



ALLENTOWN ASSOCIATION  
40+ Years of Community Service

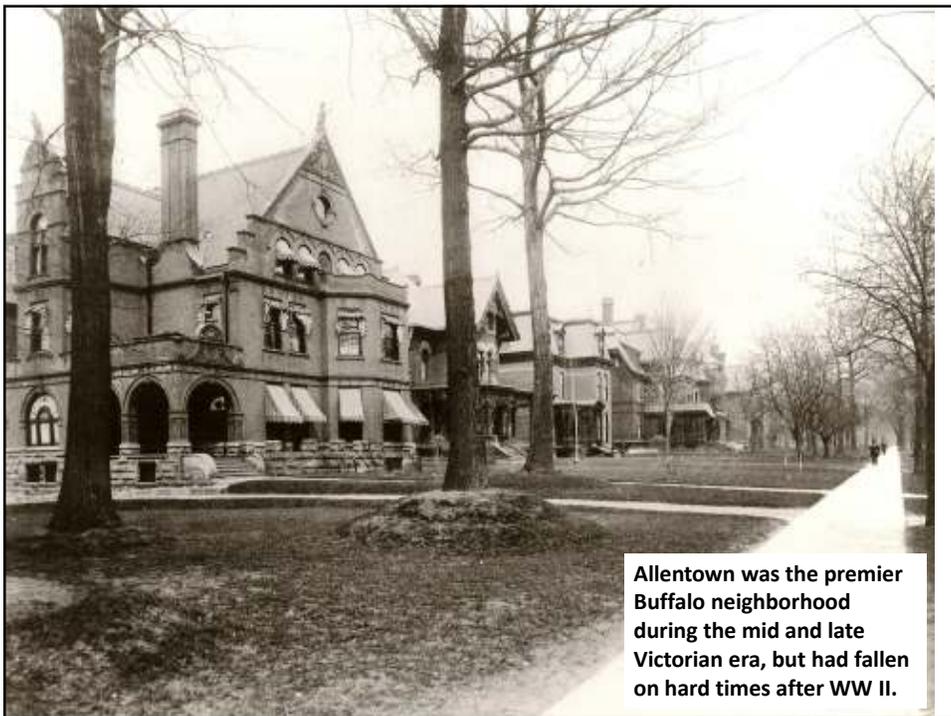
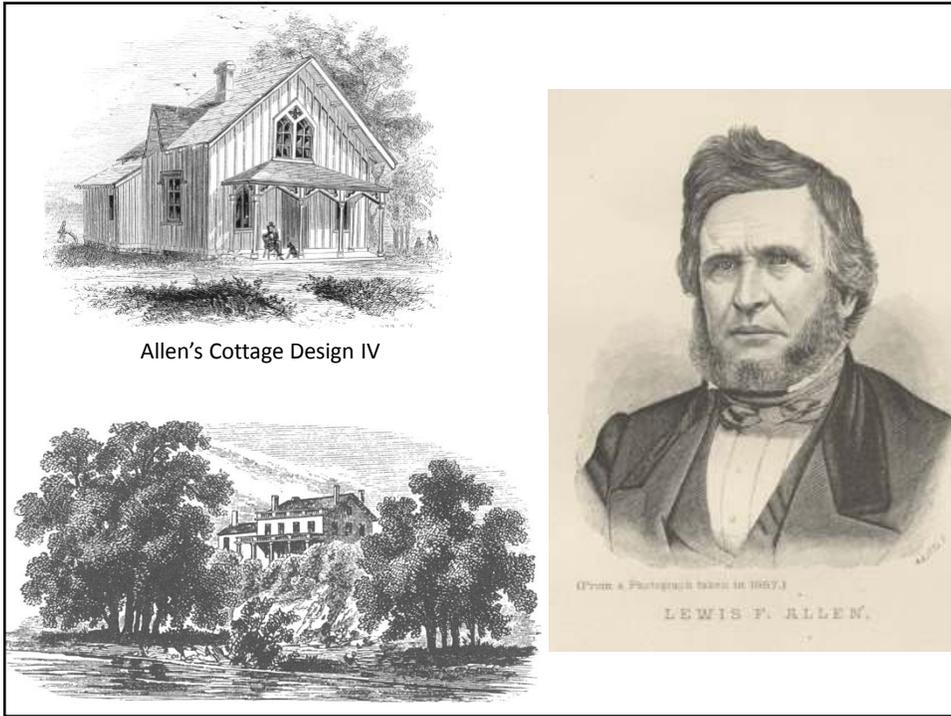


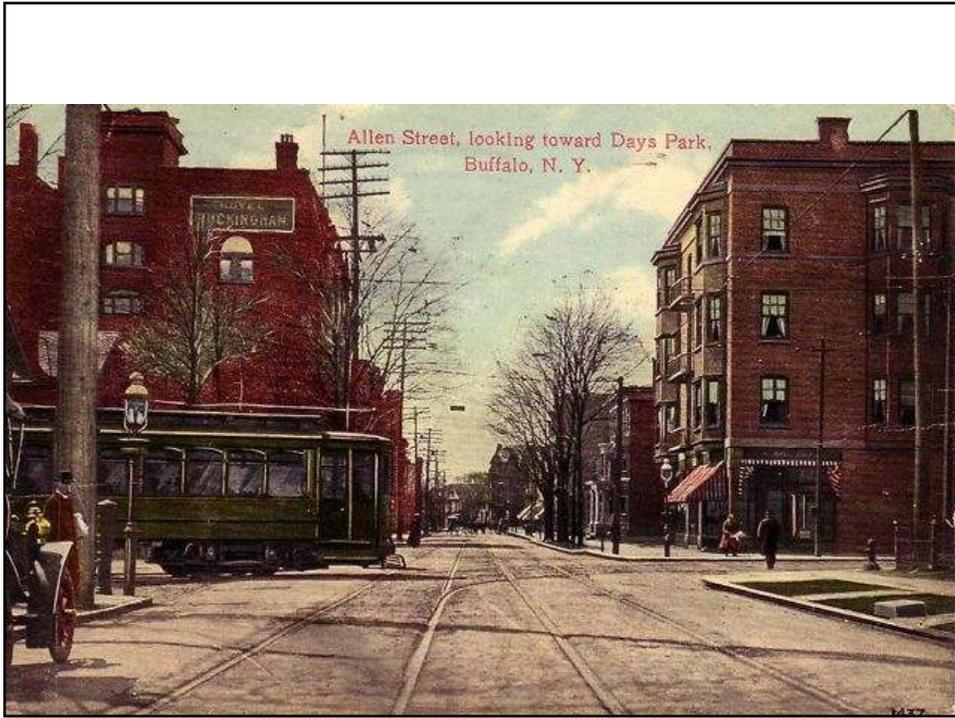
# The Allentown Association, Inc. 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 2013

