

HISTORIC BACKGROUND  
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# THE CAULKINS BUILDING

85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203



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## **The History of the Caulkins Building**

The Caulkins Building is a rare remaining example of late-nineteenth century commercial architecture designed for the thriving photographic industry, located 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 failed rehabilitation attempts, modern development along the Route 33 corridor along Oak Street to the immediate east and other factors. Despite the threat, the Caulkins Building is eligible for the State and National Registers of Historic Places based on Criterion C, for its architecture, and also Criterion A for its associations with the early pattern of commercial development of the Genesee-Ellicott-Oak neighborhood and in the City of Buffalo, and also for its role in the history of photography in Buffalo. The remains of the Caulkins Building today serve as a potent reminder of the fragility of the historic buildings throughout the Genesee-Ellicott-Oak neighborhood, and how a few previous well-intentioned yet misguided steps can create significant challenges for the preservation and reuse of buildings throughout the area. Although largely in ruin today, the Caulkins Building's beauty and unique design made it a well photographed building, and several excellent images record its elegant facade. Throughout its more than 100 year history, spanning four generations, the Caulkins Building represents a unique example of commercial architecture designed specifically for the photography industry.

Designed in 1886 by prominent Buffalo architect, Franklin Wellington (F.W.) Caulkins (information to follow), the Caulkins Building was constructed at a time of enormous success, prosperity and commercial growth in the Genesee-Ellicott-Oak neighborhood. The stately building was constructed as a mixed-use commercial and residential building for Louis Bergtold for a cost of \$5,000. Bergtold, who ran a successful cigar shop at 297 Main Street, was also known to dabble in real estate development, and was likely attracted to the growing commercial potential of the thriving neighborhood around the Washington Market (founded in 1851). Like many of the other buildings in the Genesee Gateway group, the Caulkins Building replaced two earlier ca. 1850s miniscule brick buildings. In the 1860s and 1870s, a building located at 85-87 Genesee Street was owned by Ferdinand Rehr, while the adjacent building at 89 Genesee Street was owned by an A. Bissan. In 1861 the buildings housed Charles Reinhard's clothing shop, Frederick Vanderlin's, tailor business and Charles Worst's jewelry store, with several residential tenants occupying the upper floors. In 1884, prior to the construction of the Caulkins Building, William Denzinger was noted as occupying 87 Genesee Street in addition to 91 Genesee Street for his furniture and cabinetry business.

By the 1880s, Louis Bergtold purchased the property at 85-87-89 Genesee Street and had the elegant Caulkins Building constructed. The earliest known tenants of the building were the Queen City Hat Manufacturing Company and Frederick Joseph Dorn's jewelry shop. Fred Dorn, as he was known, would become the longest occupying tenant of the Caulkins Building (image 7). Born February 24, 1856 to Philip and Mary Dorn who were originally from Hesse-Darmstadt, Germany, Fred Dorn was a prominent member of Buffalo's German/German-American community during the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries. Dorn was well educated, having attended the local St. Michael's School, City School 14, and St. Joseph's College. He studied watchmaking and repair, working for prominent local firms such as King & Eisele and Hiram Hotchkiss in Buffalo, before spending time in New York City at age 18

studying his craft. He also worked for six years in Philadelphia in the watch and jewelry business, and spent a year in Cincinnati before returning to Buffalo. In 1886, at the age of 25, Dorn established his own jewelry and watchmaking business in the newly constructed Caulkins Building at 87 Genesee Street in the central and largest commercial space of the building. Following the establishment of his own company Dorn continued to pursue his education in his career, visiting the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in order to view the mechanical displays. Dorn was well respected, and by many accounts was an honest and fair man with a pleasant demeanor and many friends throughout the city. He was a member of several organizations including the Order of Elks, the Eagles, the Moose Lodge, the Amicus Club, and other associations. Dorn was also active in the German community as a long time member of the Orpheus, the Sangerbund, the Teutonia Liederkrantz, and the Buffalo Gymnastics Club. It was also noted that Dorn took great pride in actively promoting the betterment of the German community. He ran his jewelry shop at 87 Genesee Street until his death on January 3, 1930, and the Fred J. Dorn jewelry shop continued on under his name in the same location until the 1950s. Dorn was such a beloved and significant figure in Buffalo at the time of his death that the honorary pall bearers at his funeral included the mayor of Buffalo at the time, Mayor Charles E. Roesch, former mayor Frank X. Schwab, Surrogate Judge Louis B. Hart, and Judge Louis Braunlein among other prominent men.<sup>1</sup>

The Caulkins Building also served as a well-known photography building in the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century. Since it was ideally suited for the needs of photographers at the turn-of-the-century, the Caulkins Building had an almost continual occupancy by one or more photographers. Well-designed photography studios were a rare commodity at the time, since photography was still so dependant on open space and natural lighting, and it was not uncommon for photographers to share occupancy of the studio space. The first known photographer to occupy the building at the 85 Genesee address (which appears to have been assigned to the third and fourth floor studio) was Adolph Hillman between 1891 and 1893, who also ran a studio from 539 Main Street since 1869. It may have been Hillman's tenancy in the building which prompted building owner Louis Bergtold to modify the well-suited Caulkins Building to feature a large "photo light" skylight, although it is equally possible that the building was originally constructed with this skylight since no building permit or documentation exists. Like the fanciful Werner Photography Building at 101-103 Genesee Street, the Caulkins Building was well suited to the photography trade since it faced north allowing for ample northern light. The Caulkins Building was used as the primary studio of photographer Joseph Altenberg between 1894 and 1932. Howard J. Vigras shared the studio space with Altenberg in 1914, and following what appears to have been Altenberg's death or retirement, his successor studio, Allite Studio, occupied the building until 1937. Allite Studio is the last known photography studio to occupy the building, and the upper floors may have been converted to additional residential space in the late 1930s.

Besides the jewelry shop of Fred J. Dorn and the photography studios which occupied the Caulkins Building, the stately Romanesque building played host to many other industries and commercial tenants throughout its history. In 1929, the Caulkins Building housed Edward

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<sup>1</sup> Active pall bearers included Charles and Fred Denzinger, who appear to be related to William and Charles Denzinger who owned the neighboring 91 Genesee Street for many years at the end of the nineteenth-century. While the exact relationship is unknown, this seems to be an indication that Dorn was not only well known amongst a virtual "who's- who" of Buffalo's political sphere, but was also well regarded by his neighbors and local community.

Haller's cigars & tobacco shop, Joseph Heim's dental laboratory and Louis Newman, optometrist at 85 Genesee Street, and Marie Fronheider's gloves and hosiery shop at 89 Genesee Street. In 1937 the building was home to Haller's tobacco shop at 85 Genesee, and at 89 Genesee were located Marie Matthies, women's furnishings and Louis Ulrich's hemstitching business. Newman and George Schueckuer were noted as residential tenants, likely on the second floor. Walter Kirkpatrick opened his barber shop at 89 Genesee Street in 1940, and in 1946 Christine Fuller ran a cigar shop at 85 Genesee Street; perhaps the only woman-run tobacco shop in Buffalo. Like many of the Genesee Gateway buildings, and those throughout the Genesee-Ellicott-Oak neighborhood, the Caulkins Building was a center for many aspects of daily life including shopping, dwelling, and personal health.

The Caulkins Building remained largely architecturally intact throughout its history. While the photo light skylight may have potentially been an alteration done ca. 1890 to the building, the most significant alteration occurred in 1914. Jennie Bergtold, widow of Louis Bergtold and who maintained ownership of the building at the time, hired prominent local firm Colson-Hudson (information follows) to modify the storefront of the building. This alteration may have been done in response to the low lighting levels available due to the small, triangular "land-locked" position of the building. What may have been considered sufficient in 1886 was likely by 1914 standards considered unsuitable, even given the popularity of electricity in Buffalo by this time. Since the building did not have any windows on the eastern or southern facades, the Caulkins Building relied solely on the northern façade for most of its interior illumination. A majority of the alterations done to the building by Colson-Hudson appear to be light-oriented. While it appears that the original cast iron pilasters and street level structural system was retained, new copper clad storefronts were inserted into the three bays. Wide expanses of plate glass were used as display windows and for the doors. Luxfer prism transoms were added to the storefront; a product typically used to direct light from the windows to the rear of the building. Colson-Hudson also altered the basement in a unique way. The firm, known for their engineering capabilities, removed the extant northern foundation wall and relocated a new concrete wall several feet north beneath the sidewalk. The new bulkheads inserted into the building were hollow and featured glass windows on their north side. Coupled with the new glass vault lights installed into the new concrete sidewalk, lighting was brought down into the basement level of the building (image 13). The purpose of bringing light into the basement is unknown as no specific use or occupant can be attributed to this space, and it appears the rather extensive alteration may have been done to illuminate a dark basement storage space.

Like its neighbors, the Caulkins Building suffered from the general neglect and decay which was rampant in the neighborhood in the 1970s and 80s, following the opening of the Kensington Expressway which effectively funneled residents and businesses from the Genesee neighborhood into the suburbs. The once-stunning building appears dirty and shabby in photographs, with a hodge-podge of signs pasted across the front of the building (still visible ca. 1986 is Fred J. Dorn's sign above 87 Genesee). The Caulkins Building suffered from years of general neglect and decay in the 1970s and 80s, and was largely poorly maintained and repaired. The Caulkins Building, along with its neighbor the Denzinger-Sigwald building at 91-95 Genesee Street, were largely vacant for nearly three decades in the 1970s-90s. Because of its abandonment and neglect, in 2000 the roof and flooring system of the Caulkins Building collapsed in on itself, creating essentially a hollow masonry shell with little interior support. Due

to this fragile condition, the building was twice slated for demolition by the City, including a narrow escape in 2001. In early 2002, local planner Jessie Schnell Fisher formed Triangle Development in order to purchase the Caulkins and Denzinger-Sigwald Buildings, hoping to use \$50,000 in funds earmarked for their demolition to restore and rehabilitate the buildings. Triangle Development purchased the buildings in October 2002 and began a misguided attempt at rehabilitating the building which included removing remaining historic fabric in order to brace the interior walls, similar to the work Willard A. Genrich had completed in the 1980s at the eastern end of the Genesee Gateway block. Only a month later in November 2002, a strong wind storm caused the collapse of significant portions of the Caulkins Building, taking portions of the adjacent Denzinger-Sigwald Building with it. After removing the debris from the site of the former Caulkins Building, the site was largely ignored for several years. In 2007 the 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 120+ years.

Although only portions of the building remain today, the Caulkins Building was well documented through photographs and plans and was a unique example of Romanesque Revival architecture by one of Buffalo's most prominent architectural practitioners, F.W. Caulkins. The Caulkins Buildings is also a powerful symbol of the fragility of all the buildings of the Genesee Gateway. While they were solidly built of brick and mortar and stood for over a hundred years, neglect and misguided attempts at their restoration have pushed the Genesee Gateway buildings nearly to the point of no return. Without proper methods of stabilizing, protecting and rehabilitating these buildings- especially the fragile Denzinger-Sigwald and H. Seeberg Buildings- these solid, eternal structures face almost certain demolition. With the loss of these buildings, the City of Buffalo would stand to lose one of its last largely intact rows of commercial buildings which represent the City at the pinnacle of its economic and cultural success.

### **Franklin Wellington (F.W.) Caulkins, Architect**

Franklin Wellington Caulkins was in the late nineteenth-century one of Buffalo's most prominent and well-known architects, yet today few of his works remain (see image 17). Obviously proud of his creation, F.W. Caulkins had his name and role as architect molded into the cast iron decoration of the Caulkins Building, forever marking his role in the building's history.<sup>2</sup> Little is known about the elusive architect, and many of his architectural creations have been demolished and forgotten, yet Caulkins was once one of Buffalo's most respected and prolific architects in the nineteenth-century.

Born in Hartford, Connecticut in 1855, F.W. Caulkins established his architectural practice in Buffalo in 1878 in the Townsend Block at Main & Swan Streets (image 18). An adept practitioner of nearly any style of the day, Caulkins designed several homes in Buffalo

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<sup>2</sup> While this is generally an uncommon practice, it was not the only time that Caulkins had installed such an advertisement on one of his buildings. On a similarly four-story commercial building at 755-757 Seneca Street known as the Kamman Building (ca. 1883-1884) in Buffalo, Caulkins also placed such a cast iron panel on its primary façade.

including the Elizabethan-style James Smith House at 741 West Ferry Street (ca. 1880s, demolished), the Romanesque Forsythe House at 410 Delaware (unknown date, demolished), and his own intricate Stick Style house at 415 Franklin Street (1882, contributing to the Allentown Historic District, see image 20). His series of eclectic Queen Anne-style residences at 69, 51 and 55 Symphony Circle along with 430 Delaware Avenue are all contributing buildings to the Allentown Historic District (NR 1978). Caulkins was also noted for his commercial projects which included the oddly-shaped Chapin Building at the corner of Pearl and Swan Streets (ca. 1880s, demolished), the seven-story White Building (1881, now significantly altered, see image 21) and the Richardson Romanesque style State National Bank building in North Tonawanda (ca. 1880s-1900). He also designed the Sloan Malt House (date unknown, demolished), which was located on Exchange Street on the same block as the Kamman Building. Caulkin's unique brick Gothic Revival style Prospect Avenue Baptist Church (ca. 1880s) is a contributing building to the West Village Historic District (NR 1978).

While many of Caulkins' buildings are no longer standing, perhaps his best known contribution to Buffalo's architecture is his extensive renovation to the Austin Building at 110 Franklin Street (1833, altered 1880); Caulkins demolished much of the former Unitarian Church building built by Buffalo-icon Benjamin Rathbun, completely rebuilding the edifice from the ground floor upwards. The Kamman Building (ca. 1883-84, SR 2009, NR pending) is another excellent example of Caulkins' work, and with its brick and sandstone Romanesque commercial façade like the Caulkins Building, the two contemporary buildings appear to be almost "sisters" (see image 19). After a prolific and diverse career, Caulkins left Buffalo in 1903, living and working in Missouri, Texas and Louisiana before passing away in Bedford, Virginia in 1940.

