



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

A Port City Suffragette

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Image: Caroline Hollowell Miller .Photo, Office of Historic Alexandria.

As we continue our series on important women who called Alexandria home — in honor of Women’s History Month — we cannot overlook the significant contributions made by Caroline Hollowell Miller, who fought to transform the Port City from a cruel, slave-trading hub into a center of fairness and equal rights.

The daughter of beloved Alexandria schoolmaster Benjamin Hollowell and his wife, Margaret Farquhar, Miller was born on August 20, 1831. She immediately served as a sign of hope for the young Hollowell family, who had just lost three of their children, all under the age of seven, to scarlet fever in a span of just three months.

Benjamin Hollowell was a noted Quaker who arrived in Alexandria in 1824, enticed by its pleasant setting and the friendly demeanor of many of its people, such as Edward Stabler, who shared his abolitionist views and thirst for knowledge. He began his tenure in the city as a schoolteacher at the Fair Hill school, later opening a new school “at the edge of town” on Oronoco Street. He eventually moved it to the corner of North Washington and Queen streets, settling in the building known today as Lloyd House. Although relocating only two blocks away from the original location, Hollowell saw Oronoco Street as an unhealthy spot for his school and family following the deaths of his young children. Miller was born shortly after the move.

Almost from the start, Hollowell promoted a higher standard of living in the city. He helped found The Lyceum as a center of knowledge and learning. Later, he created a system to pipe pure water from Cameron Run to the city, a distance of seven miles.

His daughter stayed close to his side, absorbing not only his deep understanding of science, literature and philosophy, but also his interest in encouraging the betterment of humankind. For example, although he enjoyed a close, personal relationship with Robert E. Lee, and — as a Quaker — declined to support military objectives, he came to rejoice in Union advances. Hollowell recognized that ultimately this would lead to freedom for slaves.

Caroline Miller joined her father in the educational profession. In 1852, she married Francis Miller, a teaching partner at Hollowell’s school. Together they raised five children and in 1875 she convinced her father to write an autobiography of his life for the benefit of his grandchildren.

In January 1883, Susan B. Anthony introduced Caroline Miller, by then a committed suffragist, to speak at the National Women’s Suffrage Convention. Caroline Miller’s remarks recalled her early life in





Office of Historic Alexandria City of Alexandria, Virginia

Alexandria, a city where both slaves and women of lower social classes were routinely brutalized — often in public.

Leaders of the suffragist movement, she said, were fostering change, not only in that small city, but also across the nation. In her summation, Caroline Miller saluted their achievements, saying, “Coming generations would rise up and call them blessed ... man would rise to a higher plane when he acknowledges equal rights for women before the law.”

“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.