



Office of Historic Alexandria
City of Alexandria, Virginia

Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

Out of the Attic

The Athenaeum

Alexandria Times, March 19, 2009

The Athenaeum. HABS/HAER, Library of Congress

The Athenaeum at 201 Prince Street is recognized as an outstanding example of Classical Revival architecture. The four Doric columns across the portico were originally fluted, but by the beginning of the Civil War, they had been plastered in the plain style seen in this photograph from the 1930s.

The building was constructed in the early 1850s for the Bank of the Old Dominion. Positioned atop of Captains' Row, a block of 18th-century homes on Prince Street, the bank provided financing and capital to local businesses and counted many prominent Alexandrians, including Robert E. Lee, as its customers.



The Union forces occupied Alexandria from the start of the Civil War, prompting the bank to close but not before the cashier was able to secure the assets and records, keeping the bank solvent. The property was taken over by the Union Army and used as the Chief Commissary Office until the end of the war.

In 1870, the Bank of the Old Dominion sold the property to the Citizens Bank of Alexandria, which kept it until 1907 when it was then sold to Leadbeater and Sons. The old Alexandria company used the building for its wholesale pharmacy business before selling it in 1925 to the Free Methodist Church, which operated it as a place of worship.

In the 1960s, the Northern Virginia Fine Arts Association purchased the church, and in tribute to the Greek goddess Athena, designated it The Athenaeum. In 2007, the NVFAA completed a restoration of the historic building.

"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



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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.