### **Colson-Hudson, Architects**

The architectural firm of Colson-Hudson was responsible for the 1914 storefront redesign of the Caulkins Building, which was undertaken for building owner Mrs. Louis Bergtold. Founded in 1905, both partners Ellicott R. Colson (1871-1923) and Harry F. Hudson (1878-1963) were Buffalo natives, and both received most of their professional training in local offices. Colson worked for eight years in the office of Esenwein & Johnson, designers of the neighboring Baldwin Building at 109 Genesee Street, while Hudson worked for Green & Wicks, as well as for D. H. Burnham & Co. of Chicago. The office of Colson-Hudson was active and produced a wide range of projects in the Buffalo area during the early twentieth century. Their residential designs included homes for Dean R. Nott at 556 Lafayette Avenue (1908), James A. White at 110 Oakland Place (1909); and Charles Rohlf at 156 Park Street (1912) designed in association with the prominent Arts and Crafts furniture craftsman. Among numerous commercial and office buildings designed and renovated by the firm are the reinforced concrete warehouse for Adam, Meldrum, & Anderson Co. at 210 Ellicott, 996-1004 Elmwood Ave. (1908), conversion of a former livery stable into a Hupmobile dealership at 401 Franklin Street (c.1920s altered, contributing to Allentown Historic District) and 515-517 Main St. (1911). The Republic Metalware Co. (1905-1913, demolished) at Republic & Alabama Streets, the Cyphers Incubator Co. (1913, altered) at 67 Dewey Avenue, and the Sowers Manufacturing Co. (1913-1920) at 1300 Niagara St., were some of the firm's industrial complexes. The firm also completed additions to the E. & B. Holmes Machinery Company Building located at 55 Chicago Street in 1910-1912 (NR 2009). After the death of Colson,

Hudson formed a partnership with his younger brother and former Colson-Hudson architect, Chauncey Hudson, to create the firm of Hudson and Hudson. This firm continued to produce works in the Buffalo area, including the art moderne Lancaster Municipal Building (1940, NR 1999).

## **A History of Photography in Buffalo, NY**

Throughout its history, Buffalo has always been a city fascinated with technology and passionate about its art. The city has countered its massive grain elevators and steel mills with art galleries and landscaped boulevards and parks. Perhaps it is no wonder that throughout the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries Buffalonians had a fascination in the medium of photography which combined technical innovation with the creative process.

The process of photography was initially developed by Louis Jacque Mande Daguerre, who introduced the method on August 19, 1839 in Paris. His technique, named the daguerreotype, created the first photographic method which created stable, fixed images. The process reached America soon after in September and by 1840 there were hundreds of daguerreotypists working in the northeast alone. In Buffalo, the first daguerreotype was said to have been taken in November of 1839 by S.P. Pease of the Weed's Hardware Store, although this image is not known to have survived.

Although not initially valued as an art form in its own right, photography became popular as a way to capture portraiture. While many Americans could not afford the cost of commissioning an artist to paint a family portrait, the relatively inexpensive daguerreotype provided an affordable alternative. Due to the long exposure times required by the daguerreotype process at the time, photography was largely done indoors in a studio, and required elaborate props and supports to keep the sitter steady during the up to 8 minute exposure time. In the pre-electricity age, buildings with even, natural lighting proved ideal for use as studios. By the mid-1840s, the photographic process had been refined, allowing for shorter exposure times which resulted in a clearer, more natural portrait.

Photography came to Buffalo at a time of significant development and growth for the area following the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 coupled with the increasing grain trade and growing railroad industry. While transportation brought thousands of workers and residents to the city, thousands of people also flocked to the region for tourism and sightseeing. People traveling further west or to nearby Niagara Falls often stopped in Buffalo, and by the 1850s the city boasted a strong, permanent photography industry which catered to the influx of visitors and settlers to the area.

Many of Buffalo's earliest photographic studios sprang up along Main Street. Dr. Elliott Burwell established Buffalo's first studio at 266 Main Street in July 1840. In 1845 Charles and Henry Meade opened their daguerreotype studio at 232 Main Street. Not only a traditional portraiture studio, they also offered the first photographic gallery in Buffalo where people could view examples of their work. Many of Buffalo's early photographers became quite prominent in the field, including Donald McDonnell. McDonnell, who presented a report in 1851 on lighting to the Mathew Brady Gallery in New York City, was described as "among the most successful of

modern operators in the art that took its name from that beautiful discovery of Daguerre.”<sup>3</sup> McDonnell’s elegant photographic studio was described:

*“Entering from Main you find yourself in a spacious reception room, hung with the finest specimens of art and furnished as richly as a parlor. Beyond this are three galleries lighted by skylights...among which are several ingenious arrangements we have never seen before. The entire length of this suite of apartments is two hundred and thirty-two feet, and no care of expenses has been spared in making this magnificent distance pleasing to the eye.”*<sup>4</sup>

While certainly McDonnell’s space was above the norm in photography studios, the description of his studio as a lavish, welcoming location which was elegantly appointed and provided a sort of escape through not only the photographic process but the architectural surroundings.

By 1855, the daguerreotype process was replaced by the wet plate collodion process, which offered a more convenient and popular method of photography. Also popular in this period were the ambrotype and tintype methods, which also provided simpler processes. However it was the invention of paper photographic prints after 1855, rather than glass or metal which was previously utilized, which revolutionized the photographic industry. This development, which created a medium which was easier to use and less expensive to produce, led to an explosion in the number of photographic studios in Buffalo; between 1855 and 1865 the number of photography studios increased from seven to nearly forty.

In the 1860s, paper photographic prints became the most popular method used by photographers, and the new technology allowed for a wide variety of new products and options. *Carte de visites*, a small photograph of about two by four inches, were an early favorite. Cabinet cards, a slightly larger version, also became extremely popular for recording portraits, landscapes and other images. Stereoviews also became extremely popular in the 1860s, creating a photographic card with two duplicate images at each end which could be viewed through a special handheld viewing apparatus, creating the illusion of three-dimensionality. Paper prints also allowed for artists to interact with the final print by hand coloring the black and white images with paints or pencils, allowing for tinting, shading and even retouching of a “blemished” image. It is in the 1860s that the term “photography” became widely used, and the medium also came into its own as a unique art form with a myriad of possibilities.

The period after the Civil War saw the maturation of the photography industry in Buffalo. Not only had the technological process of making the prints become simpler and more perfected, offering better results which were easier to produce, but the photographic industry began to become more organized and professional. Publications such as the *Philadelphia Photographer* offered information on the technological and artistic aspects of the process, creating an environment of education and discussion on photography as an industry. *Photographic World* (established in 1871) and *Photographic Times* (1872) allowed for advances in the field to reach photographers across the country.

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Torok, George D. *Hidden Years: Early Photography in Western New York*. Buffalo: Burchfield Art Center, 1993; 9.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Torok, 9.

Locally in Buffalo, several photographers and studios emerged as leaders in not only the technological aspects but also the artistic qualities of photography. William J. Baker, who owned a studio at 390 Main Street in 1867, became one of the city's most respected practitioners. His work was highly regarded, and he also wrote numerous articles in photographic journals. Baker created a lighting technique for portraiture known as "Rembrandt" lighting, which created a highlighted and more contrasting image. His technique created a more life-like image in contrast to the even, flat light source typically used by photographers at the time, which resulted in images which lacked depth and shadow. Also a significant figure in the local photography industry was Charles L. Pond, who travelled to California to photograph the new lush scenery, which he then brought back to Buffalo to sell as stereoviews. Pond also captured some of the earliest cityscape and harbor views of the City of Buffalo, including large panoramic shots which reflected the advancements made in photographic technology. Horace Bliss and the Bliss Brothers' studio was also a prominent local studio, opening at the former site of Donald McDonnell's studio on Main Street.

In 1869 when the first national photographic organization was created, William J. Baker was instrumental in creating the local Buffalo chapter. The Buffalo Photographic Association was formed in 1873 as part of the National Photographic Association, and Baker served as its president. The association provided a local forum where members could discuss new ideas and techniques, share information, and invite guests to share papers. Baker also organized the Association's national convention which was held in Buffalo in July 1873, drawing hundreds of members from across the region.

During the mid to late-nineteenth century, much of the photographic work being produced fell into two categories; portraiture and natural imagery. As photographic equipment became smaller, more streamlined and more portable, cameras could be taken outdoors to more remote locations across the country. Portraiture, in contrast, was best suited for indoor studios. Artists could control the environment in which the sitter was posed; including not only the lighting and scenery, but the poses, costumes and effects used for the shot. As a result of the special needs for photography, many buildings throughout Buffalo which housed photography studios featured north-facing skylights or windows which allowed for the ample, even lighting in the interior required by studio photographers.

By the 1880s, the field of photography began to diverge between a more artistic, professional vein and an emerging amateur market. Rochester-native George Eastman mass-marketed dry photographic plates, establishing his photography empire with his introduction of roll film in 1888. This innovation opened up photography to the amateur general public, rather than being in the sole control of the specialized professional, creating an even wider market for photographic equipment and products. While the general public no longer needed to solely rely on the photographic artist for their image needs, whether portraits or artistic landscape photography, this broadening of the photography market served to enhance the respect for the work of professional photographers as more people became familiar with the skill and artistry required to create good quality work. In 1888 Dr. G. Hunter Bartlett organized the Buffalo Camera Club, bringing together both the amateur and professional photography community which was largely responsible for promoting and forwarding photography in Buffalo forward into the twentieth-century.

The decades around 1900 were generally a period of rapid modern technological advancement, many of which also effected the photographic profession. New developments such as electricity revolutionized the field of photography. While electrical light did not replace the reliance on northern light sources, artists could more subtly control light sources for studio work, creating not only a refinement in the current techniques but the invention of new ones based on the new possibilities. George Eastman pioneered a line of inexpensive, easy to use, mass produced cameras, introducing the first Brownie cameras in February 1900. Color photography had been explored as early as the mid-1800s and by 1907 the first commercially successful color process, the Autochrome, was created by the French Lumière brothers.

As photography gained a greater appreciation for its artistic and aesthetic value, photography studios likewise became more elegant and sophisticated buildings. Many of the earliest photography studios along Main Street had taken pre-existing commercial or residential buildings which faced either east or west and converted them for use as studios. Additions were frequently constructed on the buildings with specialized “photo light” skylights constructed in the roof and wall, typically facing north, indicating the usage as photographic studios. As early as 1849, publications such as *The History and Practice of the Art of Photography* by Henry Hunt Snelling advocated certain desired elements for a photographic studio. Snelling recommended that the studio be elevated from the street level as high as possible to ensure even, uninterrupted lighting. He proposed a studio be built at the highest level of a building with large, north facing windows ideally which offered top and side or front lighting. Walls which were not glass were typically painted white or pale blue to ensure the reflected lighting maintained its color value. In his book Snelling recommended the following to photographers:

*“In choosing your operating room, obtain one with a north-western aspect, if possible; and either with, or capable of having attached, a large sky-light. Good pictures may be taken without the sky-light, but not the most pleasing or effective.”<sup>5</sup>*

Snelling’s recommendations for an ideal studio, which was echoed for several decades following his publication, in many ways sounds like a description of the Werner Photography Building (101-103 Genesee Street) and the Caulkins Building (1886, F.W. Caulkins, architect) at 85-87-89 Genesee Street. Despite being constructed some forty years after this description, as late as 1911 daylight photographic studios were still recommended in publications such as Bernard Jones’ *Encyclopedia of Photography* despite developments in electrical and artificial lighting. Daylight studios, as both the Werner Photography Building and Caulkins Building would be classified, were considered to be the best type of photographic studio throughout the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, despite inherent limitations. Photographers in daylight studios were limited to working during daylight hours, and during dull, winter days when the light was low, portraits required overly long exposures, resulting in varied results. From a functional standpoint, the large skylights were often prone to leaking and required maintenance and upkeep, and since they were often elevated to the level of smokestacks and chimneys, they became dirty and clouded and required frequent cleaning. In an industrial city such as Buffalo, this would have been a concern for many photography studios.

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Hannavy, John. *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography*. Vol. 1. New York: Routledge, 2007; 1356-1357.

Studio buildings appear to have had a tradition, going back to the description of Donald McDonnell's studio in the 1850s, of creating spectacular, elegant spaces, but the earliest buildings appear to have confined this aesthetic focus to primarily interior spaces. Studios frequently featured elaborate props and backgrounds for the photographs. However by the late nineteenth-century, photography buildings in Buffalo became as artistic on the exterior as they were on the interior. Buildings such as the Caulkins Building and the Werner Photography Building combined both the utilitarian needs of creating a functional photographic studio space with a more fantastical, artistic appearance emphasizing the bill-board like quality of the primary elevation. Advantageously located with their primary façade facing due north, the large "photo light" skylights previously utilized were in the late 1900s transformed into signature architectural features; graceful curved planes of glass and copper form "waterfall" windows and make both buildings unique and specialized among previous adapted photographic studio buildings.

Both types of photographic studios, whether adapted or new-built, featured specific, specialized elements such as the large windows and skylights and lavishly appointed interiors. Because of this specific design, buildings which were established as photographic studios typically remained in use as such for many years, becoming as identified by their architecture as the artists who worked within. It was not uncommon for artists to share photography studios during the nineteenth-century. It was common that if a photographer vacated or went out of business, another photography studio would establish itself in the building. Due to its highly specialized nature, good quality photography studio space, such as the Caulkins and Werner buildings, was hard to come by in the 1900s, and specialized buildings became rare commodities, recycled and reused to their fullest extent.

### **Architectural Responses to the Radial Street Plan**

The Caulkins Building is an example of a rare breed of buildings which is unique to Buffalo. Because of the city's radial street plan overlaid on a traditional street grid, Buffalo has a series of oddly shaped, irregular blocks which result from Joseph Ellicott's Baroque city plan of 1804. These triangular and pointed city blocks create unique challenges to the architecture and built landscape of Buffalo, both historically and still to this day. Often time as a result of these irregularly shaped blocks, individual parcels or plots within were also oddly shaped. Parcels could be regularly created along one street, but then forced to alter their direction or shape when confronted with an intersecting street which ran at an oblique angle.<sup>6</sup> Buildings in Buffalo have been forced to deal with these non-rectangular, non-uniform blocks in their parcel and plot boundaries, overall form and design, and their orientation to the primary street particularly how the building responds to the oddly shaped corners. In an age when typical commercial and residential architecture was based on a similar rectilinear "box" construction and spatial system, many of Buffalo's buildings had to be constructed at odd angles fit to the confines

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<sup>6</sup> An 1847 map of the City of Buffalo depicts the south block of Genesee Street between Ellicott and Oak Streets as being bisected by a small street called Blossom Street, north to south. Blossom Street is still partially extant as an alley running between East Huron and Broadway Streets but has disappeared further north. The presence of a right-of-way may account for the form of the parcels along this portion of Genesee Street. Parcels to the west and eastern corners appear to run parallel or nearly parallel to Ellicott and Oak Streets, but parcels in the middle of the block run perpendicular to Genesee Street. This may reflect that the parcels were divided during two different times; one early, perhaps in the 1820s-30s when settlement of the area first occurred, and one later, perhaps in the 1850s when this small alley disappears and was turned into valuable Genesee Street commercial property.

dictated by the radial street plan. The result of this negotiation has been some of Buffalo's finest architectural treasures, many of which are State and National Register listed. By following Genesee Street, such buildings include the Electric Tower (1912, NR 2008), the Buffalo Savings Bank building (1901, NRE), and the former Genesee Building (1922-23). Even Buffalo City Hall (1929-31, NR 1996) reflects the negotiation of Ellicott's street plan in its octagonal footprint, created by combining two parcels at the western edge of Niagara Square.

