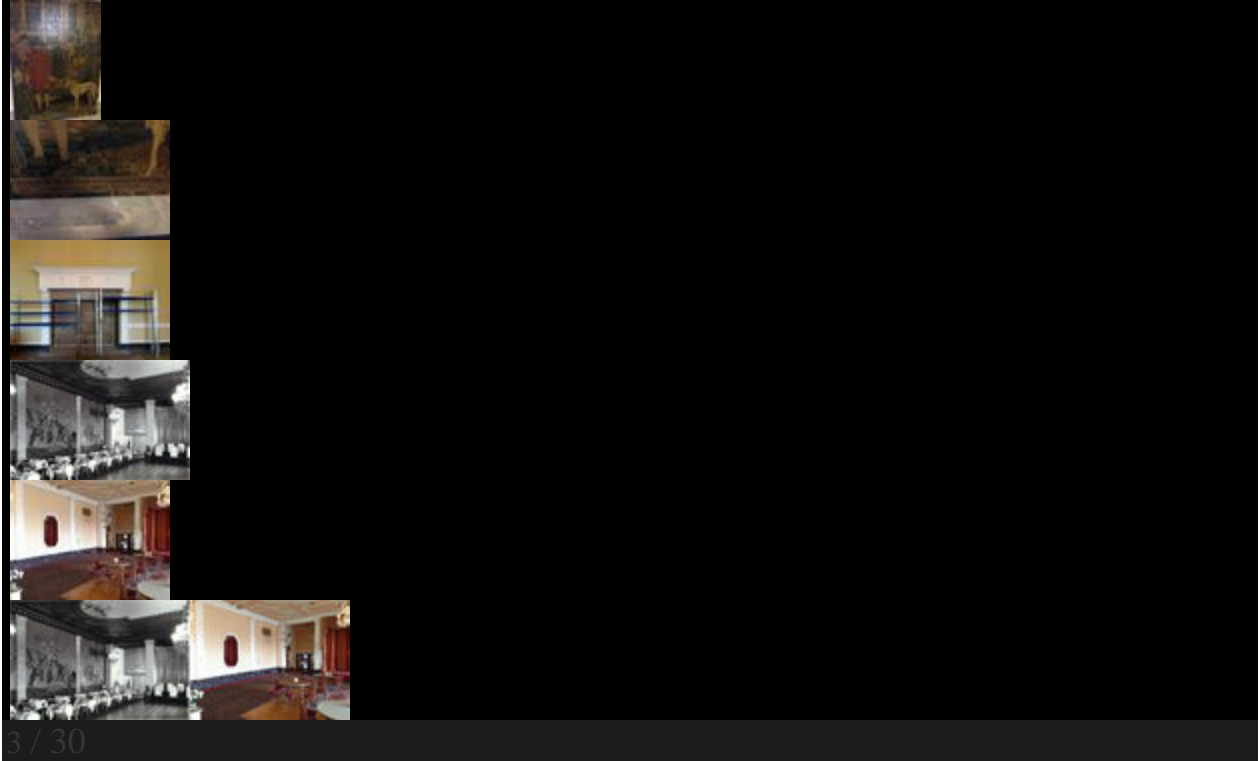


Hidden for decades, mural of city's early history rediscovered at Hotel Syracuse







A 40-foot mural by Carl Roters in the Hotel Syracuse lobby as it appeared circa 1950s, left, and how it appears now. (Onondaga Historical Association and Rick Moriarty | rmoriarty@syracuse.com)

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Syracuse, N.Y. — A 40-foot mural depicting the beginnings of Syracuse has been rediscovered inside the Hotel Syracuse three decades after it was covered up with mirrors.

Workers preparing for the historic hotel's renovation found the mural hidden behind mirrors above the reception desk in the hotel lobby.

The mural was painted for the hotel by [Carl Roters](#), a professor at Syracuse University's College of Fine Arts, in 1948 — 24 years after the hotel opened. It covered a concrete wall above the reception desk.

The hotel's new owner, Ed Riley, said the mirrors were placed over the mural in the early 1980s, a time when the brass-and-glass look was popular.

Photos from the 1940s show the mural above the reception desk, so Riley said he suspected it was still there. Sure enough, when workers removed the mirrors in October, there it was.

"It's a significant piece of artwork that we want to retain," said Riley.

The mural, one of several that Roters painted for the hotel, depicts people and events from Syracuse's early history, from the discovery of salt springs near the shores of Onondaga Lake to the rescue of the slave named Jerry from a Syracuse jail before the Civil War. The artist retired from SU in 1964 and died in Jackson, Wyo., in 1989.

Riley said he plans to leave the mural where it is when the hotel, which closed in 2004, reopens in 2016 after a [\\$57 million renovation](#).

A painting depicting George Washington's 1789 inauguration that once hung above the fireplace in the hotel's lobby has also been found. Riley said it was found in a room of the hotel.

The artist is unknown, but Riley said he would like to have the painting restored and hung somewhere in the hotel again, possibly back above the fireplace. The painting is missing its frame and has been darkened from years of tobacco smoke in the lobby.

Riley is also hoping to uncover other works of art as part of the hotel's renovation, including a mural that once decorated a wall in the hotel's Persian Terrace room off the lobby. That mural is covered by wallpaper and two coats of paint.

The ceiling of the Persian Terrace, as well as the hotel's Grand Ballroom, also have murals. The one in the Persian Terrace was covered with tiles, most likely for acoustic purposes, in the 1940s, Riley said. The one in the Grand Ballroom depicted a sky with clouds but appears to have been painted over.

Riley said he would like to restore the mural in the Persian Terrace. That's not going to be easy, though, because the glue that holds the tiles in place pulls off chunks of the mural when it is removed.