



Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

Out of the Attic

A Military Mansion

Alexandria Times, August 7, 2014

Image: Slough HQ at 209 S. St. Asaph Street .Photo, Library of Congress.

During the Civil War, the residence and headquarters of the military governor of Alexandria was located at 209 S. St. Asaph St. As seen in this photograph dating from that period, the residence was one of a pair of identical brick buildings that appear to have been built consecutively in the mid-19th century, but in fact were built decades apart.

The structure was originally built in the Federal style by dry goods merchant John Janney soon after he acquired the lot in 1809. Janney's wife Elizabeth died in February of that year, while he was in the midst of several major personal and business changes in his life, apparently connected with his advancing age.

He remained in the impressive three-story home until his death in May 1823.

The house passed through several occupants until it was sold in 1847 to William McVeigh. Four years later, with both Alexandria's prosperity and his own fortunes increasing, McVeigh purchased and demolished the wood-frame tenement next door at 211 S. St. Asaph St. He built a brick house on the lot that mirrored his own residence, but modeled the exterior facades of both buildings to reflect emerging architectural trends of the time, including larger windows and more substantial exterior trim and lintels.

McVeigh remained at the first of the homes until the Civil War broke out in May 1861. Within months, Union authorities confiscated his property for military use. In August 1862, Gen. John Potts Slough, a former lawyer and politician from Cincinnati who had served as a Union officer in New Mexico, was appointed military governor of the District of Alexandria.

He lived at the former McVeigh house and used the property for his headquarters until several months after the war had ended. Known for his hot temper, Slough had years earlier been expelled from the Ohio General Assembly for assaulting another member on the floor of the legislature.

When Slough left Alexandria, President Andrew Johnson appointed him chief justice of the New Mexico Supreme Court. He was assassinated two years later in a face-to-face confrontation with another politician whom he allegedly slandered. At his trial, the shooter was found not guilty on the grounds of self-defense, although Slough had not managed to fire the weapon he drew in his own attempt to defend himself.





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.