Buildings in Buffalo which are sited on these oddly shaped blocks typically exhibit one of two responses. One response is that the building embraces the corner or angle, acknowledging the situation of the unique form of the block in its architecture or design. Buildings which exhibit this approach often have architectural features such as columns, moldings, porches or other elements which are pointed directly at the corner. In some cases the building is turned slightly to present a primary or secondary façade to the corner. This is the response which the neighboring H. Seeberg Building presented at the corner of Oak and Genesee Streets. The 123-125 unit of the H. Seeberg Building embraced the corner location. The chamfered corner of the building contained a small but remarkable entrance into the building, marking the importance of a corner location by recognizing and conforming the building to the location. This was further augmented by the placement of the mansard roof at the corner of the 123-125 unit in the 1870s which emphasizes the prominence of the Genesee-Oak Streets location. This chamfered edge becomes a small façade which, because it alters the form of the building away from the box, becomes notable. This cut-away turns the profile of the H. Seeberg Building slightly towards the east, heightening the sense of perspective since the viewer wants to examine the building from the corner rather than straight-on, drawing the emphasis away from the larger northern façade and placing more emphasis on the corner.

An opposing reaction is to deny the presence of the odd angle or sharp corner and attempt to regulate and normalize the appearance of the building. Buildings which deny the irregular angles typically present an "ordinary," rectilinear façade to the street, regardless of the shape of the parcel or plot on which the building is sited. One could stand on the street and view this building and not immediately understand that the building was at an unusual angle or irregularly shaped plot. An example of this phenomenon is exhibited by the building at the western end of the Genesee Gateway buildings, located at 85-87-89 Genesee Street and known as the Caulkins Building. When viewed from Genesee Street, this building appears to be a typical, three-story rectangular brick building, and it is assumed that the walls of this primary façade are perpendicular to the elevation, creating a rectangular box-like building behind. In reality, this building was a miniscule building, with a triangular form. The small building was forced to adjust its perimeter to the small, wedge shaped parcel formed by the boundaries of lots to its east which ran nearly parallel to Ellicott and Oak Street along Genesee Street, with the abrupt meeting of the boundaries of parcels which ran perpendicular to Ellicott Street (image 16). Because of the knife-edge western corner of the building formed from its unique triangular form, the western bay of the building was forced to accommodate an internal stair, concealed behind a continuous storefront façade, relegating dwelling space to the eastern portion of the building. Because commercial space in this area was at a premium in the 1880s when the building was constructed, the Caulkins Building presented as large a commercial façade as possible to the busy street, a sort of "false-front," denying the form of the building behind.

## **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 28). 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.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup>

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.<sup>9</sup> 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

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<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> Rizzo, Michael. *Through The Mayor's Eyes: The Only Complete History of the Mayors of Buffalo*. Buffalo: People's History Union, 2001.

<sup>9</sup> *Index of Records of Streets*, 286.

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 29). 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.<sup>10</sup>

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 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.<sup>11</sup>

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 referred to as 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).<sup>12</sup> 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).<sup>13</sup> 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.

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<sup>10</sup> James, Isabel Vaughan. Some Outstanding Germans in Buffalo. Manuscript, BECHS.

<sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> 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 150<sup>th</sup> year with Mass." *Buffalo News*. 29 Sep 2001, A-7.

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

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 22, 23, 24). 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 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 25, 26).<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup> 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 27). 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

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<sup>14</sup> "Washington Market to Close July 1, Banas Announces." *Buffalo Evening News*. 11 Jan 1965.

<sup>15</sup> Today, the church has about 200 registered members. Refer to Condren, A-7.

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 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.<sup>16</sup> 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.

Recently, Governor David A. Paterson signed into law expanded New York State tax credit legislation which offers new opportunities for building such as the Genesee Gateway. This new tax credit legislation offers up to 20% in credits for the certified rehabilitation of residential buildings, and also 20% in credits for commercial properties in addition to the 20% available in Federal tax credits. Co-sponsored by Senator David Valesky and Assemblyman Sam Hoyt, this new legislation is aimed at making new and larger rehabilitation projects financially feasible. This legislation which took effect on January 1, 2010, is intended for projects just like the Genesee Gateway; a project with a significant impact on the local community by rehabilitating buildings which face certain demise, but whose restoration can bring new life and vitality to a neglected neighborhood.

Support for the project has come from the Margaret L. Wendt Foundation, one of Western New York’s and the nation’s preeminent foundations with an active interest and proven track-record in assisting significant historic preservation projects. The foundation was among the first in this area to seek out projects with great potential impact on the well-being of the community, rather than simply respond to pleas for assistance. The Wendt Foundation has supported several notable Buffalo-area projects including the Roycroft Campus (NR 1974, NHL 1986) revitalization in East Aurora, NY for which it received an award from the National Trust for

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<sup>16</sup> 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 Preservation, as well as the King Urban Life Center (NR 1980). In 2005, the Wendt Foundation was recognized by the Preservation League of New York State with its Excellence in Historic Preservation Award for Organizational Excellence. In the same year, Wendt Foundation Trustee Robert J. Kresse was presented the Lifetime Achievement Award by Commissioner Bernadette Castro of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation for his role in preserving and renewing some of the region's most significant historic properties.

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 proposed Genesee-Ellicott-Oak Commercial Historic District reflects a significant period of Buffalo's history, representing the city at the pinnacle of its international prominence. This district 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 Caulkins Building at 85-87-89 Genesee Street is an excellent example of the development of commercial architecture within the Genesee-Ellicott-Oak neighborhood, and it is an increasingly rare example of post-Civil War era architecture in the City of Buffalo. The building, a rare example of the work of F.W. Caulkins of which only a small number still exist, merits listing as a part of the proposed Genesee-Ellicott-Oak Commercial Historic District which is a superb collection of diverse but thematically related commercial buildings reflecting Buffalo at the height of the city's international prominence. The building is significant under Criteria C of the National Register of Historic Places Criteria for Evaluation, as an excellent example of commercial architecture and as an example of a daylight photography studio. The building is a rare example of work by prominent Buffalo architect, F.W. Caulkins, whose architecture shaped much of the appearance of Buffalo in the late-1900s but is now largely lost. The Caulkins Building is also significant under Criteria A for its role in the early pattern of commercial development of the Genesee-Ellicott-Oak neighborhood and in the City of Buffalo, and also for its role in the history of photography in Buffalo. The building is an example of the once-thriving studio photography industry in Buffalo, which grew up not too far removed from one of the earliest national centers for photography at Eastman Kodak in Rochester, NY just a few miles east. Because of its association with one of Buffalo's preeminent architects and its associations with the photographic and commercial heritage of the City of Buffalo, the Caulkins Building should be considered eligible for the State and National Registers of Historic Places as well as for the Historic Preservation Tax Credit.

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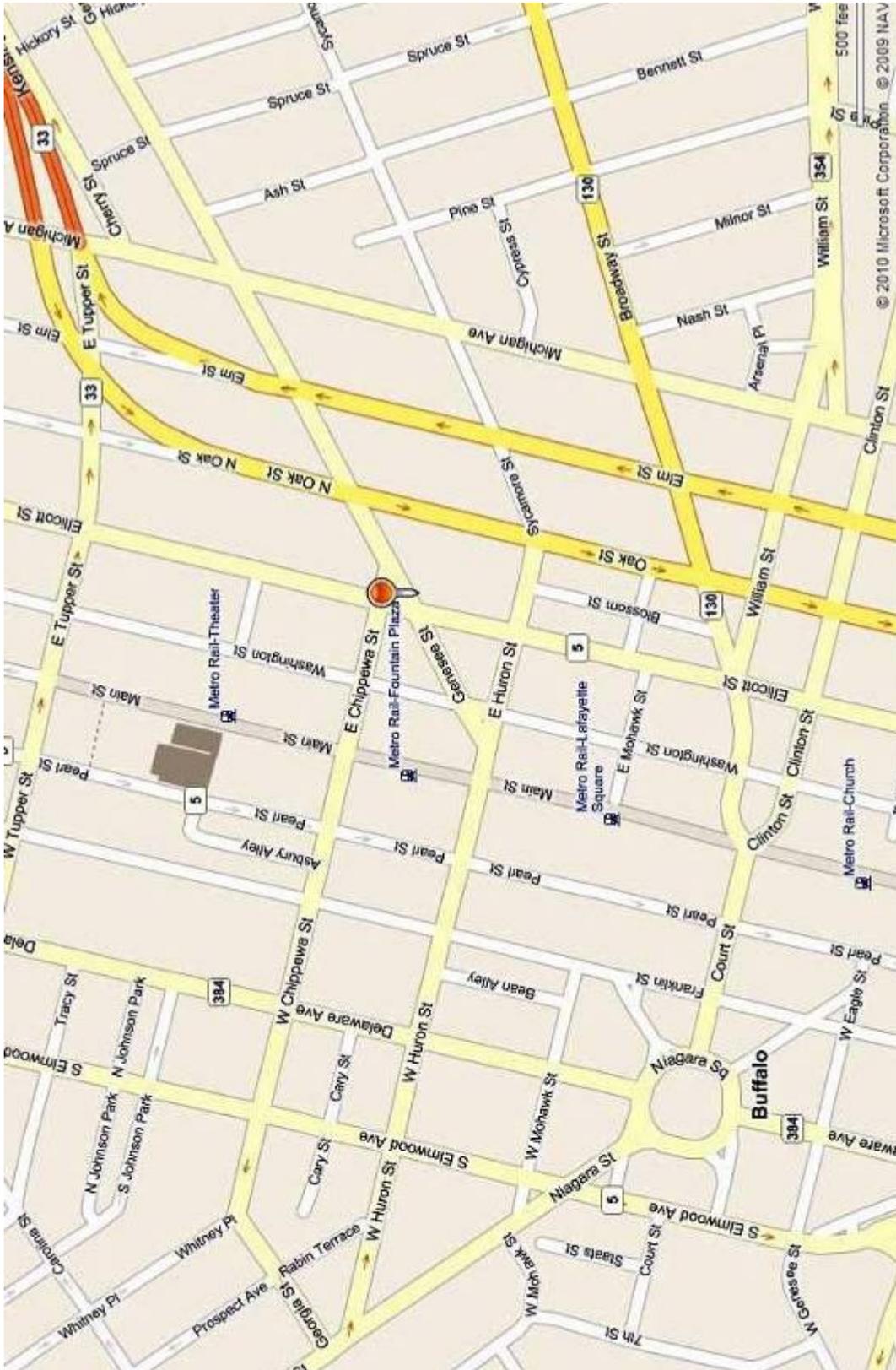
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- American Institute of Architects digital database:  
<http://communities.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/Wiki%20Pages/Find%20Names.aspx>
- Ancestry.com records for "Fred J. Dorn" and others
- The photographic files of the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society
- Buffalo and Erie County Public Library Vertical Files- Architecture, Preservation
- Scrapbook Collection at the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, Grosvenor Room
- Building-Structure Inventory Forms, February 1980, June 1988

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

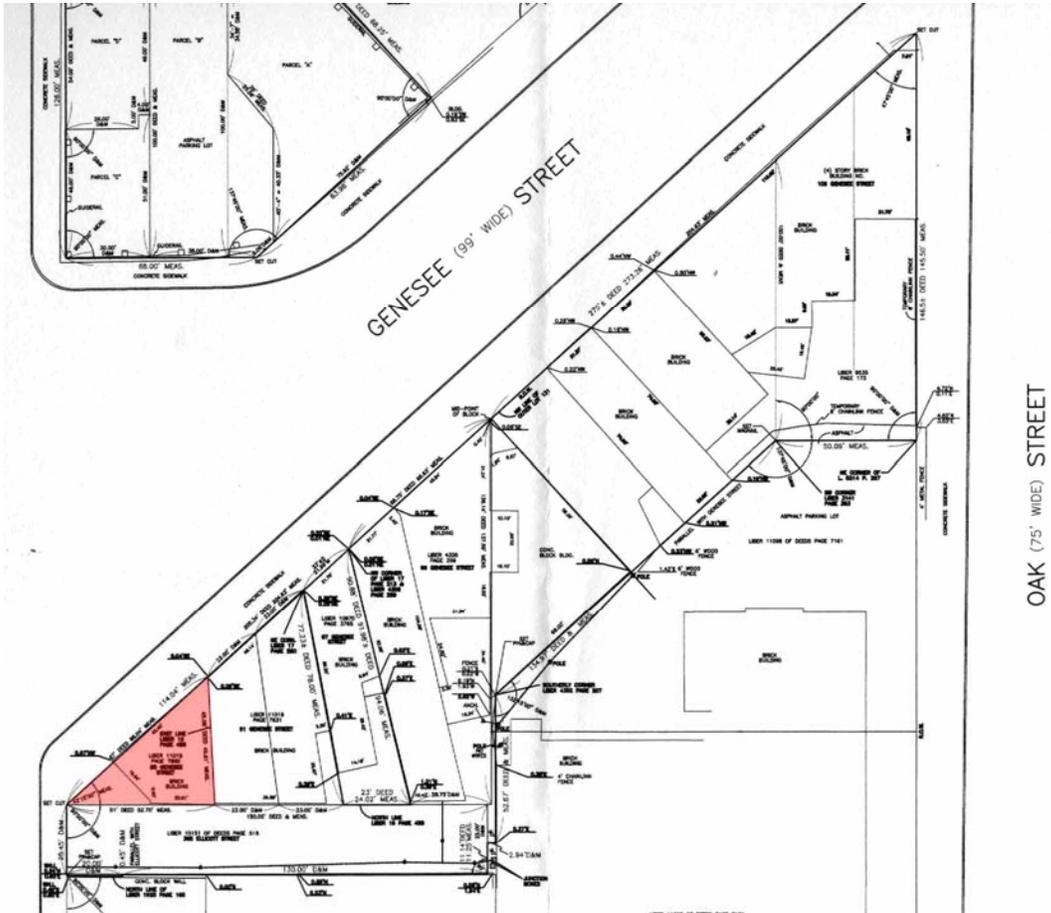
The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203



