



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

Looking at the history of the Janney House

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Image: Janney House, 404 Duke Street. Library of Congress.

One of the most prominent Quaker families in early Alexandria was the Janneys, whose members included several well-respected artisans and merchants of the community.

Joshua Janney was a renowned silversmith in the city at the turn of the 19th century, and his brother Elisha Janney was a successful merchant. In June 1809, the *Alexandria Gazette* described the new home built by Elisha Janney at 404 Duke St., seen in this photograph taken about 1965, as "... an elegant three-story brick house built within the past year, finished in the handsomest style and calculated to accommodate a large family."

The distinctive, Federal-style row-type mansion has a Georgian heritage, with architectural details similar to those seen at Gadsby's Tavern and the Lloyd House, built a little more than a decade earlier. But there are a number of transitional elements associated with the later date of the Janney house, including the molded brick cornice, painted white, which replicated the woodwork used in earlier buildings.

The size of the dwelling was quite generous by Alexandria standards of that time: 30-by-35 feet in the main block, with a 60-foot flounder extension on the rear side. The three-bay front facade was built with large six-over-six double-hung windows and arched windows in the two dormers at the roofline. The workmanship of the Flemish bond brickwork on the front side of the house is considered one of the finest examples of the craft in early Alexandria.

Like many merchants of early Alexandria, Elisha Janney's personal fortune fluctuated widely during his lifetime, and his assets were often heavily mortgaged. In 1811, after a devastating fire at another of his properties, he offered the building at 404 Duke St. for sale to settle his debts.

Ultimately, the home was auctioned to other Janney relatives, finally passing out of the family in 1854. In 1902, the dwelling was acquired by the National Florence Crittenton Mission, a social welfare organization established by millionaire Charles N. Crittenton that provided medical care and support services to prostitutes and unwed mothers across America.

Kate Waller Barrett, an Alexandria physician known for her outspoken views on the education of women at the turn of the century, was a leader in the Crittenton movement, and she and her husband Robert South Barrett later acquired 404 Duke St. as their residence.



"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



**Office of Historic Alexandria
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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.