

AUSTIN STREET POLICE ATHLETIC LEAGUE (PAL) CENTER

Erie County, NY
County and State

Name of Property

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Historic Resources of the Black Rock Planning
Neighborhood, Buffalo, Erie County, New York

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT/Correctional Facility
(police station; jail)

SOCIAL/civic

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE/professional

DRAFT

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19th & 20th CENTURY

REVIVALS/Romanesque Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: stone

walls: brick

roof: asphalt

other: _____

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The Austin Street Police Athletic League (PAL) Center is a two-story Romanesque Revival style brick building with Medina sandstone ornamental details, located at the northeast corner of Austin Street and Joslyn Street in the Black Rock neighborhood of Buffalo, Erie County, New York. The building's massing reflects its corner lot, with a central entrance on the primary elevation facing Austin Street to the south. There are no major landscaping features on the property, which has an asphalt parking lot to the rear. Details such as broad round brick arches, sandstone belt courses, capitals, and lintels exemplify the Romanesque Revival style on the exterior. Inside, the building, originally built as Buffalo Police Station Precinct 13, retains nineteenth-century materials such as pressed-metal ceilings, carved wood newel posts, and hardwood floors, with midcentury alterations to the original plan that reflect its later function as the Austin Street Police Athletic League (PAL) Center.

The exterior is substantially intact to the building's original construction, while the interior reflects its later function as the Austin Street Police Athletic League (PAL) Center. The building was originally designed to house multiple police functions, including holding cells, offices, and police dormitories. In 1955, after a recent fire, the building was converted into the PAL Center, refurbished to house recreational and educational programs, including a boxing room, classroom, and game room. While the interior of the building appears to retain many finishes and features of the original police station, the building retains a higher level of integrity from its second function as a Police Athletic League Center. Despite the loss of the roof structure, which was heavily damaged in the fire, the Romanesque Revival style building is one of the oldest remaining police stations in Buffalo and is notable as the first PAL Center in Buffalo.

Narrative Description

The Austin Street PAL Center at 348 Austin Street, formerly known as the Buffalo Police Station for Precinct 13, is a two-story brick Romanesque Revival style building located in the Black Rock neighborhood at the north end of Buffalo. This is an area that today contains a large residential neighborhood as well as multiple industrial buildings, many of them recently rehabilitated for new uses such as those nearby on Chandler Street to the east. The area is primarily commercial and residential in character, with frame dwellings along Joslyn and Austin Streets and Military Road and Grant Street forming commercial corridors to the east.

The building is setback from the street by a concrete tree lawn space with two trees and a concrete sidewalk to the south and west. (Photos 1-3). There is no major landscaping on the property. An original barn, located just to the north of the station, was demolished in 1957 to make way for the present parking lot. An asphalt parking lot is located to the rear of the building, accessed from Joslyn Street.

The building is situated on a corner lot, with the primary elevation facing south to Austin Street (Photo 4). It is two-stories high above a raised basement, where a sandstone water table is visible at grade. The building has a

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central entrance on the south elevation, accessed by a set of sandstone steps from the concrete sidewalk. The size, style, and detailing of the building indicates that it was designed as a substantial police station by architect Frederick Mohr in 1894. After a fire in 1954, the building was converted into the city's first PAL Center. The former third-floor gymnasium was removed and replaced with a flat roof above the second story.

Exterior

The two-story brick building reflects its Romanesque Revival style construction and use as a PAL Center in the Black Rock neighborhood of Buffalo, NY. The building sits on a Medina sandstone water table and is topped by a flat roof. Romanesque Revival style details are visible in the round broad window arches, brick corbeling, stone compound capitals on thick brick pilasters, and rusticated Medina sandstone sills and belt courses.

