



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

When Old Town had numerous factories

Alexandria Times, October 26, 2017

Image: Henry K. Field and Company Lumber Yard, North Lee, Queen and Union streets. Souvenir Virginia Tercentennial of Historic Alexandria, Virginia, 1907.

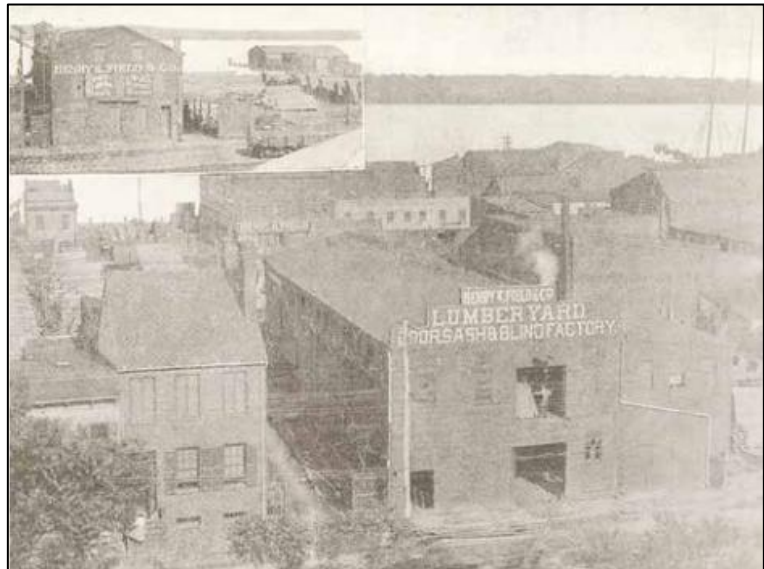
In the late 19th century, the area between North Fairfax and Union Streets, just north of King Street, was a largely industrial area, rarely photographed by city residents due to its lack of architectural merit and the presence of a number of “sporting” or bawdy houses located within its immediate environs. This view, taken from a 1907 Alexandria Tercentennial brochure celebrating the 300th anniversary of Virginia’s founding, shows the three-acre site of the Henry K. Field and Company Lumber Yard that stretched between North Lee, Queen and Union streets.

The huge enterprise, then employing about 40 men, included a main office at 115 N. Union St., a mill work yard for the storage of Georgia pine at Queen Street and a factory along North Lee for the construction of doors, windows and blinds. The remainder of the site was covered by other buildings related to processing raw timbers into lumber and building products.

Across the street from the Field property, to the north and west, was another well-known millwork factory, that of Delahay and Kemp. Edward H. Delahay came to Alexandria in the years before the Civil War and remained until 1874, when he moved on to Baltimore. During his tenure here he was a member of the Common Council and was later named the primary contractor for the rebuilding of the Alexandria City Hall after the disastrous fire of 1871 destroyed most of that structure adjacent to Market Square.

Of particular interest in this view is the three-bay gabled house, just to the left of the Field factory building. During the early 19th century, this was the home of Robert Jamieson, who had assumed ownership and management of the famous Jamieson Cracker Bakery founded by his father, Andrew, in 1785. It has been said that Andrew Jamieson, a Scot, made Alexandria famous due to his mastery of delicious best white cracker biscuits made using local waters. These were held in such high esteem, both in American and Europe, that Queen Victoria herself demanded they be stocked in the royal household.

By the 1850s, Robert Jamieson had sold his bakery interests, located at what was then 35 N. Water St., to George Hill, who continued the operation under his name, but included references to the





Office of Historic Alexandria City of Alexandria, Virginia

continuation of the Jamieson legacy. Eventually Hill acquired the Delahay and Kemp factory across the street and moved the operation to that larger building until it was destroyed by fire on Feb. 9, 1895.

“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.