



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

'Alexandria Hospital: Women Mobilize the Community'

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In October 1872, Julia Johns and a group of women opened the first permanent hospital in Alexandria. There had been hospitals in Alexandria before, but they closed at the end of the Civil War. Johns and her Board of Lady Managers established what is still an institution in Alexandria.

To celebrate the hospital's 150 years, the Alexandria History Museum at the Lyceum plans to open an exhibit titled: "Alexandria Hospital: Women Mobilize the Community." The exhibit will include rarely seen artifacts, photos from both the distant and the near past and oral history interviews of doctors, nurses, administrators and volunteers that have kept the hospital able to serve this city.

The central story of the exhibit will be the role women played in the founding and running of the Alexandria Hospital. It will chronicle the role of the Board of Lady Managers from the hospital's inception through 1941, when they gave up control of the hospital.

The Board of Lady Managers continued to advise the hospital as it moved to its current Seminary Road location and through the hospital's sale to Inova. Today, they are actively raising funds in support of the hospital. The exhibit will feature materials on loan from the Board of Lady Managers.

A particular highlight of the exhibit will be a section on the Alexandria Hospital Nursing School, which was started in 1894 and closed in 1987. Plans include featuring nursing school uniforms and yearbooks of the women who trained and often later worked at Alexandria Hospital.



Infirmiry nurses from the late 1800s. Photo, INOVA Alexandria Hospital



Office of Historic Alexandria City of Alexandria, Virginia

The exhibit also tells the story of the hospital's care for African American patients. For many years, the hospital was segregated. The exhibit will display the doctor's bag and stethoscope of Dr. Henry Ladrey, who treated patients in the African American wards during the middle of the 20th century.

It will also display a 1917 article on fundraising by the Colored Citizens Association, led by Dr. Albert Johnson, for two new wards for African American patients, as the hospital moved to its Duke Street location. Many of the funds came from local churches.

This exhibit would not be possible without the help and enthusiasm of the Junior Auxiliary of Inova Alexandria Hospital. Whether it was collecting oral histories, finding artifacts or connecting current and former staff to curators, the ladies of TWIG have been an invaluable resource and support for this exhibit.

The exhibit opens in October of this year. However, some of the oral histories collected for this exhibit can be found at www.alexandriava.gov/historic-alexandria/oralhistory-transcriptions under the heading TWIG.

"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.