

# A piece of Yates Castle someday may be incorporated in an Upstate Medical University construction project

Published: Tuesday, April 24, 2012, 6:00 AM



**Dick Case / Post-Standard columnist**  
By



Post-Standard file photo

Mike Narolis, of Murnane Builders, is the project superintendent that was onsite when the turret from one of the bridges of Yates Castle was uncovered at a construction site near Weiskotten Hall on Irving Street.

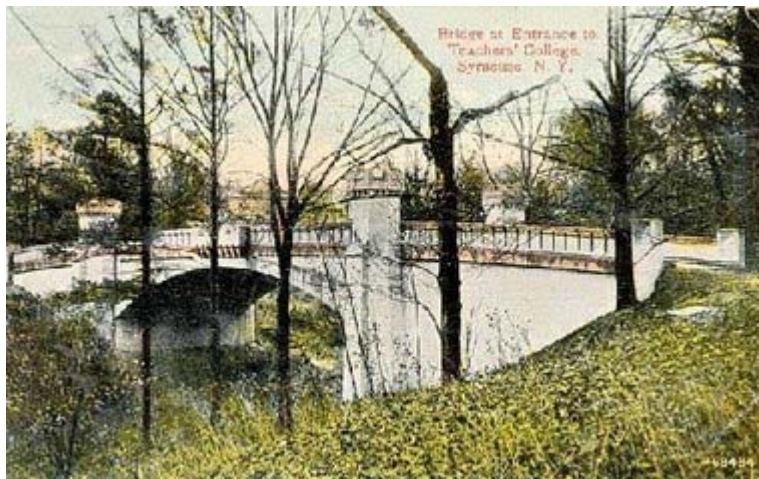
I have readers' questions to clear up today...

The first is about a piece of old Yates Castle, which used to stand in the 700 block of Irving Avenue, that was dug up during construction near Weiskotten Hall, on the Upstate Medical University campus in 2005.

It's a section of turret from one of the bridges at Yates Castle. Yates went up in 1852 as a private home for the Longstreet family, and later the Yates family. The 24-room mansion of stone had 49 acres of grounds, which included stone bridges, gazebo, barn and gatehouse. It later belonged to Syracuse University, which used the Castle as a teachers college and journalism school, before it was sold to the state university to expand its

medical college.

Yates Castle was demolished in 1954.



The turret is one of the few remains of the Castle. The only other remainders are portions of a stone wall along Irving Avenue and two Osage orange trees from the estate that still grow in front of Weiskotten Hall.

Darryl Geddes, director of public relations for the medical center, explained when I asked last week that the turret is in storage at Upstate "and we still

Provided material

Postcard image of one of the bridges at Yates Castle, a mansion built in 1852 on what is now University Hill. Yates Castle was torn down in 1954.

hope to incorporate it into some upcoming design plans."

When it was unearthed during construction, Dick O'Shea, Upstate's assistant vice president for

management, said the bridge was torn down before the Castle. "We think it was buried in the ravine it crossed. It was probably six to eight feet down."

Darryl Geddes passed on another story of preserving sections of Yates Castle. He said a table had been fashioned from an American black walnut tree that once grew on the estate, next to the stone wall. The walnut was estimated to be 75 years old and "needed to be taken down for safety reasons" last year.



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Courtesy Upstate Medical University

Sean Behm, a carpenter at Upstate Medical University, poses with a table he made out of an American black walnut tree that once grew on the estate of Yates Castle.

He said the project was spearheaded by Doug Joseph, assistant director of upstate's Physical Plant Department, and Jeff Griffin, a buildings and grounds superior, and based on a book, "The Soul of a Tree." It was built by a staff carpenter, Sean Behm.

"While we couldn't save the tree, we wanted to somehow preserve it because of its historical connection to Yates Castle and Weiskotten Hall," Doug Joseph said. The table is in Upstate's library in Weiskotten Hall, not far from where it grew.

### Neutral Court

Bev Gibbs wanted to know how come Neutral Court got to be Neutral Court?

Neutral Court is a short street on the city's North Side, between Mary and Pond Streets.

I asked my helpful collaborator, Pam Priest, archivist at the Onondaga Historical Association, to provide an answer. Pam got halfway there.

She found that Neutral Court used to be called Mary Alley, most likely because it ran off of Mary Street. In 1916, John H. Wolf and others petitioned the Common Council to change the name to Neutral Court. The motion was adopted.

Pam also located a petition by Anthony L. Siebenlist and others to change Mary Alley to Park Lane. There apparently was no further discussion of the matter.

In 1917, the Syracuse Herald commented that "The most interesting in the changes of street names is that of Mary Alley, which is now Neutral Court...."

Pam said she found no reason why the name Neutral Court was picked. Is it buried in old city records?

Personally, I like Mary Alley.

### **Bob's Tune?**

Bill Kramer has this tune stuck in his head. He used to hear it on WSYR radio, on the Bob "Deacon" Doubleday broadcast. Deacon had a player piano with lots of rolls.

Bill recalls "Nola" but "there was another song that usually followed it; it was peppy, like the Lawrence Welk theme music. I can hum it and tap my hands along with it, but I can't find a name for it."

Can anyone help Bill?

### **AXA's time and temp?**

Charlie Gowing says he misses seeing the time and temperature on the AXA (MONY) tower downtown. "Runners and walkers who start from Columbus Circle depend on this information," he writes.

Help!

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