



Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

Out of the Attic

Carr's innovations at Yates Gardens

Alexandria Times, September 14, 2017

Image: Yates Gardens, Library of Congress.

When D.C. realtor, Edward “Eddie” Carr found the site for his Alexandria residential project in 1939, he was unexpectedly surprised that the four land parcels south of the old Yeates homestead on Franklin Street faced nine street blocks with all utilities already in place.

In addition, the frontage was spacious, with the ability to include secondary traffic and parking lanes, separated from the main thoroughfares with ten foot landscaped medians. Although Carr was fluent in building both single-family detached homes and garden apartments, he chose to build townhouses at this location due to the historical tradition on the gridded streets of Alexandria, and the capability of the project site to yield 100 homes, from 70 to 120 feet in depth.

While Carr’s team of architects followed local building styles and stylistic elements closely, they also strove to achieve contemporary tastes for interior comfort and natural light, so window placement and even the size of windows was flexible. Each house was raised up several feet above street level so that basement-level kitchens and dining rooms would be bathed in sunlight, and the setbacks of the homes was staggered to further achieve this goal.

Floor levels between neighboring homes were also differentiated so it appeared that abutting homes appeared distinct and built at different times, but this had the added benefit of minimizing the transfer of noise from one home to another. The exterior of each home was also distinguished from its neighbors by color choices of walls and trim, and by roofing materials that varied between natural slate and 40 pound painted tin. One major concession to modernity was the inclusion of garages in select higher-priced homes.

Yates Gardens was an immediate success, and sales of the townhomes were brisk, with entire blocks often selling out well before construction was complete. In this regard, as both realtor and builder, Carr was amenable to customizing specific homes to advance purchasers to meet their individual needs.

The concept was so well received that the project was included in a 1941 edition of the prestigious magazine “Architectural Forum,” listed under the headline “Antique House Reproductions,” perfectly reflecting the effect that Edward Carr had intended.





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.