



Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

Out of the Attic

A dyed-in-the-wool Alexandrian

Alexandria Times, April 30, 2015

Image: 400-402 King Street, 1960s. Photo, Library of Congress.

William Gregory III, the eldest son of a respected wool factory owner of Kilmarnock, Scotland, was born in that city in March 1789.

He came to Alexandria in 1807 to work as a clerk in the King Street dry goods store of merchant Robert McCrea, a fellow Scot and local importer of carpets and woolen goods from the Kilmarnock factory known as Gregory, Thompson and Co.

During the War of 1812, the young Gregory enlisted in the Alexandria Blues and in 1814 participated in the Battle of the White House on the Potomac, which played out below Mount Vernon. By that time, Gregory had been elevated as a partner with McCrea. In 1827, he succeeded the elder Scot in the dry goods business.

By February 1829, Gregory had acquired a three-quarter-ownership interest in the lot at 400-406 King St., then owned by Presley Jacobs, on the southwest corner of South Royal Street. At the time, Gregory's portion of lot comprised 400-402 King St. while Jacobs retained ownership of one-quarter of the lot at 404-406 King St. as well as an adjacent property at 113 S. Royal St.

Gregory immediately built a three-story, four-bay commercial building — complete with fine Federal-style details — with three apartments in the rear. Two were for his use with the other for Jacobs. After the large building was completed in 1830, two of Gregory's brothers joined him in Alexandria. But each died shortly after their arrival.

Despite these setbacks, the family business continued to thrive in Virginia. In 1841, Gregory finally acquired the Jacobs' lot to the west. There he constructed a second structure, designed to look like an extension of its eastern counterpart.

Gregory later assumed control of his father's factory in Scotland. But he finally retired from life as a merchant and factory owner on two continents in 1847. He remained in the Old Dominion and was elected president of the local branch of the Farmer's Bank of Virginia that same year. He retained that title until 1866.

During his lifetime he was married to two women: Margaret Bartleman, daughter of an Alexandria merchant, and Mary Long, daughter of a Nantucket sea captain. He had five children with each of





Office of Historic Alexandria City of Alexandria, Virginia

his wives and died in Alexandria in 1875 at the age of 87.

This photograph of the two Gregory buildings shows them just before their demolition in 1968 as part of the Gadsby's urban renewal project. Although the first floors of both buildings had been marred by inappropriate alteration and neon signage, the upper stories still retained the prominent features that proclaimed Gregory's confidence and commitment to Alexandria.

"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.