



Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as The Alexandria Times and Advertiser

Out of the Attic

Home of early mayor saved just in the nick of time

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Image: Taylor-Fraser House, 700 S. Pitt St. Library of Congress

In 1779, Jesse Taylor — a native of Belfast, Ireland — immigrated to America and settled in Alexandria.

Within a decade he became mayor, and his family was recognized as among the young city's most notable. His daughter, Jane Allen Taylor, married Dennis Ramsay, a son of William Ramsay — a founder and one of the first trustees of the town.

In 1780, Jesse Taylor acquired a quarter-block comprised of the southwest corner of King and South Pitt streets. Soon after, it's believed that he built this Federal-style house, seen in this 1970s photograph at its original location at 109 S. Pitt St., adjacent to the old Lennon Opera House that fronted King Street. In 1799, Jesse Taylor conveyed the property to William Fraser, who owned it until dying in 1825.

In 1836, Fraser's estate sold the home to John Pascoe, and it eventually passed to two business partners: Louis Brill Jr. and Moses Waterman. The two men were the proprietors of the adjacent Opera House restaurant and a rowdy local watering hole named Brill's Palace Saloon. During the period of Brill's ownership, there were many deeds of trust, securing the property to loans on the adjacent business furnishings and equipment.

In 1898, Brill sold the house to the Robert Portner Brewing Co., one of Alexandria's major industries.

The four-bay, two-and-a-half-story brick house was recognized for its magnificent entryway and dormer detailing. The interior was embellished with a magnificent stairway, fine moldings and 18th-century architectural details.

When Alexandria's urban renewal project began in the mid-1960s, the house was threatened with demolition. However, a plan was worked out to preserve the dwelling. On October 7, 1975, it was relocated to the corner of Franklin and Pitt streets in a move that was recorded in major newspapers, including *The Washington Post*.

The house has since been restored and remains at that location, set somewhat back from the street but facing toward its original location, six blocks to the north.





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

"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.