(1) Location of the Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203

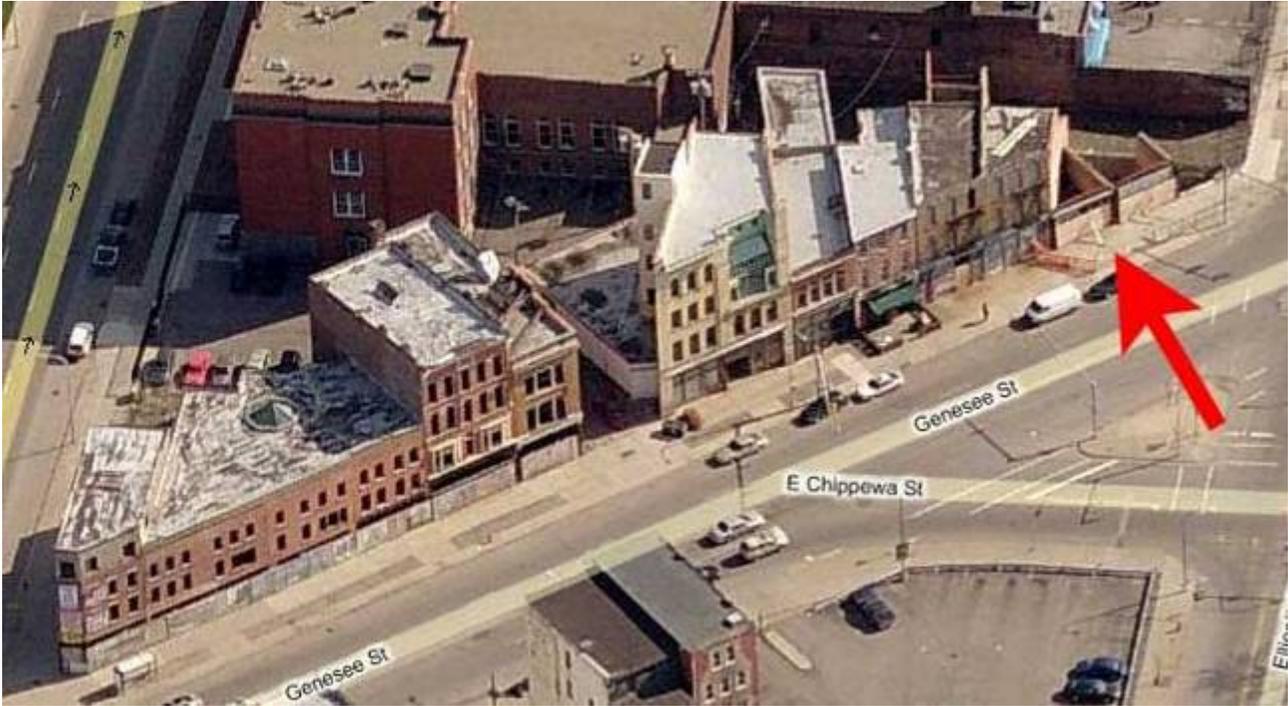


(2) Detail, Survey (2008)  
Showing location and parcel size of The Caulkins Building (red)



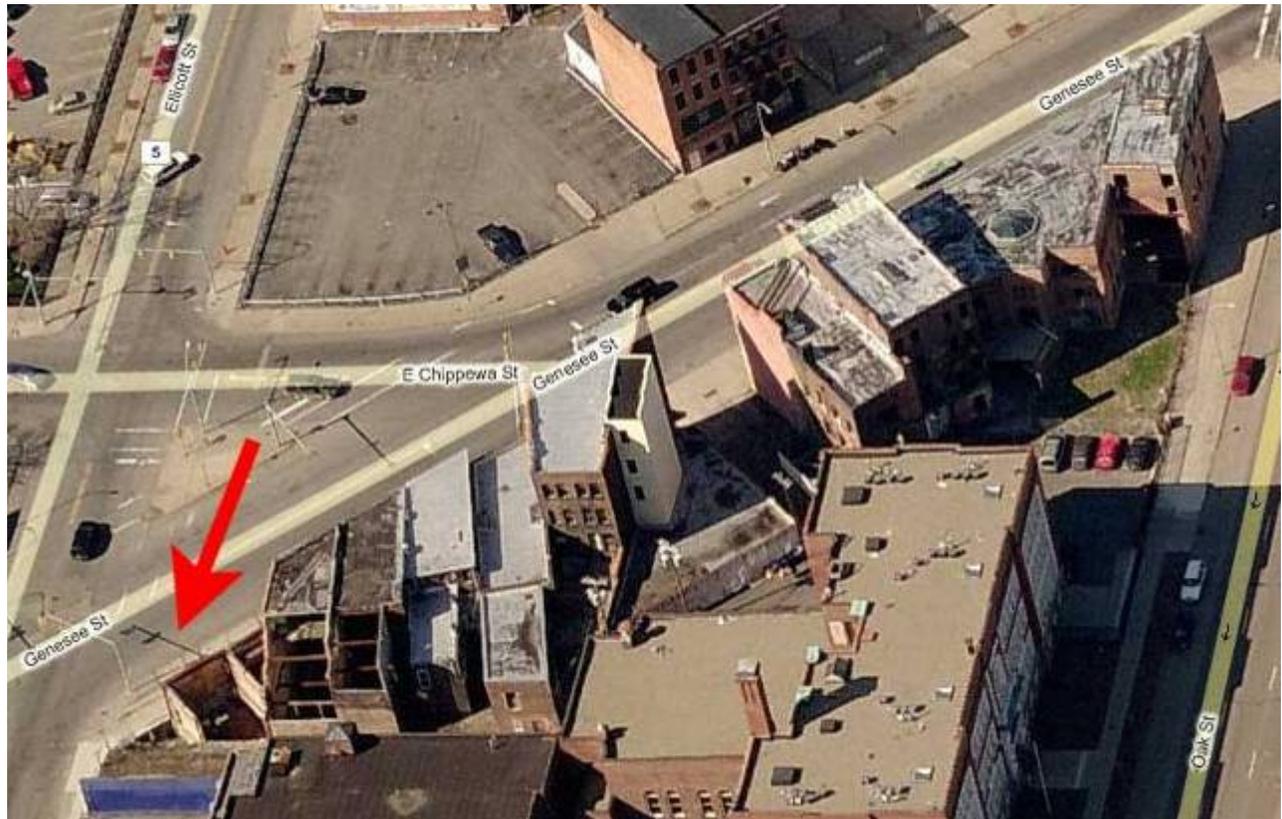
HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203



(3) Aerial View, facing south

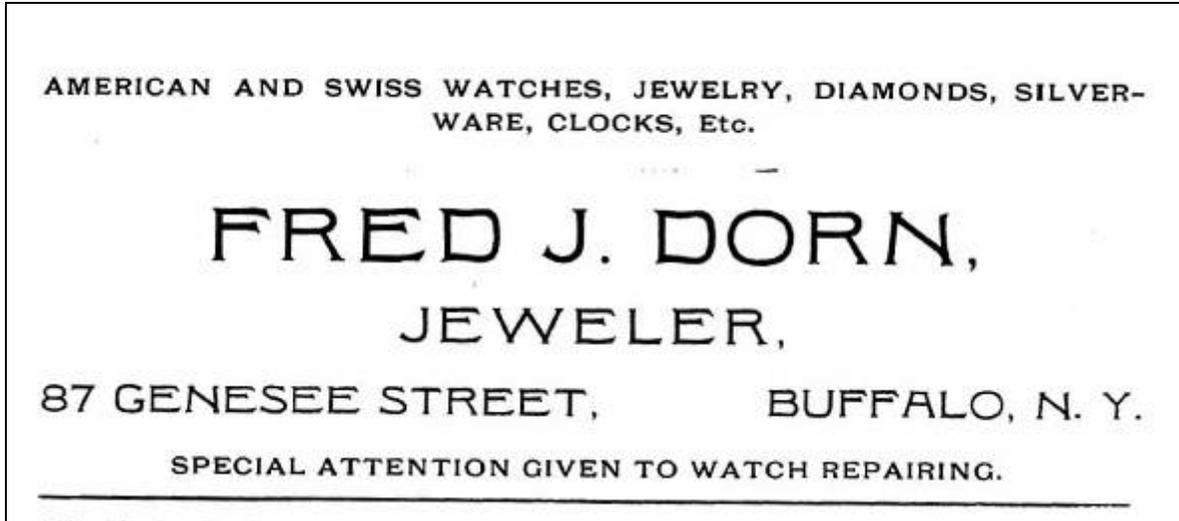
Note the regular, continuous line of the Genesee Gateway facades along the south side of Genesee Street.



(4) Aerial view, facing north

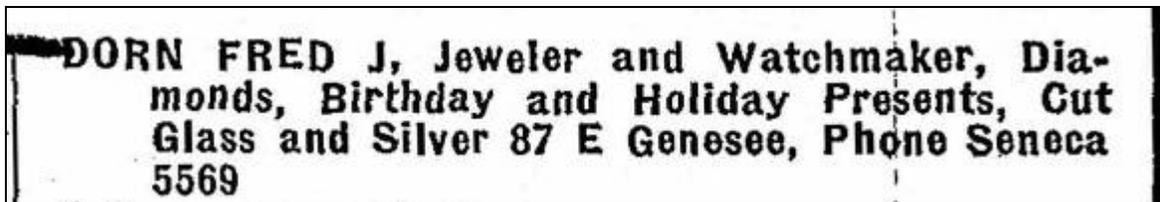
HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203



(5) Advertisement, Fred J. Dorn, Jeweler (from 1897's *Illustrated history of the United Trades and Labor Council of Erie County*)

Dorn was the longest tenured and perhaps most prominent tenant at the Caulkins Building, running a jewelry shop at 87 Genesee Street from 1886 until his death in 1930.



(6) Advertisement, Fred J. Dorn, Jeweler (1927 City Directory entry)

Following Dorn's death in 1930, his shop continued on under his name until at least the 1950s.



(7) Fred J. Dorn  
(February 24, 1856-  
January 3, 1930)

Dorn's jewelry store was a fixture at 87 Genesee Street for over 60 years.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203

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Cor Genesee st and Ellicott, 4-story br  
store and ten; cost, \$5,000; o, L. Bergtold;  
a, F. W. Caulkins.

(8) Excerpt, "Building Intelligence," *Sanitary Engineer* (1886)

Noted in this national publication was an announcement for the design and construction of the Caulkins Building at a cost of \$5,000 to owner Louis Bergtold.



(9) The Caulkins Building, ca. early 1970s

While grainy, this photograph is the earliest known image of the Caulkins Building. Note that the neighboring 395 Ellicott Street commercial building was still in existence to the south, which was demolished in 1975.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203

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(10) The Caulkins Building, 1980 (John Conlin, photographer)

When viewed obliquely, the true design of the Caulkins Building is revealed. Note that the façade appears to resemble a sort of bill-board with its four-story knife-edge corner at the right of the photo.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203

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(11) The Caulkins Building, 1980 (John Conlin, photographer)

A detailed view of the center bay of the Caulkins Building. Note that Fred J. Dorn's signage is still partially visible above the 87 Genesee Street storefront. After over 60 years in business, the Dorn shop had apparently left its mark on the building.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203

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(12) The Exterior Stair of the Caulkins Building, 1980 (John Conlin, photographer)  
A close up view of the elegant and unique staircase, wedged into the triangular confines of the western 85 Genesee Street bay. Note the adjacent miniscule retail space located at left.

## HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203

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(13) Interior of 87 Genesee retail space, looking north, 1980 (John Conlin, photographer)  
Notice how light-filled the commercial spaces were following the 1914 alterations done by Colson-Hudson. This image highlights the ample storefront display windows as well as the Luxfer prism transom above.

## HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203

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(14) The Caulkins Building, early 1980s (Karl R. Josker, photographer)

When viewed straight-on from the front, the Caulkins Building presents a deceptive façade. The building appears to be a typically, rectangular box building which extends far back to the south. In reality, this building occupies a small, triangular parcel. At the center storefront (#87) the signage of Fred J. Dorn is still partially visible, after many decades.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203

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(15) The Caulkins Building, ca. 1986

An excellent color image of the Caulkins Building, this image highlights the dark recessed corner stair, the Luxfer prism transoms and the stately Romanesque Revival brick and stone façade. Also notable is the “waterfall” or “photo light” skylight.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203

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(16) The Genesee Gateway Buildings, ca. 1986

Note the presence of the Caulkins Building and the mansarded Denzinger-Sigwald Buildings towards the image foreground, which were lost in 2002. The Werner Photography Building is located towards center and the H. Seeberg Building is at the background left.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

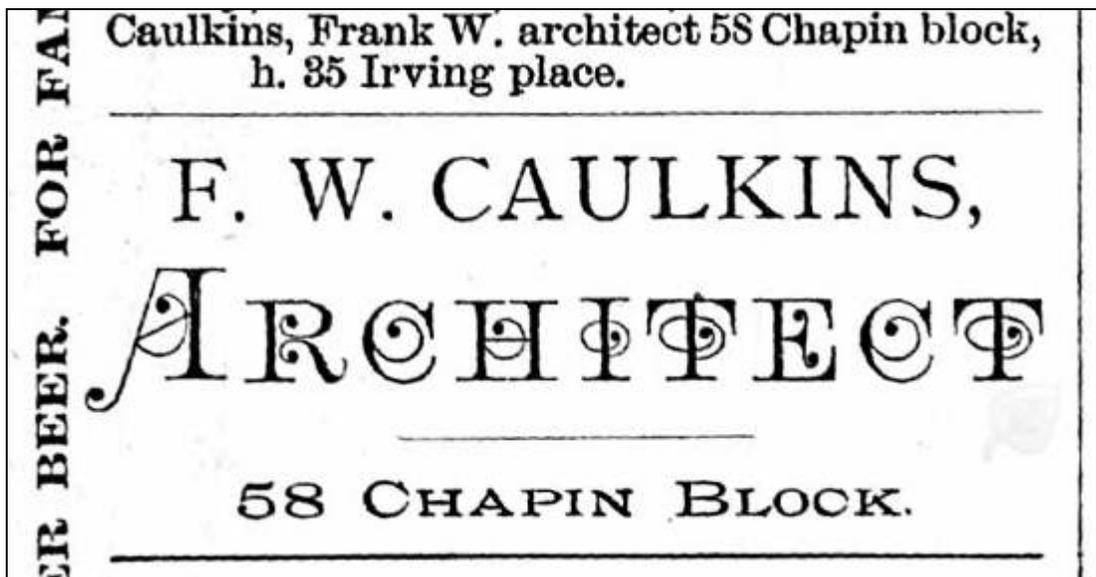
The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203

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(17) Franklin Wellington Caulkins, Architect  
(1855-1940)

F.W. Caulkins was a well-known architect working in Buffalo in the late nineteenth-century. While several examples of his residential work remains, few of his larger commercial commissions are extant today. The unusual design of the Caulkins Building is a testament to his architectural skill and design abilities. (from WNY Heritage Magazine)



(18) Advertisement, F.W. Caulkins, Architect (1889 City Directory)

This size and flourish of this advertisement from just a few years after the construction of the Caulkins Building indicates the successful career which Caulkins was enjoying during the 1880s.

## HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203

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(19) The Kamman Building, F.W. Caulkins Architect (ca. 1883-84, NR 2010)

Listed on the State Register of Historic Places, with National Register listing pending, the Kamman Building at 755-757 Seneca Street is a similar brick and stone Romanesque Revival mixed-use building, constructed around the same time as the Caulkins Building.



