

HISTORIC BACKGROUND
January 11, 2011

THE BALDWIN BUILDING
109 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203



Prepared by:



Clinton Brown Company Architecture ReBuild
The Pierce Building in the Theater Historic District
653 Main Street, Suite 104
Buffalo, NY 14203
PH (716) 852-2020 FX (716) 852-3132
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The History of the Baldwin Building

The Baldwin Building is a rare remaining example of early twentieth-century commercial architecture in the Genesee-Ellicott-Oak neighborhood. Once a part of one of Buffalo's most thriving commercial districts, this building is now under threat from neglect, previous and destructive alteration work and modern development along the Route 33 corridor along Oak Street to the immediate east and other factors. The Baldwin Building is a contributing building to the local Genesee Gateway Historic District based on Criterion C for its architecture. The period of significance for the architecture of the Genesee Gateway Historic District is ca. 1840s- ca. 1930s. The exterior of the building remains an excellent example of Commercial Neoclassical architecture from the turn of the twentieth-century; the Baldwin Building represents a small-scale and elegant example of the ornamental style which decorated some of Buffalo's most opulent buildings. The Baldwin Building is also significant for being designed by the prominent firm of Esenwein and Johnson who created many of Buffalo's most recognizable landmarks. Unfortunately, many modestly sized buildings with ornate classical detailing have been altered or modified as tastes changed, and the ornate flourishes became unfashionable. As a largely intact example of Commercial Neoclassical commercial architecture designed by one of Buffalo's leading architectural firms, the Baldwin Building is a significant architectural gem in the City of Buffalo.

Like other buildings in the Genesee Gateway block of commercial buildings, the Baldwin Building replaced an earlier commercial structure. Maps indicate that a ca. 1850s building once occupied the parcel at 109 Genesee Street. This irregularly massed building appears to have contained a two-story frame block at the street and a brick addition to the rear. It may have been the house and shop of shoemaker Frederick Braunlich, who was listed at the address in 1861-64. The 1872 city atlas indicates that the property was then owned by Maria Erb and her husband Henry, a Bavaria native; a rather unusual occurrence in the 1800s for a married woman to be the primary owner of land and a building. In another rather progressive move for the mid-nineteenth-century, it appears that Maria began a millinery business in the building, and Henry joined her business later. The Erb millinery shop operated from the small building at 109 Genesee Street from around 1860 into the 1870s, and Henry Erb also was noted as selling their wares at the Washington Market, providing an easy link between the mass consumerism at the large marketplace with her small shop just down the street. By 1880, the Erb family was no longer living in the building, but it continued to house Maria and Henry's millinery shop as well as son Peter's physician office. Peter Erb's homeopathic medicine office remained at 109 Genesee Street until at least 1890.

By 1897, the American Wringer Company, a company based out of New York City, was located at 109 Genesee Street, and managed by Joseph R. Baldwin, a native of Maryland. In the 1900 census, A. William Baldwin (who appears to be a brother of Joseph) and his family resided in the building at 109 Genesee Street which they rented, where William Baldwin also ran a clock repair shop.

In 1903, the previous building at 109 Genesee Street was demolished for the construction of the present Baldwin Building. Given that the footprint of the existing building was nearly identical to the new construction, it is possible that the Baldwin Building was constructed utilizing portions of the smaller two-story building, especially the existing stone foundation. Oliver J. Beyer, secretary for the Baldwin Specialty Company, enlisted the prominent architectural firm of Esenwein and Johnson to design the new commercial building. Interestingly, Beyer was recorded in the 1880 census as residing at the previous 109 Genesee Street building, as a son-in-law of the Erbs, having married their daughter Rosa, and this may account for how he became connected to the property.

Established in 1895 by Joseph R. Baldwin, the former manager of the American Wringer Company, the Baldwin Specialty Company started off selling laundry wringers and quickly expanded to sell a diversity of products including furniture, household equipment and products and clothing. The retailer appears to have not only constructed the elegant new Commercial Neoclassical building on Genesee Street in 1903, from which the current name of the building is derived, but also opened another branch in Rochester at the same time as the Baldwin Furnishing Company. The Baldwin Specialty Company specialized in a wide variety of consumer products including furniture and for a brief time clothing, and later carried lines of radios, washing machines, and air-conditioners. The company changed its name to the Joseph R. Baldwin & Co. around 1915, and continued business from 109 Genesee Street until 1920 when they relocated the company to 120 Genesee Street across the street. In 1940 the company again relocated to a new custom-built building located at 52-54 Genesee Street. The Joseph R. Baldwin & Co. furniture and household products business was inherited by his son and continued on into the 1940s.

The occupant of the Baldwin Building in 1929 was the Queen City Rubber Company which had been previously located on Court Street since the early 1900s. The company continued in business in 109 Genesee Street until the late 1930s when the firm had a large steel billboard installed on the roof by the advertising company of Whitmier & Ferris. The nature of the business done at the Queen City Rubber Company (whether it was limited strictly to tire sales or whether they operated an on-premises repair shop) is currently unknown; if they needed to bring automobiles into the building for repairs, they may have possibly altered the storefront to allow for vehicles to enter. While it appears that the building remained in use as a tire dealer for several decades, the H. Seeberg company utilized the building as a warehouse in the 1970s. In the 1980s the building was owned by Willard A. Genrich who attempted to rehabilitate several building along Genesee Street. Genrich, who owned many of the neighboring Genesee Gateway buildings, had high hopes for the rehabilitation of such a prominent row of rare commercial buildings. In 1986 he started a rehabilitation project which removed the interiors of all the buildings down to the studs and brick and removed the second floor structural system in 1988. Genrich's misguided attempts were to secure the structure of the building and to modernize its fire resistance. After several years of legal issues between Genrich and the City of Buffalo who took Genrich to housing court seeking a demolition of the buildings, the future of the Baldwin Building appeared bleak. In 2007 the Baldwin

Building was purchased by Genesee Gateway LLC, with support from the Margaret L. Wendt Foundation. Spearheaded by CityView Construction Management, the Genesee Gateway project is rehabilitating the vacant buildings along Genesee Street between Ellicott and Oak Streets, creating a series of commercial and office spaces that will restore the luster of this once dazzling commercial block for its next 100+ years.

Commercial Neoclassical Architecture

Architecture which drew from Classical Roman and Greek ornaments and motifs was highly popular around the turn of the twentieth-century. Several factors made the clean, crisp style which utilized columns, moldings, garlands, sculpture and a wide variety of other decorations extremely popular. In an era characterized by dark, dirty, messy urban environments symptomatic of raw, post-Civil War, pre-zoning industrial manufacturing, by the late 1800s the clean, organized and elegant designs of classical architecture were seen as a way to “clean up” the city landscape both physically and mentally. One manifestation of this interest in transforming the urban environment was the growing field of landscape architecture, which was popularized by figures like Frederick Law Olmsted beginning in the 1850s and who worked extensively in Buffalo between 1868 and 1896. Olmsted’s extensive greenscape for Buffalo included designing the grounds for the Buffalo State Asylum (now known as the Richardson-Olmsted Complex) of 1870 (NHL 1986), the grounds of the City and County Hall (1871-75, NR 1976) and a comprehensive parks and parkway system throughout the area, which culminated in the extensive National Register-listed “Olmsted Parks and Parkways Thematic Resources” document (NR 1982).

The classical vocabulary of architectural form was promulgated to the architectural community of the United States via the teachings of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, France. A popular training academy where young artists and architects and draftsmen could learn about drawing, painting, proportion, scale, ornament and other elements, the first American architect to study at the Ecole was Richard Morris Hunt who graduated in 1855. Following Hunt, many prominent late nineteenth-century architects studied at the school including H.H. Richardson, Daniel Burnham, Henry Hornbostel, John Russell Pope, Charles McKim, Raymond Hood and many others, many of whom worked in Buffalo. Still many more architects studied or apprenticed with Beaux-Arts trained offices, including Frank Lloyd Wright, Louis Sullivan, Frank Furness and countless others. Between the mid-1800s and the mid-1900s, anyone who received an education in architecture either went directly to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts to study or studied under someone who did. As a result of the widespread prominence of the Beaux-Arts training methods, it is no wonder that classical-derived architecture was perhaps the national architectural style during this era.

One of the ways which the classical vocabulary was transmitted to the general public was by the prominent World’s Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893. The so-called “White City,” as the fair was nicknamed, featured architecture designed by the biggest architectural names of the late 1800s including William Morris Hunt, Charles McKim, Frederick Law Olmsted and Daniel Burnham. The fair presented a

clean, almost sterilized, version of the ideal city with glistening white buildings, elegant sculptures, domes, fluted columns, pediments and other classical elements.¹ Locally, this aesthetic arrived in Buffalo in 1895 when Daniel Burnham constructed the Ellicott Square Building in Buffalo which at the time of its construction was the world's largest office building. Other notable grand examples of the classical language were created by some of Buffalo's local architects including George Cary who designed the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society Building (1901, NR 1980, NHL 1987) and E. B. Green, who designed the domed Buffalo Savings Bank at Main and Genesee Streets in 1901 and the temple-like Albright-Knox Art Gallery in 1905 (NR 1971).

Esenwein and Johnson

The firm of Esenwein and Johnson was one of Buffalo's most successful and prolific architectural partnerships in the city around the turn of the twentieth-century. Headquartered in Burnham's Ellicott Square Building, The office of August Esenwein and James A. Johnson was a skilled practitioner in many popular architectural styles of the time including Classical, Georgian Revival and Art Nouveau styles.

Born in Esenwein-Virnsberg, his family's ancestral homeland in southern Germany, August Esenwein attended the University at Stuttgart and later the Stuttgart Polytechnic University, graduating in 1879. At the time, German schools were known to provide excellent education in engineering, and the technical, construction-related aspects of architecture. Esenwein then went to Paris where he trained as a draftsman in an architectural atelier. While he may not have received Beaux-Arts training in Germany, it is likely that the method and philosophy would have been presented to him in France. Esenwein arrived in Buffalo around 1880 where he found work as a draftsman and worked as an engineer in the office of the Delaware & Western Railroad. In this office, he won an architectural competition for his design of the first Buffalo Music Hall in 1882.

Johnson was also not a Buffalo-area native, having been born in Syracuse, NY in 1865. Like his partner, he trained in several architectural offices including the offices of Buffalo architects Edward A. Kent and Joseph Lyman Silsbee as well as the New York City offices of Richard Morris Hunt and McKim Mead and White in 1890. Johnson arrived in Buffalo in 1892 where he soon partnered with James Marling (the former partner of Silsbee) where he designed the Alexander Main Curtiss House at 780 West Ferry Street in 1895 (potentially NRE).

The firm of Esenwein and Johnson was formed in 1897. While Esenwein specialized in construction and engineering, it appears Johnson focused on the ornamental aspects of the firm's designs. Together, the firm designed a wide-variety of buildings including the infamous Temple of Music at the Pan-American Exposition in 1901

¹ The classical styles popular at the turn of the twentieth-century, and their ordered, rational and intellectual design, contrasted to the Victorian Romantic styles which had been the trend for the later half of the 1800s. Styles such as the Richardson Romanesque, Queen Anne and Gothic Revival were based primarily on the notion of the picturesque, and captured an emotional and often rather complex architectural aesthetic to architecture in this period. The regularity and order of classical architecture can be considered a response.

where President McKinley was assassinated. Other buildings include the Art Nouveau-styled Ansonia Building (1905, contributing to the certified Theater Historic District) and Calumet Building (1906) in Buffalo, Lafayette High School (1901, NR 1980), the elegant General Electric Tower (1912, NR 2008), the Niagara Hotel in Niagara Falls, NY (1923, NR 2008), and the daylight factory the M. Wile and Company Building (1924, NR 2000). In addition, the firm designed numerous residences for prominent local clients and other buildings throughout Western New York.

In 1903 according to a building permit, Oliver J. Beyer hired the firm, fresh from their success at the Pan-American Exposition, to design the new Baldwin Building at 109 Genesee Street. During this same period other projects in Buffalo included many which featured a classical-derived ornamental design program. Notable projects going on include the construction of the Beaux-Arts Classical Charles W. Goodyear House at 888 Delaware (Green & Wicks, 1902), the Renaissance Revival Lafayette High School (Esenwein and Johnson, 1901-03, NR 1980), and Green & Wicks' temple fronted Highland Lodge #835 / Central Presbyterian Church Community Center at 2456 Main Street (1904-05). Perhaps also, given the strong German ethnic background of the local community (refer to the next section), the German-native August Esenwein was commissioned. Having one of Buffalo's most prominent architectural firms design a relatively small building on Genesee Street reflects the neighborhood's prominence in the early 1900s. This was a building which was highly visible to the throngs of market shoppers, and only an elegant and stylish building- no matter the size- would suit the high-profile commercial location, it would appear.

Esenwein and Johnson were among the elite architectural offices in Western New York at the turn of the twentieth-century, and had many reputable projects to their name. Esenwein died in 1926 after a year-long illness, and Johnson continued the firm, partnering with Frank B. Kelly. After Johnson's death in 1939, Kelly finally dissolved the company in 1942.

