, the title passed to his son, Orlando Fairfax, a successful physician in Alexandria, and he owned it until Union forces seized it during the Civil War.

Architecturally, the house is a superb example of a three-story townhouse with a rectangular plan. The entrance is comprised of a deep vestibule, with curved ends, arched ceiling and a doorway surrounded by arched fanlight and sidelights in the Adams style. Interior woodwork, mantels and doors are ornamented with applied gesso to provide a highly delicate and elegant effect that relies heavily on the use of shadow. A magnificent spiral staircase at the core of the house rises underneath a skylight to provide maximum natural illumination.

This early 20th century view of the house also documents the streetscape of turn-of-the-century Alexandria. Note the cobbled street with embedded bluestone pathways for pedestrians, overhead electric lines and a cast-iron letterbox on the corner.



"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.