



Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

Out of the Attic

Old Town home housed several notable residents

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Image: John Gordon House, northeast corner King and N. Washington Streets. Photo, Library of Congress.

A remarkable survivor at Alexandria's primary downtown intersection is the John Gordon House, located along the northeast corner of King and Washington Streets.

Built as a residence between 1797 and 1799 – an addition was later built on the rear – the imposing Georgian façade is one of Alexandria's few remaining examples of a late 18th-century “row-end” house, complete with an elegant front cornice turning the corner and continuing along the full side-view façade. The house was constructed in brick with a Flemish bond pattern, and the angle of the gable ends have been adjusted slightly near the peak of the roof to give it a rounded appearance.

Almost immediately upon completion, John Gordon sold the house to Amos Alexander for \$800, plus an annual ground rent of \$88.84. Over the ensuing years, the property passed through multiple owners, including Judge Christopher Neale, a former Mayor of Alexandria who died in 1863, and later Judge Charles E. Nicol, who died intestate in 1924.

When Judge Nicol's estate was finally settled in 1940, Dr. Robert South Barrett acquired the home. Three years earlier, Barrett had arranged for the construction of the public library along Queen Street in honor of his mother, Kate Waller Barrett.

Several months after Dr. Barrett acquired the property it was transferred to his sister, Lila Alfriend, who redeveloped the first floor for commercial purposes. In 1955, Alfriend executed a limited restoration of the exterior features on the upper floors, such as repairs to sills, window sash and the *Oeil-de-Boeuf* window in the gable peak. However, no work was implemented on the interior of the upper floors, as they were deemed to be in unsafe condition at that time.

The view shown here documents what the building looked in 1964, the same time that Alexandria was proclaimed an “All-America City” by *Look* magazine, as seen in the banner flying high over Washington Street.



“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.



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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.