The Genesee-Ellicott-Oak Neighborhood

The Genesee-Ellicott-Oak neighborhood has its origins as a rural area which was located on the north-eastern fringe of the Buffalo settlement areas. The first landowner in the area was Major Andre Andrews. Born in Cornwall, Connecticut on July 8, 1792 and trained as a lawyer, Major Andrews relocated to Buffalo in 1820 at a time when the city was rapidly growing, where his likely business was investing and dealing in real estate. His arrival was well timed; Major Andrews arrived in Buffalo only about 16 years after Joseph Ellicott formally laid out the city streets. He arrived at a time when Buffalo was quickly emerging as both a commercial and economic powerhouse following the heated battle and ultimate victory over the neighboring community of Black Rock for the western terminus of the Erie Canal, and the subsequent construction of the canal between 1817 and 1825. Major Andrews' first known land purchases were lots 202 and 203 from the Holland Land Company at the intersection of Genesee and Huron Streets (site of the current General Electric Tower) made in 1821, where he constructed his residence. He also purchased lots 120 to 132 totaling 79 acres at the edge of the growing village of

Buffalo, including lots 131 and 132, in the area known as the “Outer Lots,” which would develop into the site of the Genesee Gateway buildings (image 13). While Genesee Street was a primary road leading east at the time, the lack of any other notable intersecting roads indicates that this area was largely unsettled field and farmland during the early 1820s.² Andrews likely realized the potential for dividing and selling this land in the future, as the growth of Buffalo pushed into this area. Major Andrews became a significant figure in early Buffalo history and was active as a lawyer in addition to his real estate dealings. In 1824 he served as a Presidential elector (one of the popularly elected representatives, or electors, who formally elect the President and Vice President of the United States), and in 1826 began his term as a Trustee for the Village of Buffalo. In 1833, Major Andrews was elected as Buffalo’s second mayor, serving a one year term in office. Major Andre Andrews died in Buffalo on August 18, 1834 after a bout of cholera, and is thought to be buried in Forrest Lawn Cemetery.³

As the settlement in Buffalo continued to increase and expand in the wake of the burning of Buffalo in 1813 during the War of 1812, the developing Genesee-Ellicott-Oak neighborhood began to be settled by primarily German immigrants. While initial German settlers came to Buffalo via Pennsylvania, by the 1820s many Germans became arriving directly from Germany and German regions of France in greater numbers. Aided and encouraged by the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, by 1828 the wide-spread settlement of Germans in Buffalo began. On June 19, 1826 Genesee Street was declared a public highway, marking increasing settlement and growth along this corridor.⁴ As a major route in and out of the village, Genesee Street would have been a natural location for commercial development to occur as it was more highly traveled and visible. It was a midway point between the rural farmland further east and the rapidly growing Buffalo population and this area became a natural location for the transfer of farm produced goods to the growing consumer base. An 1828 map of the Village of Buffalo reflects that the Genesee-Ellicott-Oak neighborhood, while still being located on the north-east fringe of Buffalo, had notable settlement (image 14). Early settlement of Germans was located primarily along Broadway and on Genesee Street, occupying these peripheral regions. In the 1830s and 1840s, nearly one-third of Buffalo’s population was German, becoming a politically, culturally and socially significant group.⁵

By the 1850s, people of German ancestry numbered about 15,000 of the approximately 42,000 total residents in the City of Buffalo. During this period, there began to emerge from the uniformly working-class German population in Buffalo a rising group of merchants who had seemingly become successful and wealthy rather

² On August 18, 1821 Genesee Street (or Busti Avenue at the time) was recorded as being 99 feet wide to Oak Street at the edge of the current Genesee-Ellicott-Oak neighborhood, then narrowing to 66 feet to the village line which was at about Locust Street to the east. This change in street width is a good indication of where the settled village area ended and the rural, unpopulated areas began. Bureau of Engineering. *Index of Records of Streets, Public Grounds, Waterways, Railroads, Gas Companies, Waterworks etc. of the City of Buffalo from 1814-1896*. Buffalo: Wenborne Sumner Company, 1896: 285.

³ Rizzo, Michael. *Through The Mayor's Eyes: The Only Complete History of the Mayors of Buffalo*. Buffalo: People's History Union, 2001.

⁴ *Index of Records of Streets*, 286.

⁵ James, Isabel Vaughan. *Some Outstanding Germans in Buffalo*. Manuscript, BECHS.

suddenly. This rising class of German businessmen had largely remained in their homeland until they had received an education and had learned a trade, arriving in Buffalo as highly skilled and intelligent workers. Many German immigrants brought their skills as butchers, bakers, millers, brewers, blacksmiths, tanners and grocers to the growing city and were able to forge successful and profitable businesses located in the heart of their ethnic neighborhoods, including along Genesee Street.⁶

It is in this climate that the growth and character of the Genesee-Ellicott-Oak neighborhood developed by the 1840s into a self-sufficient commercial and residential center for many German immigrants. Spurred by the multitude of skilled tradesmen, retailers and producers coupled with the increasing needs of local residents, this neighborhood was a logical location for a public market. In 1856 the Washington Market (also sometimes called the Chippewa Market) was established, located on the city block between Ellicott and Washington Streets at Chippewa Street just south of St. Michael's Church (original 1851, present building 1867).⁷ The market cleared what had been a sparsely-settled block which had contained a few assorted frame structures as well as the one-story Greek Revival-style Public School 13 (1838), which was subsequently relocated about a block south on Oak Street (1891-1915, NR 2005).⁸ This neighborhood over the span of two decades transformed from Major Andrews' greenfields to the pre-Civil War era "suburb" of lightly populated settlement into a post-Civil War commercial center for the expanding metropolitan zone of Buffalo. The large market, which covered over 2.5 acres, was known as the largest market west of the Hudson River.

The Genesee-Ellicott-Oak neighborhood became a more thriving commercial district based largely on its proximity to the Washington Market. The market was a significant center for life in Buffalo. Owned and operated by the City, it featured hundreds of vendors, selling a wide variety of produce, meats, cheeses, flowers and other products, most produced by the skilled local German community (image 7, 8, 9). The centerpiece of the market was a large brick Romanesque Revival market building which housed the stalls for dozens of Buffalo's finest butchers. Against the exterior walls of the building were housed stalls for poultry, butter, cheese, fruits and vegetable vendors, and stalls for merchants of crockery, tins, knit products, and other assorted products were arranged around the block. Overall, the market was a center of activity, noise and socializing, especially on the primary market days of

⁶ German families in the buildings at 113-125 Genesee Street include the Urbans, the Datts, the Wagner family, and the Korn family, who were all among the early founders of businesses in this neighborhood. Goldman, Mark. *High hopes: the rise and decline of Buffalo*, New York. Albany: State University of New York, 1983: 76-77.

⁷ St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church was founded in 1851 following a schism in the nearby St. Louis RC Church. Rev. Lucas Caveg and 19 other German-speaking families splintered from that church to form St. Michael's, constructing a small wood-frame church on the church's present site on Washington Street near Chippewa Street. Soon after, the parish founded a grammar school to educate the children of the local German community. Records indicate that the present church building was constructed in 1867, and in 1870 the parish established Canisius College, a Jesuit institution, to the north of the church. The college would relocate to its present location on Main Street in 1910. Following a devastating fire resulting from being struck by a lightning bolt in 1962, the parish rebuilt the building utilizing the remaining exterior shell, reconstructing the church's signature domed tower. Refer to Condren, Dave. "St. Michael's Church, Jesuits' original base in area, to mark 150th year with Mass." *Buffalo News*. 29 Sep 2001, A-7.

⁸ Refer to the State and National Register of historic Places nomination for School 13 (03NR05199), section 8, page 1.

Tuesdays, Thursdays and especially Saturdays, when the market was so crowded that moving around the more than 400 stalls was especially difficult.

Because of the significance of the Washington Market as a center for trade, commerce and business, buildings in close proximity to the retail area also reflect the commercial character of the market. A majority of the buildings constructed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries adjacent to the Washington Market along Ellicott, Genesee and Washington Streets were commercial buildings. One of the most notable buildings in this area is the Market Arcade Building (1892 by E.B. Green) which is a Beaux-Arts Classical style arcaded indoor commercial building which connected Main Street to the west with Washington Street and the Washington Market to the East. This neighborhood also featured streets which were lined by commercial buildings dating from the 1850s to the early twentieth-century, typically featuring additional commercial vendors. Businesses in the immediate Washington Market area include the McClure Bloesser & Eggert Boot and Shoe Factory, P. Messner's Chair Factory, and several saloons and boarding houses on Ellicott Street. In the same area were also located George Urban, Jr.'s Urban Roller Mills (founded in 1881) and his father's retail flour shop on Oak Street. Genesee Street was also lined with commercial buildings and included businesses such as Frank Pfennig, retailer of tobacco products at 95 Genesee Street, cutler Gabriel Giesser at 99 Genesee Street and Henry Urban who ran a successful grocery store located at 123 Genesee Street for many decades. Because of the attraction of the Washington Market, this neighborhood around Genesee, Ellicott and Oak Streets was one of Buffalo's thriving commercial and retail centers throughout the nineteenth- and early-twentieth centuries.

By the late nineteenth-century, the stretch of Genesee Street between Ellicott and Oak Streets became one of the most recognizable centers for photography in Buffalo. While Main Street had served as Buffalo's earliest hub of photography studios, and remained as such throughout the nineteenth-century, by the late nineteenth-century new buildings constructed along Genesee Street, with primary north-facing facades, were ideally situated for photography studios. The Caulkins Building at 85-87-89 Genesee Street was the earliest constructed in 1886 by master architect, F.W. Caulkins. Combining both utility and function with artistic design, the Caulkins Building's most identifiable feature was the convex "waterfall" skylight at the center of the building which brought additional north light into the upper studio spaces. In 1895 Mrs. Frederike Giesser commissioned Richard A. Waite, one of Buffalo's preeminent architects, to design the elegant Werner Photography Building at 101-103 Genesee Street. Like the Caulkins Building, the Werner Building's signature feature is its expansive curving skylight. No other buildings like these are known to have been constructed elsewhere in Buffalo, and these buildings are the only known currently existing examples of specialized, high-style photography studio in the City of Buffalo. Not only was the neighborhood associated with the thriving market and commercial activity of the day, but it also can be identified as Buffalo's most elegant and sophisticated centers of late-nineteenth-century photography.

Over the past few decades, this neighborhood has declined due to several factors. When the New York State Thruway opened in 1959, many traditional commercial

neighborhoods in Buffalo saw the migration of stores and retailers following the population growth to the suburban regions. The opening of the Kensington Expressway (Route 33) in the 1960s which connected downtown Buffalo to the eastern suburbs also served to channel both residents and businesses out of the crowded urban core. The Genesee-Ellicott-Oak neighborhood suffered greatly both economically and culturally as a result of these new highways and with the opening of the Elm-Oak arterial of the Kensington Expressway in 1967/68. The neighborhood saw a dramatic loss of commercial tenants as a result of this trend, and the Washington Market itself closed in 1965, after several failed attempts to boost business and the construction of new, modern market buildings, as business dwindled (image 10, 11).⁹ It was also generally an age which saw the transformation of commercialism, with the separation of manufacturing, sales and corporate headquarters to separate facilities. St. Michael's RC Church, one of the centerpoints of the traditionally German community, blames the "death" of the church directly on the construction of the neighboring Elm-Oak arterial, charging it with the removal of hundreds of houses, and therefore parishioners, from the church neighborhood.¹⁰ During the 1960s and 1970s, this area faced the Urban Renewal wrecking ball, and numerous historic buildings were demolished to make way for "shovel-ready" parking lots which dot this area of the city. The Washington Market itself was razed in 1965 shortly after it closed and now is a large parking area (image 12). As a result of demolitions and the construction of the Elm-Oak arterial, the blocks along the east of the neighborhood at Oak Street have been cleared of all historic fabric, with either vacant lots or new sterile, modern development being constructed. The downturn of commerce in the area as well as the increased vehicular traffic from the Kensington Expressway have also contributed to the general neglect and decay of the architecture of the neighborhood. The buildings along Genesee Street between Ellicott and Oak Streets, along with several key buildings along Ellicott and Oak just to the north on this block, constitute one of Buffalo's last remaining intact nineteenth- and early-twentieth century commercial streetscapes reflecting downtown's prominence when Buffalo was a major American city. Today, this contiguous row of historic commercial buildings marks the point at which the suburban fringe of the city accessed via the highway transforms into Buffalo's Downtown, a region quickly blossoming with new rehabilitation and development. In this capacity, they act as a "gateway" welcoming suburban travelers into Downtown.

