



# Alexandria Times

*Established in 1797 as The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

## Out of the Attic

### Pharmacy and the Stabler family

*Alexandria Times, October 22, 2020*

**W**hile the name Stabler in Alexandria is generally associated with Edward Stabler and his apothecary business on South Fairfax Street, now known as the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum, several of his sons also made pharmacy their profession. William, Richard H. and Edward H. all followed their father into successful pharmacy practices during their lifetimes.

William Stabler, Edward's eldest son, apprenticed under his father and eventually took over the business after his father's death in 1831. John Leadbeater, William's brother-in-law, joined the business in 1844 and the two men ran one of the most successful medicine and retail businesses in Alexandria during their partnership, only ending in 1852 at William's death. The Leadbeater family continued the business until it was forced into bankruptcy and closed in 1933.

Richard Hartshorne Stabler, William's younger brother and Edward's seventh child, also apprenticed under his father at the apothecary shop but chose to pursue a more formal medical education, receiving a Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1843.

Upon gaining his degree, Stabler returned to Alexandria and advertised in the Alexandria Gazette in April 1843 that he was available to see patients at his office on Fairfax Street. For reasons unknown, though, Stabler announced less than a year later in February 1844 that he was closing his medical practice and offering up his office for rent.

The lure of the family pharmacy business was evidently strong, though, and by February 1848, Stabler advertised that he had opened his own pharmacy at the northwest corner of King and Washington Streets. This shop, located at what was then 165 King St., proved to be successful, and Stabler operated it until his death in 1878, when his son Laurence took over the business.

In addition to operating his shop, Stabler was also involved with the professionalization of the practice of pharmacy. After serving as the American Pharmaceutical Association's first vice president in 1864, he was elected to serve as their president in 1870. Stabler also taught pharmacy classes at the National College of Pharmacy in Washington, D.C. from 1872 to 1878.

Edward Hartshorne Stabler also operated a successful pharmacy business after apprenticing with the family. Stabler first set up shop on Pennsylvania Avenue in D.C. in 1832 before moving to Baltimore and establishing a large wholesale business under the name E.H. Stabler and Co. that operated through the 1840s and 1850s.

The Stabler family's involvement in the pharmacy industry in the 19th century mirrors the larger historical trend of the small local apothecary of Edward Stabler's time evolving into the multi-state wholesale pharmacy businesses of his sons William, Richard and Edward.

To learn more about this family business, visit the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum as it re-opens to the public for limited tours in November.

*"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 and invited guests.*