

## SYRACUSE REAL ESTATE



Left, the Oak Knitting Mill building at 102 W. Division St. in Syracuse in 1955, when it was an American Stores Co. food warehouse. Right, the building in 2017 undergoing a transformation into apartments and offices. Photos courtesy of the Onondaga Historical Association and Rick Moriarty

# Former knitting mill gets new lease on life as apartments

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Construction is underway to turn the former Oak Knitting Mill in Syracuse's Franklin Square area into apartments and offices.

Work started this spring at the four-story brick building at 102 W. Division St. General contractor BBL Construction is building 38 apartments (20 one-bedroom and 18 two-bedroom) and 5,000 square feet of office space where workers once made knit underwear starting in 1900.

Developer Timothy Lynn said occupancy will begin Sept. 1. Monthly rents will range from approximately \$1,000 to \$2,000, he said.

He estimates the cost of the project at \$9 million.

Charles E. Crouse and Adolph G. Velasko opened the mill in February 1900 at the northwest corner of West Division Street and Genant Drive.

The building was designed by famed Syracuse architect Archimedes Russell and features large windows, ceiling heights up to 13.5 feet, and exposed brick walls and wooden support beams and posts.

The mill closed in 1927, but the building was expanded several times and used as a warehouse for many years.

Two local businessmen, Charles E. Crouse and Adolph G. Velasko, opened the mill in February 1900 at the northwest corner of West Division Street and Genant Drive for the production of knit underwear.

It was the third such mill in Syracuse, following the founding of the Clinton Knitting Co. in 1893 and West Brothers Manufacturers in 1894. Many others followed.

The mill employed 80 people when it opened.

The ladies' knit underwear made at the mill proved to be so popular that the mill was almost immediately expanded, with a three-story addition to the west side of the building opening in January 1901.

By 1903, the mill employed 150 people, most of them women.

## THE INDUSTRY HEADS SOUTH

In 1927, Oak Knitting joined many other northern textile and knitting companies moving south to be closer to where their raw material, cotton, was grown and to take advantage of lower wages. It packed up its knitting machinery and moved to Atlanta.

After the mill closed, the building was expanded several more times, the last time in 1940.



Developer Timothy Lynn, pictured here, is turning the 117-year-old former Oak Knitting Mill in Syracuse's Franklin Square area into 38 apartments and 5,000 square feet of office space. The apartments will feature high ceilings and exposed brick walls and wooden support beams and posts. Rick Moriarty/[rmoriarty@syracuse.com](mailto:rmoriarty@syracuse.com)