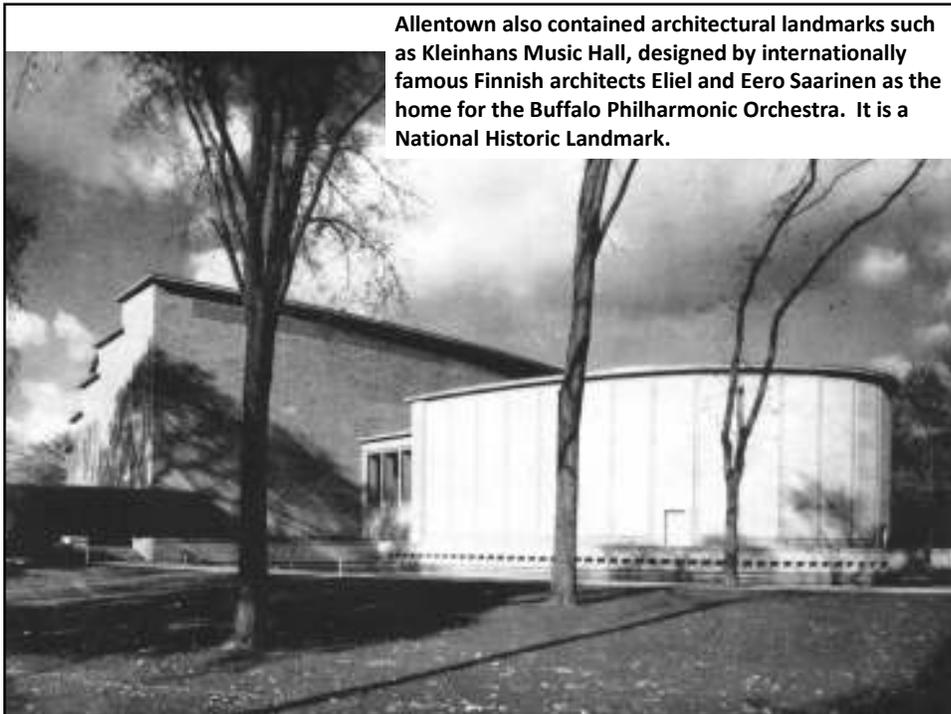
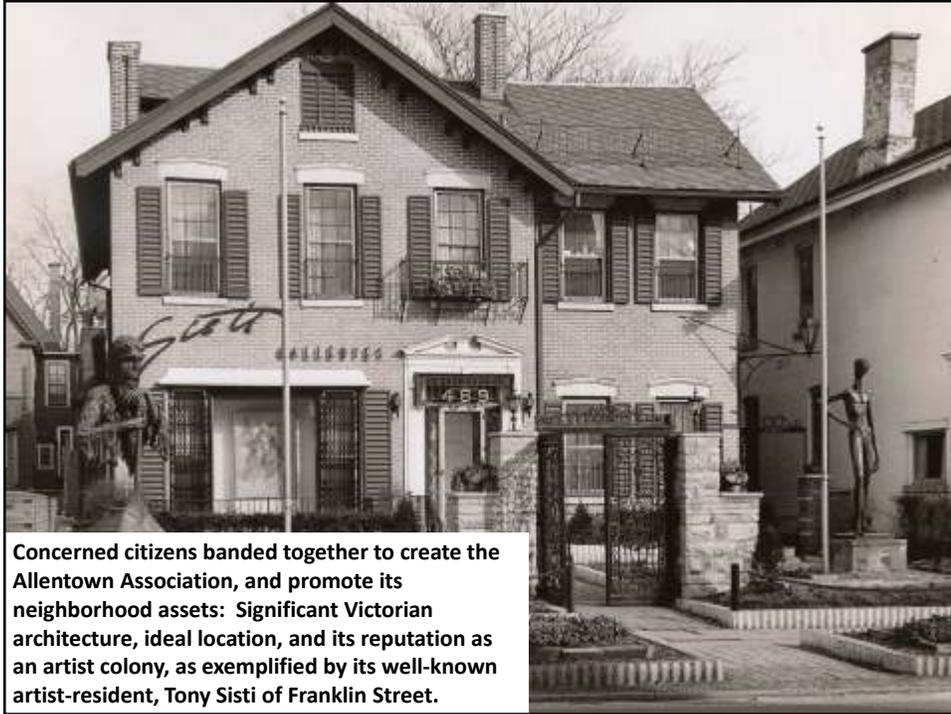
*The Allentown Association serves its community through efforts to beautify the neighborhood; to encourage historic preservation and property maintenance; to promote appropriate business development; to fight crime; and to protect and enhance Allentown's unique urban ambiance.*

**In 1969 the Allentown Association identified the unique characteristics of the Allentown neighborhood as part of its renewal and re-branding, still valid today.**

- Rich history
- Arts & culture
- Antique, diverse housing stock
- Location & amenities
- Walkable
- Fine shopping, dining & nightlife
- Diversity & inclusivity
- Historic preservation
- Destination
- Urbanity, dynamism, & vibrancy







The section of Delaware Avenue within the Allentown neighborhood contains some of the finest dwellings ever constructed in Buffalo, such as the William Dorsheimer house designed by America's legendary Victorian architect, H.H. Richardson.



Allentown also contains the most palatial of Buffalo's homes, the Butler Mansion on Delaware Avenue at North Street, designed by the prestigious NYC architectural firm McKim, Mead, and White.





English-born architect Richard A. Waite designed two significant homes on Delaware Avenue, mayor Philip Becker's home (top) and industrialist Chilion Farrar's home (bottom). Waite's most famous extant building is the parliament building in Queen's Park, Toronto.



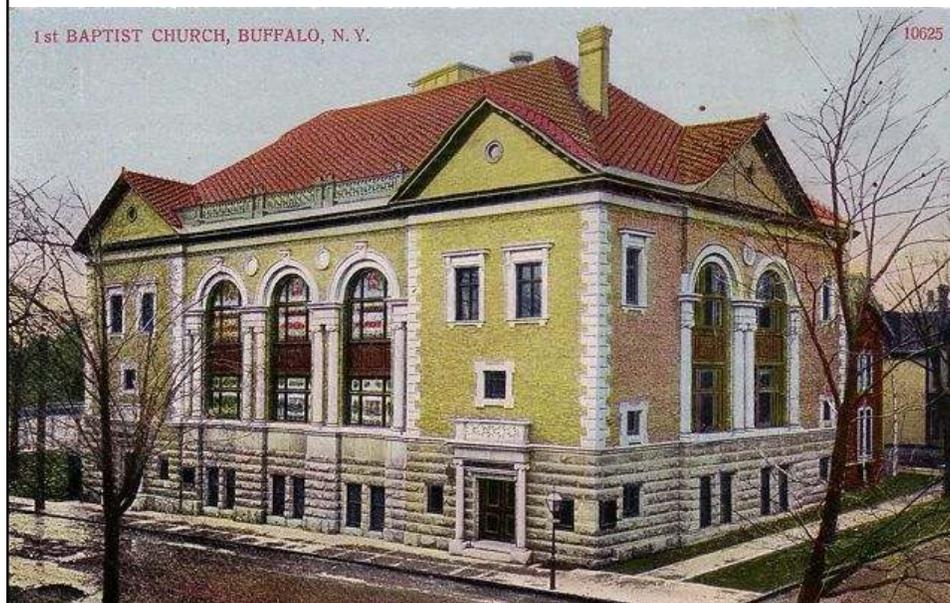
Allentown contains two architecturally and historically significant churches, the First Presbyterian Church on Symphony Circle designed by prolific Buffalo architectural firm Green & Wicks featuring its beautiful Byzantine interior and Romanesque exterior.

The image contains architectural drawings for the First Presbyterian Church. At the top left is a floor plan labeled 'FIG. 702' and 'GREEN & WICKS ARCHT. FOR BRUNNEN BROS. FEB. 2, 1902'. Below it is a perspective drawing of the church building, featuring a prominent steeple and Romanesque exterior. To the right is a photograph of the church building, showing its Romanesque exterior and a tall, slender steeple. At the bottom left of the drawing, it says 'COMPETITIVE DESIGN FOR THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH BUFFALO, N.Y.' and is signed 'Green & Wicks'.