(20) Caulkins House, 415 Franklin Street (1882, contributing to Allentown Historic District)  
F.W. Caulkins' own house is one of the City's finest examples of the Stick Style Queen Anne tradition.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203

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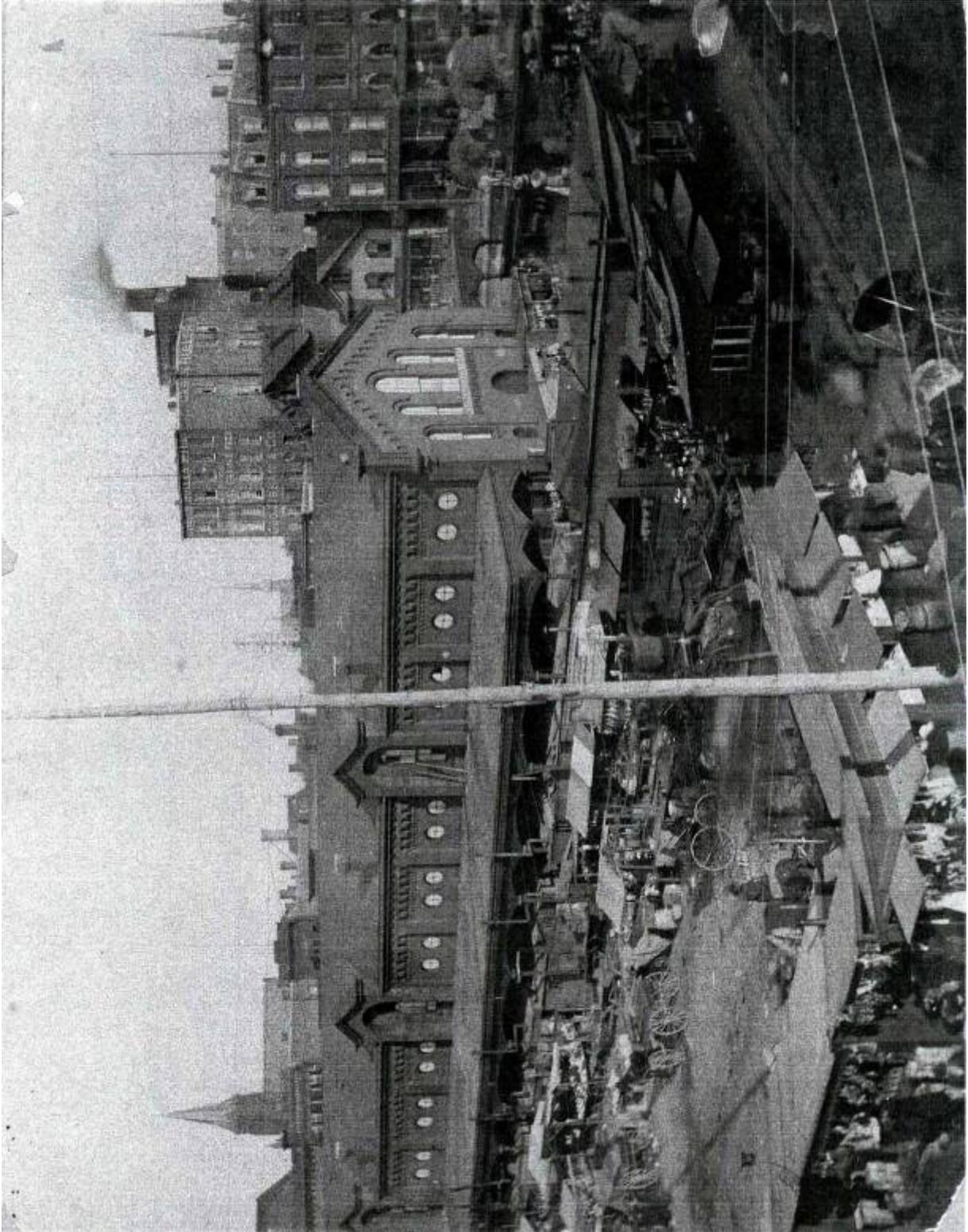
(21) The White Building, F.W. Caulkins (1881)

Now much altered, the White Building is the seven-story commercial building at the center of this image.

## HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203

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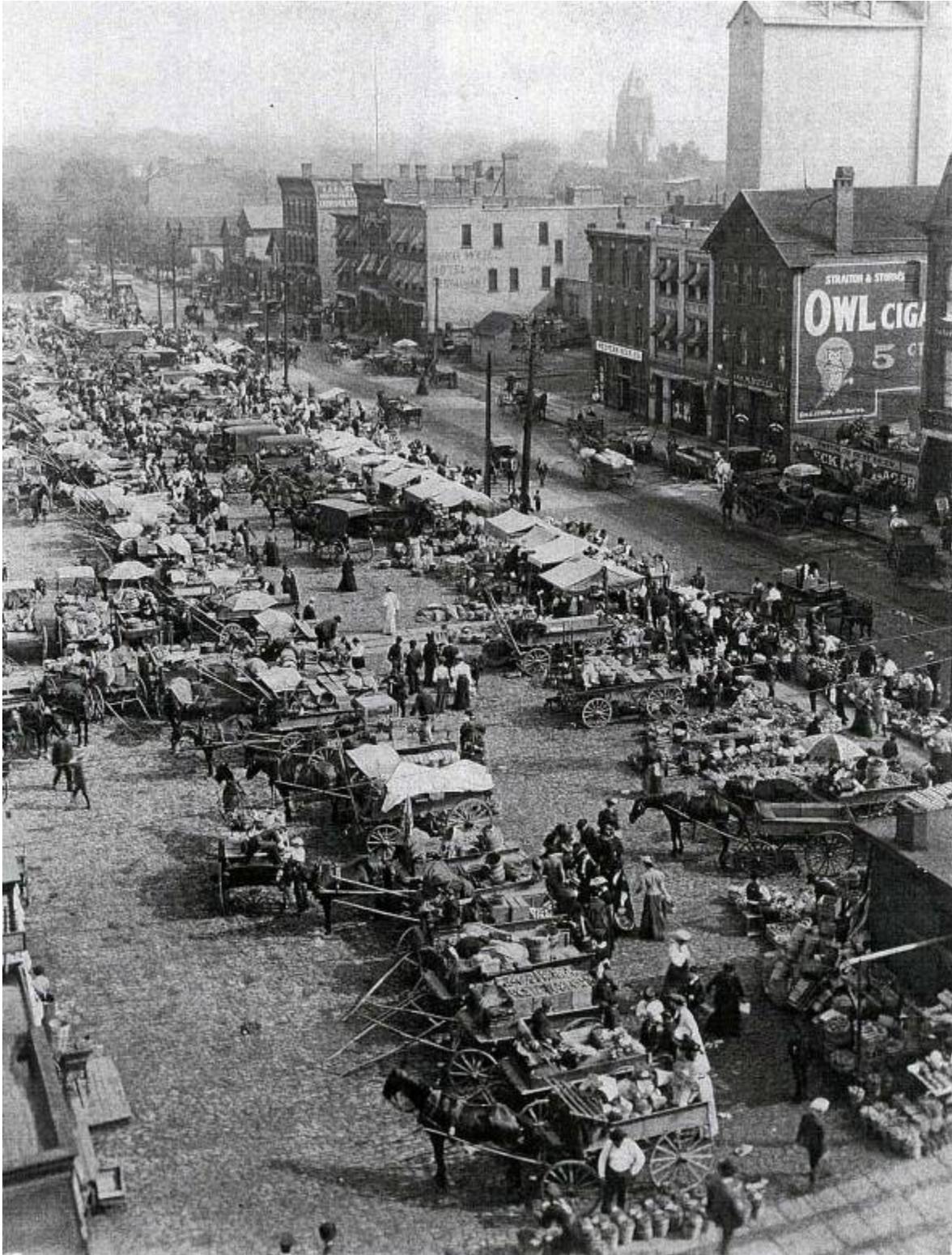
(22) The Washington Market looking east towards Ellicott Street, 1890

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. (Courtesy BECHS)

## HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203

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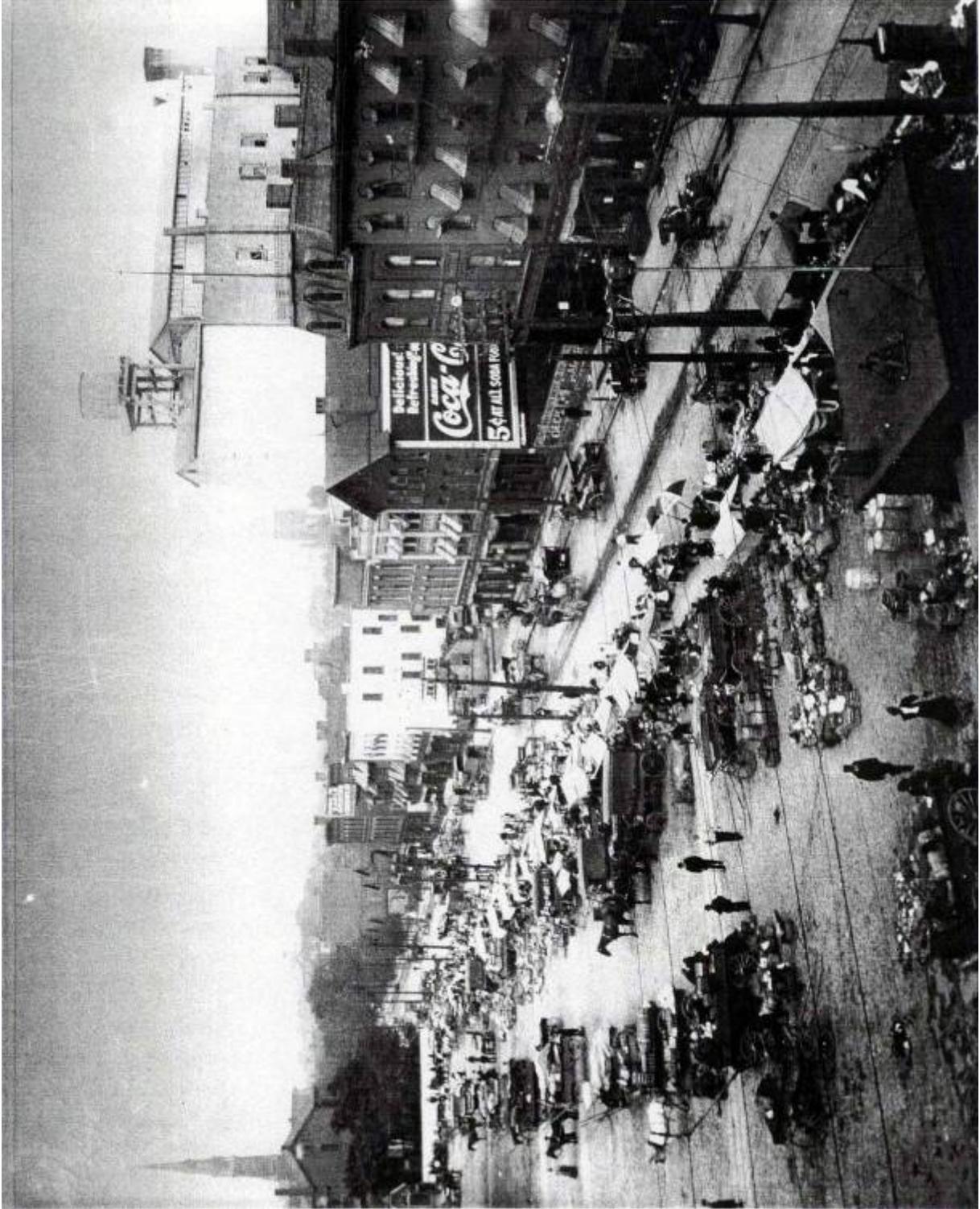
(23) The Washington Market looking north-east along Ellicott Street, 1905

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. (Courtesy BECHS)

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203

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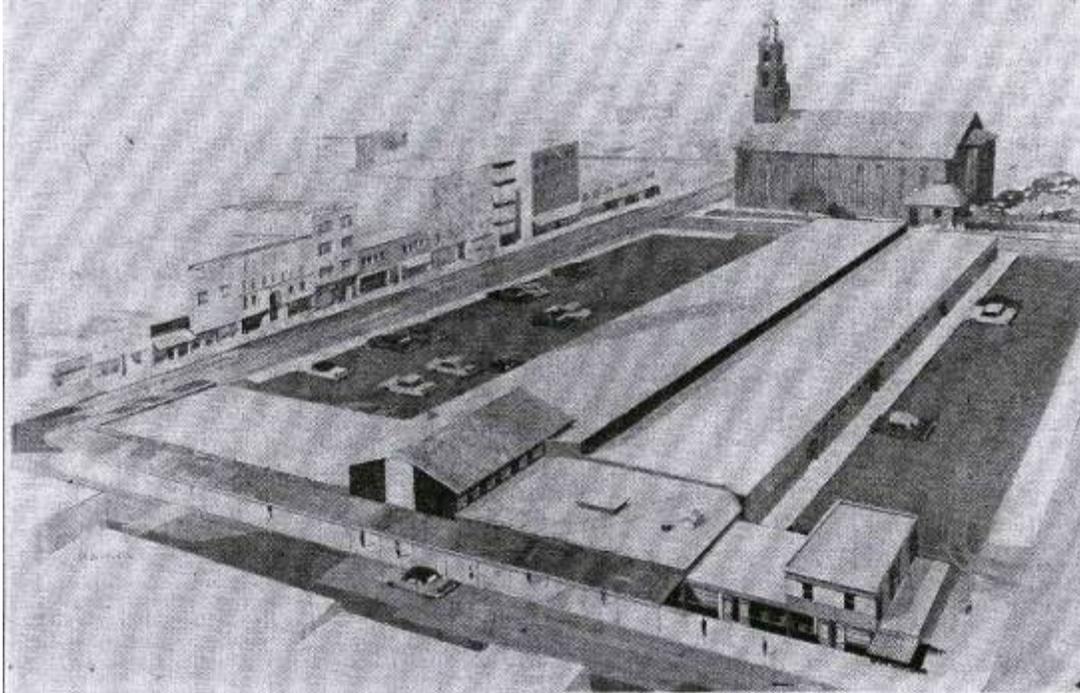


(24) The Washington Market looking north-east along Ellicott Street, 1912  
A view of the fine collection of nineteenth- and early-twentieth century commercial architecture which characterized the Genesee-Ellicott-Oak neighborhood at this period. (Courtesy BECHS)

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

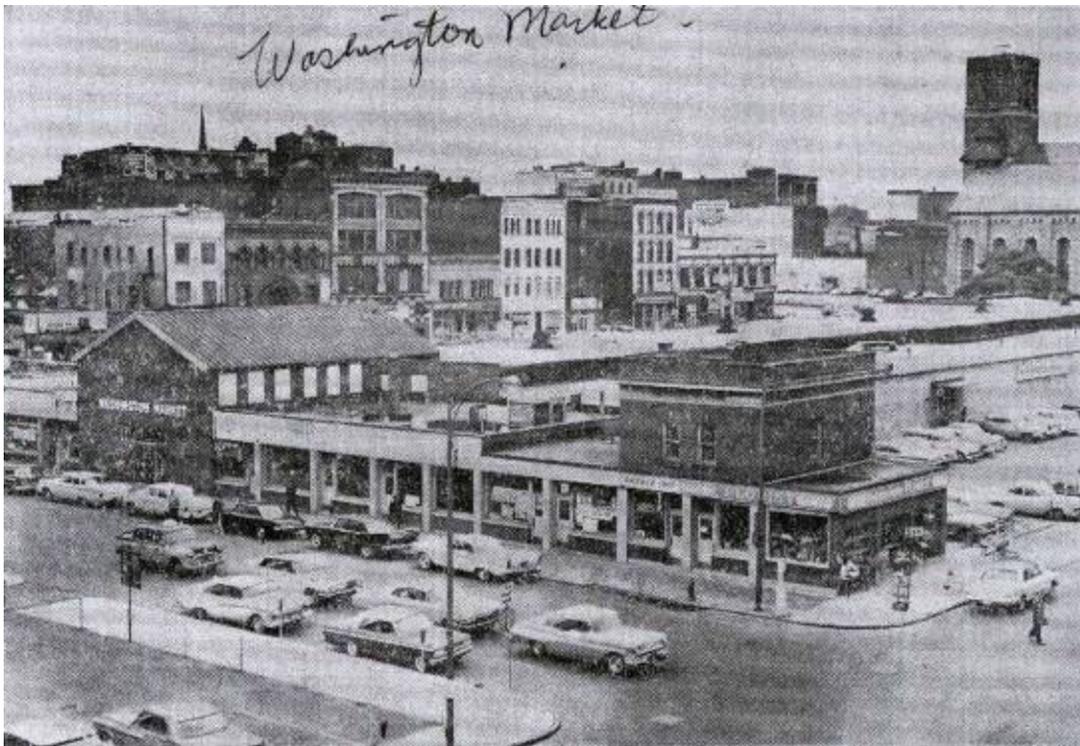
The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203

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(25) "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. (Courtesy BECHS)



(26) 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. (Courtesy BECHS)

## HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203

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Buffalo Courier Express, 22 Sep 1963:1.