In the face of the decline of the neighborhood, the promise of the Genesee-Ellicott-Oak neighborhood envisioned for the past two decades is now taking shape. Despite a somewhat shabby exterior, the buildings along the south side of Genesee Street between Ellicott and Oak Streets have been considered for rehabilitation projects dating back to the 1980s. Willard A. Genrich purchased the collection of buildings, hoping to transform them into "The Next Great Place" as part of a campaign to locate a new convention center in the neighborhood. In a failed attempt to save and transform the buildings at the eastern end of the block, Genrich replaced the existing structural systems with steel framing, attempting to stabilize and reuse the building and to bring their fire resistance to modern standards which unfortunately did not

⁹ "Washington Market to Close July 1, Banas Announces." *Buffalo Evening News*. 11 Jan 1965.

¹⁰ Today, the church has about 200 registered members. Refer to Condren, A-7.

take the “first, do no harm” stance of current rehabilitation practices. Genrich posed concepts of turning the buildings into housing, offices and restaurants, with no success. Jessie Schnell Fisher of Triangle Development purchased the buildings at the western end of the block at 85-87-89 and 91-95 Genesee Street in an attempt to secure the buildings for a misguided attempt at rehabilitation. However before plans could develop and begin, the buildings were damaged in a November 2002 windstorm, halting any work. At that time, Genrich-owned buildings at the eastern end fared no better, ending up in Buffalo Housing Court in 2006 where he was found guilty of three building code violations and fined after the City of Buffalo threatened to take the buildings by eminent domain in 2004 to demolish them.¹¹ The vacant buildings stood as reminders of Buffalo’s once-great commercial heritage as well as symbols of the unsuccessful attempts at rehabilitation; the only potential future for these dead buildings appeared to be demolition, creating more vacant lots or stark, modern low-rise office buildings in the neighborhood.

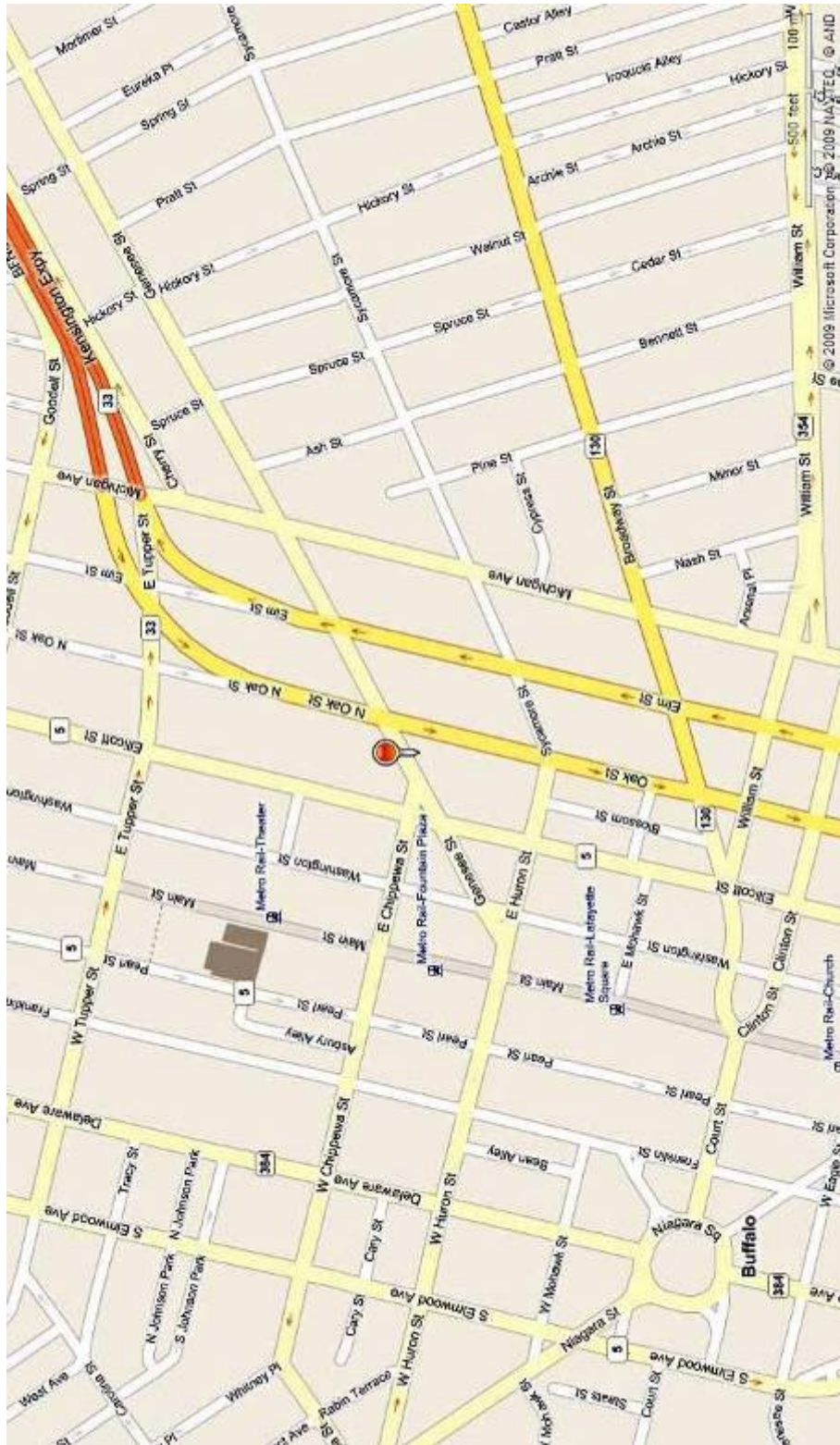
Today, there is one last opportunity for the rehabilitation and revitalization of the once vibrant Genesee-Ellicott-Oak neighborhood. Purchased in 2007 by Genesee Gateway LLC, the collection of nineteenth- and twentieth-century commercial buildings is being developed into a multi-million dollar commercial and office complex which promises to bring new activity and business to the neglected neighborhood. Unlike previous attempts, the new design based on the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards gracefully respects the form, footprints and design of the original historic fabric, while once again transforming the buildings into viable new space which functions for today’s commercial and spatial needs.

The Genesee-Ellicott-Oak neighborhood along Genesee Street and running north on Oak and Ellicott Streets retains numerous significant examples of commercial architecture from a period which spans over 120 years. While this neighborhood features a wide variety of architectural styles from simple, builder-designed utilitarian Italianate examples to elegant architect-designed, highly styled Beaux-Arts examples, the Genesee-Ellicott-Oak area has a period of architectural significance which spans between ca. 1850s and the early 1930s. This period of history for the City of Buffalo reflects dramatic changes in commercial trade and commercial architecture, shifting from small owner-occupied shops built for simple functionality, to larger shops which created ample glitzy showrooms. Several of the buildings, including the Schwinn-Mandel Building and the H. Seeberg Building at 113-125 Genesee Street, also combined manufacturing with the retail shop. The Genesee-Ellicott-Oak neighborhood reflects a significant period of Buffalo’s history, representing the city at the pinnacle of its international prominence. This area reflects a largely intact and contiguous collection of rare, remaining and highly threatened small-scale commercial buildings; buildings which are disappearing rapidly from Buffalo’s urban center.

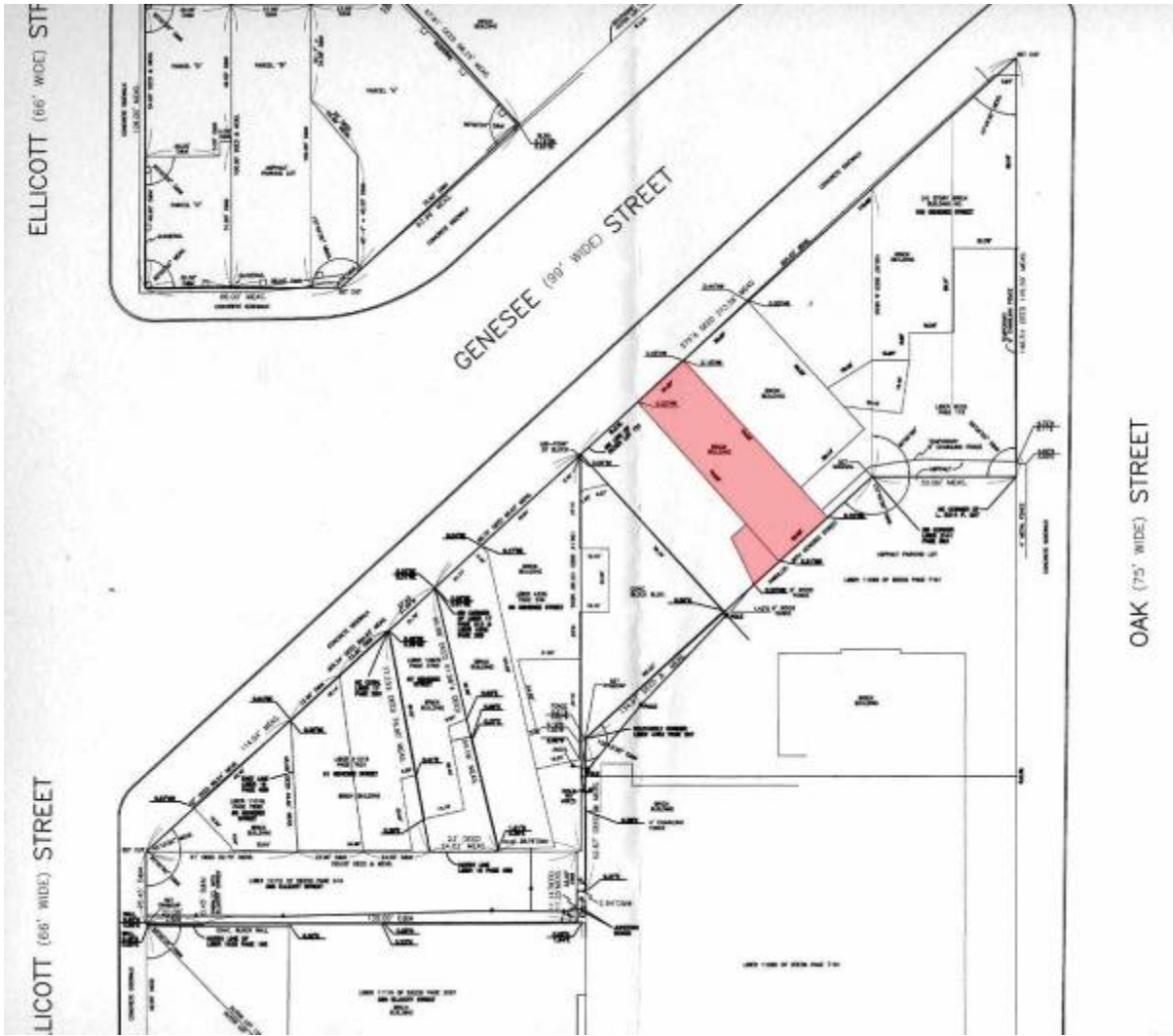
The Baldwin Building at 109 Genesee Street is an excellent largely intact example of the development of commercial architecture within the local Genesee Gateway

¹¹ Linstedt, Sharon. “Historic but vacant Genesee St. strip for sale.” *Buffalo News*. 7 July 2006; D-7. Also Linstedt, Sharon. “Purchase of 99 Genesee confirmed.” *Buffalo News*. 15 Aug 2007; B-2.

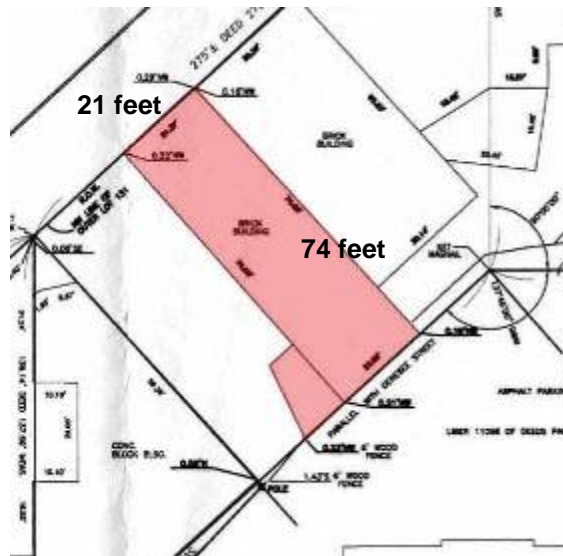
Historic District, and it is an increasingly rare example of early twentieth-century commercial Neoclassic architecture in the City of Buffalo. The Baldwin Building is a contributing building to the local Genesee Gateway Historic District based on Criterion C for its architecture, as an excellent example of commercial architecture and as an example of work by the Esenwein and Johnson firm.



