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ON THE MARKET

A historic country estate with in-city convenience

Renowned Alexandria home once served as St. Mary's Academy

By Merlisa Lawrence Corbett
Special to The Washington Examiner

Tucked away behind trees along Russell Road, Mount Ida has country estate charm with major city access.

The estate was built around 1808 by Charles Alexander, a descendant of John Alexander, for whom the city of Alexandria is named. The estate's grounds originally spanned 6,000 acres along two miles of the Potomac River. Though the acreage shrank as the property changed hands and other homes sprang up nearby, the original house is as stately as ever.

Owners Brian and Maria Smith, both native Northern Virginians, have put their home on the market in preparation for a new life as international travelers.

"Our first stop will be Alaska," said Brian Smith. "We want to stay through the winter into the spring."

Constructed around the same time Thomas Jefferson finished Monticello, Mount Ida contains similar neoclassic elements, such as Beaux-Arts millwork, elaborate trim, wide baseboards and prominent exterior columns.

The Archdiocese of Arlington owned the property until 1993. It served as St. Mary's Academy, an all-girls high school, and sister school to Bishop Ireton High School, an all-boys school, until the school closed in 1990.

"I used to come up here and harass the girls," joked Brian Smith, who bought the home in 1998.

The house is located seven miles south of Washington, a bike ride away from Old Town Alexandria and a walk from hippie chic Del Ray. At 7,040 square feet, the home features six bedrooms, seven fireplaces, four full and three half-baths. All the fireplaces have steel sweeps.

A real cannon sits on the front lawn. The grand curved stairway of stone and brick leads to a veranda with towering two-story Ionic columns in the center and single-story columns wrapped around the porch. French doors open to formal living and dining rooms, which contain



COURTESY PHOTOS

Mount Ida, a historic Alexandria estate, was built around 1808 by Charles Alexander and is currently for sale by the owners.

sculpted friezes, antique chandeliers, high ceilings, dentil moldings and key arches. Renovations over the years incorporated the plaster-over-masonry-walls technique, and much of the decorative molding is original.

"You can tell right away that no expense was spared," said Ray Gernhart, a real estate broker who is helping the Smiths sell the property.

The recently renovated kitchen

has a French Country feel with ample white cabinets and granite counters. Glass teardrops from a small town in Italy are attached to window treatments that grace the kitchen windows. Updated appliances include a Viking range, a separate KitchenAid oven with microwave and two Bosch dishwashers. The family room, 20 feet by 24 feet, was built in 1985 and has a separate heating and cooling system. It connects with a parlor, which makes the space great

for entertaining. Just off the family room is a lovely garden area with lattice and brick arbor. The home has north and south sun porches with ceiling fans, as well as a private fieldstone patio.

The Smiths have attracted a steady stream of onlookers since putting the house up for sale. "People remember going to school here," Brian Smith said. "So many people have come by to take pictures that I want to install a toll gate."

At a glance

- » **Address:** 305 Charles Alexander Court, Alexandria
- » **List price:** \$3,450,000
- » **Rooms:** 6 bedrooms, 4 full baths and two half-baths
- » **Size:** 7,040 square feet
- » **Listed by:** For sale by owners Brian and Maria Smith; 703-706-5769
- » **Virtual tour:** mountidasale.com