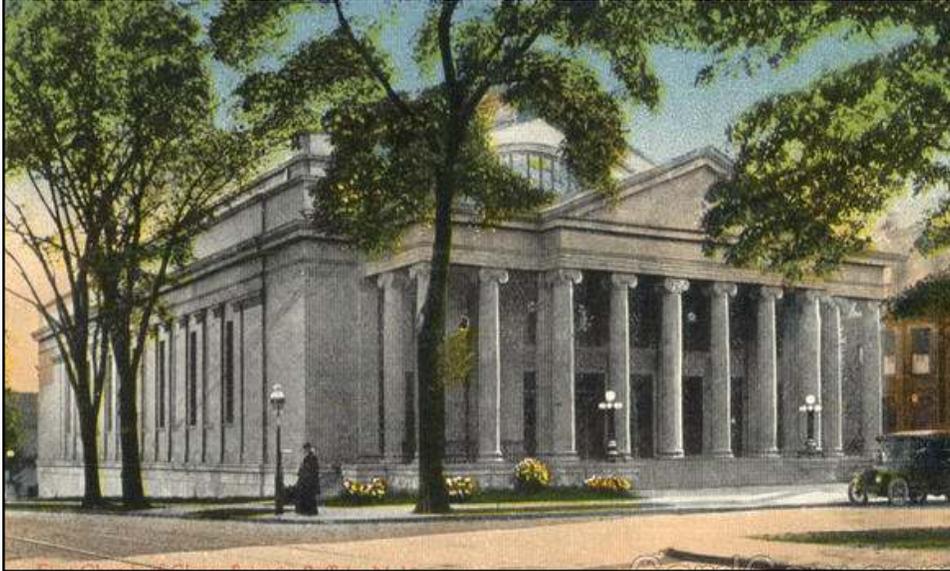
The other architecturally and historically significant church is St. Louis, Buffalo's oldest Roman Catholic parish. Designed by NYC architects Schikel and Ditmar, it features an octagonal 245-foot Medina sandstone steeple incorporating a 72-foot-tall, pierced spire. It is the tallest open-work spire ever built completely of stone without reinforcement in the United States.



Allentown is also home to another "first" – the First Baptist Church



**And one more, the First Church of Christ, Scientist (now Karpeles Manuscript Museum)**



**Other significant homes include the Bemis house designed by Joseph L. Silsbee**



Allentown is home to three residential "pocket parks," two of which are designed by F.L. Olmsted



Arlington Park



Symphony Circle



Days Park

The Allentown Art Festival, inaugurated in 1958, brought a renewed appreciation of Allentown's architecture and helped to brand the district as a bohemian arts community in the 1950s and early 1960s. This photograph is from the 1959 festival held in June.





**By the 1960s, Allentown was firmly established as an arts community  
(Art Festival painting by Ross Drago).**





## ***Timeline of Events*** **Formation of** **The Allentown Association, Inc.**

- **1959** Initial meeting chaired by Jason Natowitz was held with neighborhood residents and City of Buffalo officials to address concerns of "creeping blight."
- **January 1960** Olive Williams chairs meeting with small group dedicated to create an organization to fight neighborhood blight.
- **Autumn 1960** Organization bylaws are created and named the "North Street Community Association," reviving the name of a long-dormant neighborhood organization. Olive Williams is elected first president.
- **June 1, 1961** First public general membership meeting held at Salvation Army.
- **June 1963** Organization renamed Allentown Association.
- **October 1963** Organization incorporated as not-for-profit corporation as *The Allentown Association, Inc.*
- **November 1963** Max B. E. Clarkson elected president.

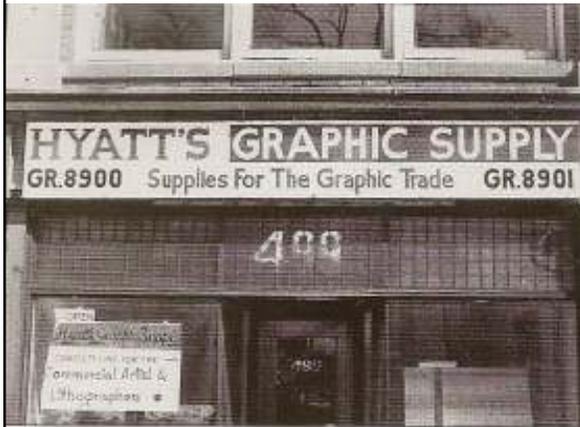
## **Major Allentown Association accomplishments of 1960s**

- Neighborhood revitalization
- Volunteer-sponsored cleanups
- Property surveys
- Block leaders organized
- Engaged membership
- Creation of newsletter
- Concentrated code enforcement
- Fought rezoning of Irving place to oppose demolition (100 members attended common council meeting in rezoning opposition)
- Installation of trash bins on Allen Street
- Branding of Allentown neighborhood similar to Washington's Georgetown or NYC's Greenwich Village
- On April 17, 1967, the Association's first office, the "Allentown Information Center" was opened at 78 Elmwood Avenue

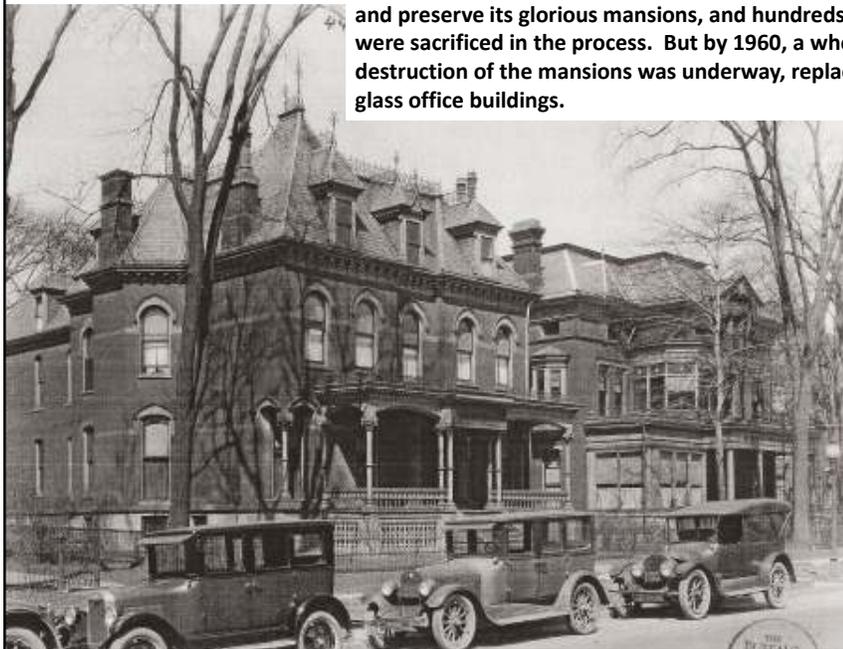


**Olive Williams, first Allentown  
Association President**

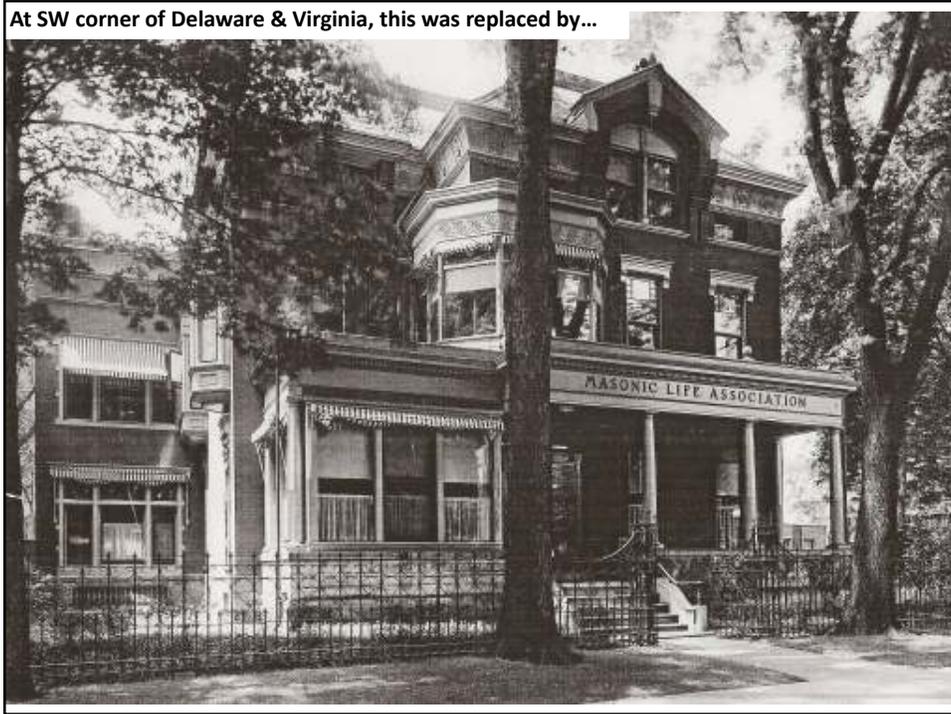
The Allentown neighborhood development continued to attract arts and boutique businesses, such as Hyatt's, which was opened in Allentown on Franklin Street in 1959 by Charles Hyatt and moved to its present location on Main Street in 1961.



