Mantled in Norman garb the Castle stands...
silent witness of
two centuries . . .

The story of The Castle is told by its grey, shadowy walls which house a romantic interior of high-arched doorways, frescoed walls, ornately carved banisters, an elaborate imported mirror which covers a 16 foot height . . . and a capricious drinking fountain . . .

The Castle today presents a picture of Syracuse's School of Journalism, with its nineteen families of Kastle Kids who interrupted the usual Castle noises in 1934 with a staccato din of headlines, bylines, and deadlines.

Like the many novelists, poets, and playwrights who attended Yates' parties of yesteryear, once again the hallways are jammed with journalists in modern garb. But these men and women grab the nearest chairs instead of the most popular dancing partners . . .
A faded photo of the Yates' botanical gardens and the bridge—now destroyed—leading to their home, The Castle...

... If you can imagine a verdant expanse of 49 acres covering more area than where the medical school, VA hospital, and Irving Avenue are now; if you can hear rustling silk and the clatter of wooden carriage wheels on bumpy dirt lanes, then you are ready to be the welcome guest of the (g)hosts of what is now called Yates Castle...

... Sitting in a train in 1867 were two gentlemen. As each one was traveling alone, they started up a conversation as strangers often do out of sheer boredom or curiosity.

"Colonel" Cornelius Tyler Longstreet told Mr. Alonzo Chester Yates how disappointed he was with his home. Longstreet complained of the poor lighting that the medieval-like structure had... of the dampness and leaky roofs... of the loneliness... and of how he and his bride felt left out of the social circle because their home was too far away for their invited friends to attend the frequent parties and teas. He confessed that his house of happiness seemed like a house of gloom...

"... I would be rather envious of you, sir. Living where I do, my social obligations keep me away from my children."

"Where do you live?"

"James Street."

"That is the rather fashionable section, is it not? James Street is where we should have built in the first place."

"Then, why not trade homes?"

And the year 1867 saw Yates and his family moving into The Castle upon the payment of $30,000.
To the society of this era, The Castle was commonly known as Renwick Castle after James Renwick, a young architect who designed it in 1852. (It is interesting to note that Renwick later became the noted designer of St. Patrick's Cathedral, the Smithsonian Institution, and Vassar College.)

Longstreet had commissioned Renwick to model The Castle after the supposed ancestral home of his young English bride. Renwick married in 1852 and spent part of his honeymoon working on The Castle. The 24-room Norman replica was ready in late 1855. The interior of The Castle embodied the lavishness and pretentiousness of the renaissance period.

According to a recent appraisal by architects, if a duplicate of The Castle were erected today, final costs would be about $1,250,000, whereas the original cost was several hundred thousand dollars.

The paneled ceilings in the dining room, which alone cost over $10,000, were decorated with murals of fruits, flowers, and vegetables. Marble statues fitted into the arched niches in the hallway. Each room in The Castle was decorated by Henry Allwelt, a nationally renowned interior decorator.

A rear view—though in modern days used as the front entrance—presenting a picture of bleak, desolate, shadowy grey walls . . .
The walls and partitions were constructed to run from the cellar to the attic. Endless hours of labor shaped the massive grey walls and the gaping doorways, setting off the $157' \times 90'$ Tudor-Gothic structure.

Battlemented towers stood watch on the outside while below, carved lions' heads guarded massive oak doors. The lions were surrounded by ropes of leaves done in beautifully executed carvings. The doors opened on a small, barrel-vaulted vestibule, beyond which lay a rather narrow hall.

This hall then broadened out under the rotunda, leading straight to the great stairway. Behind the stairs, the hall continued on to the servants' quarters.

At a large semi-circular landing in front of the mirror, the stairway divided into two separate staircases to the second floor. A few paces past the last step lay an octagonal opening which formed the "well." The layout was identical for upstairs and downstairs.

As you came into The Castle, a small reception hall and opposite it a little library were the first rooms off the corridor. Next came the two parlors, each with a large bay window. (This would be rooms 102 and 103.) On the south side of the edifice, next to the parlor, was the dining room. (This is room 105 on the right at the foot of the stairs, where the large copy desk is located.)
Next to the dining room, opening out of it on the east, were the butler’s pantry and the kitchen. (This is now the Goudy Typographical Laboratory.) Across the hall, opposite the main dining room and kitchen were two rooms: sitting room on the left and bedroom on the right. (This is now the Journalism Library.)

... Yates made The Castle home. He overcame Longstreet’s difficulties by having the roofs repaired regularly, by improving the lighting conditions, and by having more fireplaces built in. He maintained an active membership in the social set by readily offering his span of six as a taxi service for his guests from the city.

