



# Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

## Out of the Attic

### The proud Alexandria resident

*Alexandria Times, June 11, 2020*

Image: Bruce Scott. Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame.

In 1961, he applied for a job in the same department and passed the civil service exam. But he was denied employment by the Civil Service because he refused to discuss his homosexuality.

Scott argued that his sexual preference was irrelevant to his ability to do the job. When the Labor Department refused to rehire him, he filed a lawsuit. In doing so, he challenged the federal government's hiring practices and changed our country's definition of employment discrimination.

City directories list Scott's residence during the early 1950s as 4415 Raleigh St. here in Alexandria. Between his forced resignation in 1956, and his retaking the civil service exam, he joined the Washington D.C. Chapter of the Mattachine Society, one of the early gay advocacy groups in the United States. The Washington chapter was started by Frank Kameny in 1960, who himself had been fired by the federal government for his sexuality.

By the time of an April 24, 1963 Washington Evening Star article published about his case, Scott was 51 and felt ready for the fight that he knew would "out" him as homosexual. He reasoned that discomfort was a price he was willing to pay to force the government to study whether there was a correlation between homosexuality and work productivity.

The article quoted Scott's claim in court that:

The disqualification because of alleged immoral conduct is a denial of due process: and the disqualification for immoral conduct is arbitrary and capricious.

In 1965, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ruled in Scott's favor, agreeing that a "vague" charge of homosexuality was not grounds for disqualification for federal employment. The ruling didn't immediately benefit Scott, who took a job with the State of Illinois during the legal process and worked there until he retired in 1985.

However, his legal victory paved the way for the reversal of the federal government's policy of denying employment to gays and lesbians in 1975 and helped shape employment practices for the rest of the country.

Employment discrimination against people who identify as LGBT is no longer legal in the U.S. The courage of Bruce Scott played a key role in making that so, and his role in LGBT history shouldn't be overlooked. While Scott lived in the Chicago area after his victory in court, Alexandria is proud to claim him as a resident during his court fight against employment discrimination.

*The Office of Historic Alexandria wants to acknowledge Pride Month with columns on LGBT history in the northern Virginia area.*





## 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.*