



# Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

## Out of the Attic

### The wild West End

*Alexandria Times, August 27, 2015*

*Image: The West End. Photo, Office of Historic Alexandria.*

Alexandria's first West End neighborhood was centered just to the southeast of Shuter's Hill, and its economy developed gradually through the early 19th century due to its proximity to the town's major thoroughfare heading west.

This was a particularly strategic location, where Duke Street in Alexandria, part of the District of Columbia until 1847, extended across the eastern border of Fairfax County connecting to the Little River Turnpike and the vast grazing and agricultural lands to the west and south. Once inside the Alexandria limits, Diagonal Road and Commerce Street further assisted the constant passage of farm wagons and cattle by allowing an easy passage to King Street, avoiding the rigid, right-angle corners of the predominate Alexandria street grid.

From the beginning, the small neighborhood was known as a somewhat raucous area, where Virginia cattle drovers and farmers could rest, relax and even celebrate after making the long journey to transport the fruits of their livelihood to the city's markets. Once their business transactions were complete at the end of a long day, men could stop for the night before the hours-long journey returning home at Catt's Tavern, also known as the Drover's Hotel on the north side of Duke Street and west of Diagonal Road.

Small stores serving the needs of rural landowners sprang up nearby offering products like soap, candles, hardware and window glass that might not be available in the Virginia hinterlands. This Civil War-era view of the south side of Duke Street at Diagonal Road shows the brewery building just east of — and partially obscured by — James Grigg's General Store with the large front porch.

Clearly, the West End was the pivotal spot where the town literally met the countryside, and its proximity to two municipal borders allowed for limited oversight and governance. Activities prohibited on one side of Duke Street might be perfectly legal on the other. Such was the case with the Shooter's Hill Brewery, built in 1858 across the street from Catt's Tavern and just outside the official limits of Alexandria, which by then had been retroceded by Congress back to Virginia.

The land on which the brewery was established was assembled by Bartholomew Rotchford in the 1820s and passed to his son Richard upon his death in 1858. Richard soon sought tenants for the parcel which included an old frame house. German immigrants Alexander Strausz and John Klein entered into a partnership to lease the property and convert the two-story house with three bays into a facility to





## Office of Historic Alexandria City of Alexandria, Virginia

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produce beer and ales. They immediately built a lager cellar and accessed Hooff's Run at the rear of the lot for a source of water and the dumping of liquid effluent when necessary.

Although Strausz terminated the partnership by 1860, the brewery continued with Klein as purveyor throughout the Civil War. Even when the sale of alcohol was prohibited in Alexandria by the military governor in 1862, the brewery continued to flourish as it was technically outside the city limits. Klein died just as the war ended, and the business passed to his major creditor Francis Denmead.

Soon after, it was leased to Henry Englehardt who bought the business outright in 1872, but failed to make the required payments to Denmead. When the mortgagor died in 1891, his son called Englehardt's debt and plans were made to sell the property to Englehardt's brother-in-law the following year. On the morning of August 18, 1893, a fire erupted within the structure and within an hour it was burned to the ground.

*"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.*