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SYRACUSE

Factory's history noted with string, level and tape measure

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Decades ago, Ken Burke lived in the shadow of the Dietz Lantern Factory. He watched the shift workers shuffle in and out of the brick building that manufactured kerosene lanterns for the world.

Earlier this month, he was riding a boom lift up and down the building with a paint brush, restoring the signs that welcomed those workers for more than a century. Burke was hired by the developers who are turning the building into upscale loft apartments.

Burke's work is also woven through Syracuse's history. He painted the Carrier Corp. sign that told thousands of people a day the factory was the "World's Largest Air Conditioner Company." He painted the "Mission District" sign on the Near West Side that has become a landmark.

Burke spent weeks measuring out the Lantern Factory letters with string, a level and a tape measure. He worked from old pictures. The old signs that welcomed workers had been sandblasted off the building years ago, taking with them the history of a company that once made most of the world's kerosene lamps.

Burke stood outside in Leavenworth Park, taking in the view of his work and Syracuse's changing landscape. His mother-in-



history. He painted the Ken Burke, who once lived across the street from the Dietz Carrier Corp. sign that told Lantern Factory, restored the signs on the building for its thousands of people a day second incarnation as an upscale apartment building.

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law once worked in the factory. She was part of the crew that went in at night to clean up the metal shavings that piled up on the floors during the day. Now, those same floors will hold 20-somethings, young couples, and empty-nesters who

want to be near downtown. The lofts have cooks' kitchens and fancy fixtures. The rents will average \$1,600. But the signs that tell the building's history will stay. And, at one of the entrances, lanterns made in the building will light the path.



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