In 1924 Delaware Ave. from Niagara Sq. to North St. was widened in an attempt to transform it to a commercial street and preserve its glorious mansions, and hundreds of trees were sacrificed in the process. But by 1960, a wholesale destruction of the mansions was underway, replaced with glass office buildings.



At SW corner of Delaware & Virginia, this was replaced by...



... this in the early 1960s

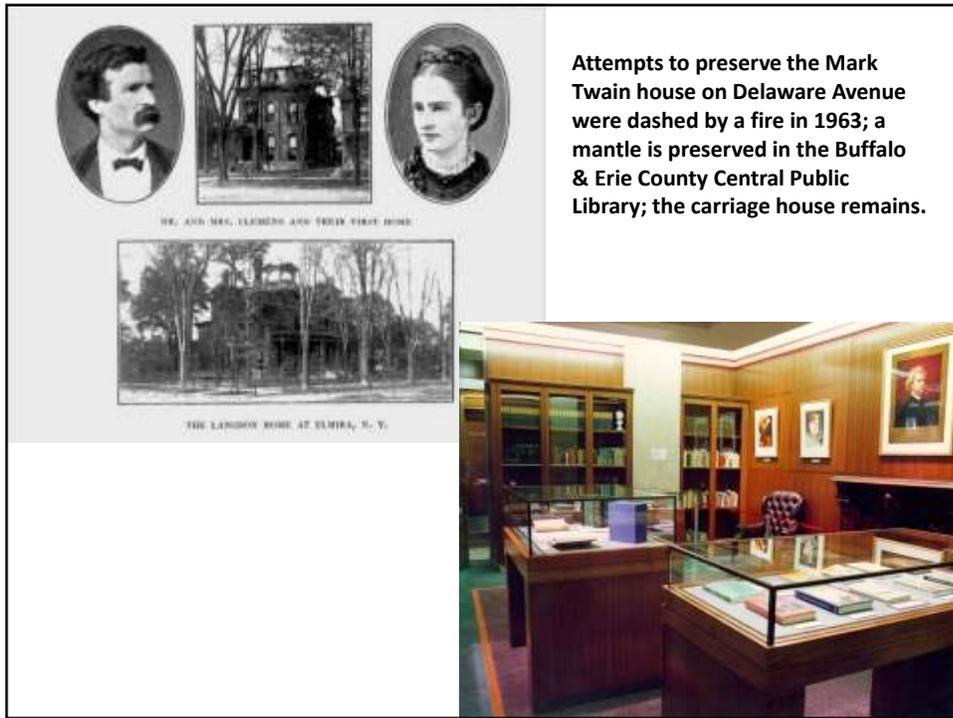


The classic Second Empire house on right was replaced by...



This building at 452 Delaware Ave. in 1963





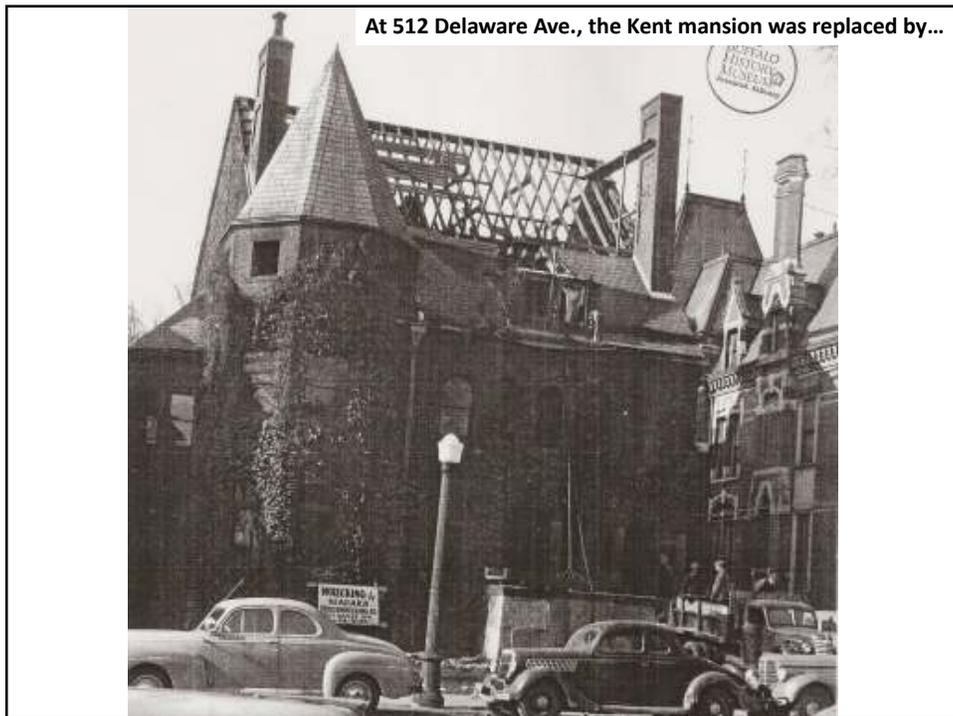
Attempts to preserve the Mark Twain house on Delaware Avenue were dashed by a fire in 1963; a mantle is preserved in the Buffalo & Erie County Central Public Library; the carriage house remains.

MR. AND MRS. CLEMENS AND THEIR FIRST HOME

THE LANGHOE HOME AT ELmira, N. Y.

The top section of the image contains three historical photographs. On the left is a portrait of Mark Twain. In the center is a photograph of a large, multi-story brick house with a prominent chimney. On the right is a portrait of a woman. Below these is another photograph of a large, multi-story brick house, identified as the Langhoe home in Elmira, N.Y. To the right of these photographs is a text box with a black background and white text. Below the text box is a photograph of a modern library interior with wooden paneling, bookshelves, and display cases.

At 512 Delaware Ave., the Kent mansion was replaced by...



The bottom section of the image features a large black and white photograph of a multi-story brick building. The building has a complex roofline with several gables and chimneys. A large sign is visible on the right side of the building, which reads "BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM". In the foreground, there are several vintage cars from the 1930s or 1940s. A street lamp is also visible in the foreground. The text "At 512 Delaware Ave., the Kent mansion was replaced by..." is positioned above the photograph.



Enough is enough... the destruction began in the next block of Delaware between Allen & North Sts. with these buildings destroyed for...



This at Delaware Ave., NW corner of Allen Street, in 1962



These old houses on the west side of Delaware between Allen & North Streets are standing in the way of progress!



Oh, no they aren't...



Irving Place residents under the leadership of Olive Williams with support from the Allentown Association led the charge of the preservation of the east side of Irving Place between Allen and North Streets when the street's properties were threatened with demolition by owners this Delaware Avenue office building. Irving Place may have been lost if it were not for the Allentown Association. In the 1990s, after a stalemate of more than 30 years, two new townhouses were constructed on the site of a proposed parking lot, thus retaining the residential quality of Irving Place.



Allentown Association members and Irving Place residents Alison Fleischmann (29), Maggie Flemming (18), and Lee Walker (74, who founded Dell Computer with his student Michael Dell) at one of the many Zoning Board hearings about the Benderson lot in the 1970s. The ongoing problem was only solved when George Arthur called Alison and Allentown Association executive director Carole Holcberg to have lunch with Arthur and Councilman Joel Giambra.



