



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

Virginia's Restored Government and Alexandria

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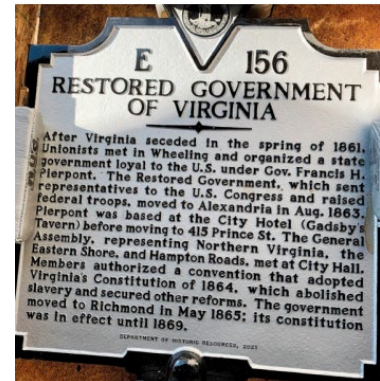
Image: The new sign to be placed on N. Royal Street commemorating when Alexandria served as the capital of the Restored Government of Virginia during the Civil War

When Virginia seceded from the United States in April 1861, not all Virginians supported secession. The northwestern part of the state was especially opposed to leaving. The Unionists found a leader in Francis H. Pierpont, who represented Marion County. Pierpont and others organized a convention in Wheeling in May 1861, and another in June, where Pierpont was unanimously voted as governor of the Restored Government of Virginia, which President Abraham Lincoln recognized.

Pierpont spent much of his time raising troops and supplies for the Union cause, but he also encouraged the formation of a new state: West Virginia. Although the new government of West Virginia petitioned to join the Union in 1862, it did not officially become a state until June 1863.

Pierpont continued to govern the state of Virginia from its new capital of Alexandria. The counties of Alexandria, Fairfax, Loudoun, Accomack, Northampton and Norfolk remained loyal to the Restored Government. According to the Encyclopedia Virginia, the Restored Government's priorities included the "creation of 'free schools,' the extension of constitutional rights to freedmen, and the convening of the 1864 state constitutional convention aimed at abolishing slavery."

The Virginia Department of Historic Resources is placing a sign this month that commemorates the Restored Government's seat in Alexandria. It will stand on Royal Street between the entrance to city hall and the corner of Cameron Street. The sign reads:



Restored Government of Virginia

After Virginia seceded in the spring of 1861, Unionists met in Wheeling and organized a state government loyal to the U.S. under Gov. Francis H. Pierpont. The Restored Government, which sent representatives to the U.S. Congress and raised federal troops, moved to Alexandria in Aug. 1863. Pierpont was based at the City Hotel (Gadsby's Tavern) before moving to 415 Prince St. The General Assembly, representing Northern Virginia, the Eastern Shore, and Hampton Roads, met at City Hall. Members authorized a convention that adopted Virginia's Constitution of 1864, which abolished slavery and secured other reforms. The government moved to Richmond in May 1865; its constitution was in effect until 1869.

Sponsor: Department of Historic Resources

Locality: Alexandria



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.