



Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

Out of the Attic

Get to know Del Ray

Alexandria Times, July 12 2018

Image: 2000-2008 Mt. Vernon Avenue. PotomacVA.org

For twelve years, starting in 1904, John Carpenter's stores were pretty much the only game in town if you needed groceries and sundries in the Del Ray development. Shopping was mostly done on foot and his only competition was Mary Woodward's much smaller shop at the corner of Del Ray and Clyde Avenues.

Carpenter had put up a large store, a smaller store and a storage building in a U-shape at the corner of Mt. Vernon and Howell. He rented out the stores in 1912 to Russian immigrant Jacob Glassman and sold them to him in 1916, with the Glassman family owning them, on-and-off, for the next sixty years. The main store building was replaced in 1938 by the larger brick building that now houses the Evening Star restaurant, but the two smaller buildings, and the courtyard created by the U-shaped configuration, remain.

The original main store building housed a grocery at first, then an auto supply store and a hardware store. The current building is split lengthwise. It held Max Rumshin's DGS grocery store on the south side (which is now the Evening Star) and "Doc" Carneal's Del Ray Drug Store (currently Planet Wine) on the north.

The significance of the lot derives from the confluence of three interesting factors. The first is its status as the launching pad for the subsequent development of Mt. Vernon Avenue and retail in Del Ray generally. The Avenue was almost entirely vacant land on both sides when John Carpenter set up his shops; others gradually followed suit.

The second was as the anchor for the minor influx of Russian Jewish immigrant merchants that started with Jacob Glassman, himself born in Russia in 1879. Over the next 10 years, he provided start-up opportunities for a half-dozen merchants in similar situations, many barely speaking English in the main store and the smaller one on the north side. After a break he and his son teamed up with Max Rumshin twenty years later to establish a cooperative grocery store here before his heirs finally sold the property after sixty years.

The third was the use of the small building at the back by the irrepressible Nick Colasanto as his law and real estate office. Known for his swagger, complete lack of verbal political filter and free-swinging approach, he was the voice of Del Ray for five terms on city council, as well as having served as city manager. How such a small building could house so much wheeling and dealing is a mystery.

Next time you stop in, or just pass by, look around at the three buildings surrounding the courtyard. They all really do have stories to tell.

You can find out more about this site and others in Del Ray at <http://www.potomacva.org>



"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



Office of Historic Alexandria City of Alexandria, Virginia

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 staff of the Office of Historic Alexandria.