

# The historic Courier Building, in downtown Syracuse: In 1917, a poignant farewell to a newspaper



Downstairs interior of the old Courier Building, downtown Syracuse. (Sean Kirst | [skirst@syracuse.com](mailto:skirst@syracuse.com))

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*A few days ago, I wrote about [the old Courier Building and its legendary balcony](#), where - in 1851 - an angry Daniel Webster threatened a federal crackdown on any efforts to help those escaping from slavery.*

*That speech in downtown Syracuse set up the drama of the [Jerry Rescue](#) a few months later, involving the liberation of William "Jerry" Henry, who'd been jailed while in flight from bondage.*

*The Courier Building, part of [Saturday's downtown living tour](#), is among the oldest existing structures in the city. Until 1906, it was home to the old Courier, a Syracuse newspaper that had several similar names .... The Daily Courier and Telegram & Courier among them.*

*While doing some research about the balcony at the [Onondaga Historical Association](#), I stumbled into this clipping, written on May 10, 1917 - just over 98 years ago - by a correspondent known only as "E.E.K. "*

*Any newspaper person would be moved by this piece - and I think you'll feel the sense of used-to-be when you go past that old building, as well. It's a literary sketch, really, and a beautiful take on what was; it reminded me of [another description of a bygone Syracuse, on a long forgotten Easter Sunday](#), that I published in 2014. Obviously, this goodbye to The Courier has particular resonance for those of us in the newspaper business, but I think anyone who appreciates passage and transition will feel it, too.*

*Our two 1917 correspondents would be pleased, I think, if they could somehow know the building is not only still there, but that new owner Jim Prioletti is calling it by the newspaper's name.*

## **The Courier's Farewell**

**Letter to the editor  
The Post-Standard  
May 10, 1917**

Two climbed the stairs of the old Courier building yesterday afternoon, like wraiths of the past, and took a last look into the old editorial rooms where for so many years centered the publicity end of Onondaga democracy.

The gaping windows had been an invitation. The empty casements seemed like so many eyes, a sort of a death's head effect, looking out from the old block over City Hall, the Yates (Hotel) and other local surroundings. The Order of the Moose, which is to make it a clubhouse, had begun the work of remodeling, and the building looked as forlorn, as wretched, as tho a tornado had swept through it.



The Webster balcony, Courier Building, St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral in background: A transformation into commercial and residential space. *Dennis Nett | dnett@syracuse.com*

Plaster and pieces of broken timber were strewn here and there, and the explorers - into the scenes of the past - had to climb over many obstacles. The old city room was still there, although hardly recognizable.

There was the corner where Milton H. Northrup used to put the punch into the editorials. Over there sat S. Gurney Lapham and Gurney Strong. Over by the window had stood the long city desk, with A.M. York behind it. And here was the spot where Joe Tebeau began his newspaper work. Over there Bill Baker had handled sports in the days when **Bill Dinneen's** light first began to shine on the diamond.

Back of the city room was the little dingy office where Lynn Lewis spent the long hours of the night poring over telegraph copy, Fred Wose and Mose Hutchins the politics and Flanagan the theaters. So it was 25 years ago. So it was for the 25 years M.H. Northrup was the editor, until he ceased his literary labors in 1894.

Then out through the dark, smelly hall the two went and out on the balcony where in 1851 Daniel Webster delivered the address gone down in history, and

they wondered if the Moose will find a way of preserving that historic old piece of ironwork and its platform in the making of their new home.

Back down the stairs they went for the last time and two who had been boys 25 years ago had taken their farewell look at the place where they began their life work. They had seen the last of what in the days of Tilden and Cleveland and Roswell Flower was a busy, ink-smelling, happy-go-lucky editorial room, not much like the modern newspaper plant of today.

Saturday, May 10.

E.E.K.

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