



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

From Confederate soldier to prosperous shopkeeper

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Image: Warfield Building, northeast corner King and Pitt Streets. Photo, Library of Congress.

One of Alexandria's greatest turn-of-the-century buildings was closely associated with one of the city's most beloved native sons.

Edgar Warfield, Jr. was born in Alexandria in 1842, and — as an 18-year-old — co-founded the “Old Dominion Rifles,” a local militia that later joined the 17th Virginia Regiment during the Civil War. He served in the Confederate Army throughout the war, returning to Alexandria after Gen. Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox to find his hometown in economic ruin and many of his young comrades dead. Undeterred, he became a druggist, ultimately becoming the owner of one of the largest pharmacies on King Street.

Warfield announced plans to replace his small drugstore at the northwest corner of King and Pitt Streets in 1905 with a large, urban-style commercial and residential building. His

vision came to fruition the following year. The three-story Warfield Building, pictured here just before demolition in 1968, housed his bustling pharmacy on the lower floor and boasted luxurious rental flats above.

The upper floor apartments featured six rooms and a bath. Each unit came outfitted with all modern conveniences of the day, including hot and cold running water, central heating, electricity and speaking tubes to ease communication. The interior woodwork of the building was oak and mahogany, and the first level commercial floor area was fashioned with terrazzo and featured a decorative border.

The modern building was comparable to those then being built in major American cities and was clad in a gray, Roman brick exterior, with Indiana limestone trim and metallic cornice. The drugstore entrance was set in a truncated corner to highlight its prime downtown location, while the apartment entrance was located farther up along North Pitt Street.

The Warfield Building proved a wise investment for the veteran, and he prospered there until his death in 1934. At that time, Warfield was the last Confederate veteran alive in Alexandria, and his affable nature and love for his hometown made him a legend in his own time.



“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.