



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

Storied stadium wasn't always a ball field

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Image: Simpson Stadium, E. Monroe Ave., ca. 1951. Library of Congress

Eugene Simpson Memorial Stadium has a long history associated with sports in the community, but that use occurred only by happenstance.

The property was once part of Alexandria's Almshouse, a poorhouse and workhouse established in 1801 where residents farmed the surrounding land to provide their sustenance. In 1928, two years after a larger regional facility for the indigent was built in Manassas, city officials sold the property to Robert C. Frame for a six-room tourist lodging.

However, Frame defaulted on his mortgage during the Great Depression, and the city reacquired the property for public use.

By 1941, the recreation department was using the property, calling it the Alexandria Municipal Stadium. A large ball field was developed on the western end, opposite the YMCA, and the Almshouse served as a storage facility for recreation equipment. Officially scheduled adult teams utilized the very rustic stadium, along with community youth who created teams — sans uniforms or sponsors — named after different neighborhoods in Alexandria.

In April 1951, the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League used the field for spring training. In Alexandria, the Fort Wayne Daisies and Racine Belles drilled daily, before players attended evening Helena Rubinstein charm classes. The teams' official games were played at D.C.'s Griffith Stadium, now the site of Howard University Hospital.

The photograph seen here, taken from a short publicity film from the time, shows the view looking north to the 400 block of East Duncan Avenue. In the distance along the third-base line is Leslie Avenue, which crosses East Duncan, just to the right of the apartment building on the left. Amazingly, the homes and apartments seen in the background are still standing.

The Almshouse building was torn down in 1952, and a dog park now occupies its location near East Monroe Avenue and Jefferson Davis Highway. In September 1964, the Alexandria City Council renamed the stadium to honor the memory of Eugene Simpson, a former city councilor and vice mayor who had passed in June of that year. Simpson led one of the largest construction companies in the United States and had long been a major supporter of athletic programs in the city.





**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.