The Yates family moved into The Castle, built of brick and sanded over to simulate grey stone, adding splendor with deep, velvet carpets, fine oil paintings, a 16-foot mirror from France, Italian marble statues inside and out, and a conservatory with a colored glass roof. Flower gardens and extensive landscaping with European and Asian shrubbery enhanced the picturesque, but bleak, exterior.

Alonzo Yates and his fun-loving son, Alonzo, Jr., made genial hosts. Their parties and cotillions filled the social pages of local newspapers and were the general topic of conversation for weeks afterwards.
A little known fact: staircase has a two-inch higher top step... many have muttered imprecations!

Castle's bridge... long vanished...
taken from atop Piety Hill—Crouse College site—showing The Castle with its original towers, and the coach house on the left...

Walls a foot thick; recessed floors mute sounds

A twisting elegance of delicately-carved lines...unusual angle of the stairs
After his father died, young Lonnie Yates continued to give even more lavish parties, where guests lit their expensive Havanas from paper currency suspended from imported chandeliers. Guests came from Milwaukee, Houston, New York City, and Boston. Because of the great distances, guests remained not just a day or two. And they were entertained extravagantly . . . and each day was made more memorable than the last . . .

Dancing on the pavilion to a 10-piece orchestra made up of flutes, harps, and violins was part of the gaiety of a summer evening in 1893. Yates served ices and cool drinks during intermission.

A newspaper account of a New Year’s Eve party mentions that large lanterns, hung from brightly decorated marble statuary and antique armor, lighted the driveway and bridge approaching The Castle. In side rooms, the quick repartee of the whist players could be heard . . .
Over the past 101 years, many rumors and legends have persisted. Even now, Syracuse University students pantingly ascend the stairs to the tower and just as rapidly descend to the depths of the basement in fruitless attempts to prove the veracity of the hidden-room legends.

One of the more popular legends is that of the death of Mrs. Longstreet. The story goes that due to poor health, she committed suicide by jumping from the North Tower; whereupon, the broken-hearted Longstreet sold out to Yates. Actually, Mrs. Longstreet outlived her husband and remained in her native Central New York after he died.

The Castle also became known for being a stop on the "underground railroad" for runaway slaves during the Civil War. Visual proof cannot concede to the existence of this passageway and this romantic legend, along with so many others, may only be stated as fact in fiction, although Longstreet was considered a crusading abolitionist.

Carrying through the imaginary forms of a typical castle, rumor decided that this castle, too, should also have a secret room. There is what can be called a not-so-secret room over what is now the dean's office. The entrance is through the closet in the dean's outer office.

In this research, one of the writers literally stumbled on to the entrance by climbing a ladder, jumping from one timber to another, and finally hoisting himself through the narrow opening leading into the "secret room."

The mirror on the large second floor landing was believed to hold a secret behind it while reflecting the obvious in front. Upon recent investigation, the presumed secret passageway proved to be only a boarded exterior window.

Room 102 today
is the school’s busiest classroom.
An Era Ends

The seemingly bottomless kegs of wine finally dwindled down until the dregs were noticeable. This was in 1898, the year the Yates family abandoned The Castle and the convivial atmosphere settled into gloom.

For the next two years, 1898-1900, The Castle stood vacant. Curiosity-seekers peered from time to time through the cobwebbed windows into the misty depths. On stormy nights, neglected shutters, hovering bats, and broken windows helped legends and rumors to grow and grow and GROW.

Then one day in 1900 the grass was trimmed and the windows and shutters repaired. Mr. A. Lincoln Travis changed Yates' Castle into the Syracuse Classical School. This was to be the beginning of the academic invasion of The Castle.

At the turn of the century, Syracuse University became interested in this building which was situated on the periphery of its campus. At a meeting on November 6, 1905, the trustees voted in favor of purchasing The Castle property.

A preparatory school or a faculty apartment house was in the plans when The Castle was bought, but it was later decided to have the building house the teachers college.

The Margaret Olivia Slocum Teachers College settled in The Castle in 1909. The college was named in honor of Mrs. Russell Sage who donated a sizeable sum for the renovation of the building. Mrs. Sage was the former Miss Slocum, governess to the Yates' children.
Beautifully framed between the trees, this Castle snow scene was taken recently from the southeast corner . . .

Beautifully polished floors were replaced by sturdier ones that were calculated to withstand the many pairs of scuffling shoes. The shining woodwork was painted over. But the graceful lines of the staircase with its spindle railing were retained.

Stained glass windows were removed from some of the rooms and the once stately dining room and parlors were plunged into rapid metamorphosis . . . and out of butterflies, classrooms.

