

Syracuse's Gothic cottage vacant for 30 plus years is demolished







4 / 14

The 1850s gothic cottage at 1631 S. Salina St. in a photo from 1913.

David Lassman | dlassman@syracuse.com

PrintEmail



By Charley Hannagan | channagan@syracuse.com

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For more than 30 years, the house known as The Gothic Cottage on South Salina Street sat vacant waiting for someone to restore it to its former glory.

No one ever did and now it's gone.

Wednesday contractors working for the [Greater Syracuse Land Bank](#) demolished the once distinctive four-bedroom house at 1631 S. Salina

St., with its winding staircase and arched windows. The loss of another Syracuse landmark was [mourned on Facebook](#), while neighbors cheered the elimination of what they said was an eyesore.

"It really didn't have any real historical value as far as the interior. That had all been taken out. It was time for it to go. It was an eyesore," said Will Morgan, who owns Morgan & Morgan Home Inspections/ Building Consultants. His office is at 1638 S. Salina St., across the street from the cottage.

"I think it's a great thing. It's about time," said Rich Puchalski, executive director of Syracuse United Neighbors.

The land bank plans to soon demolish the old church at 1641 S. Salina St. next door to the cottage. The two properties will provide a large lot that will likely attract developers interested in building low-income housing, said Katelyn Wright, the land bank's executive director.

The cottage tapped into the public's love of Gothic architecture, which has distinctive ornate details, she said.

"There aren't a lot of them, they're adorable and people like them," Wright said.

Historians believe the Gothic house was built between 1850 and 1855. There are no reports that anyone famous lived there. It was still in use as a family home in the 1940s.

The New Jerusalem Church of God in Christ bought the cottage with plans to renovate it into a foster home, but it never raised the money for the project. By 2002, the church had not paid taxes on the property since 1978.

There have been many attempts by non-profit groups to get state grants to rehabilitate the property, but it was never enough to pay for all the work that was needed.

At the same time, the church next door - built as the Danforth Congregational Church in 1884 - was deteriorating too. By 2010, the city

condemned the property and told the congregation it would have to move. The city took over both properties and sold it them to the land bank.

In July, the land bank issued a request for proposal for developers to rehabilitate the cottage and the church. Wright said she walked several developers through the property, but no one responded to the request for proposals.

With an estimated \$400,000 needed to rehab the cottage, even with the federal and state tax credits available for historic properties, "no one thought they could make the numbers work," she said.

The land bank's goal is to work quickly with the city to take over deteriorating properties, stabilize and then sell them, returning them to the tax rolls, she said.

Over the last two years, it has sold 248 properties - half to landlords and the rest to owner-occupiers who've invested \$8.2 million in renovations.

"We want to get these into the hands of people who want to roll up their sleeves and renovate them," Wright said.

Unfortunately for the Gothic cottage, "I think it just missed its chance," she said.

Here are more views of the [cottage](#).