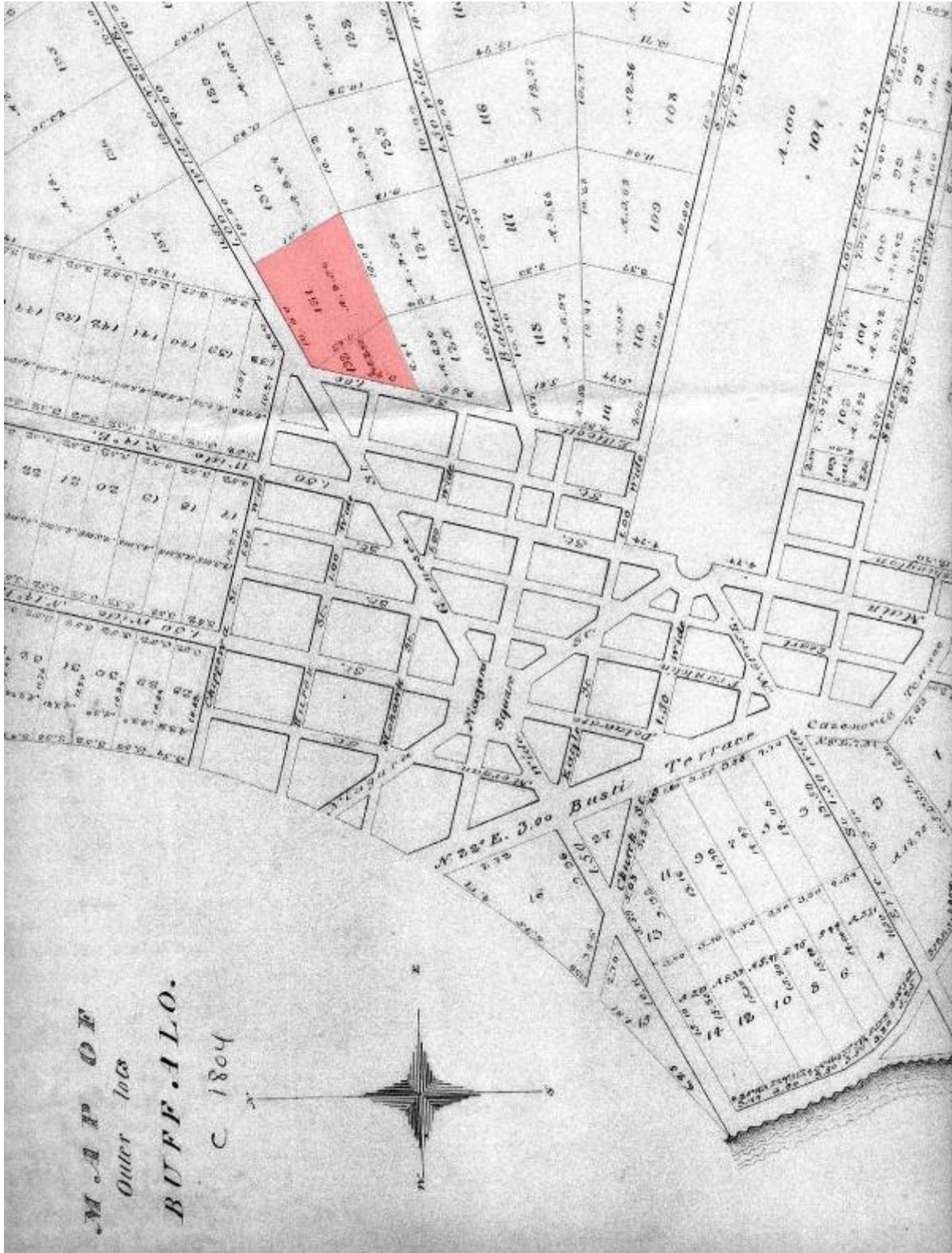


(27) "A New Downtown Parking Lot Opened Today."

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. (Courtesy BECHS)

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203

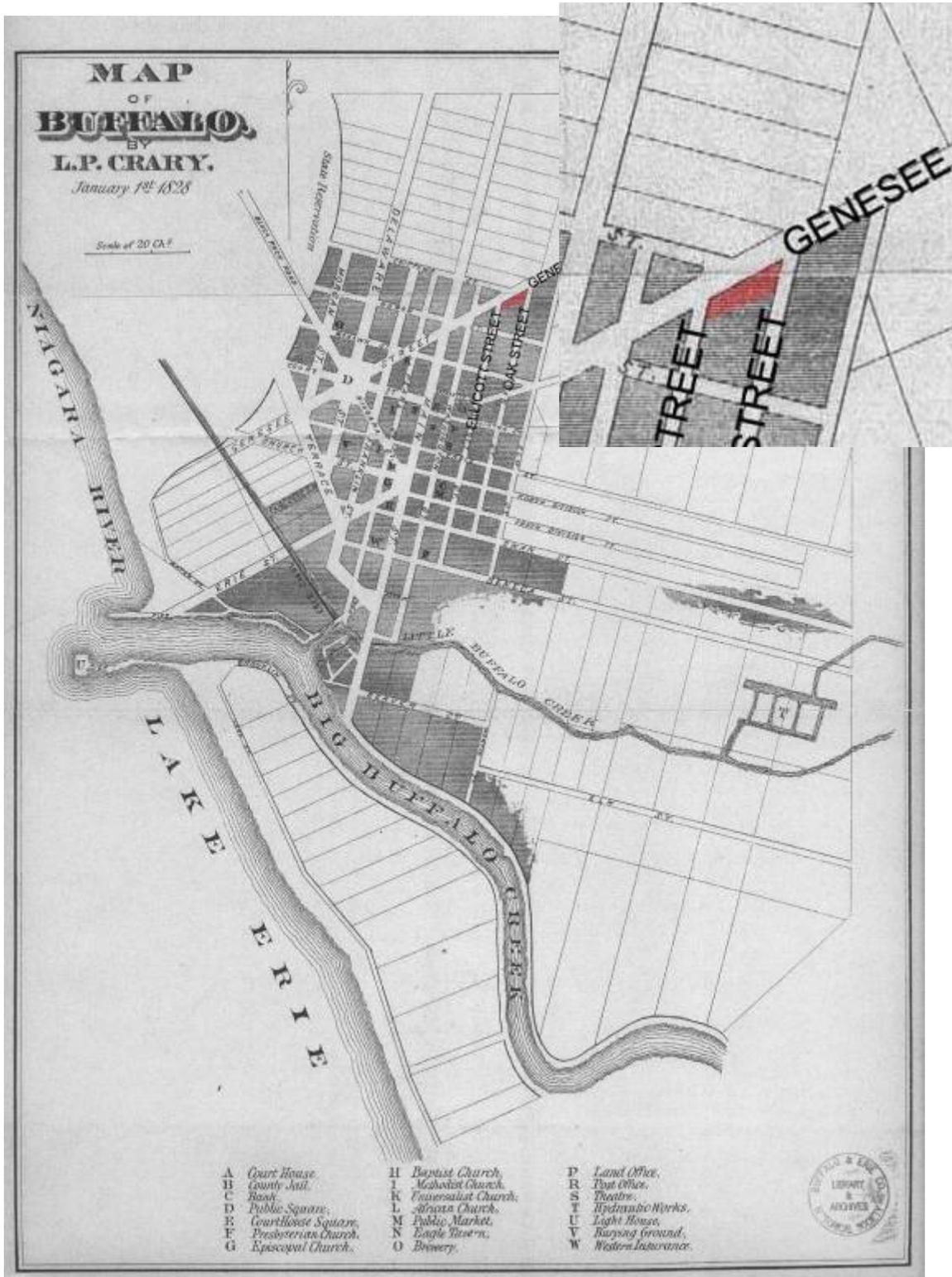


(28) Detail, Map of Buffalo Outer Lots, 1804/05

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. (Courtesy BECHS with highlighting)

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203

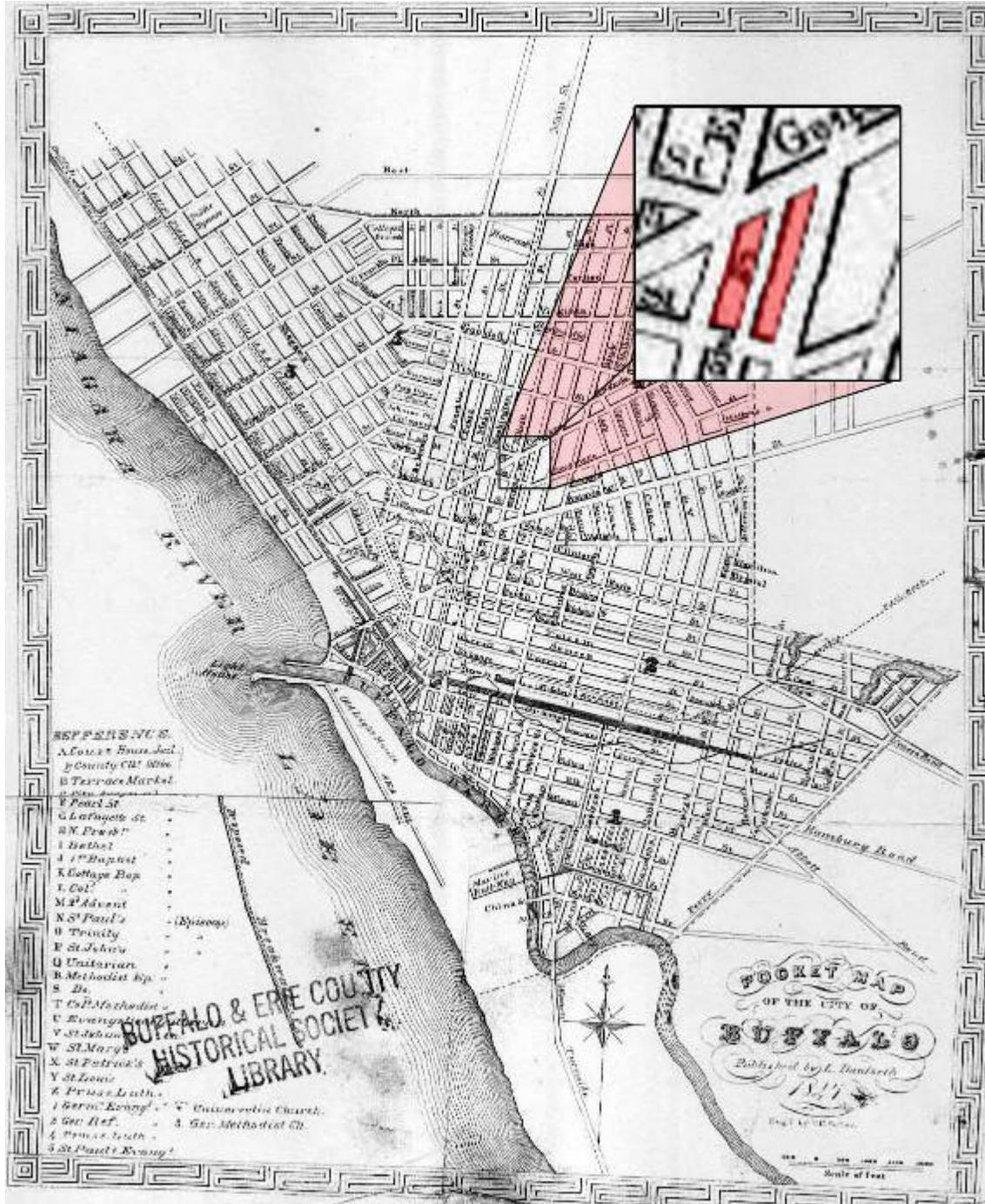


(29) 1828 Map, Village of Buffalo (Courtesy BECHS)

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

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203



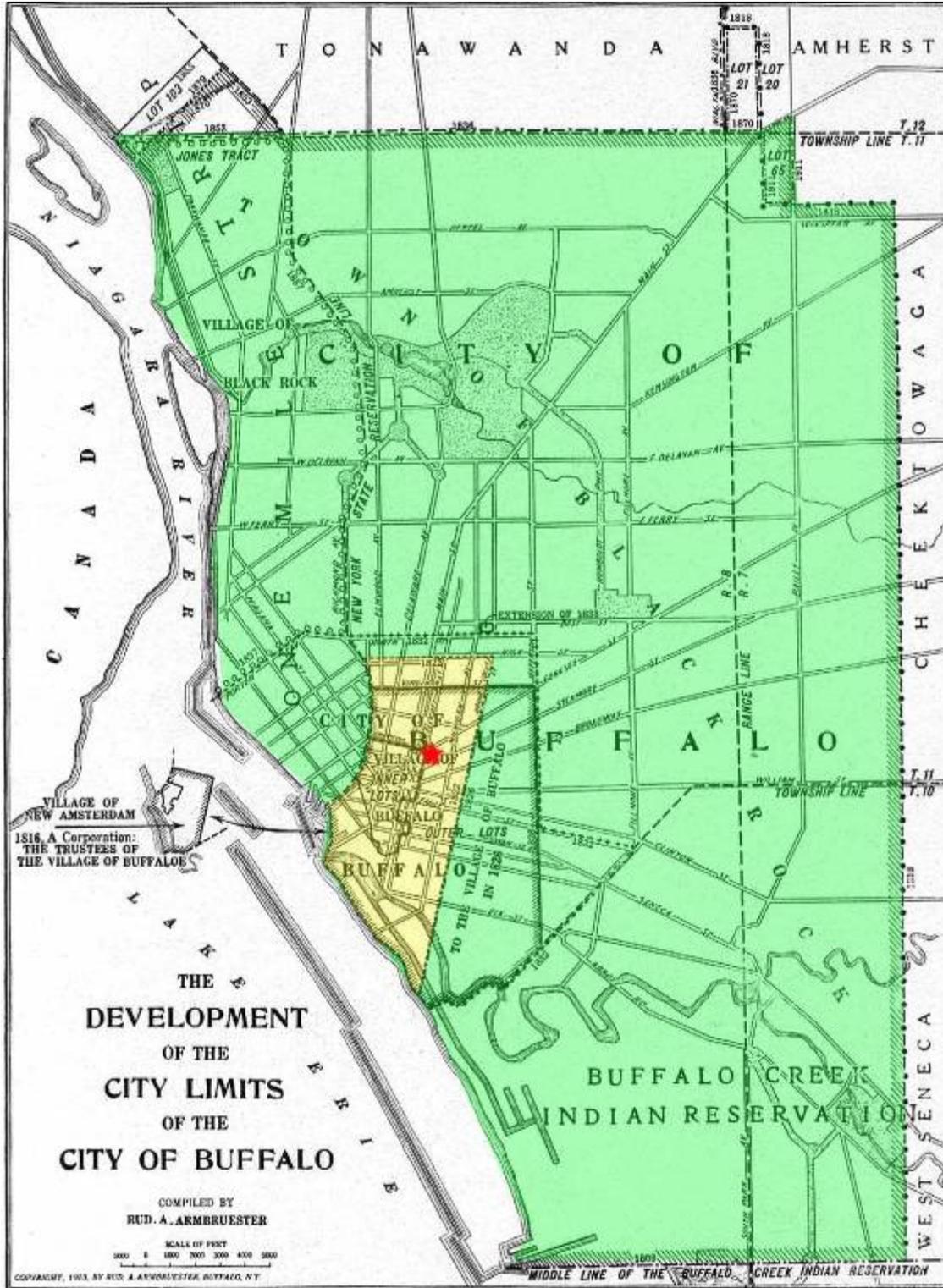
(30) Pocket Map of the City of Buffalo, 1847

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.