The primary elevation faces Austin Street to the south, with a symmetrical seven-bay-wide organization (Photo 1). The central bay contains the primary entrance, with paired wood doors set within brick pilasters with sandstone Corinthian capitals. An original flagpole support remains attached to one of the brick pilasters. A Medina sandstone lintel with the carved words 'Police Station No. 13' is located above the entrance, topped with a round rusticated sandstone arch with curved iron grates in the semicircle below. The outer three bays to the west and east each contain three sets of windows, with a paired window located in the center of each bay flanked by single windows. The first-floor windows are located beneath round brick arches, with round fixed-pane transoms above. The second-floor windows are topped by rusticated sandstone lintels. The windows are one-over-one double-hung aluminum sash, installed to replace the original windows in kind in 1979 and again in 2023. While the windows are non-historic, they were a sensitive replacement and do not disrupt a historic understanding of the building. Smaller glass-block windows are located at the raised basement level, in line with windows located on the upper floors. They are set beneath brick jack arches atop the sandstone watertable. The center bay features a paired window above the entrance on the second floor, with the entire bay protruding slightly. Medina sandstone belt courses divide each floor and wrap around the south, west, and east elevations but do not continue to the rear. Brick dentils form the cornice below the flat roofline, wrapping around the building.

The same materials, rhythm and fenestration continues on the east, west, and south elevations, with only a few variations. The west elevation is two bays wide, with a round arch over paired windows in each first story bay and two single windows with sandstone lintels on the second floor (Photo 4). The east elevation has three windows on the second floor and two on the first floor. A non-historic fire escape is located on the east elevation. The north, rear-facing elevation contains three bays, with a central bay with secondary entrance set back from the other protruding bays (Photo 5). The northeast bay is a solid brick wall, with single windows beneath simple jack arches facing south. The northeast bay has a different cornice, with wood brackets. The northwest bay has three small round windows beneath round brick arches with sandstone caps and sills on the first floor, with two single windows matching those elsewhere on the second floor.

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Interior

The interior plan of the building reflects its use as a PAL Center beginning in 1955, but many original materials and ornamental details remain intact from its original police station construction as well. The plans of the first and second floor contain several large rooms used as classrooms during the PAL Center era, with a small corridor located off the primary stairwell at the center of the building accessing rooms on both sides. Classrooms are located in former police offices, now used as offices again for the present tenant.

The 1955 conversion made minimal alterations to the original plan, utilizing most of the original larger main spaces and inserting removable drywall partitions in some locations. Original interior details include tin ceilings, elaborately carved wood newel posts, wood window and doorway surrounds, wood wainscoting, and the original black rock foundation visible in the basement with vaulted ceiling. Windows, replaced in kind in 1979 and some again in 2023, are in their historic wood casings, with wood sills and entablatures in some locations.

The entrance occurs on the south elevation, through paired wood paneled doors with single lights beneath a fixed-pane transom, all set within an original wood casing. Beadboard wainscoting and wood ceilings are present in the entrance foyer (Photo 6). The primary stairwell is located to the north of the entrance, with a set of straight stairs with wood treads and risers leading to the second floor. An elaborately carved, thick, square wood newel post and carved wood baluster rails ornament the stair. Plaster brackets are located above the stairwell landing on the first floor (Photo 7).

