



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

Wayne's three sisters

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Image: House on 1405 Wayne Street. Office of Historic Alexandria.

When Michael B. Harlow, known as “MB,” decided to try his hand at real estate development shortly after the turn of the 20th century, he followed the standard route of the day, buying a tract of land, laying out a grid of streets and dividing the land into rectangular plots. Harlow’s Cottage Park venture in this case was essentially East Nelson Avenue. He rarely put up houses, instead simply selling bare lots to his customers.

While MB had no interest in building up an entire development, he did want to set the tone for an upmarket neighborhood. To that end he immediately put up three substantial houses in the heart of Cottage Park, along Wayne Street.

The first of these houses, now 1405 Wayne, was built in 1907-1908 and its two similar neighbors at 1407 Wayne and 1409 Wayne the next year. All are handsome houses but their most striking features are the gorgeous windows. Amazingly, even after over a hundred years, all three still have their original units, a testament to the aesthetic understanding and commitment of generations of owners.

The first of the houses to be built was quickly snapped up by Henry and Annie Parrish in July 1908, with financial assistance from Henry’s sister Jeanette, who lived there part-time. Annie passed away at age 36 from cancer and the house was resold in June 1918 to J. Kent and Ora White, who raised five children in the house. His two sons, John Jr and James, both joined their father in business, J. Kent White Electrical, with the father prominent in Alexandria business associations and the Chamber of Commerce.

Daughter Mary attended nursing school in D.C., graduating in 1934. She specialized at the Johns Hopkins Department of Surgery. She was blessed with a long life and a front-row seat for a tumultuous period of American history, having met and married Louis M. Friday, administrative assistant to U.S. Vice President John Nance Garner. In 1935 they moved to Uvalde, Texas, actually residing in Vice President Garner’s home as secretaries and aides through 1940. She later served as a nurse in San Antonio before passing away in 2006 at age 94.

John Sr. passed away in 1956, and the house was only intermittently occupied until the heirs finally decided to sell it in October 1969, after fifty years in the family.

You can find out more about this site and others in Del Ray at www.potomacva.org.





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 staff of the Office of Historic Alexandria.