

# Raleigh Times Newspaper History

Raleigh has seen hundreds of newspapers come and go over the past two hundred years. The Raleigh Times' convoluted lineage started with The Evening Visitor in 1879. After stints as the Press-Visitor and the Raleigh Daily Times, it was bought by John C. Drewry and renamed The Raleigh Times. In 1906 the Times building was erected to house this fledgling paper. Two years later the paper went under until its purchase by John A. Park in 1911. Required to pay in gold coins, Park depleted Raleigh's gold coin supply when he requested \$25,000 in gold. Under Park's leadership as publisher and editor, the Times soon became the News and Observer's main rival. For the next two decades the paper thrived, as did the Capital city. World wars and prohibition kept the paper supplied with news. Unlike other editors, Park kept his opinions out of his editorials. Instead, he entertained readers with stories of his travels to places like the Grand Canyon, Berlin, South America, Panama and Las Vegas.

While the News and Observer and the Raleigh Times fought for circulation, news, and advertising, Josephus Daniels and John Park were known for their cordiality. After retiring from his post as Secretary of the Navy, Daniels brought home a deck gun and placed it in his Hayes Barton lawn. The gun, of course, was pointed a block away at John Park's home. Whenever they ran into each other around town Park loved to inquire about the gun and Daniels would remind him that he was always watching.

Over the years Raleigh Times employed notables such as Nell Battle Lewis, Jesse Helms, and Arthur O. Sulzberger. Eventually circulation in afternoon newspapers across the country decreased. The Times was no exception and in 1955 the paper was sold to the News and Observer. On November 30th, 1989, the Raleigh Times put out its final edition.

Detailed Project History (of the building) ([this could be a link from the paper history page](#))

Based on the date on the pediment of the building we know that the Times building was built in 1906. Though the pediment is missing along with much of the cornice detail from the top five feet of the building, we were able to find out the original construction date through old pictures. Since the newspaper had such a high-profile function in Raleigh, there are a number of excellent photographs that document the building's original design. This has served as a great resource for us in restoring the building.

Since most of Empire Properties' work has been adaptive reuse projects, it is unusual for us to rebuild a structure back to its original state. It is generally too costly and time consuming. Plus, there is rarely enough information to guide you through a restoration. We felt that since this building was small and it has such a previous significance to the city, we wanted to restore it to its original state as best as we could.

The building was designed in the classic style common among mixed-use buildings during the turn of the century. On the bottom level, it had two storefronts with a staircase between the two to access upstairs office space. In this case, the upstairs tenant at 12 1/2 East Hargett St. was the Evening Times newspaper, which was later bought by the Raleigh Times. The two retail tenants downstairs were The Office Supply store in 12 East Hargett St. and the Electric Shoe Shop in 14 E.

At some point between the initial construction of the building and 1913, when an addition was built on the back, the Raleigh Times expanded into the space of the former Electric Shoe Shop on the first floor. An internal staircase was built inside the rear wall of the building to connect the two spaces so that editors and reporters could go upstairs without leaving the building through the front door. This connection was removed during later renovations and was one of several areas of structural failure we found when we began renovation. Based on the writing on one of the plaster walls, we determined that an addition was built onto the back of the building in 1913 to expand the space for the Raleigh Times. It is likely at that time that another staircase was built to connect the two floors of the newspaper, and the previously added internal staircase was removed. The

presses also were added in the back of the first-floor addition. When we excavated the original foundations and pits, we found a number of lead type between the floorboards of the second-floor rear space. That led us to believe all of the type setting was done on the second floor in the rear, while reporters and office support worked in the front of the building on the first and second floors.

Sometime in the 1940s, the building was renovated into a jewelry store for a local jeweler. To increase retail frontage and window space, the tenant removed the original staircase entrance to the upstairs space and spanned that entire distance with steel to make it one storefront. At the same time, the staircase was reestablished in the storefront of 12 East Hargett St., almost cutting that frontage in half.

During the 1960s, the pediment was removed and the façade was clad with aluminum. The aluminum was later removed during the 1980s, but very little restorative work was done to the building. An aluminum storefront was added, and the new owner put his wig shop in the former location of the jewelry store.

We bought old bound volumes of the Raleigh Times from a vendor at the flea market who knew we owned the building. Creating a network of people who know the history of the downtown is a key in redeveloping old buildings. The information on the publisher let us know what part of the building they occupied and who the publisher was at that time.

An ad in one of the old papers told us who one of the tenants was in the downstairs. It happened to be the grandfather of one of the landscape architects we used on the project a block away. We were able to get some ideas on what his shop was like from him.

We've done an enormous amount of structural work to repair where the previous three staircases were cut into the floor and where the major roof leaks rotted out the structure in the middle of the building. A new curb has been poured at the sidewalk in preparation of the storefront.

Once the modern storefront was removed, the original millwork of half of the façade was exposed, giving us the exact profile and dimensions of both sides of the storefront to build back. It also gave us the information we needed to justify the design to the Historic District Commission. The storefront was rebuilt using a rich mahogany based on the remaining original millwork and a photo of the building from 1912. The sign on the windows was designed to replicate the original gold leaf sign based on the 1912 photograph of news carriers in front of the building.

Most of the brick on the Times building was painted, and the original type of brick could only be seen where the brick wrapped around the columns. Since it was an unusual cinder type of brick and we had to rebuild the column on the east side of the building, we chose to paint the brick again instead of stripping off the paint. Once the entire demo was done, we could assess what needed to be done to the walls and plaster. Since the roof had failed, water had been seeping into the building and running down the walls for years. As a result, much of the brick to be re-pointed, and the brick walls to be re-plastered.

The building had three types of millwork. In the front, the windows and doors had typical 1920s grooved trim. The only exception was one of the windows on the east side of the building. It looked more turn of the century but was original since it still had the porcelain insulation drilled through the wall and the trim. The back half of the building was done in a very utilitarian plank design. We assumed that since it was used as back-house functions, they didn't spend the money to make it nice during the 1913 renovation.

Since the roof had to be repaired, much of the structural repair and bracing was done from the top, so that the existing wood ceiling in the back half was not disturbed. More bracing was also added to accommodate new mechanical units. And a chase with bracing was added in case a restaurant rented the first floor space. The beam that spanned the original eastern storefront and the middle staircase came from a 1940s renovation to expand the store frontage for the new jewelry store at 14 E. Hargett Street. At that time, the masonry column between the staircase and the storefront was removed, the staircase was reestablished in the 12 E. Hargett storefront, which was built considerably smaller.

We removed the beam and inserted a pipe column where the original masonry column had been. Then the pipe column was clad with brick to bring back the original dimensions and character of the storefront. We did all of this work in one day during a rainy weekend.

When excavating the first floor of the building we found the press pit that was used to print the Raleigh Times. We also found many old bottles including an Anheuser-Busch bottle from the turn of the century. The