(Courtesy BECHS)

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203

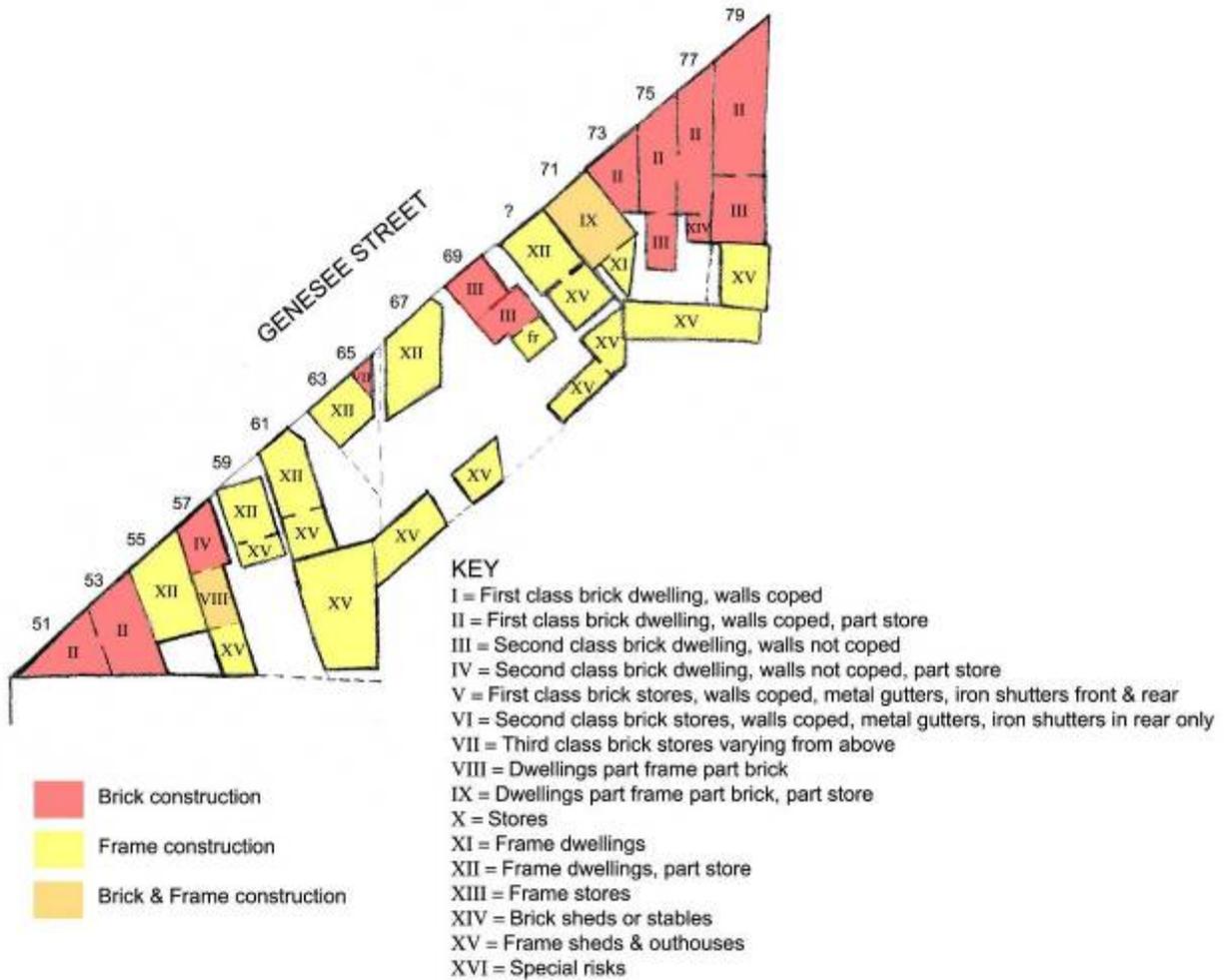


(31) The Development of the City Limits of the City of Buffalo (1923)

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. (Courtesy BECHS)

## HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203

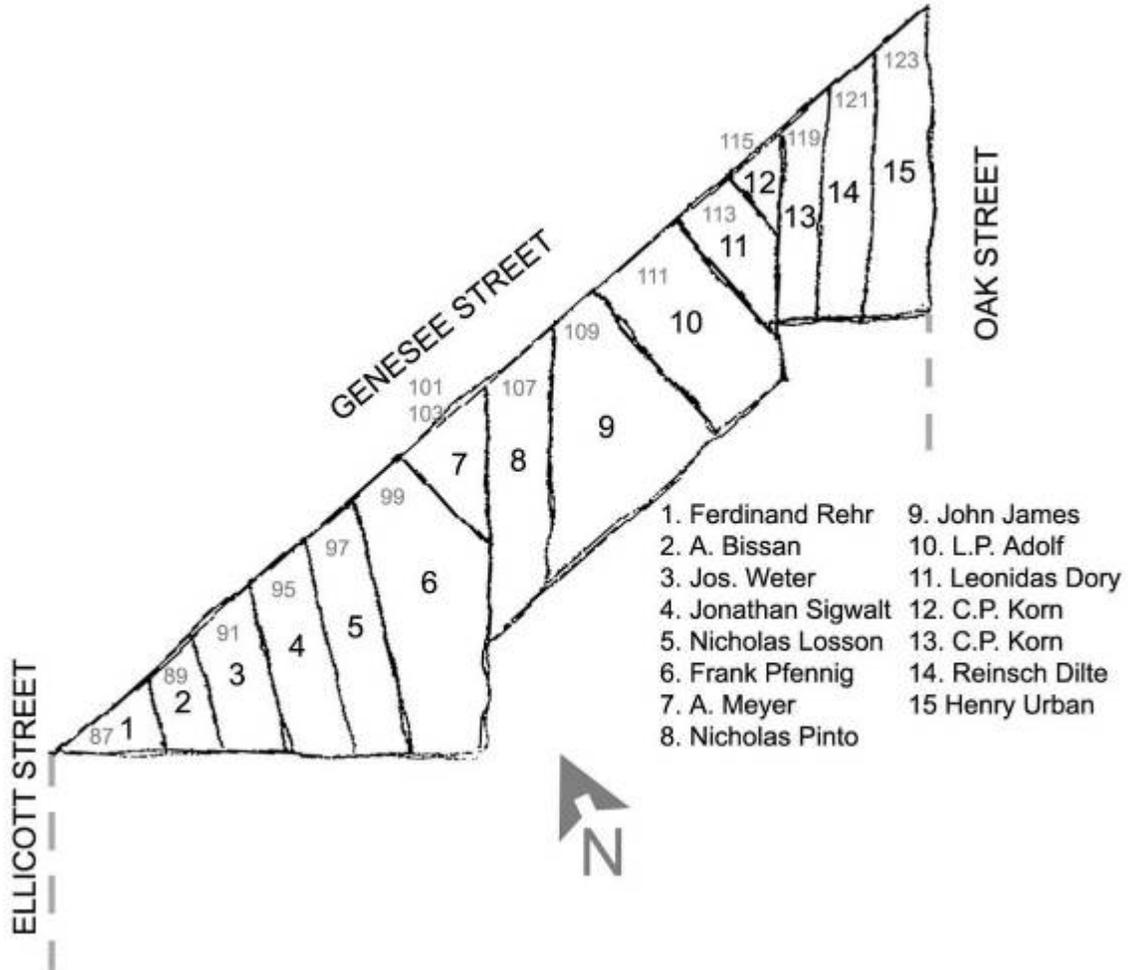


### (32) Sketch detail, 1854 Fire Insurance Map of the City of Buffalo

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. 85-87 and 89 Genesee Street is approximately labeled as 51 and 53 Genesee Street on this map; note the presence of two brick mixed-use residential and commercial buildings.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203

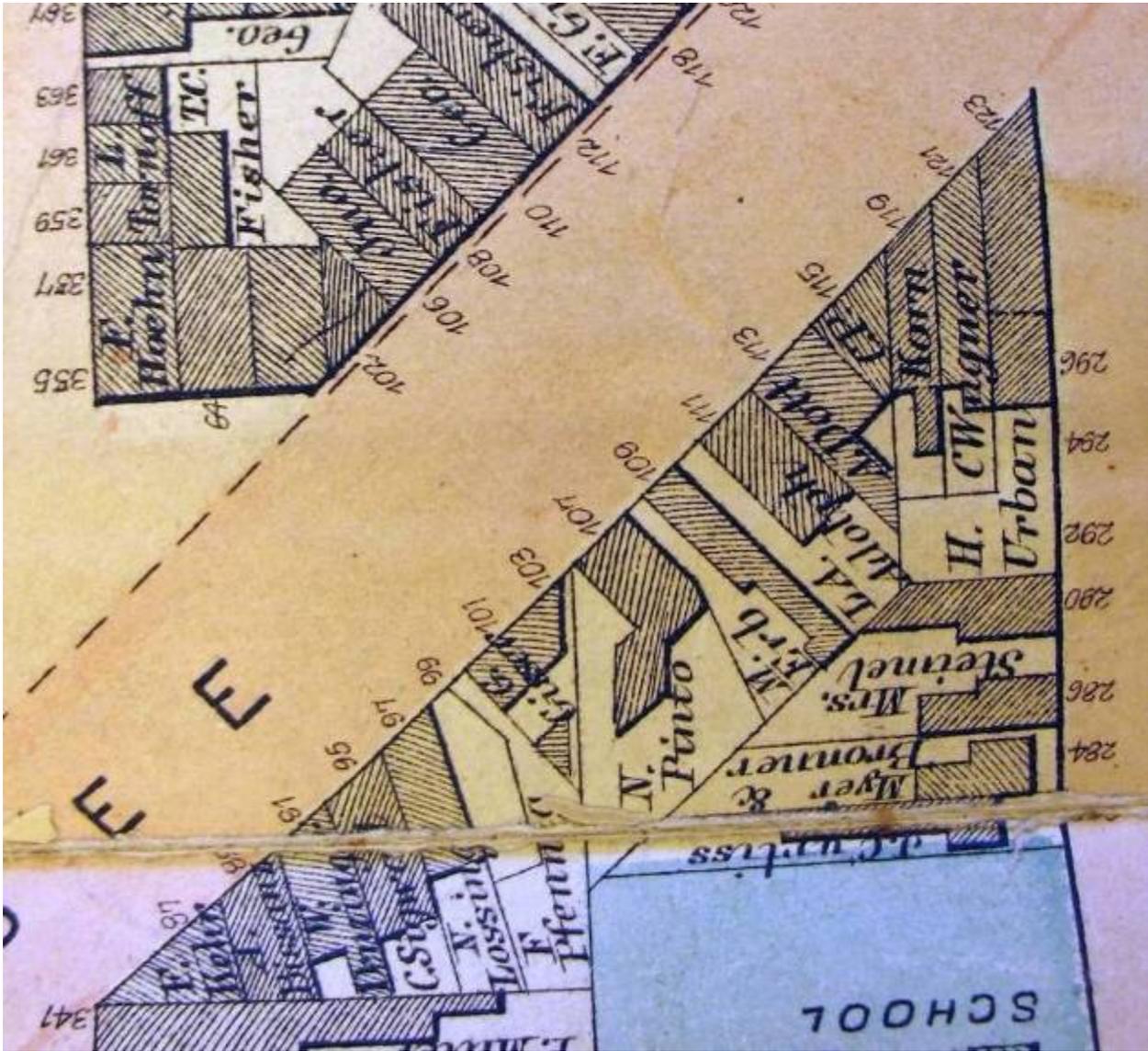


(33) Sketch detail, 1866 Deed Atlas of the City of Buffalo

While this map does not indicate buildings or structures which were constructed, it does list the owners of the various Genesee Gateway parcels. Note that the present Caulkins Building occupies what was then two parcels, owned by Ferdinand Rehr and A. Bissan.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203

