



# Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

## Out of the Attic

### A Tailored Piece of Property on South Royal Street

*Alexandria Times, September 25, 2014*

Image: 113 S. Royal Street, 1960s. Photo, Library of Congress.

At the turn of the 19th century the property at 113 S. Royal St. was home to John Longden, a tailor who operated his business in the 600 block of King Street, next to the Republican Coffee House.

Longden owned several other houses along South Royal Street and around 1802 he sold the land and wooden house to Presley Jacobs, a young tailor who may have been his apprentice. Soon after, Jacobs constructed a small brick building immediately to the rear of the house that he used as a tailoring studio.

With his popularity growing rapidly by 1815, Jacobs relocated the business around the corner to King Street, next to Dr. Litle's Apothecary Shop. However, he continued living at 113 S. Royal St. until his death in the early 1850s.

Richard Y. Cross acquired the property in 1856, but died four years later. The advent of the Civil War in May 1861 delayed the settlement of his estate and Union soldiers used the property as a tenement during the four years of Alexandria's occupation.

In 1868, a handsome three-story brick residence, seen in this 1968 photograph, replaced the wood-frame tenement that had deteriorated during the war. Local contractor James Mills built the structure on the front portion of the property, and incorporated the small brick building at the rear as a wing.

The residence — with a shop below — was built for Gilbert Miner and his wife, Virginia. It is believed that Miner was ill at the time of construction and making plans for his wife's survivorship. The real estate transaction was complicated and executed by a legal agent, John Van Riswick, of Washington, D.C.

Gilbert Miner died in 1870, shortly after Riswick sorted out the mess. The carefully worded deed specified that Virginia Miner was to have the same legal rights to the property, free of the debts and control of her husband, as a "femme sole."

Although Virginia Miner's new home was of modest architectural merit, its construction in Alexandria after the devastation of four years of war and a period of prolonged economic stagnation mirrored the uncertain times facing residents.

Sadly, the building was yet another victim of Alexandria's 1960s downtown [urban renewal](#) project and was demolished 100 years after it was built.





## **Office of Historic Alexandria City of Alexandria, Virginia**

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*“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.*