In 1964, when the Wilcox mansion was threatened with destruction like the houses across Delaware Avenue, citizens joined forces to save the house.



A "Hike for History" parade and civic rally was held to draw attention to the Wilcox mansion in 1964.



At the 1965 Home Show, attendees were given an opportunity to sign a petition to save the house. Thousands of people signed the petition.



Through these efforts, The Wilcox mansion was spared and transformed into the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site in 1966 and opened as a museum in 1971. The effort was supported by members of the Allentown Association.

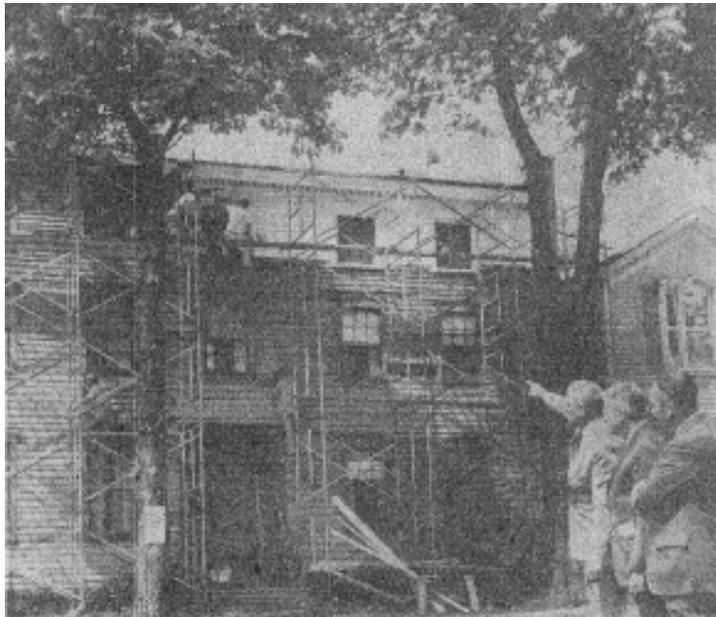


Members of the Allentown Association rebranded itself as an alternative to the suburbs for professionals during the 1960s as shown in this Courier Express article from 11/30/1970 and shows a house at 111 Park Street and another on Irving Place.





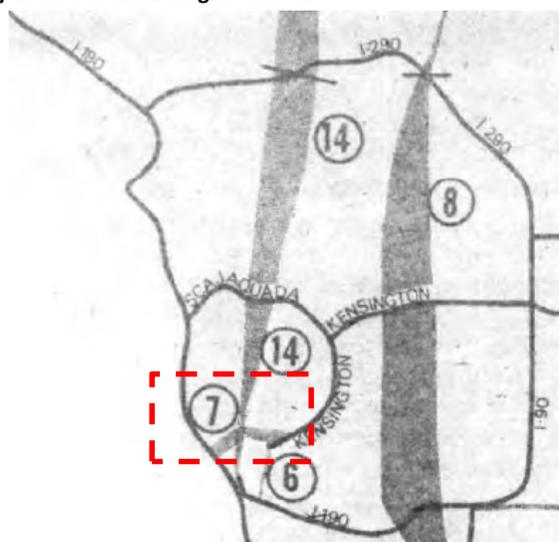
Buffalo's oldest house, the George Coit House was a successful early 1970s preservation effort supported by the Allentown Association and Landmark Society.



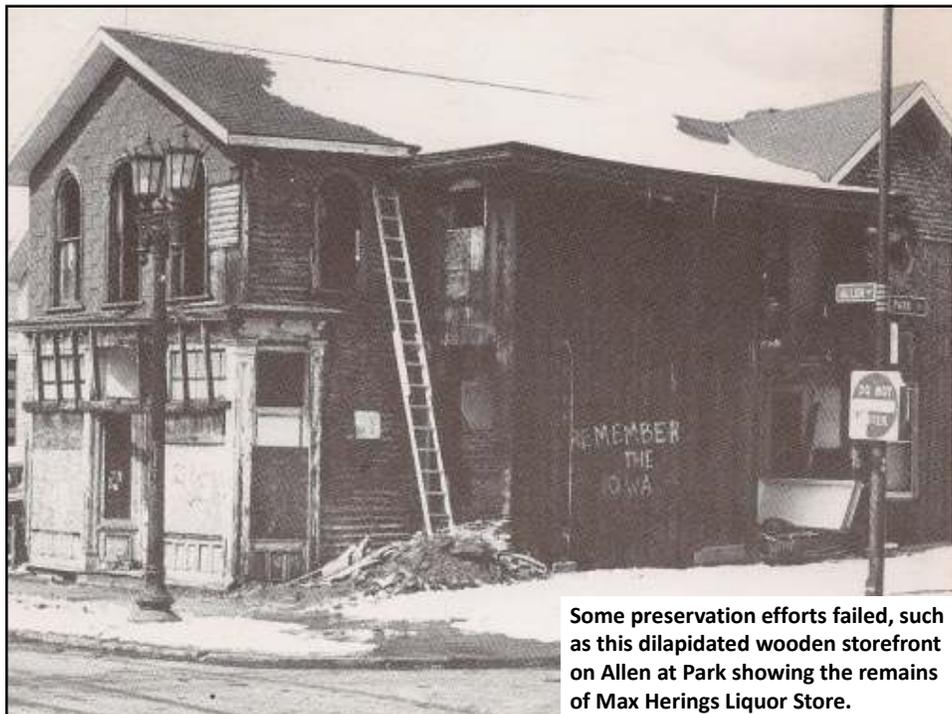
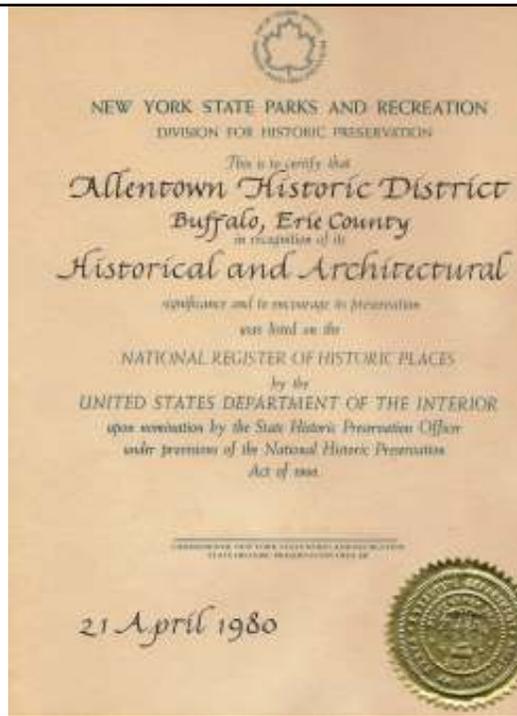
The Allentown Community Center was created in 1971, which continues on as The Clarkson Center (photo shows James Kimberly, the Kimberly family cat, and Betsy Mitchell).



The Allentown Association joined a growing number of urban communities around the country to protest the construction of high-speed highways. Threatening the Allentown neighborhood was the proposed West Side Arterial/Virginia-Carolina Expressway, which would have cut through Allentown, rending it in two and greatly decreasing its desirability as a residential neighborhood.



The Allentown Association was the leader in the creation of Buffalo's first, and for many years its largest, certified local historic district. The Association, working in concert with the Landmark Society of the Niagara Frontier (now Preservation Buffalo Niagara), cataloged each structure in Allentown and garnered support for the creation of the local historic district (it collected a petition with approximately 1,000 signatures). The Association, working with City Hall interns, also photographed all structures for documentation on NY State Historic Preservation Office Historic Resource Inventory Forms. As a result, the Allentown Local Historic District was created in 1978 under the auspices of City of Buffalo Preservation Board. Two years later, a portion of the local district was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Some preservation efforts failed, such as this dilapidated wooden storefront on Allen at Park showing the remains of Max Herings Liquor Store.