(1) Location of the Baldwin Building, 109 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203



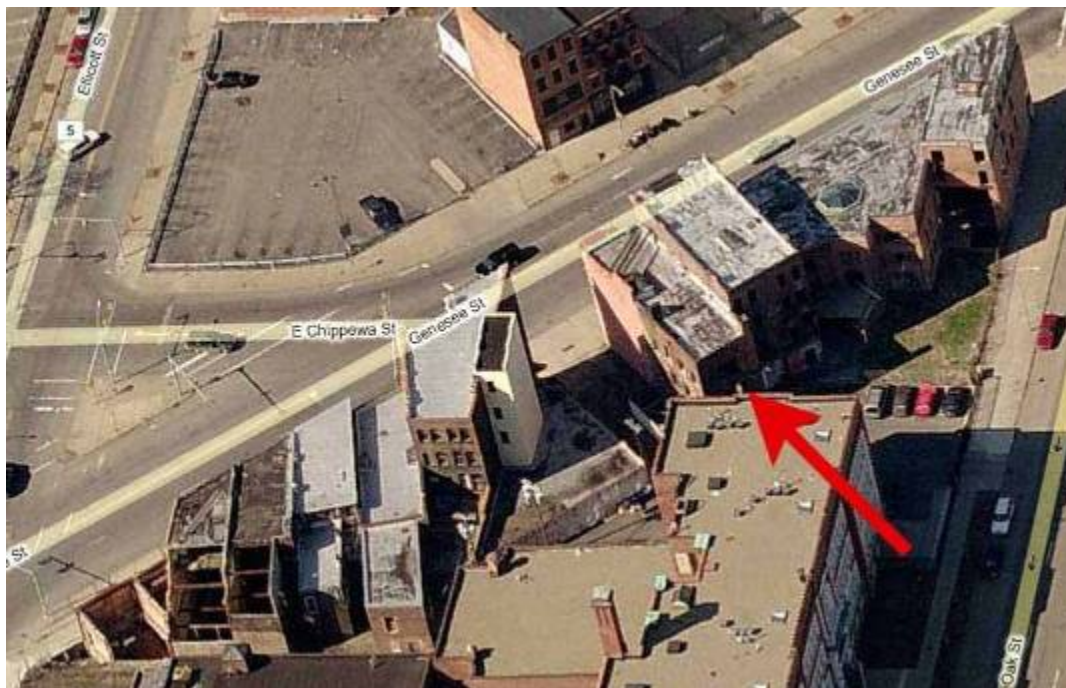
(2) Detail, Survey (2008)
 Showing location and parcel size of The Baldwin Building



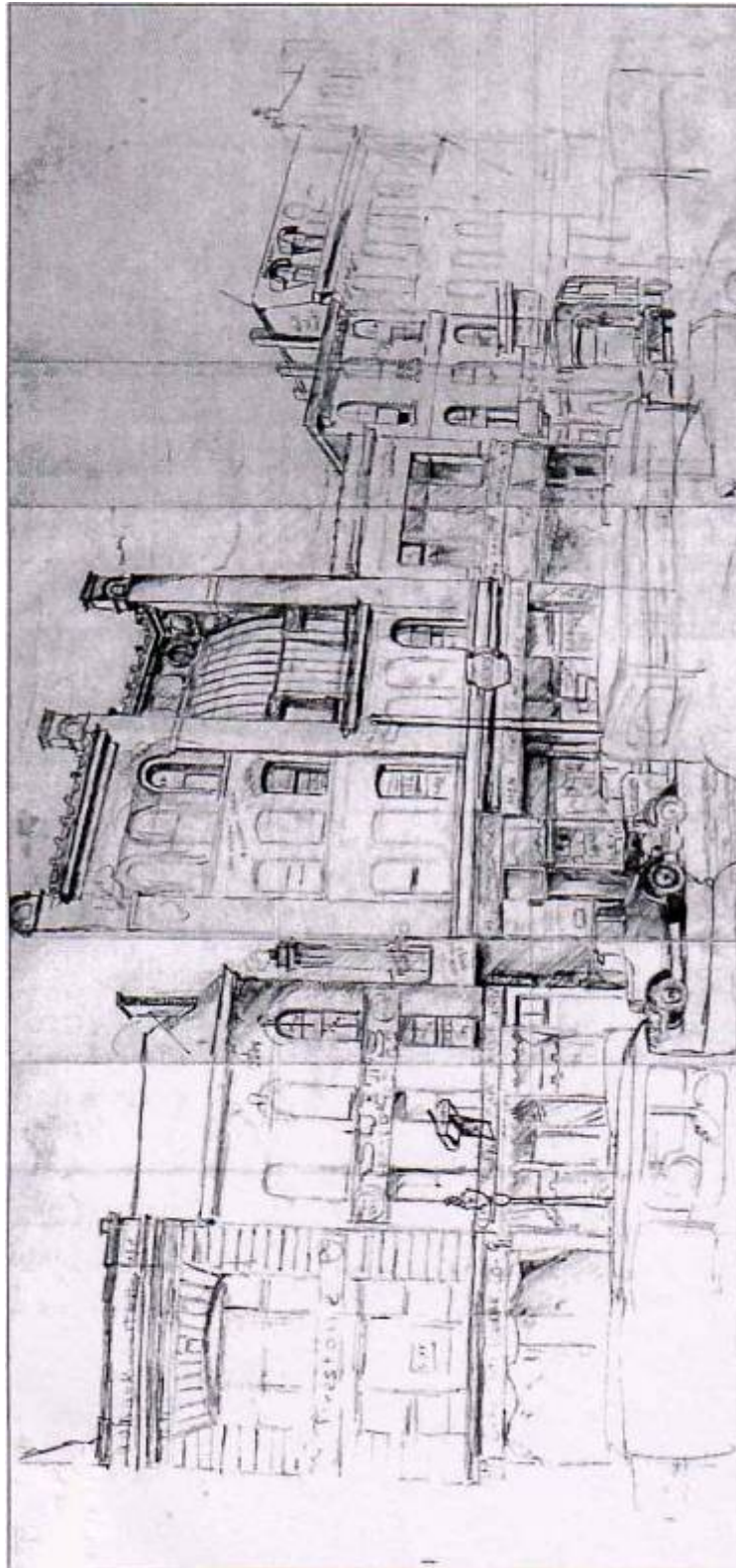


(3) Aerial View, facing south

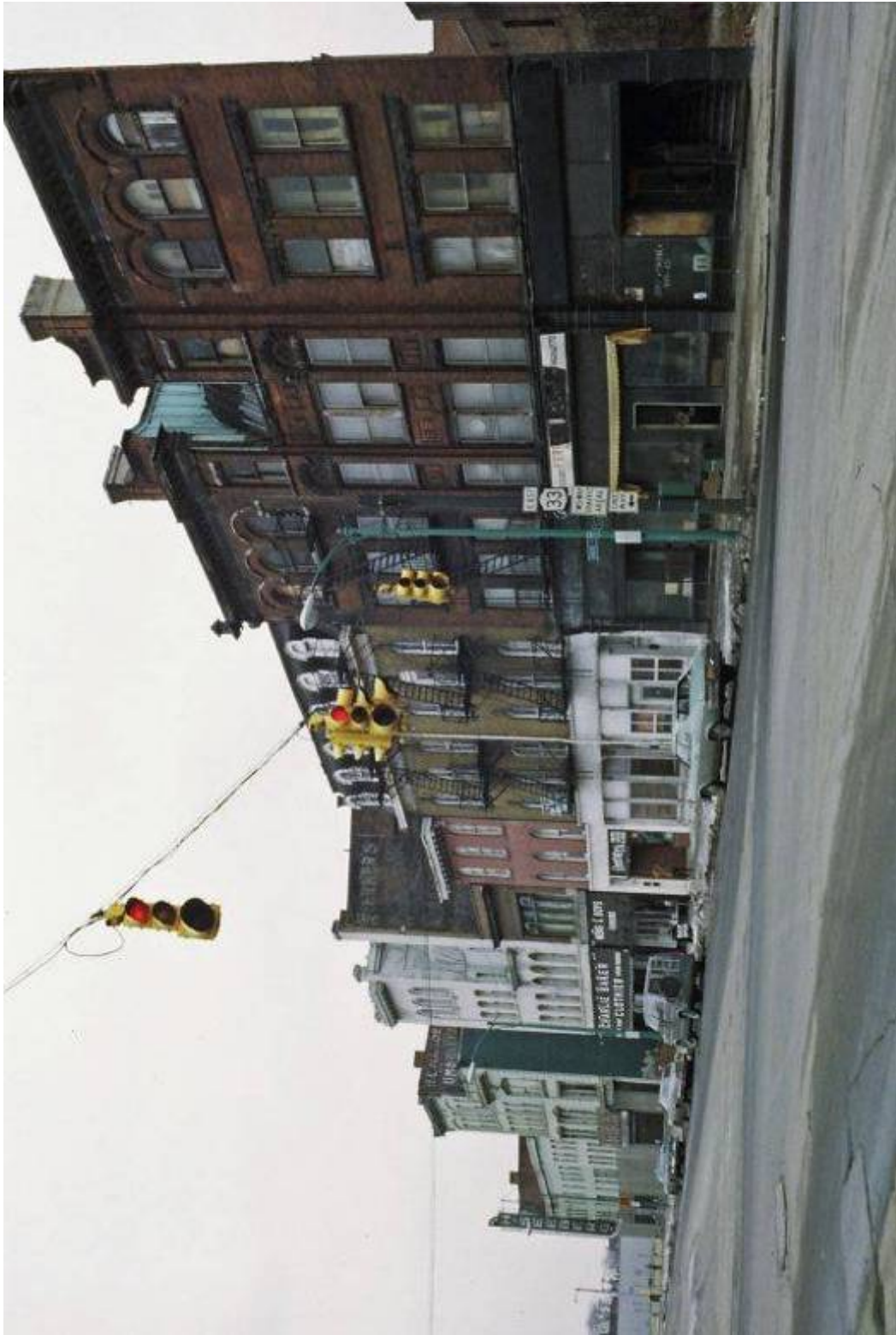
Note the regular, continuous line of the Genesee Gateway facades along the south side of Genesee Street. The Baldwin Building is one of the most regular in mass and form compared to the other more oddly angled buildings.



(4) Aerial view, facing north

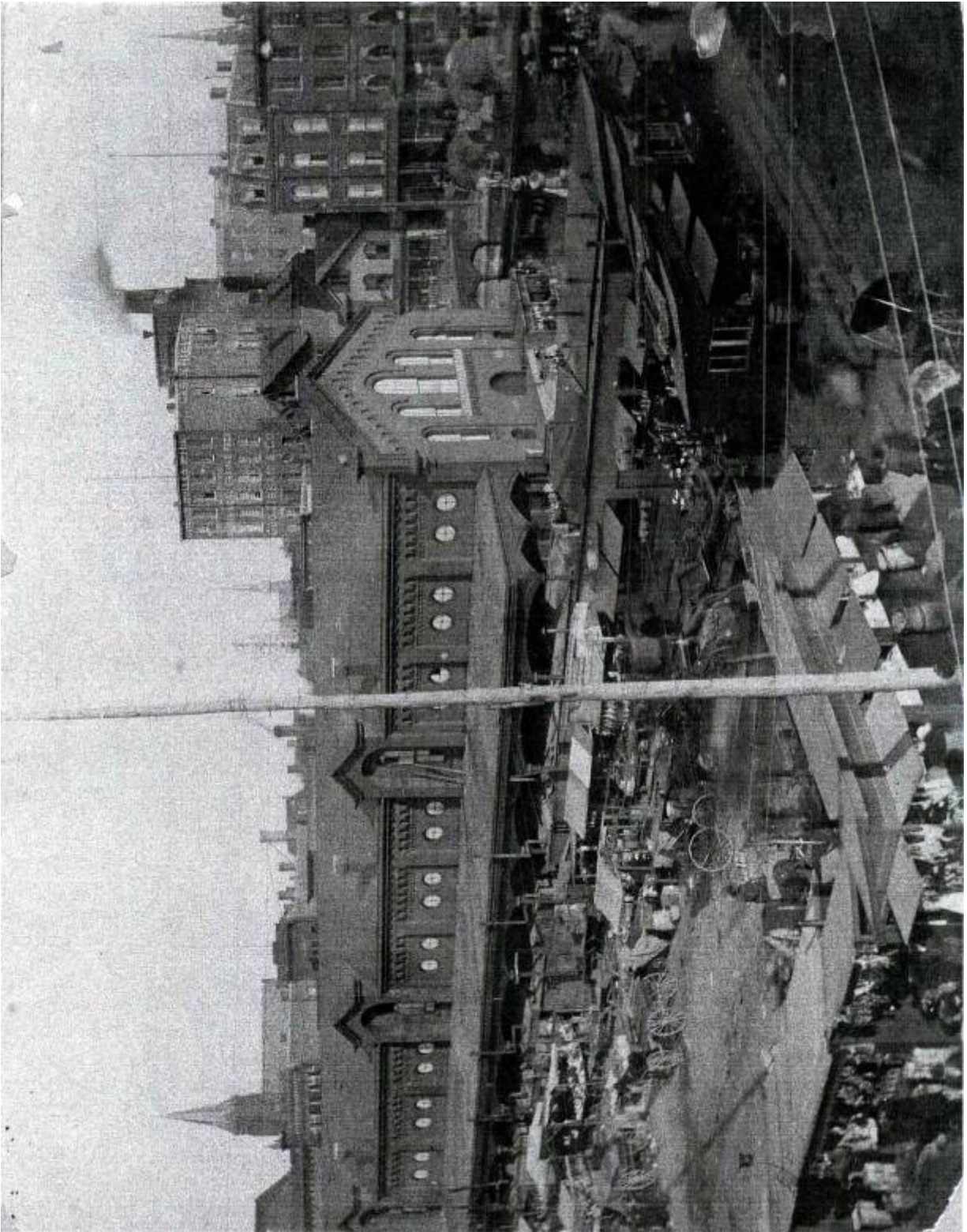


(5) "Study for Street Scene" pencil sketch by Charles Burchfield, 1940
Note the façade of the Baldwin Building is sketched at the left of the drawing. At the time it was likely still used as an automobile garage, featuring the "Firestone" signage across the building's front.

