



# Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

## Out of the Attic

### Life with the Lees

*Alexandria Times, January 31, 2013*

*Image: 609 Oronoco Street. Photo, Library of Congress.*

One of two stately Federal-style houses located just a block south of the famous “Lee Corner” at North Washington and Oronoco streets is the former home of William Hodgeson, an Englishman, who had married the daughter of William Lee — one of the first American envoys abroad during the Revolutionary War.

This house at 609 Oronoco St. was built along with its partner at 607 in the mid-1790s by John Potts but soon passed to Lee family members eager to live adjacent to their relatives. The two homes demonstrate the graceful simplicity and elegance of the period, each boasting a dentiled cornice and central pediment sheltering an oval lunette projecting ever so slightly on the front facade.



In 1820, one of Alexandria’s most remarkable educators, the Quaker schoolmaster Benjamin Hallowell, opened his first school at 609. One of his earliest pupils was Robert E. Lee, who had moved next door to 607 after the death of his father, Henry “Lighthouse Harry” Lee. Educated earlier at the Alexandria Academy, Robert E. Lee was prepared at Hallowell’s school for his eventual enrollment in the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y.

Hallowell recalled in his journal October 17, 1825, that he and his wife of one day were standing on the front steps of the school when the Marquis de Lafayette passed by on his way to give his respects to the widow of Henry Lee, his former comrade-in-arms next door. Hallowell wrote that Lafayette “made us a graceful bow, not knowing it was to a lady who had been married the day before, and whom her husband had named his Lafayette wife.”

Check these pages again next week for more on 607 Oronoco St.

*“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.*



**Office of Historic Alexandria  
City of Alexandria, Virginia**

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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.*