



# Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

## Out of the Attic

### Odd Fellows Hall served as rationing headquarters during World War II

*Alexandria Times, January 16, 2014*

*Image: Odd Fellows Hall. Library of Congress.*

One of the more interesting uses of Odd Fellows Hall at 218 N. Columbus St., seen here in the late 1960s, was during World War II, when the building became the headquarters of the War Price Rationing Office, or WPO.

Overseen by the Office of Price Administration, a unit of the federal government commonly referred to as the OPA, the local chapter's duties mirrored those of similar chapters nationwide. Its job was to maintain the even and fair

distribution of supplies to the civilian population. Soon after entering the war in December 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt required that heavily used natural resources, materials and supplies be prioritized for military use, thereby escalating prices and shortages of common, everyday items used by every American.

Working with patriotic fervor, each chapter regulated and rationed a vast variety of desperately needed items, ranging from vehicle tires, gasoline, foodstuffs, liquor and metals.

Odd Fellows Hall was the third temporary home for the WPO, which was first located at the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce offices and later the Rupley building at 815 King St. A three-member board chaired by Charles M. Jones, then district manager of the Virginia Public Service Co., oversaw the local WPO.

A team of volunteer administrators assisted the board, interpreting the complex OPA rules and regulations for each commodity. These administrators were well-known and respected within the community, representing a wide cross-section of Alexandria.

Superintendent T.C. Williams was in charge of registering residents for gasoline coupons, and local teachers assisted his efforts. Irwin Hufford, co-owner of Shuman's Bakery along King Street, was the food administrator, which included meat, dairy products, coffee and sugar.

As the war dragged on, Alexandria secretly found creative ways around WPO oversight to secure rationed supplies, particularly highly coveted gasoline. A ban on discretionary car travel in 1943 resulted in the ticketing of every car parked near local movie theaters. Those charged with speeding were threatened with the loss of all rationing coupons.

By July 1943, 29 Alexandrians stood trial at the Columbus Street headquarters for violations. By Thanksgiving 1944, there was not a turkey available for purchase anywhere in the city, and vehicular travel over the Christmas holiday was prohibited.





## Office of Historic Alexandria City of Alexandria, Virginia

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When word of victory over Germany finally came to Alexandria in 1945, there was little celebration. Instead, thousands of city residents headed to houses of worship to give thanks for the end of the war and their personal sacrifice.

*“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.*