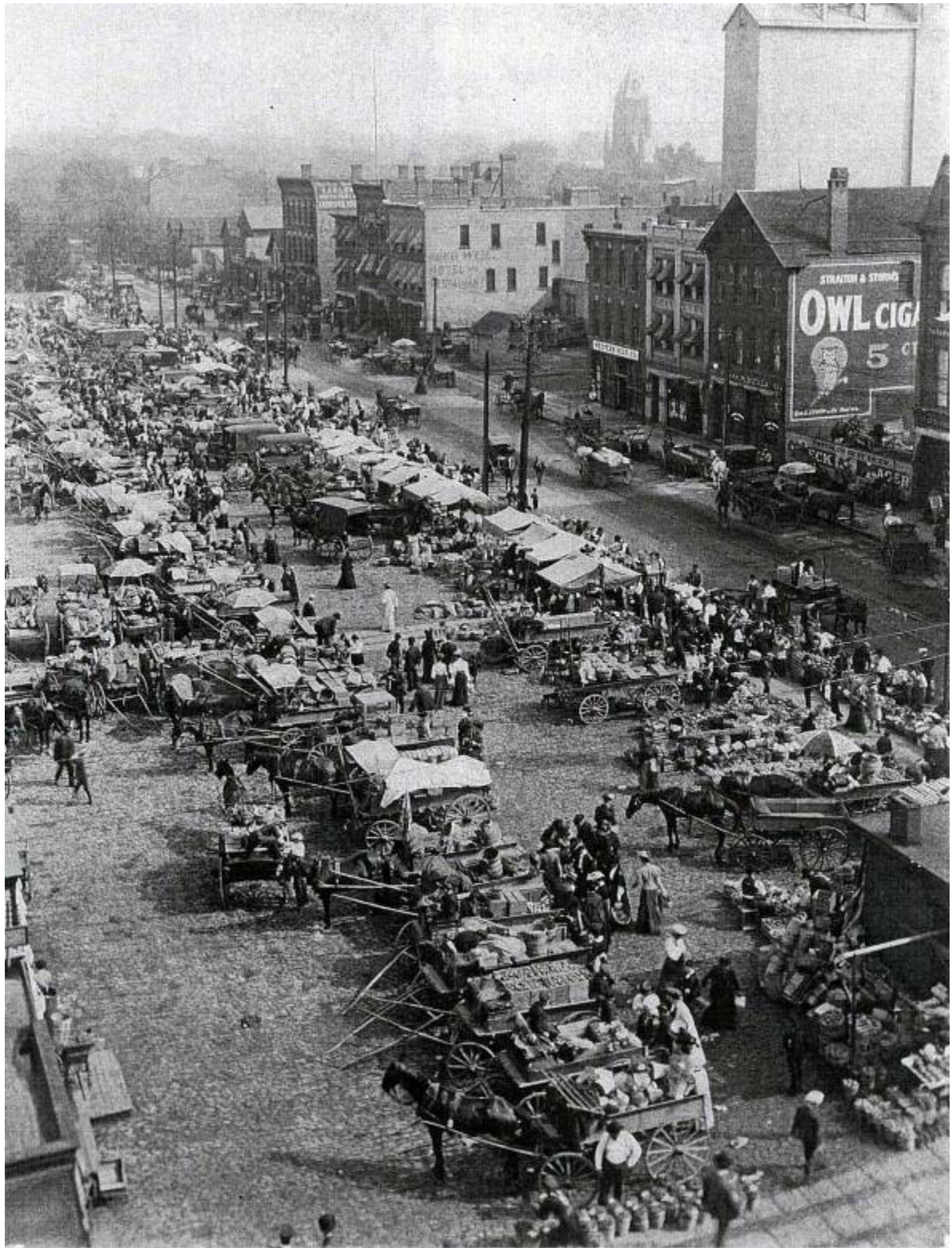


(6) The Genesee Gateway Buildings, ca. 1986

Note the presence of the Caulkins Building and the mansarded Denzinger-Sigwalt Buildings towards the image foreground, which were lost in 2002. The Baldwin Building is located towards the left middle-ground of the row.

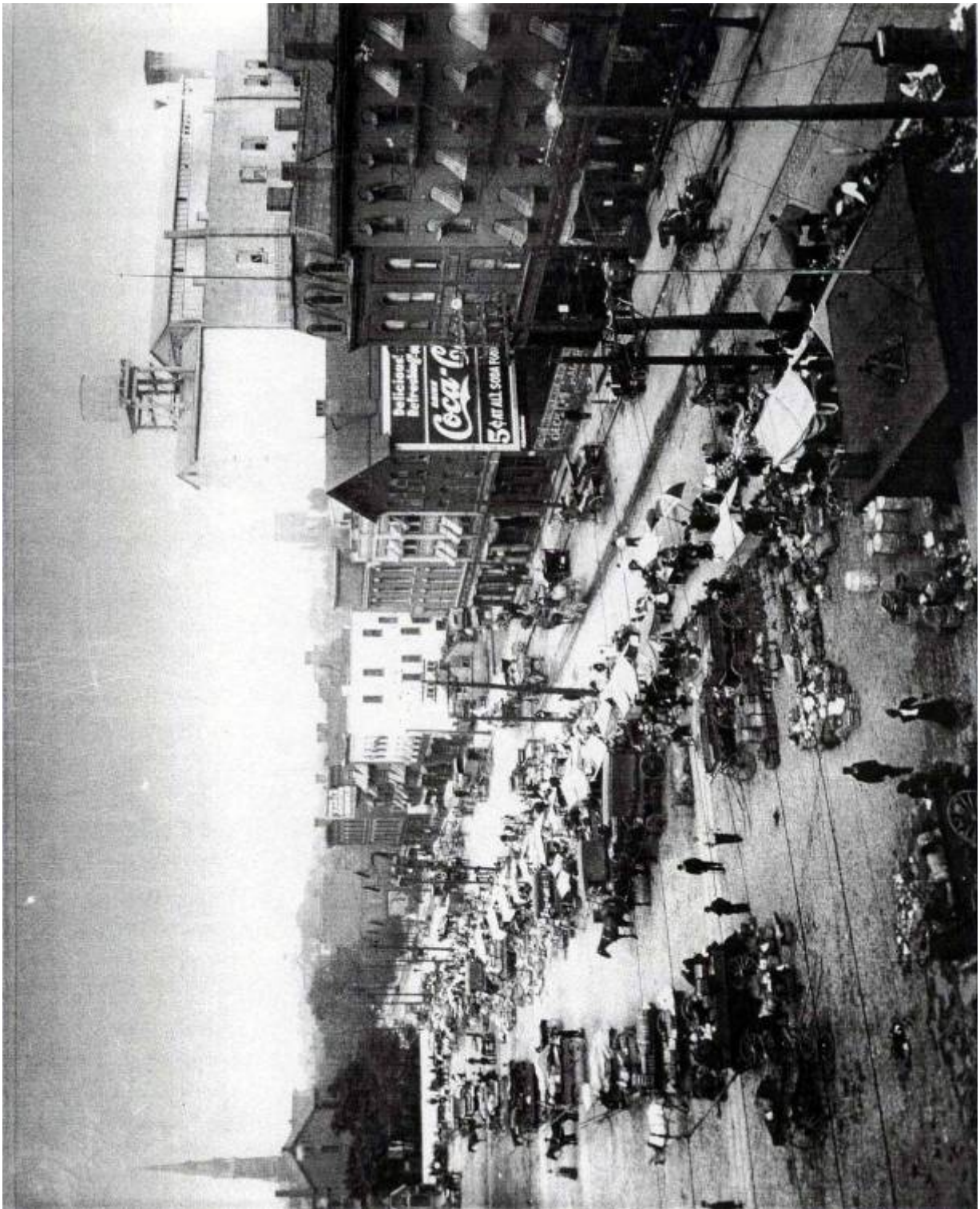


(7) The Washington Market looking east towards Ellicott Street, 1890
Note the growth of other commercial buildings along Ellicott Street which developed as a relationship to the bustling market. The tall structure in the right background behind the market building is the Urban Roller Mills milling building in its original appearance.

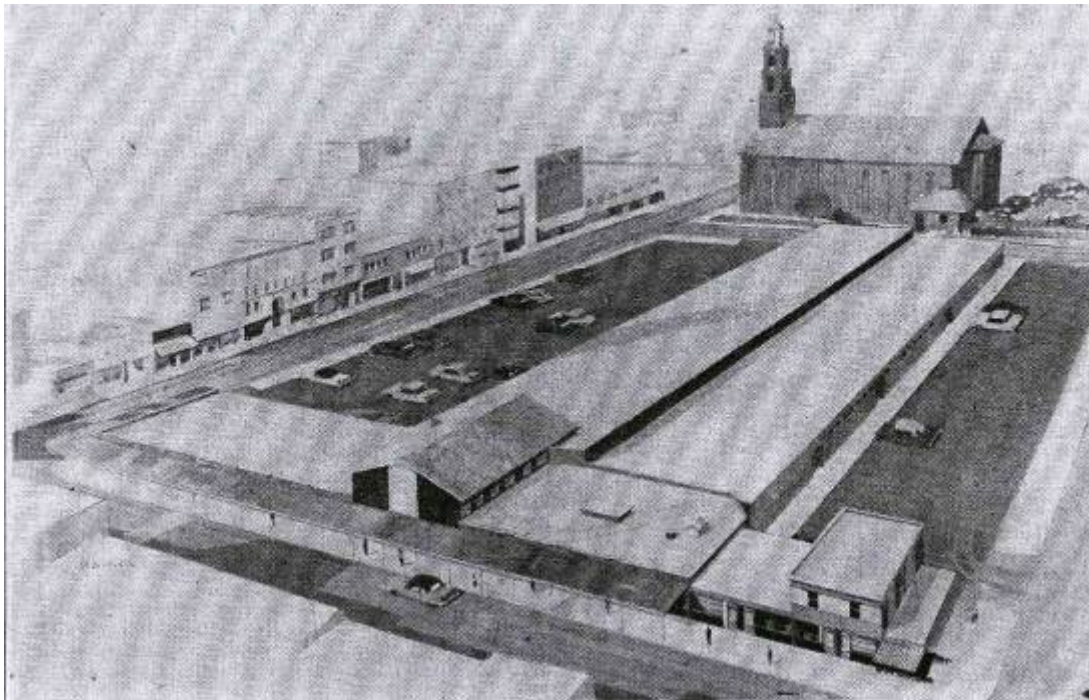


(8) The Washington Market looking north-east along Ellicott Street, 1905

This view on a crowded market day shows the type of commercial neighborhood which had grown up around the Washington Market by the turn of the twentieth-century. The tall structure just visible in the upper right corner of the image is the Urban Roller Mills milling building.



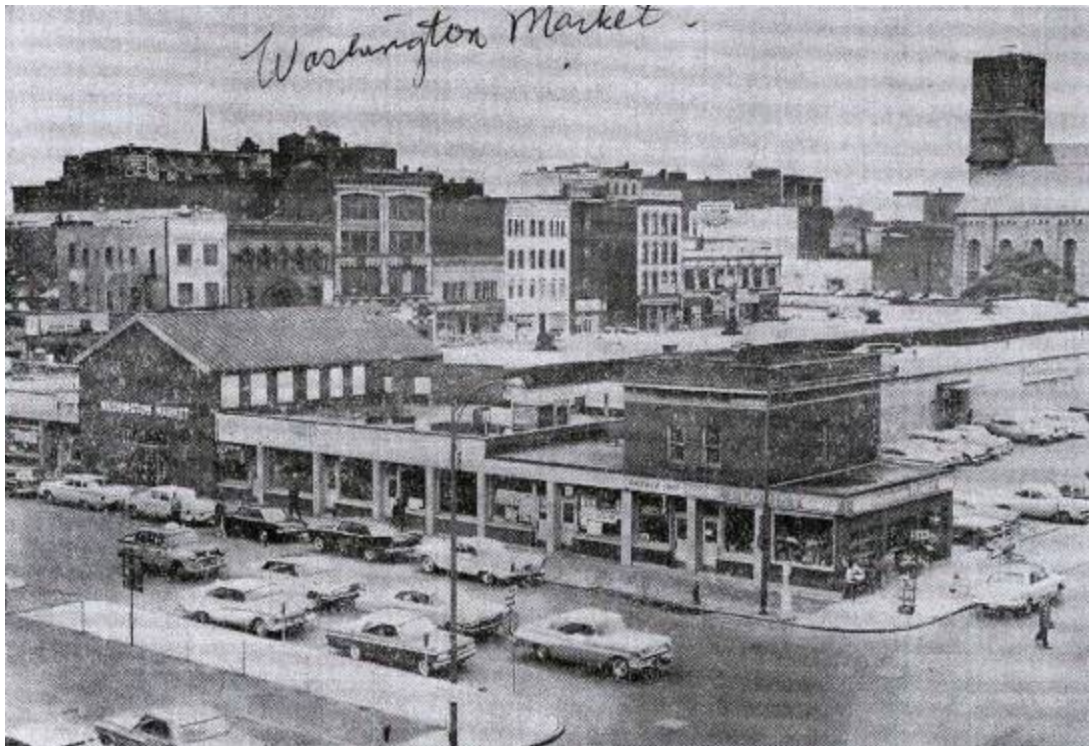
(9) The Washington Market looking north-east along Ellicott Street, 1912
A view of the fine collection of nineteenth- and early-twentieth century commercial architecture which characterized the Genesee-Ellicott-Oak neighborhood at this period.



