



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

Women fundraise for healthcare

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When a group of women led by Julia Johns met to organize the Alexandria Infirmary in December 1872, community health care took a big step forward. Through the efforts of this group, called the Board of Lady Managers, townspeople were no longer required to go to Richmond or Washington to receive hospital care.

The Board of Lady Managers also opened a nursing school in 1894. While supporting the hospital, the nursing school was a pathway for women to become educated in a period when opportunities were limited. The Board of Lady Managers marshalled community support and administered the Infirmary, later called Alexandria Hospital, and nursing school, until 1941.

The hospital changed locations frequently until 1917. Thanks to the Alexandria Library Special Collections, we have access to the 1918 Annual Report that looks back on that year. The most notable occurrence for the hospital in 1917 was the opening of their facility on the 700 block of Duke Street, which would serve until the late 1960s. Also in 1917, doctors and a dietitian were added to staff, and the nursing school added a massage class to its curriculum. Total expenditures were \$16,077.67. The largest cost was for groceries, recorded as \$5,865.38.

Within the new purpose-built hospital facility, many rooms were furnished exclusively through donations. Throughout its history, the hospital has been able to thrive due to the donations it received from an enthusiastic Alexandria.

The Annual Report notes two unnamed donors. One furnished two operating rooms with state-of-the-art facilities, and the other donor provided everything for the "Rest Room," a kind of lounge. As the hospital wards were segregated at this time, the Colored Citizen's Association raised \$500 and furnished two four-bed wards for African American men and women respectively.

The 1918 Annual Report acknowledged services donated by Miss Brooke, notary public and Mr. Washington, attorney. The National Needle Work League donated 43 unspecified garments. The report also included an accounting of Thanksgiving and Christmas gifts of cash, food, clothing and other items to the hospital, traditional donation events that date back to the hospital's earliest years.

Some examples of Thanksgiving donations by individuals, organizations and a local business include: Mrs. G. P. Anderton, who donated one box of Pettijohn's breakfast cereal, two boxes of corn flakes, two boxes of rolled oats and two oranges; and St. Paul's Sunday School, which donated apples, sugar and salt. The King's Daughters Circle Del Ray gave 15 cans of vegetables, two quarts of beans and seven jars of fruit and jelly, while the Constantinople Fruit Store donated one bunch of bananas.

Historic Alexandria celebrates Women's History Month throughout the month of March. For a listing of virtual events and celebrations, please visit alexandriava.gov/historic.



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 and invited guests.