

APARTMENT BUILDING
WHERE FUTURE NOVELIST
BRIEFLY LIVED WITH HIS PARENTS
IS SET TO BE DEMOLISHED

FITZGERALD'S SHORT STAY IN SYRACUSE

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ASyracuse apartment building where "The Great Gatsby" author F. Scott Fitzgerald briefly lived as a child is scheduled to be demolished.

The building at 501 Catherine St. is one of two buildings on the block between East Willow and Hickory streets that will be demolished and replaced with 50 new apartments, either in one long building or in several buildings, said Paul Driscoll, commissioner of Syracuse's Department of Neighborhood and Business Development.

Driscoll said the apartment building, at the corner of East Willow and Catherine streets, was vacant and already had numerous code violations when a fire that started next door at 505 Catherine St. damaged it Nov. 18.

The city had the building at 505 Catherine St. demolished the day after the fire because it was heavily damaged and posed a public safety hazard, Driscoll said. Engineers later determined that 501 Catherine St. and 509 Catherine St., the other buildings on the block, were not worth saving and should be demolished as well, he said. Both buildings are vacant.

According to the Onondaga Historical Association, Fitzgerald's family moved to Syracuse from Buffalo in 1901, when he was 5. They first lived at 603 W. Genesee St., a building that no longer exists. In 1902, the family moved to Kasson Place at 622 James St., an apartment building that not only still exists, it underwent extensive renovations three years ago.

The following year, the Fitzgeralds moved a block away to 501 Catherine St. (which at the time was numbered 613 E. Willow St.), a building built in the late 1800s. They moved back to Buffalo later in 1903, when the future author was 7.

Dennis Connors, curator of history at the historical association, said it's unfortunate

the building at 501 Catherine St. will be coming down, but that its historical value is limited.

"It's not like he wrote 'The Great Gatsby' while he was living there," he said.

Considered one of the 20th century's greatest American novelists, Fitzgerald pub-



Fitzgerald

lished his third and most famous work, "The Great Gatsby," in 1925, a period of American history known as the Jazz Age. The book centered on characters in the fictional wealthy town of West Egg on Long Island. Fitzgerald died in Hollywood, Calif., at the age of 44.

Driscoll said the city did not learn of Fitzgerald's connection to 501 Catherine St. until last week, when plans had already been made to tear it down. However, he said the interior of the building is in such bad condition that the building's connection to the author will not change plans to demolish it, he said. The demolition is expected to occur this spring, he said.

Home Headquarters Inc., a builder of affordable housing in underserved neighborhoods, bought the house from Amariah Properties LLC in September for \$5,150, according to Onondaga County property records. Home Headquarters also acquired 509 Catherine St. from different owners, Driscoll said.

He said plans are for Home Headquarters to sell the properties to another nonprofit organization, CNY Services, which would build 50 apartments on the block — half for people affected by substance abuse and half for people on low incomes.



Princeton University Library

F. Scott Fitzgerald, author of "The Great Gatsby," is seen as a child in an undated photo, location unknown, at left.

As a youngster, he lived with his family in three Syracuse apartments in three years. The first building, where he lived at age 5 in 1901, no longer exists. In 1902, his family moved to the building below, now Kasson Place apartments at 622 James St.



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In 1903, Fitzgerald lived in this apartment building at 501 Catherine St., Syracuse, before moving to Buffalo later that year. This building is scheduled for demolition this spring.