(10) "Architects Sketch of New \$400,000 Washington Market"

This 1955 drawing done by the architecture firm of Backus, Crane and Love shows the new design for a modern, concrete block market which replaced the brick Romanesque market building.

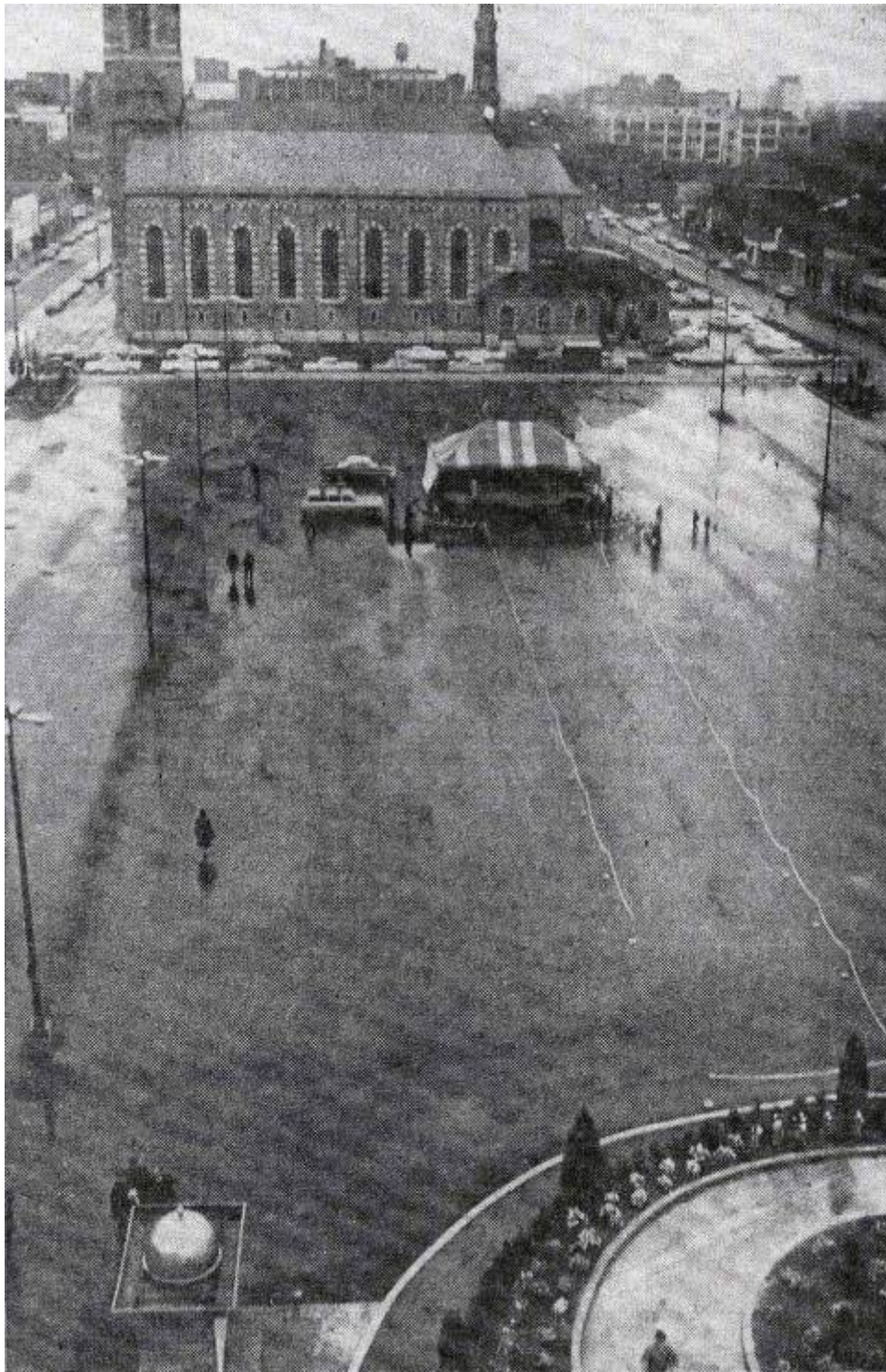
Buffalo Evening News 4 Feb 1955.



(11) The Washington Market in view from Ellicott and Chippewa Streets

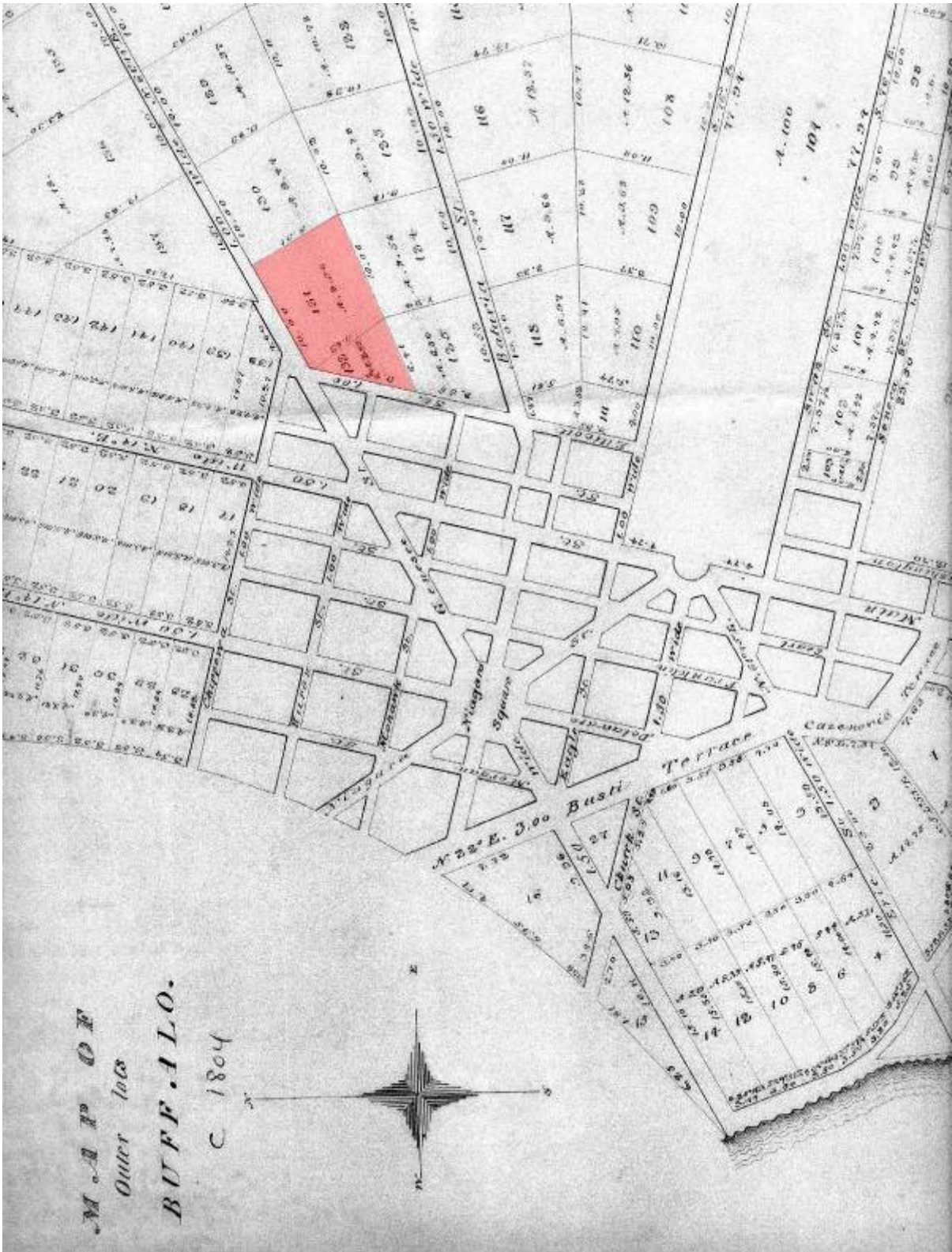
With the neighborhood in decline, and dubbed "a losing proposition with no bright hopes in sight," this 1963 image reflects the appearance of the market during its final days.

Buffalo Courier Express, 22 Sep 1963:1.



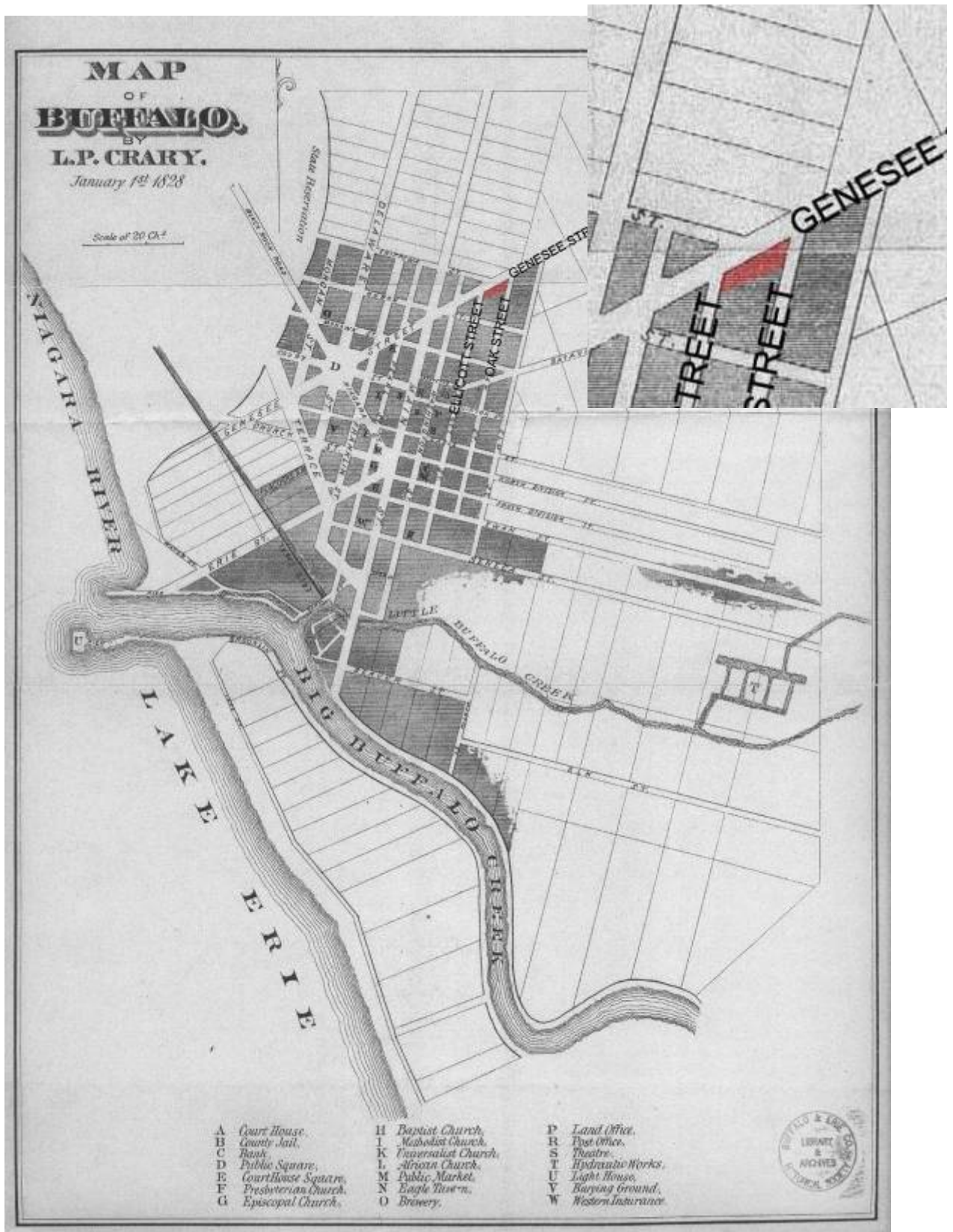
(12) "A New Downtown Parking Lot Opened Today."

