



Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

Out of the Attic

Hallowell Hospital utilized during Civil War

Alexandria Times, April 13, 2017

Image: Hallowell Hospital, ca. 1862. Alexandria Library

Another major Civil War hospital complex developed along the 200 block of North Washington Street, which included the former home and school buildings of the beloved Alexandria schoolmaster Benjamin Hallowell. A Quaker and ardent abolitionist, Hallowell first came to Alexandria in the 1820s and by 1824 opened a school in a rented house at 220 N. Washington St., now known as Lloyd House, where he taught Robert E. Lee. When his 1832 attempt to purchase that property at auction was thwarted by Joseph Lloyd, he removed his educational facility to an adjacent location that combined the old four-and-a-half story Hoffman sugar refinery and a tobacco warehouse, nicknamed “Brimstone Castle” by his students. He presided over the school there until 1842, then transferred it to his nephews, Caleb and James Hallowell. Years later, in 1859, he took a position as the President of the Maryland Agriculture College, accepting no salary on the condition that the school, now the University of Maryland at College Park, would no longer use slaves to maintain the campus.



As seen in this photograph taken about 1862, Hallowell’s old school complex was appropriated for use as a Union Army hospital by the military Surgeon General in July 1861, just after the first major battle of the war, the First Battle of Bull Run, fought north of nearby Manassas. The old sugar mill structure, with the rooftop observation deck used to forewarn of a Potomac River invasion by Confederate vessels, was one of the tallest buildings in Alexandria at the time.

The cupola, which at first glance appears to top the former tobacco warehouse, was actually an architectural ventilation element atop an open structure connecting the school buildings, just beyond the brick arch that formed the formal entrance to the school. It also contained a school bell used to announce the call to class and changes to the school schedule during the day. Further north, the building to the extreme right of the image is the southwest corner of what by then was known as Lloyd House.

Ultimately, the Hallowell Hospital complex was expanded to include five main buildings, including Hallowell’s old home located on the east side of North Washington Street. When the expansion took place, the school property was called the Old Hallowell Hospital, and the Hallowell homestead became New Hallowell. Although both facilities were a part of the same complex, the adjacent Lloyd House remained a private residence throughout the war. Friends of the Lloyd family who lived there at that time,



Office of Historic Alexandria City of Alexandria, Virginia

a retired pastor and his wife, complained bitterly about the horrid stench and constant screams emanating from the nearby hospitals that surrounded that elegant Georgian homestead during the war years.

In addition to the original buildings, a one-story wooden barracks in a simple Gothic Revival style was hastily added to the Cameron Street side of the property, with medical tents just north of the new building. In addition, an assemblage of smaller buildings was acquired along the North Columbus Street frontage to the rear and accessed by a long covered walkway. This area also included the addition of more barracks for hospital personnel, sheds and a “dead house” for the storage of unburied corpses.

The Hallowell Hospital complex closed just weeks after the war ended in 1865, and the property reverted back to educational use, now renamed Blackburn’s Academy by a new educator, John Blackburn.

“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 Amy Bertsch, former Public Information Officer, and Lance Mallamo, Director, on behalf of the Office of Historic Alexandria.