

Hotel Syracuse lobby being restored to former grandeur







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This is how the lobby of the Hotel Syracuse looked soon after the hotel opened in 1924. (Onondaga Historical Association)

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Syracuse, N.Y. — Workers on a \$57 million renovation of the Hotel Syracuse are bringing the historic downtown hotel's grand lobby back to its 1924 dimensions.

They are knocking down a wall that was built in the 1960s and shortened the lobby by about 50 feet.

The wall was built to the left of the hotel's registration desk to create a bar and work space behind the bar. But it blocked from view two large, arched windows and a smaller window, making one side of the lobby noticeably darker. It also blocked from view a balcony overlooking East Onondaga and South Warren streets.

Ed Riley [acquired the hotel last year](#), 10 years after it was closed by a previous owner. He decided to get rid of the wall and bar to bring the lobby back to the way it looked when the hotel opened in 1924.

"It will increase the size of the lobby, and we get to use it not just as a lobby, but as a pre-function space," Riley said.

The balcony behind the wall will also be restored by removing a second-story floor that was built behind the wall. It will match a balcony that still exists on the opposite end of the lobby, above what was once called the Cavalier Room and later Bernardi's. Riley plans to restore the Cavalier Room and put the lobby's new bar in there.

"This will restore the symmetry of the lobby," Riley said. "It just balances the building back to its original design."

The demolition work already has revealed a decorative molded plaster ceiling behind the wall. The plaster is painted to look like wood, just as it was when the hotel opened. (The rest of the lobby's ceiling was painted white over the years.)

Riley plans to reopen the hotel, with 261 rooms, early next year.

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