



Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

Out of the Attic

Yates Gardens developer was a typesetter turned builder

Alexandria Times, August 24 2017

Image: Advertisement, November 10, 1940. Washington Post Archives

When developer Edward R. Carr proceeded to develop the Yates Gardens subdivision in 1940, he did so not solely because row houses were economically feasible in the frantic pre-war period of scarce housing in the national capital region. Rather, the choice was based largely on the historic architectural traditions of Alexandria which had favored townhouse construction almost since the inception of the colonial town in 1749.

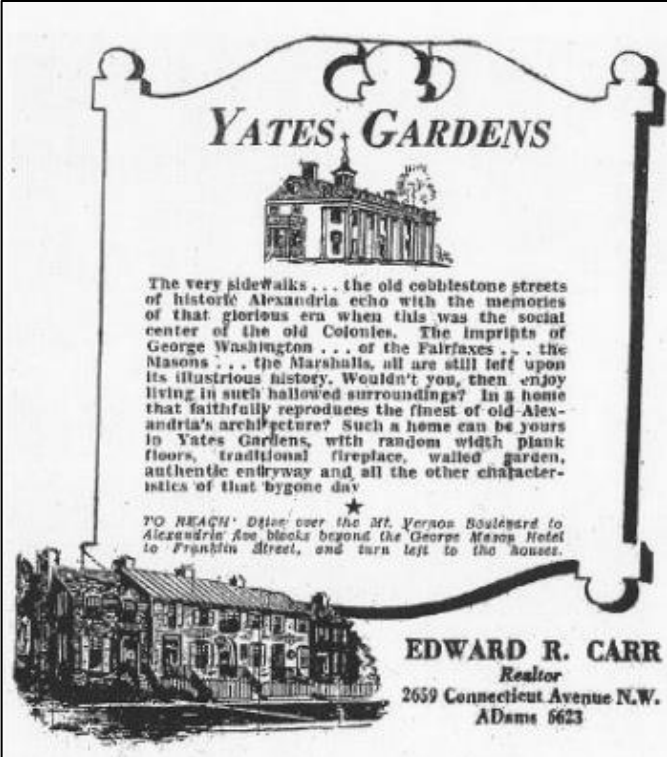
Carr was enamored with the charm and 18th century vestiges of old Alexandria and wanted to share that feeling with the many young families who he felt were “frustrated” in their desire to acquire and restore a period dwelling at a reasonable price in the Washington area. Carr’s project assured potential purchasers that a move to Yates Gardens would achieve their patriotic allegiance to America’s historical past, but would also provide the most modern amenities available at the time, all at an affordable price.

Edward Carr was born in Washington in 1898 and attended Central High School there, but dropped out before graduation and went to New Orleans to work as a typesetter. He soon returned to Washington as a salesman for the new art of “moving pictures” until the start of World War I, when he enlisted in the U.S. Marines.

After three close calls with death overseas, following the war he returned to Washington and became a real estate salesman. His first foray as a builder was in 1925, when he constructed two houses in the 3900 block of Legation Street NW and then branched out into building commercial and multi-family residential structures.

The Great Depression caused him to return to real estate sales, but in late 1934 he embarked on his first large-scale building project, Barnaby Woods in the northwest quadrant of the District of Columbia. Although priced from \$11,000 to \$13,000, this successful project of quaint single-family colonial homes laid the groundwork for his next venture, the more modestly priced Yates Gardens.

This advertisement placed in the Washington Post on Nov. 10, 1940 clearly summed up Carr’s early aspirations for the Yates Gardens project. In it he alludes to Alexandria’s rightful place in “that glorious era when



YATES GARDENS

The very sidewalks . . . the old cobblestone streets of historic Alexandria echo with the memories of that glorious era when this was the social center of the old Colonies. The imprints of George Washington . . . of the Fairfaxes . . . the Masons . . . the Marshalls, all are still left upon its illustrious history. Wouldn't you, then, enjoy living in such hallowed surroundings? In a home that faithfully reproduces the finest of old Alexandria's architecture? Such a home can be yours in Yates Gardens, with random width plank floors, traditional fireplace, walled garden, authentic entryway and all the other characteristics of that bygone day.

★
TO REACH: Drive over the Mt. Vernon Boulevard to Alexandria Ave blocks beyond the George Mason Hotel to Franklin Street, and turn left to the house.

EDWARD R. CARR
Realtor
2659 Connecticut Avenue N.W.
ADams 6623



Office of Historic Alexandria City of Alexandria, Virginia

this was social center of the old colonies,” and he appeals to potential purchasers to envision their own place in the “hallowed surroundings” of America’s founding fathers and families.

The connection was immediate, and sales in the new development were brisk. Young families, eager for a return to a simpler time, lined up to purchase the authentically-designed townhomes, complete with wood-burning fireplaces, random width wide-plank floors and walled gardens. The fact that each new townhome also included central heating, air-conditioning, a modern kitchen and tiled bathroom made the comparison with Mount Vernon far superior.

“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.