The Allentown Association also administered a paint subsidy and grant repair program to help Allentown residents repair and restore their properties, such as this house on College Street.



Another house the Allentown Association helped to renovate on Cottage Street.

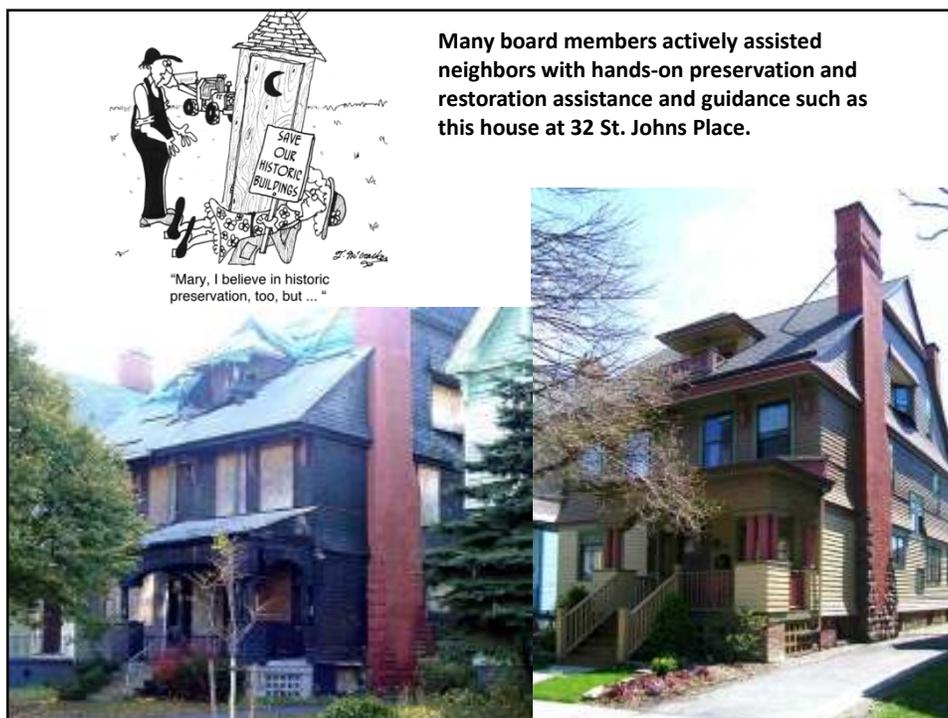


The Association also obtained a federal grant which resulted in the stabilization of the Allen Street sidewalk on its north side between Irving Place and Park Street and conserved the street's original medina stone. The grant also funded the creation of "A" with the circles on the street signs, all created by architect and Allentown Association president Peter Castle.



During the bohemian days of the 1970s Allentown Art Festival, the Association began its tradition of selling hot dogs to raise funds for its initiatives as seen in these photographs from 1975.





Final vestiges of Allen Street's seedy days during the 1970s, the Allentown Association supported the Allendale Theater's transformation from premiering *Deep Throat* to *American Graffiti* as shown in this 1976 photograph and members fought the opening of a topless bar at what is now Colter Bay on Delaware Avenue at Allen Street.



**City Winks at Topless Dance**

Downtown residents' petition, 127 in all, finally have allowed an Allentown restaurant with topless dancers to operate without a liquor license.

Allentown's Corporation Council, John Hagan said, a Common Council committee hearing Tuesday that the city and Edward Schmitt, manager of the Golden Shop at Delaware and Allen, negotiated the establishment would now open until the proper license was obtained.

"I feel the restaurant is operating legally," said Edward E. McCowan, president of the Allentown Association, which is trying to eliminate topless dancing, top pornographic movies and bookstores from the area.

The Council voted approval of licenses for dancing, and another public hearing on requests for new business uses of property in Allentown, a special zoning district.

However, orders was also for the Golden Shop, it has granted a different license by the city's Department of Licenses and Permits, Hagan said.

The license was issued in April because the permit did not have all the usual zoning use," he said.

The Council's consent was voted to conform to the city Council not to grant the new license. The Council will vote next Tuesday on whether to permit signs during at the restaurant.

The Allentown Association hired its first executive director, Carole Z. Holcberg, in 1975. She held the position in the 1970s and was well known for promoting Irving Place when she later founded her own real estate sales firm, Holcberg Ltd. Realty.



The Association was also instrumental in its advocacy to preserve the Birge Mansion on Symphony Circle (which was nearly lost to demolition).



The Birge Mansion today



**The Blizzard of '77 inspired the Allentown Association to create its annual "Blizzard Ball" as a fundraiser**



Hail to Thee, O Blizzard

**1,000 have 'ball' recalling Blizzard memories**

**BUFFALO, N.Y. (UPI) —** They gave away "Blizzard of '77" travel games as door prizes, and the 1,000 guests, attired in tuxedos and evening gowns, swapped stories of how they survived it all.

It was Buffalo's answer to those Madison Avenue advertising executives who made the city's name synonymous with hip-deep snow. You remember the television ads:

— "Catching a cold in Buffalo, N.Y. is no fun."

— "Thank you, Buffalo..." for helping a tire company show the world its new radials will work in snow.

Appropriately, light snow fell throughout the weekend, but it wasn't enough to stop Buffalo

area residents from attending Saturday night's first annual "Blizzard of '77 Anniversary Ball."

Table centerpieces depicted a man shoveling his car out of a snowbank. There were vials of "genuine ligoeted snow from Buffalo," and greeting cards from Buffalo with a picture of a snowbound parking lot on the front.

The co-chairman of the ball, William J. Eaton, who runs a local art gallery, said proceeds from the \$15-dollar-a-head gala would benefit the neighborhood revitalization programs of the Allentown Association and Butler Hall, which aids out-of-town visitors visiting cancer patients at Roswell Park Memorial Institute.

Songwriter Kent Finlay, who won a one-way trip to Buffalo for writing the worst song in the Luckenbach, Texas, "Mad Dauter Day" bad-

song contest, sang "Buffalo Gal," a ditty he wrote especially for the trip.

Finlay was given a return plane ticket — they called it "deportation" — after the Chamber of Commerce heard his song.

Finlay, 30, sporting a 10-gallon hat, said his song is about a boy from Luckenbach who falls in love with a girl from Buffalo.

Finlay said he planned to be married next Saturday — if he gets back to Texas. "My girlfriend is awful worried I'll get snowed in," he said. But he managed to leave Sunday.

Absent from the festivities was James E. Smith, former meteorologist-in-charge of the Buffalo office of the National Weather Service. He announced his retirement within days of last

year's blizzard, saying the storm was "the last straw."

Guests at the ball delighted in asking each other, "Where were you during the blizzard?"

Tim Teppa, a salesman, said he was one of the lucky people at home during the blizzard. His date, Denise Decker, said she stayed with a fellow employee who lived near her office and watched "Roots" on television for two days.

NBC commentator Brian Ross said he was part of a three-man crew sent into Buffalo the day before the blizzard. He wound up staying for two weeks.

"We ended up spending a week sleeping on the floor of our affiliate station," he said. "We had rooms at a hotel near the airport (about 10 miles away) — but we couldn't get there."

Beautification efforts continued to be a focus of the Allentown Association in the 1970s, as it does today.



Patrieta E. Gallivan Carete Z. Döcherberg Alison F. Kimberley  
Allentown's "Bottle Brigade" at work cleaning out a weeded and overgrown vacant lot

## Allentown Brigade Is Back!

Allentown Association members cleaning up lots in abandoned houses near Days Park in the 1970s.





McKim Mead & White's Metcalfe Mansion on North Street west of Delaware Avenue (demolished, but interior rooms were preserved and reconstructed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and BSC).



## The 1980s



The Allentown Association directly preserved many significant structures during the 1980s. It was responsible for the Elmwood Avenue Block Revitalization Project which restored a number of homes on Elmwood Avenue between Virginia and Allen Streets as well as the restoration of its offices at 45 Elmwood Avenue (known as the Junior League House).



