



The building at 318 E. Fayette St. in Syracuse was being demolished on May 22. It was built as a home sometime before 1851 and was one of the city's oldest buildings. (Pamela Priest / Onondaga Historical Association)

Poof!

One of Syracuse's oldest buildings quietly demolished after city determines it's unsafe

By Rick Moriarty
rmoriarty@syracuse.com

One of the oldest buildings in Syracuse is now history. Literally.

The former home of Rafferty's and Shenanigans bars at 318 E. Fayette St., which was built as a home in the mid-1800s, was demolished four weeks ago with no fanfare.

Owner Eleanor Theodore said the city ordered her to demolish the three-story building after engineers determined it was structurally unsafe. She said the building was flooded and extensively damaged when its sprinkler system sprung a leak in January.

Theodore said she has no immediate plans for the now-vacant lot. She inherited the building from her father, William Theodore, who bought it in 1941.

Pamela Priest, archivist and research center manager for the Onondaga Historical Association, said she first learned of the demolition on May 22 when she left her office on nearby Montgomery Street and saw that most of the building had already been taken down. She snapped a quick picture of what was left of it.

Priest said the building dates back to before 1851, when it showed up on a city directory with four tenants. At the time, its address was listed as 42 E. Fayette St. The numbering system on the street was later changed and it is now 318 E. Fayette St.

The earliest known image of the building is from an 1878 lithograph, in which it appears as the middle of three buildings on the street.

By 1908, an addition had



In recent years, the building at 318 E. Fayette St. housed bars and restaurants. This photo was taken when it housed Shenanigans. (Post-Standard file photo)



An 1878 lithograph shows 318 E. Fayette St., the building in the middle, as it appeared 138 years ago.

(Onondaga Historical Association)

been built onto the front of the house and it had become a commercial building housing various businesses, Priest said. At some point later, an addition was built onto the rear of the building.

In recent years, the building housed a series of bars and restaurants, including Shenanigans, the Burgundy Lounge, Rafferty's, Shell & Bone and The Taste. It was vacant when the flood occurred.

Despite the fact that it was at least 165 years old, the building was not on the city's list of historic properties. Owners wishing to demolish

buildings on the list must first obtain a certificate of appropriateness from the Syracuse Landmark Preservation Board.

Kate Auwaerter, preservation planner for the city, said it appears the property was missed by periodic surveys conducted to identify historical structures. However, she said inclusion on the list would not have mattered in this case because a certificate from the Landmark Preservation Board is not required when a building is determined to be structurally unsafe and an emergency demolition is ordered.