



# Alexandria Times

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## Out of the Attic

### A look back at Christmas in the 1920s

*Alexandria Times, December 14, 2017*

*Flossy Flirt doll. Photo, Office of Historic Alexandria.*

The 1920s seem like a long time ago, and indeed Alexandria was a very different city back then. The memories of one lady who grew up in Del Ray during that decade shed light on how holiday traditions and practices have both remained intact and changed over time. She wrote:

“Christmas morning was the nicest morning in all the world. Even before we got downstairs, the whole house was sweet with the fragrance of pine. As we came down the steps, the hall rack mirror reflected the lighted Christmas tree in the next room. Oh, what delights awaited us in that room!

“There were toys and games we had not even imagined we would have, and always a new doll for me. The beautiful pine Christmas tree stood in the center of the rectangular platform that Daddy had made to be used every year ... Here were the boys’ battery-operated Lionel trains, the tracks set in an oval pattern around the platform, with all kinds of signals, switches, a tunnel and a little train station. In the center was a miniature village, complete with houses, church, school, streets, sidewalks, trees and little cars and trucks. It was so beautifully laid out that we could hardly believe that it had been done in a night. “The trains were made of heavy metal, and perfect in miniature from engine to caboose. Every year new freight or passenger cars were added. And new pieces would be added to my doll house.

“Two dolls I remember especially. One was called ‘Flossy Flirt’ (pictured above) and Flossy rolled her eyes from side to side in a most appealing way. The other was a more grown up doll about thirty inches tall, with a beautiful china face and big, luminous brown eyes with long lashes. Mamma said she looked like Mary Pickford, so that’s what we called her. Later, when Mamma had her own long hair cut, she made a wig of it for the doll to replace the original hair that had become messed beyond hope.

“My favorite Christmas was the one that brought a big square playhouse made of heavy paperboard, set up in a corner of the playroom. Here I was content to spend hour after hour all through the holidays. I’d crawl through the little door with six tangerines and my book, ‘Heidi,’ reading by a little light bulb rigged by Eddie. ‘Heidi’ and ‘Little Women’ were my favorite books.

“We could almost always count on snow for Christmas, and gave our sleds a good workout too. Mt. Ida Hill was our favorite place to go ‘bellywhoppin’ — the fact that it was not without its dangers making it all the more attractive. But after narrowly missing a big tree at a curve midway down, I was content to ride on top with somebody else steering.”

While the toys of the 1920s may seem primitive to us in 2017, the magic of Christmas is something that many of us can still relate to 90 years later.





## **Office of Historic Alexandria City of Alexandria, Virginia**

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*“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 on behalf of the Office of Historic Alexandria by Amy Bertsch, Public Information Officer (2007-2012), Lance Mallamo, Director (2012-2017), and Daniel Lee, Historian, and other staff (2017- ).*