This 1965 photograph reflects the ultimate fate that has plagued much of the historic architecture in the Genesee-Ellicott-Oak neighborhood. Here a new surface parking area is opened on the site of the then-recently demolished Washington Market site, marking the end of an era for Buffalo's commercial history. Today this is still a parking lot, and there are no reminders of the once-great market which was once located on this plot. St. Michael's RC Church stands in the center background.



(13) Detail, Map of Buffalo Outer Lots, 1804/05

The red highlight indicates plots 131 and 132, purchased by Major Andre Andrews circa 1821 at the outer edge of Buffalo at the time, and current location of Genesee Gateway buildings. Notice how the road narrows just past the corner of Ellicott and Genesee Street.



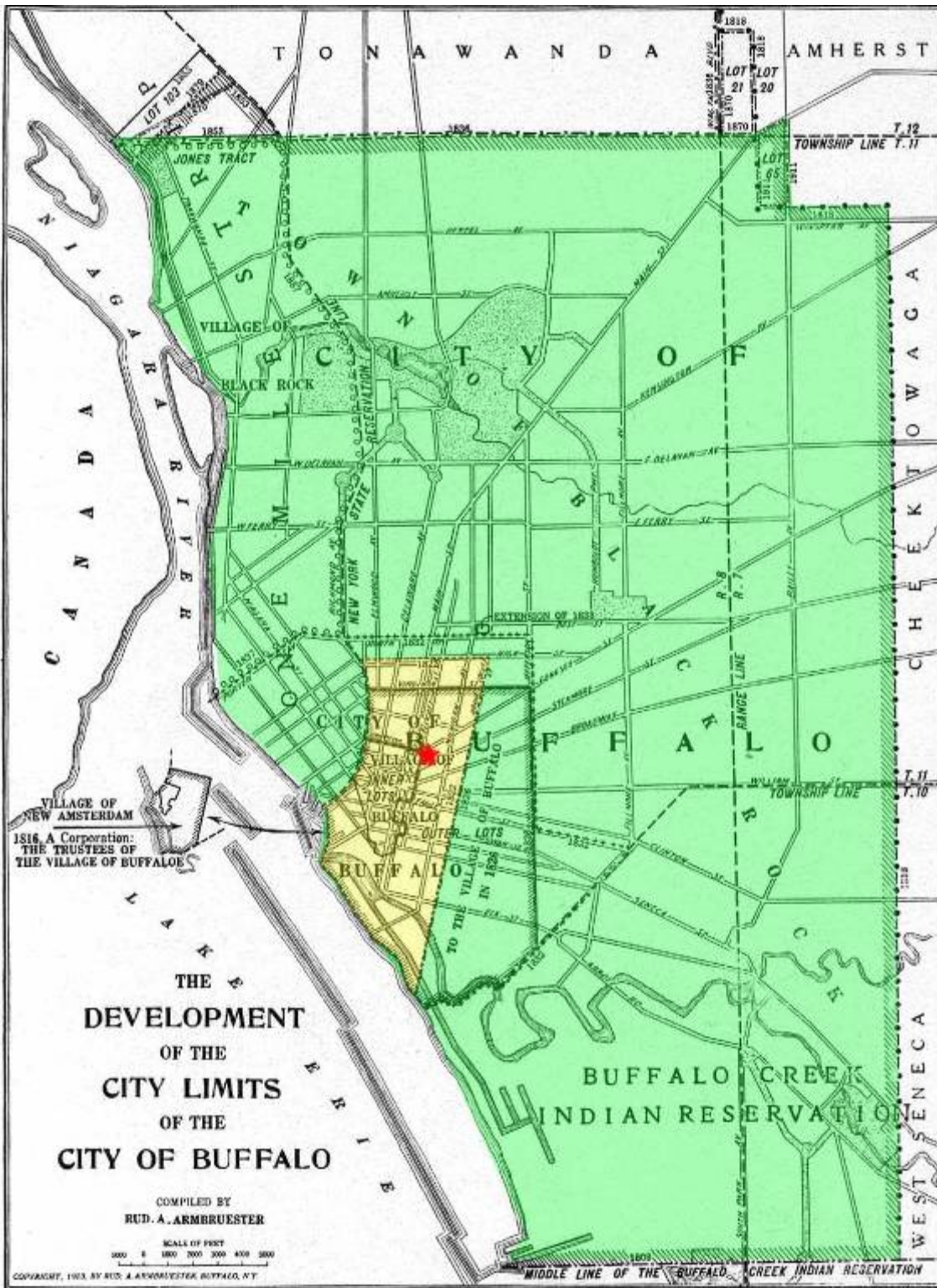
(14) 1828 Map, Village of Buffalo

Inset shows location of Genesee Gateway buildings highlighted in red. Note that buildings developed at the junction of developed areas and the rural fringe.



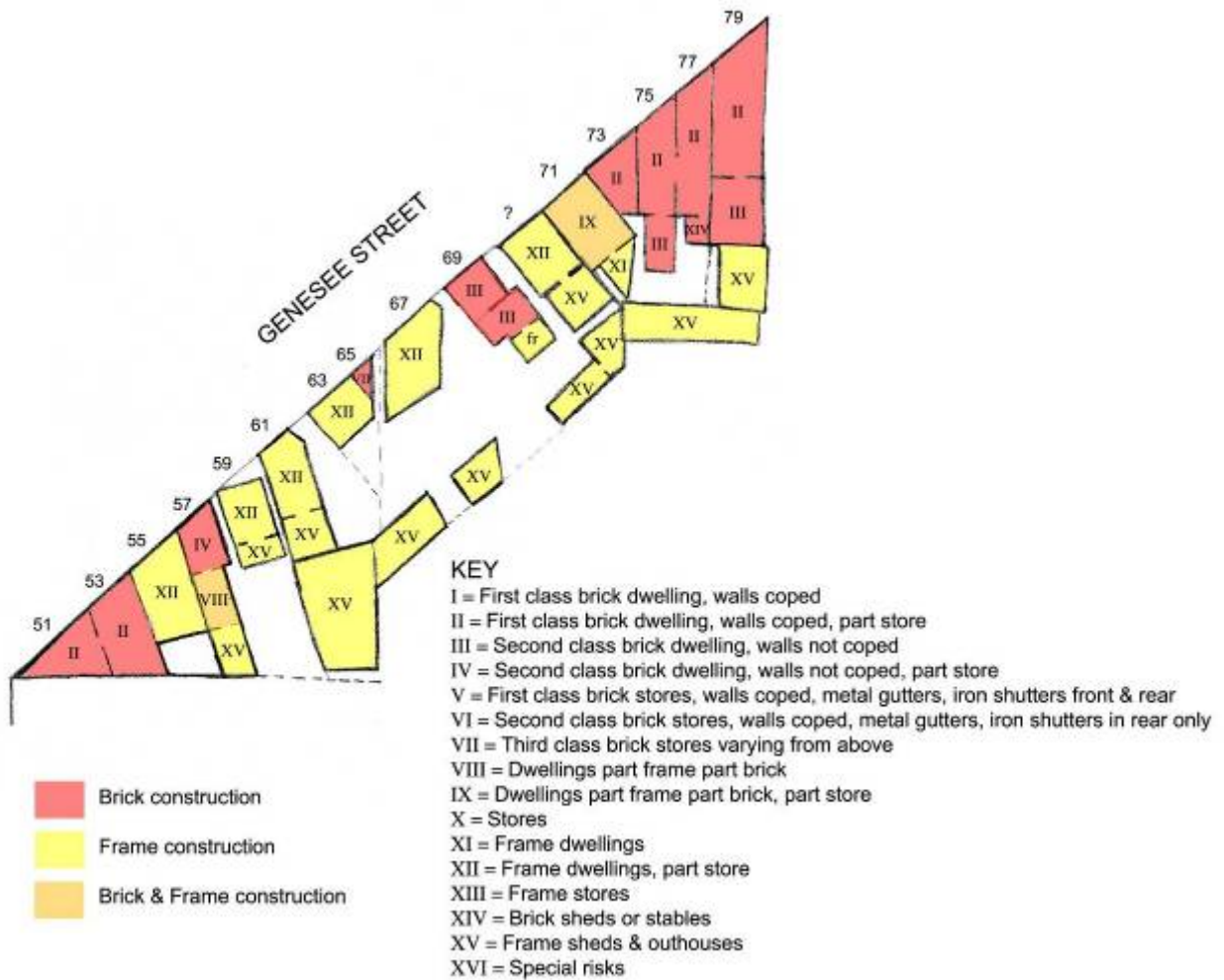
(15) Pocket Map of the City of Buffalo, 1847

Enlarged map detail highlights the Genesee Gateway area as it appeared in the late 1840s. Note what appears to be a small street, called Blossom Street, which bisects the block north to south, possibly the reason why brick buildings aligned in continuous blocks or rows were constructed at the corners of the block and an assortment of oddly shaped frame buildings filled in the center, possibly as later urban development taking over the former right-of-way of the street. This configuration may also account for the configuration of individual lots on this block



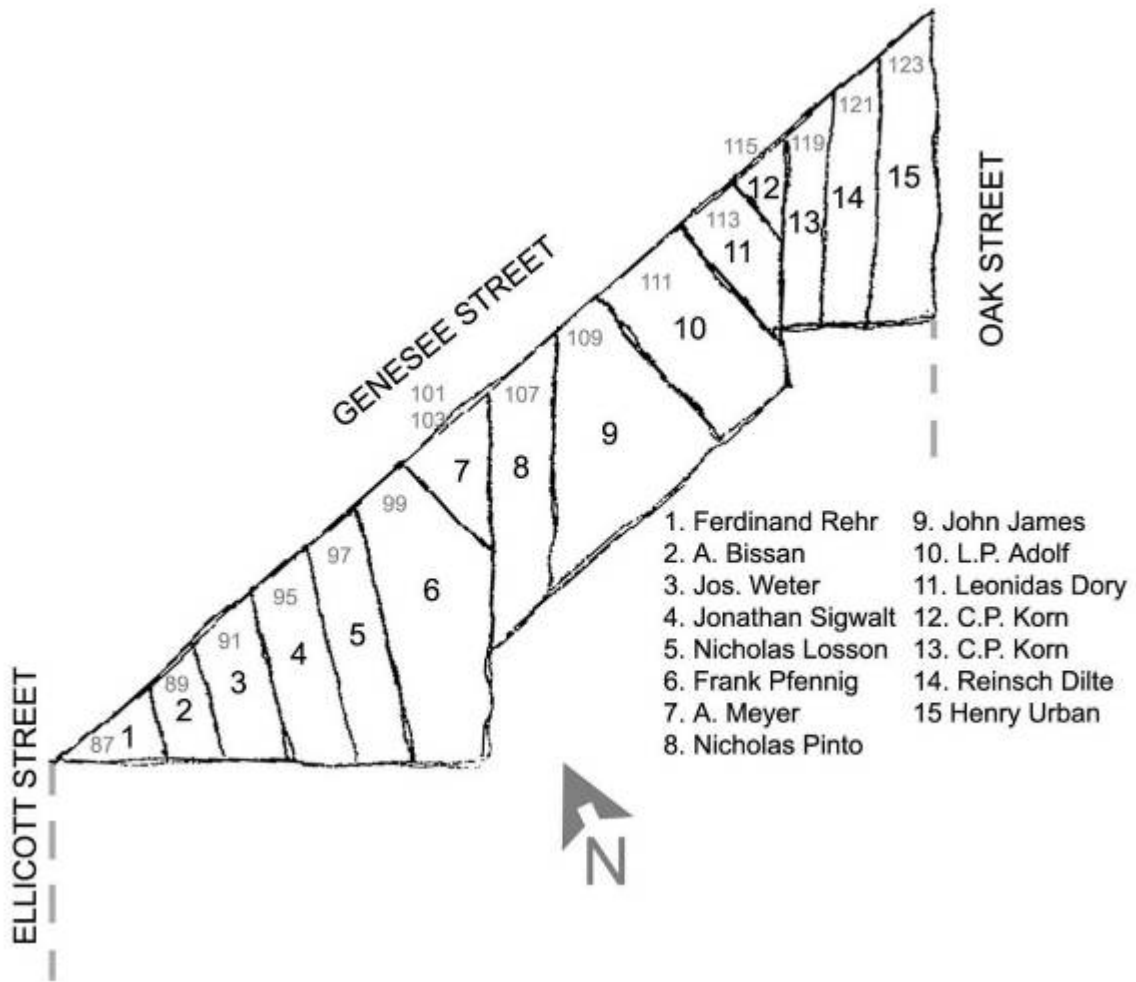
(16) The Development of the City Limits of the City of Buffalo (1923)

Yellow indicates the boundaries of the then Village of Buffalo in 1822 around the time the Genesee-Ellicott-Oak neighborhood was founded. The red star indicates the location of the Genesee Gateway buildings in relation to the overall size of the city at the time; compare to the green 1923 boundaries of the city.