The wide fireplaces which invited coziness were walled up. The complete remodeling, which took many months, expanded the original 24 rooms into 27.

The wooden bridge, built in 1890 to carry the traps and tandems, was replaced by a concrete span in 1908. (The bridge vanished from the Castle landscape in the spring of 1938.)

YATES CASTLE DOOMED
MUST COME DOWN!

Tremors were first felt in 1926 when this headline appeared, stating that The Castle would be razed for the expanding medical center. Alum groups hastily convened to raise a unison protest.

But The Castle never crumbled. Depression brought about a shortage of building funds.

When similar rumors started again in 1946, the student body shrugged its shoulders and decided to “wait and see.” Nothing happened. Then in 1952 the final decision was announced: The Castle must go in June, 1953 . . .
And so it comes to pass . . . 

If your memory is beginning to get clearer, it is because the year is 1934 and M. Lyle Spencer is the first dean of the new SU School of Journalism. The teachers college and the school of education, the school of music and the school of fine arts were moved from The Castle to scattered locations on campus.

Physical changes were made by this new "family." The bridge was torn down . . . the gatehouse . . . finally, the blockhouse.

Dean Spencer was always fascinated by The Castle and its many legends. In one of his first convocations, he announced that thenceforth it would be known simply as The Castle, thus eliminating family and other connotations. The first Journalism Kastle Kids spent many hours investigating all the nooks and crannies to find the hidden passages reported in some of the more fanciful legends.

As a result of one search, a cache of beautiful paintings was found behind the mirror. The finest painting in the group, "Latin Lady," was presented to Dean Spencer and still hangs in the dean's office.

Windows: add to Castle's romance

Sunlighted alcove of room 103 . . .
The Deans: The Castle's live-wire dynamos . . .

Spencer served as first dean 1934-1950; Miller was acting dean in 1937, 1942-43; Campbell sat in acting dean's chair in 1945-46; Clark held the acting dean's position 1950-51, appointed dean 1951.

One of the personalities inevitably associated with The Castle is the late Louise Schiavoni (her less known married name: Manniello). A graduate of the old department of journalism, she was Dean Spencer's first secretary and for a time journalism librarian. In these capacities and as first alumna president of Theta Sigma Phi she did much to advance the cause of journalism.

In 1935, Leslie Nichols established the Bureau of Public Information in The Castle.

Although it could probably live to see another century or two of Kastle Kids, the vibrating typewriter ribbon, symbol of The Castle's life blood, has abruptly unwound to its bare spindle . . .

Who will take care of the squirrels now? They, poor creatures, will probably expect Frank Locke (Irv Hewes' successor) and Irene and Audrey (the dean's assistants) to come back. But a new building will arise . . . and the squirrels' three friends earnestly hope that the medical students will take time out in between autopsies to feed and befriend the animals.

Everyone who has ever had a class in The Castle has his own memories—but what of the other Hill students?

Fine artists can no longer squat on the lawn to sketch the straight and regal lines of the towers. Freshmen, worrying about their English themes, will find no visible battlements to inspire new legends . . .

. . . For the Kastle Kids and their progeny, The Castle will always remain slowly dying, but long to be remembered and loved, a visage of golden memories . . .

Mantled in Norman garb The Castle stands.
Morning sun lights up its towers of grey
The adopted children of another soil leave
their footsteps on its floor,
But seasons will come and go as before
And all sweet sounds of youth shall have flown—leaving behind not even an echo!
The Castle's Familiar Faces...

Miss Evelyn E. Smith: first J-School librarian at work...

Graduate division head George L. Bird shows "how to do it".

Graphic Arts expert Laurance B. Siegfried: picas & serifs...

Magazine chairman Roland E. Wolseley explains a "layout"...
CHRONOLOGY:

1852, June: Colonel Longstreet purchases 49 acres in Syracuse
1852-1855: Building of The Castle
1855-1867: Longstreet family occupies The Castle
1867: Longstreet and Yates trade homes
1867-1898: The Castle's heyday, with Yates as untiring host
1898-1900: Dark Years: Castle is unoccupied
1900-1906: Syracuse Classical School located in The Castle
1906-1934: Margaret Olivia Slocum Teachers College housed in The Castle
1934-1953: School of Journalism finds a home in The Castle
1953, April 25: FAREWELL BALL re-echoes through The Castle's halls ... the oaken doors swing inward ... conviviality and laughter ... the blinds are lifted to let in moonbeams to mingle with the light and play tricks in the modern hairdos of lady guests ... 
1953, June 1: NEW YORK STATE leaves only an epitaph:
—30—