

HISTORY · April 6, 2022

# The history of the Raleigh Times building



Anne Weber



Raleigh Times newsboys | Photo via NC Archives

## To-day's news to-day

In 1906, a two-story building on E. Hargett St. was built to house **The Raleigh Times**, a newspaper dating back to 1879 previously called "[The Evening Visitor](#)." As a daily afternoon paper, it published news the day it happened. This explains the mantra scrawled on the historic building's facade: "To-days news to-day."

"The Raleigh Times was the place **where Raleigh's history was first printed**," owner Greg Hatem said. "It wasn't just a building in Raleigh; it had a significance to it."

For decades, the Times was one of the city's **most circulated newspapers**, competing with [The News & Observer](#) until it was bought by the Observer in 1955. The final edition of the Raleigh Times was printed on **Nov. 30, 1989**.



The Raleigh Times building used to house a shoe store | Photo via NC Archives

## The shops

On each side of the stairs leading up to the newspaper's second-floor office were two stores: a **shoe store** and **Thiem's Stationery Shop**, which later sold records, too.

Through the years, the building also housed an **office supply store** + a **jewelry store**.

When **Greg** purchased the building in 2002, there was a **beauty salon** on the right, a **wig shop** on the left, and a water-damaged, rotting **empty second floor**. "It was a disaster up there," Greg said. But it was the history that sold him.

## The renovation

In **2004**, the major renovation project began. Greg didn't know what the building would become until he stripped away the drop ceiling and sheetrock walls, revealing the original structure of the building. "We have to restore this and we have to make it public," he thought at the time. "It was like a time capsule."



Photo courtesy of The Raleigh Times

As a former photojournalist, Greg's always had a soft spot for journalism, so a tribute to the building's original purpose made sense. The Times building would become **The Raleigh Times Bar**, a newspaper-themed restaurant and bar downtown.

"We did a full restoration of that building, taking it right back down to the studs," Greg said. "And in doing so, we found some extraordinary things." By the end of the transformation, he had a collection of **old lead printing blocks, books, bibles, bottles, and a single shoe**. When excavating the first floor, they found the **press pit** used to print The Raleigh Times. They even found a [Three Sheik condom tin](#) stuck in the floorboards. "We knew the journalists had a lot of fun in that building," he said.

Using an **image of paperboys from the early 1900s** and **ghost images of the original millwork**, builders recreated the **Roman-Revival style** storefront using dimensions scaled from the old photos and **rich mahogany wood**. They even repainted the 100-year-old "To-day's new to-day" sign in gold on the front window. Inside, the walls and plaster were repaired to strengthen the structure.

## **The restaurant**

On **March 17, 2006**, [The Raleigh Times Bar](#) opened its doors — **but just for Raleigh Times journalists**. During its pre-opening party, dozens of past newspaper employees reunited in their old-but-updated building to celebrate the Times + share stories, newspaper clippings, and photographs.

One week later, the Times opened its new concept to the public. Since its first transformation, the space has been **renovated twice** to add second floor seating and a rooftop patio with **views of downtown**.



The Times building today | Photo by RALtoday

And now, **116 years later**, it's celebrating its **16th birthday**.

**Old press clippings and images** from its namesake adorn the walls, showcasing the history of the City of Oaks. Many of the items were donated by people with connections to the newspaper. Restaurant-goers can find a collection of treasures discovered in the once-decrepit building (even the condom tin) in a glass case.

The Times has seen its fair share of celebrities. Journalists **Bob Woodward** and **Carl Bernstein** have dined at the Times. The **Miami Heat** basketball team has stopped by. And we can't forget about the **Barenaked Ladies** (who've mentioned the restaurant twice during concerts, Greg said).

Perhaps the most noteworthy visitor is **Barack Obama**, who visited the Times in 2008 for a post-campaign beer — a pit stop that made the front page of the Washington Post and a section of the New York Times. He ordered a **Pabst Blue Ribbon**. "That was the day we stopped reporting the news and became the news," Greg said. "It set the stage for more history in that building." The glass cup Obama drank out of is now prominently displayed in a glass case behind the bar.

When you visit the Times, **look down as you enter the restaurant**. You'll find "SHOES" "TIMES," and "THIEM'S" spelled out with black tiles below each of its three entrances, reminding visitors of what the building used to be as they walk into what it has become.



Don't forget to look down | Photo by RALtoday