**WELCOMING COMMITTEE** — The Allentown Association showed off its refurbished headquarters at 45 Elmwood Ave. at an open house Friday. The official gathering included, from left, President William E. Nittorasy, Executive Director Joan Permas and Delaware County Councilman William L. Morry.

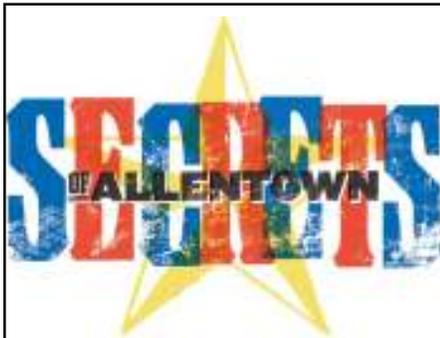
The Association emptied its treasury to purchase and install a roof to preserve the Allendale Theater which was nearly demolished. Working with the City of Buffalo, it has been one of the area's most successful adaptive reuse projects. The restored theater, originally opened in 1913, is now the home of the Theater of Youth, bringing families and children to Allentown to experience live theater.



The Allentown Association spearheaded the beautification of a lot at the corner of Allen at Main Street after the demolition of a several buildings, lost to neglect.



The Association also took an active advocacy role in the preservation of St. Mary's Square and its conversion to condominiums. It too was a building nearly lost.



During the 1980s, the Allentown Association began its tour of homes, known as *Secrets of Allentown*, which showcases and promotes the benefits and value of historic preservation to the public.



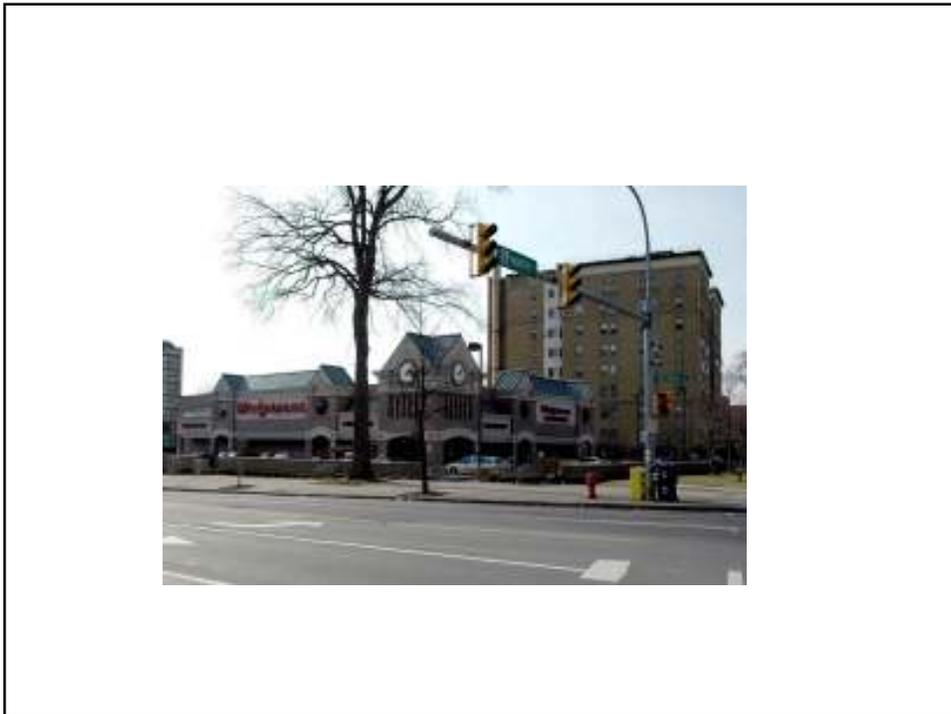
Secrets of Allentown house on Park Street, 2001.



In 1987, two-way traffic was restored to Allen and North Streets and the Allentown Association hosted an antiques fair to promote its many antique businesses and reputation as a destination for antiques lovers.



McKim Mead & White – Root Mansion (demolished, site of Walgreens)





1990s & 2000s

Entering the digital age, the Allentown Association launched its website in the 1990s.



The Allentown Association inaugurated the Allen West festival on Allen between Elmwood and Wadsworth in 1999.



In the 1980s and 1990s, the Allentown Association's headquarters were located at 234 Allen Street, corner of College. Many neighborhood events were hosted there, such as this holiday event, presided over by "Bumper the Wonder Dog."



Allentown Association board member Mary Tomaselli, who for many years was an Allen Street merchant, operating a dry cleaners and later opening La-Tee-Da restaurant, still an Allen Street staple.



The Allentown Association continued its historic perseverance efforts when it purchased the Coit House (Buffalo's oldest house) at 414 Virginia Street for the purposes of stabilization and infrastructure improvements until it could be resold. Long considered Buffalo's oldest house, the effort complemented an earlier effort by the Landmark Society in 1970 to initially save the house against imminent demolition.





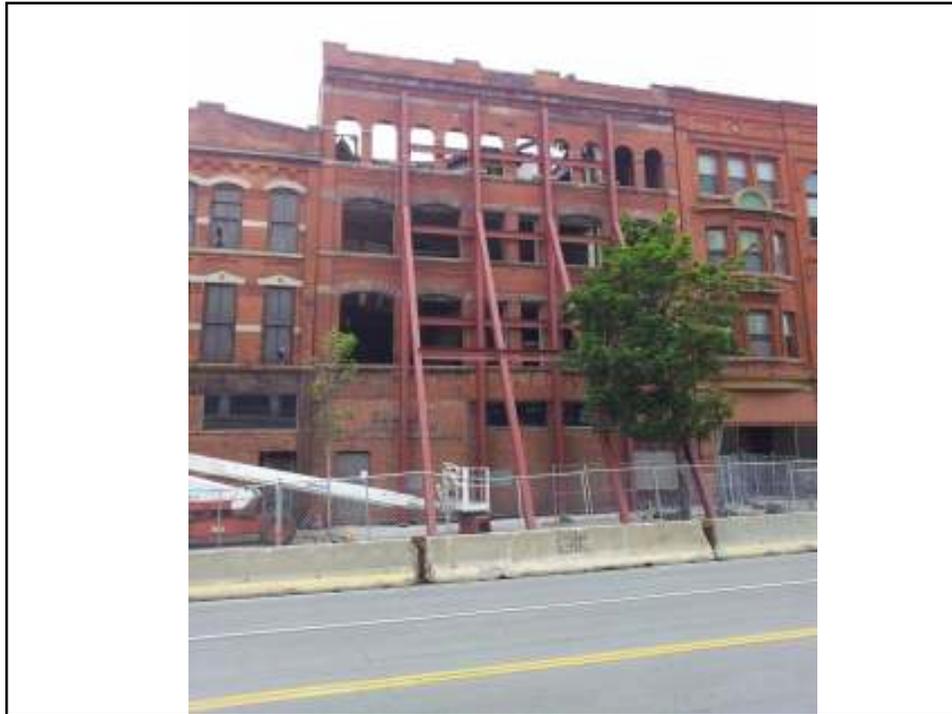
Perhaps the Allentown Association's most dramatic historic preservation effort (in partnership with the Campaign 4 Greater Buffalo), sued the City of Buffalo to stop the emergency demolition of the Metzger Building located at the northwest corner of Main and Virginia Streets. Now part of the successful "Granite Block," the Metzger Building was key to the redevelopment of the block of Main Street from Virginia to Allen Streets, complementing the development efforts of the nearby Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus.





