



# Alexandria Times

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## Out of the Attic

### Alexandria's Sister City Caen

*Alexandria Times, June 2, 2022*

**W**ith the celebration of the 78th Anniversary of D-Day this week, we highlight Alexandria's sister city Caen, Normandy, France. Readers might be familiar with Caen's World War II history. It took 18 years to rebuild the city from the approximately 75% destruction it suffered during the war.

Today, the capital of Normandy has an approximate population of 100,000 residents within the city limits and approximately another 50,000 in the surrounding areas. Founded in 1432, the Université de Caen Normandie plays a prominent role in the city's culture, with a student body of 28,000. Visitors and residents can enjoy strolling down the Rue Saint Pierre to browse shops or eat in restaurants on or near the Rue du Vaugueux.

Caen is known for its stone, Pierre de Caen. A limestone known as particularly suitable for carving, Pierre de Caen is probably most famous for its use in Westminster Cathedral. Château de Caen, built by William of Norman in 1060, also features the famed stone. Six years after its completion, William conquered England and became known as William the Conqueror. Today, the castle houses three museums and a garden devoted to the cultivation of plants grown in the Middle Ages.

History fans also can't miss the Church of Saint Pierre, which was the site of French King Henry IV's conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1593, ending the French religious wars. Historians of 20th-century history will find the Caen Memorial Museum, which focuses on World War II history and the Cold War more to their liking.

On June 6, 1944, more than 160,000 Allied troops invaded Normandy, France, gaining a significant foothold in continental Europe. The Battle for Caen took place from June 6 to August 6, 1944, and more than 9,000 Allied soldiers were killed during the invasion. Their sacrifice directly led to the Allied victory over Hitler and the Axis Powers.

The City of Alexandria has shared a Sister City relationship with the city of Caen since 1991. Today, Caen and Alexandria enjoy cultural, educational and economic cooperation. Throughout the year, ACSCC also organizes exchange programs, lectures, children's programs and additional events to promote our French-American relationship. Historic Alexandria features a lecture on the roles of the absent Generals, Patton and Rommel, on June 2, by historian Kim Bernard Holien, Ph.D. We also invite



*1Reenactors from the 2019 D-Day celebration. Photo/Alexandria-Caen Sister Cities Committee.*



## Office of Historic Alexandria City of Alexandria, Virginia

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you to Market Square on Saturday for a full program commemorating the invasion of Normandy from 3 to 6 p.m.

*“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. A special thanks to Sister Cities exchange intern Anais Poplin for her help with this column.*