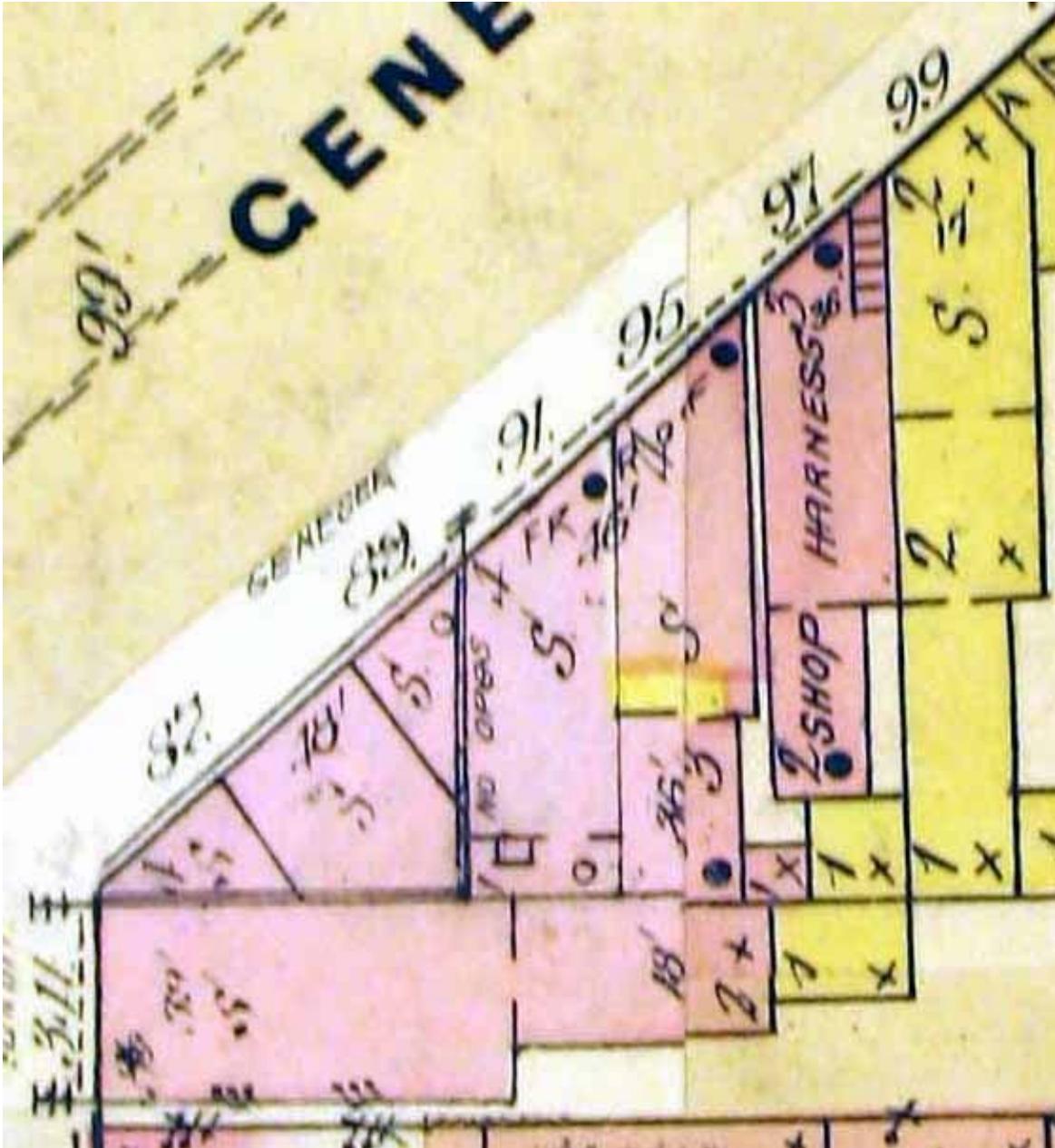


(34) Detail, 1872 Atlas

This map appears to show the earlier ca. 1850s buildings which once occupied 85-87 and 89 Genesee Street. Note that there was once a small triangular building at the corner of Genesee and Ellicott Streets, foreshadowing the triangular form of the Caulkins Building of 1886. (Courtesy BECPL)

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203

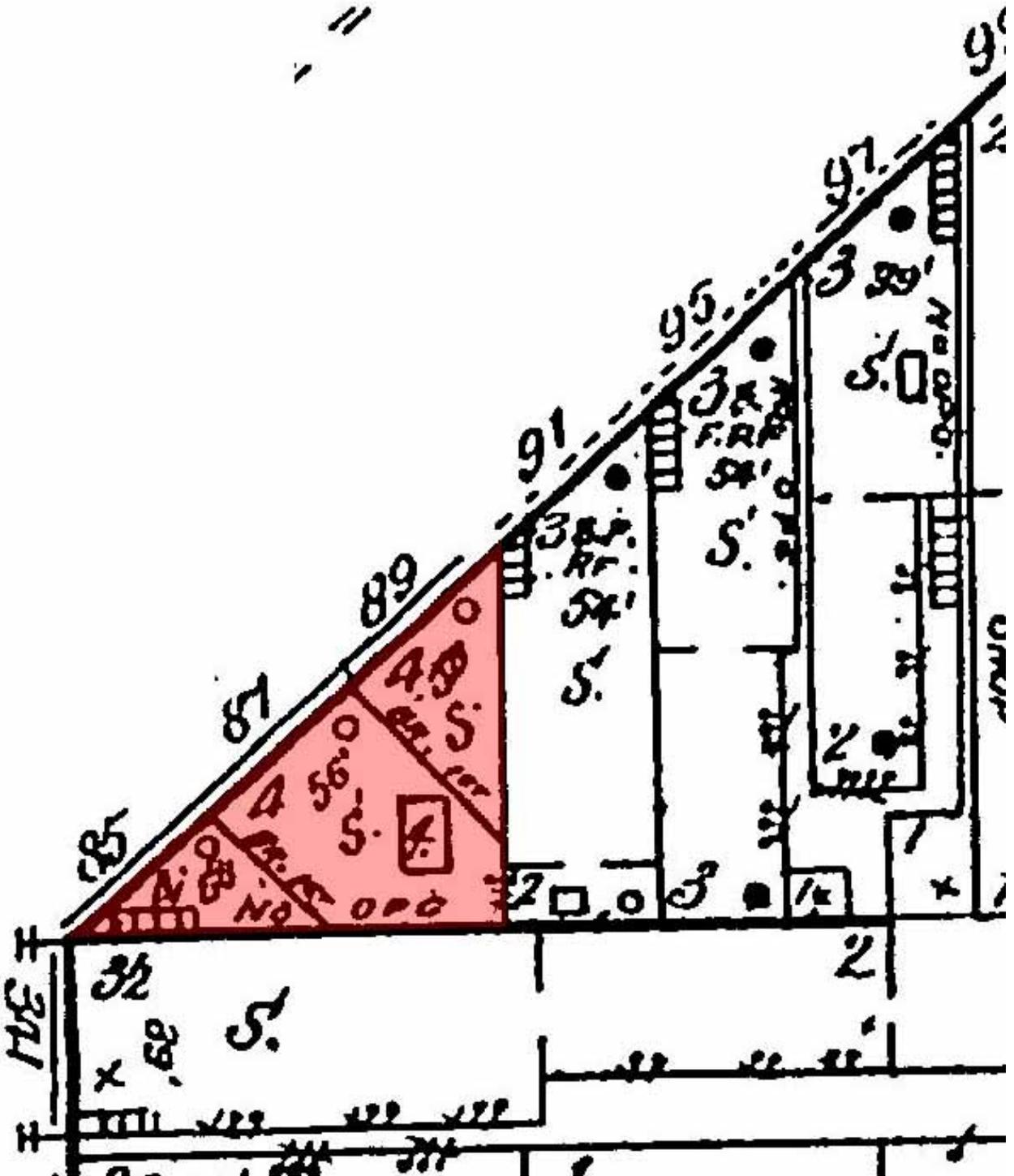


(35) Detail, 1881 updated to 1888 Sanborn Map

Note the division of the building into three commercial ground floor spaces. There is also no indication of a skylight or window feature which may suggest that in 1888 this feature was not an original part of the building; or perhaps the map just does not record such features. (Courtesy BECPL)

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203



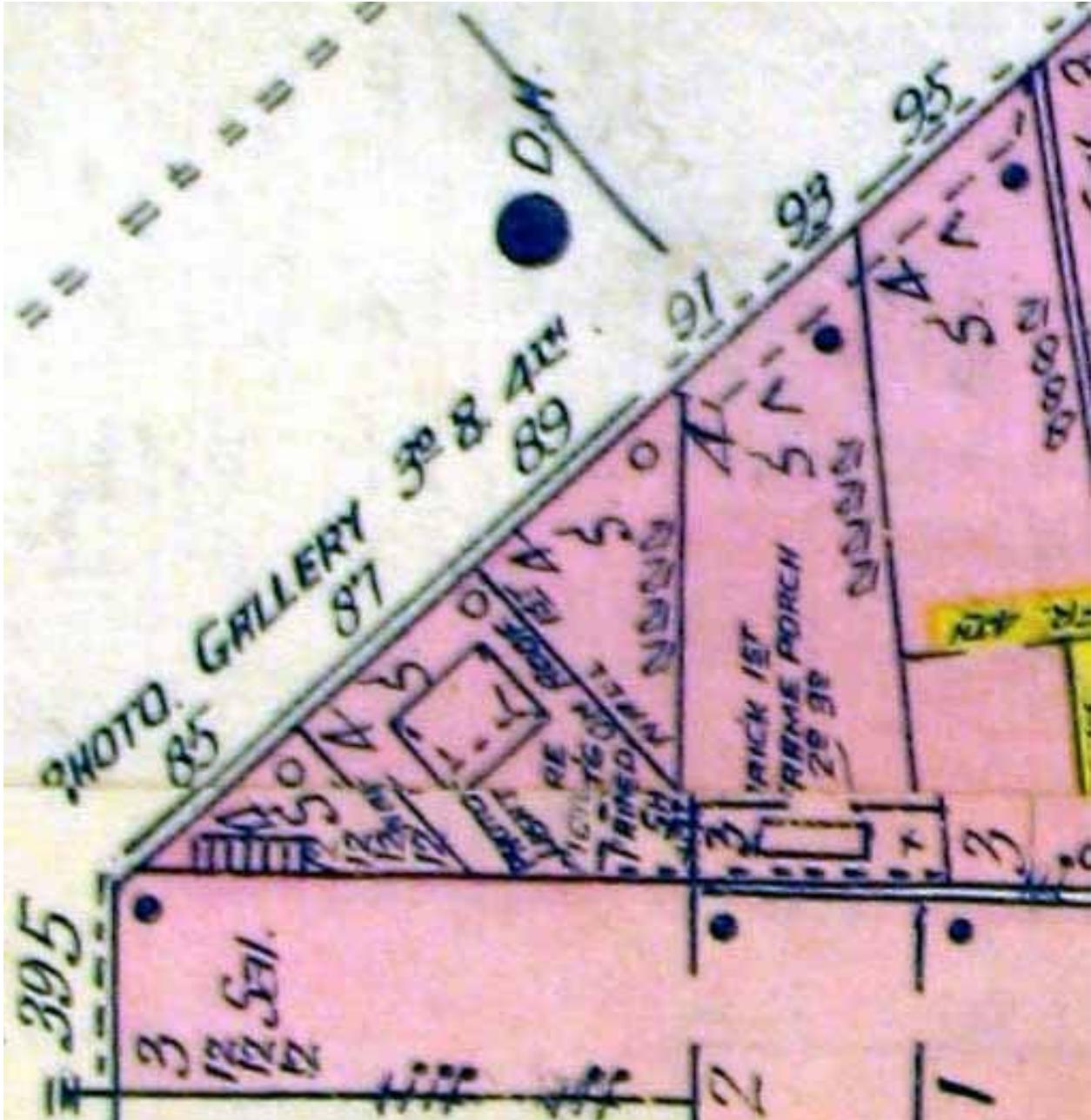
(36) Detail, 1889 Sanborn

Note the location of the stair at the western corner of the building, the indication of no openings at the south façade and the suggestion of a rectangular structure (perhaps the skylight or some roof fixture) in this map.



HISTORIC BACKGROUND

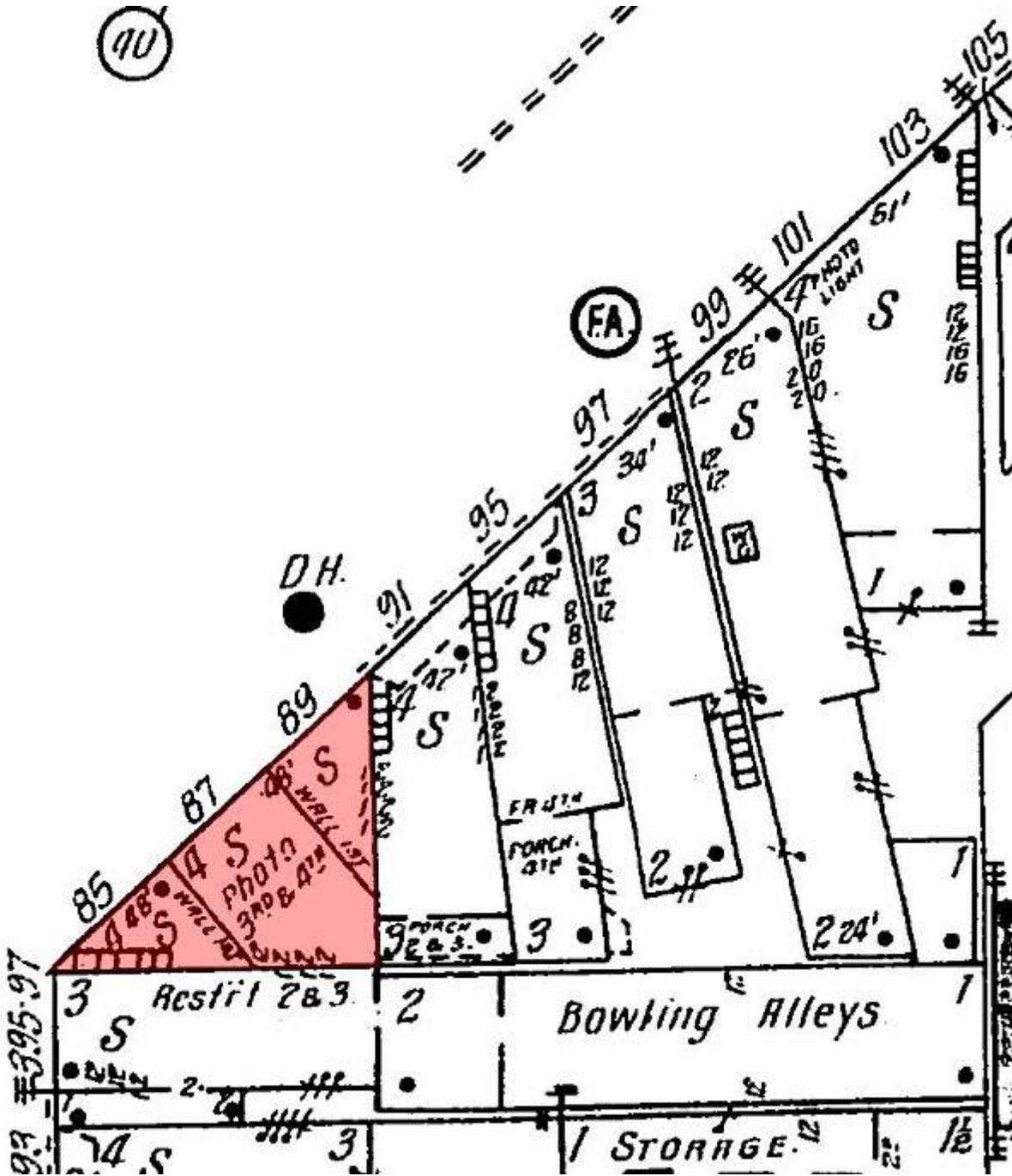
The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203



(38) Detail, 1899 updated to 1916 Sanborn Map (courtesy BECPL)

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The Caulkins Building, 85-87-89 Genesee Street, Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14203



(39) Detail, 1925 Sanborn Map

Note that the interior layout of the building appears to have remained consistent since the Caulkins Building's 1886 construction. A photo studio space is noted as continuing to occupy the third and fourth floors of the building.