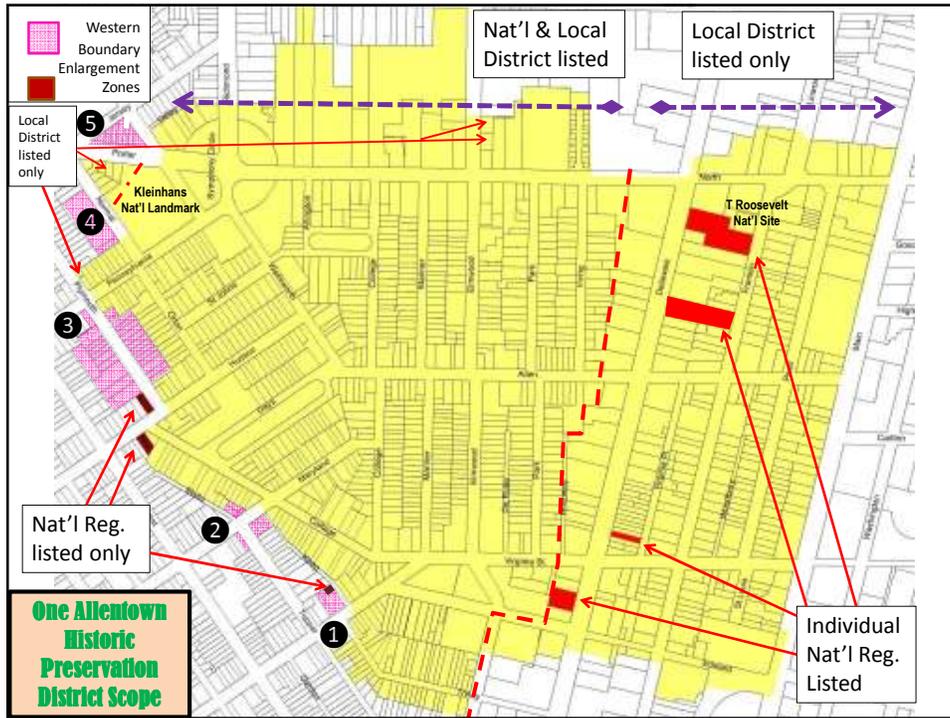
**The block, the four-story 1891 Bosche Building at 918 Main Street, was also in danger of imminent demolition. Its roof was lost as a result of a small fire and the landlocked row-style building was written off to demolition by nearly everyone. Undaunted, the Allentown Association hired a structural engineer to demonstrate how the building could be saved. It then worked with the City of Buffalo to procure a \$1 million NYS Restore Main Street grant to repair the building for use as a mixed commercial/residential structure. It is currently being restored.**



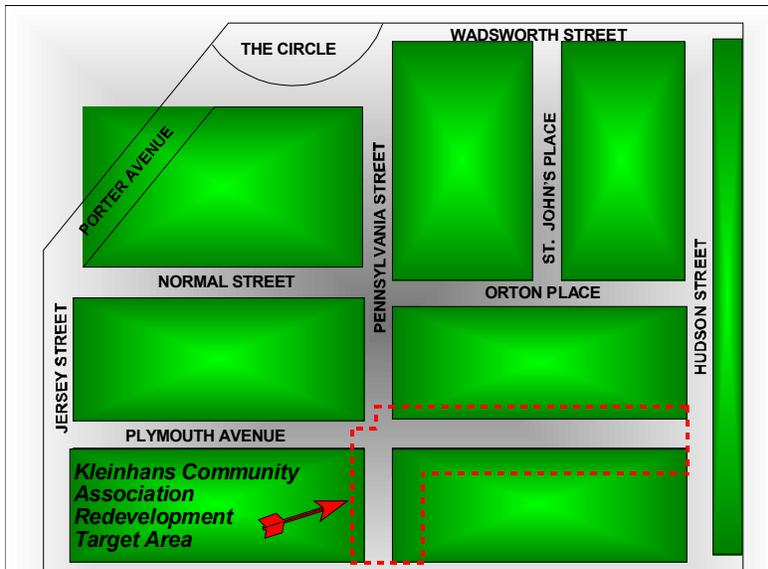


**In 2012, the Allentown Association worked to enlarge the district's National Register boundaries to include all its local boundaries. The creation of the local and national register historic districts has dramatically and positively impacted the character of Allentown's historic integrity and serves today as a model for other preservation districts within Buffalo and Western New York**





At the western end of the Allentown Historic District, in 1997 residents took it upon themselves to focus resources on the Plymouth/Pennsylvania target area partnering with the Allentown Association and Heart of the City Neighborhoods (HCN) in 2002

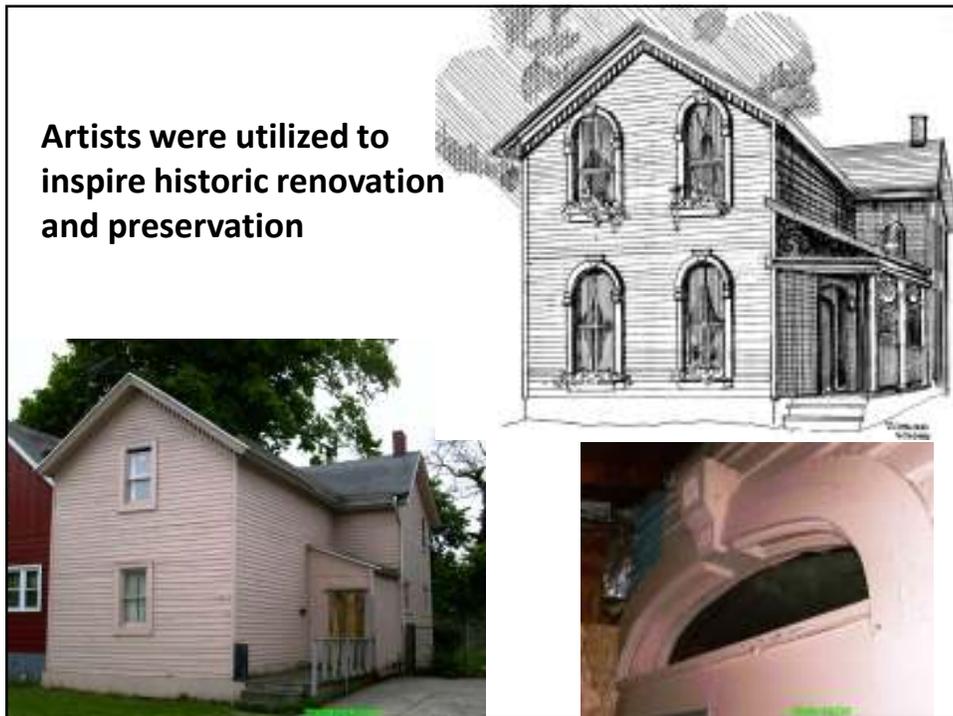


**Target area had good historic fabric, but was terribly altered**



**In target area, houses sold for as little as \$2,000 and were highly at risk for demolition or absentee landlords. This 1871 house at 23 Plymouth was saved through HCN and sold to owner-occupant.**





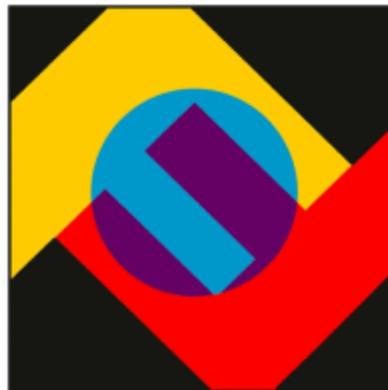
Neighborhood residents joined together to save this fire-damaged house at 34 Plymouth from demolition



Historic preservation and modern ecology – 25 Plymouth



The Allentown Association launched First Fridays Gallery Walk in 2009



GREATER ALLENTOWN GALLERY ASSOCIATION  
**FIRST FRIDAY**

## The Allentown Association's work continues...

- Have an Allentown representative appointed to the Buffalo Preservation Board
- Institute new-resident information packets
- Grow individual membership by 30%
- Begin design work on Allen Street improvements
- Reconcile local historic district boundaries to national historic district boundaries