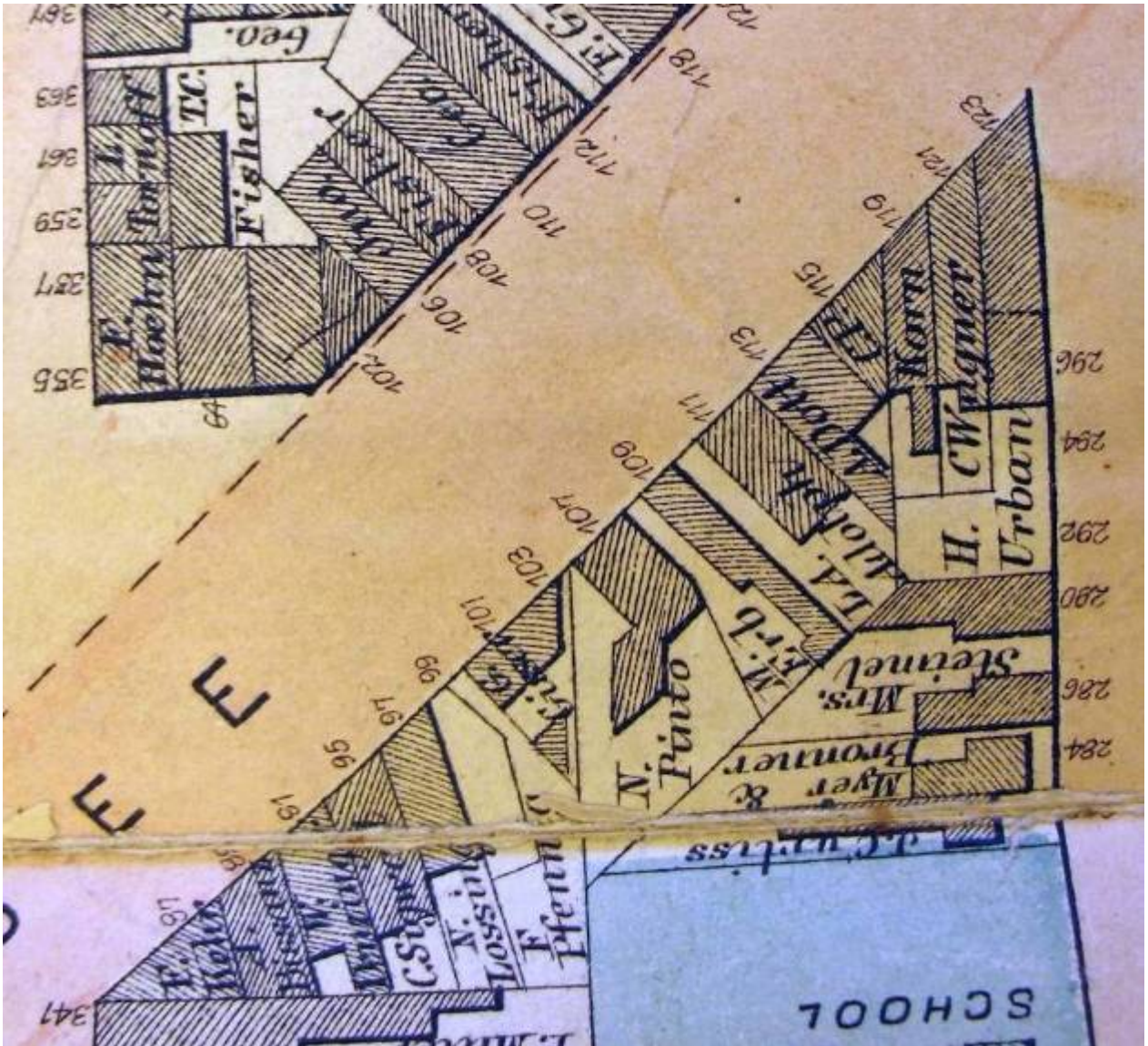
(17) Sketch detail, 1854 Fire Insurance Map of the City of Buffalo

This map represents the earliest record of buildings along Genesee Street. Note that brick construction was used at both corners of the block, but a majority of the building fabric was of frame construction. 109 Genesee Street is approximately labeled as 69 Genesee Street on this map; note the presence of a wood framed store and dwelling at this location.



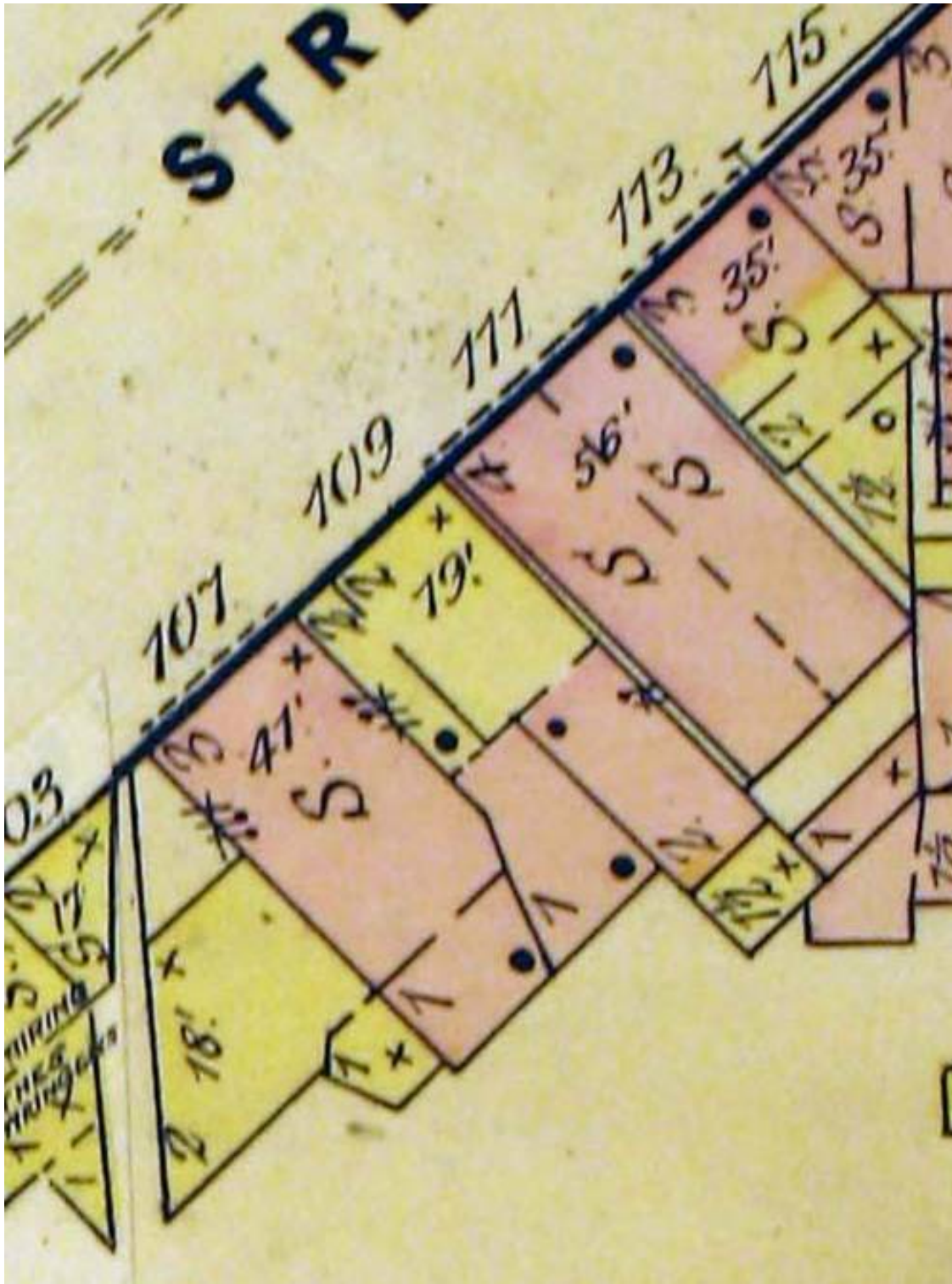
(18) Sketch detail, 1866 Deed Atlas of the City of Buffalo

While this map does not indicate buildings or structures which were constructed, it does list the owners of the various Genesee Gateway parcels. The owner of what is now 109 Genesee Street was listed as John James.



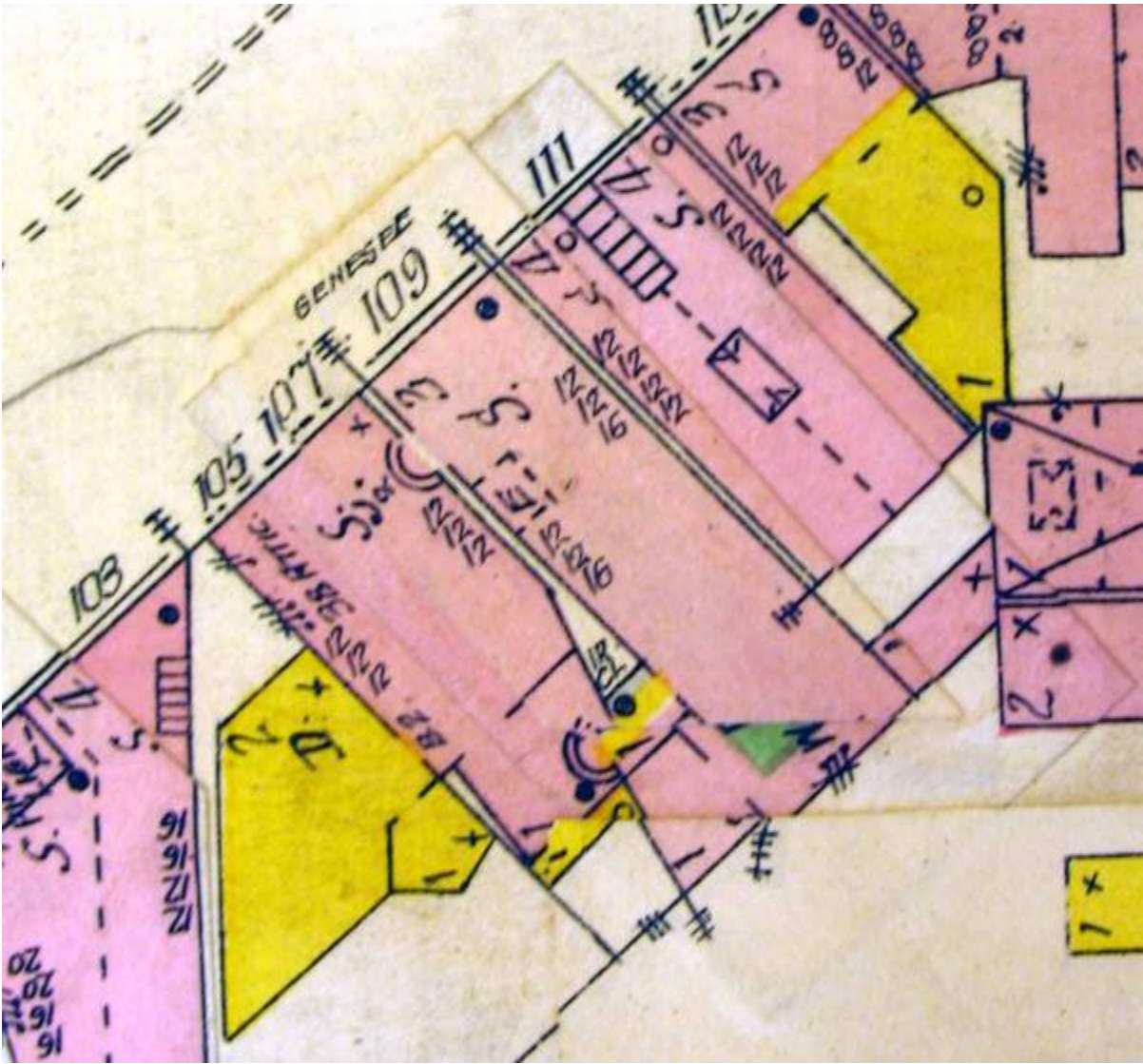
(19) Detail, 1872 Atlas

This map appears to show the earlier ca. 1850s building which once occupied the property- note how the building does not fill its entire parcel and was owned by an "M. Erb" or Marie Erb



(20) Detail, 1881-1888 Sanborn Map

The earliest indication of the interior layout of 109 Genesee Street. The front portion of the 2-story building is of frame construction while the rear is a 2-story brick building which connects with the neighboring 107 Genesee Street



(21) Detail, 1899-1914 Sanborn Map

The present configuration of the Baldwin Building; a single-tenant commercial building with a generally open floor plan.