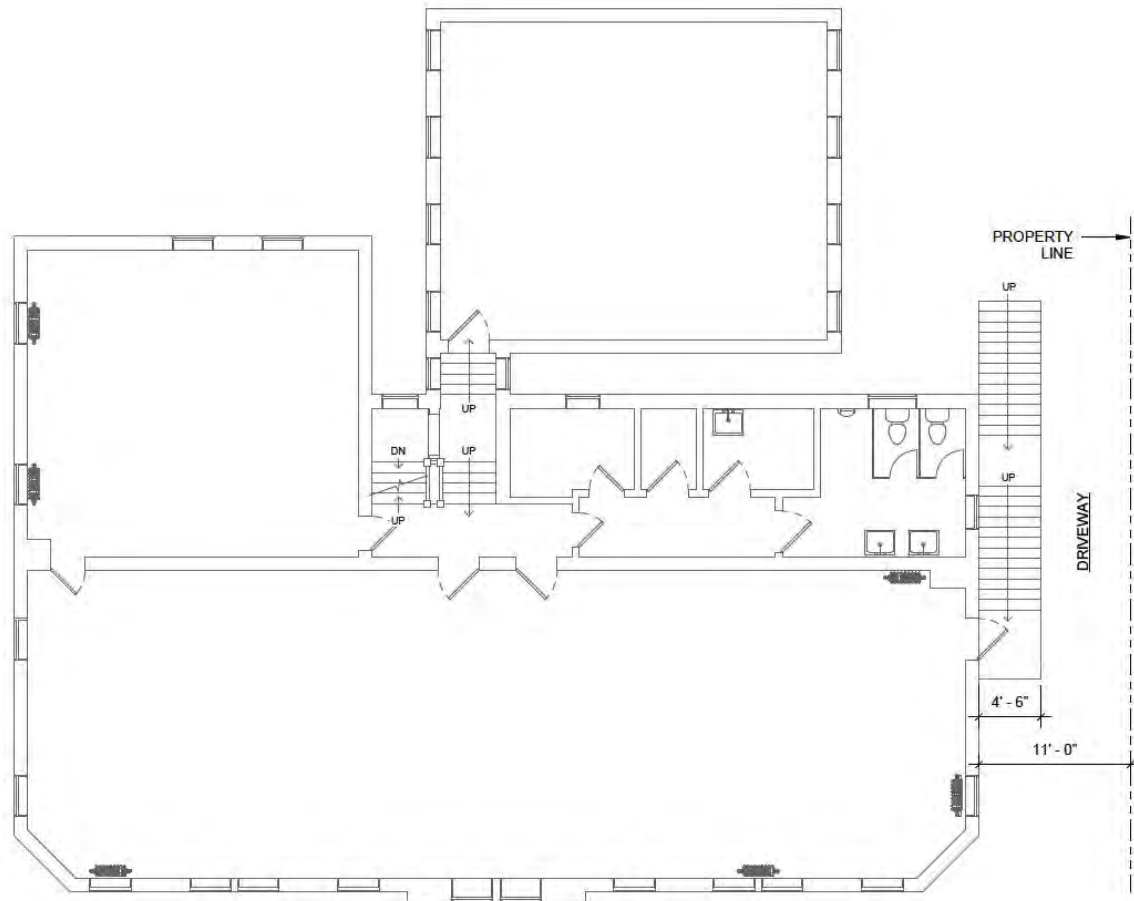
Doorways with original casing and pivot transoms rise to near ceiling height, accessing rooms from the entrance foyer. These doorways are located throughout the building, with original wood casings and pivot transoms (Photo 9). Original plaster walls are distinct from later drywall partitions. Exterior brick walls are exposed and painted in some locations. Ceilings are painted wood or painted tin, with ceiling trim. Tin ceilings are located above acoustical tile dropped ceilings in some locations as well, indicating the tin is an original condition. Wainscoting continues in some locations. Floors are carpeted or tiled with laminate flooring, but examples of original hardwood are visible in some locations.

The second-floor plan and materials are similar to the first floor, with larger classrooms and subdivided offices. A tin ceiling with curved ceiling trim is present in one larger classroom to the south on the first floor, where beadboard wainscoting and plaster walls are located as well. This classroom has been converted into an apartment (ca. 2023), where the space remains essentially open. The existing partition walls at the training space at the southeast corner remain intact and the space became a lounge, while the breakroom became a bedroom at the southwest corner. The north-south partition wall was extended to accommodate a kitchen and guest room, with transom windows in the upper portion of the wall. Hardwood floors are visible in some locations on the second floor. Original wood door surrounds and window casing is distinct from later conversion, where acoustical tile dropped ceilings and simpler wood door casings exists (Photos 12-15).

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First Floor Plan



① EXISTING FLOOR PLAN
1/8" = 1'-0"

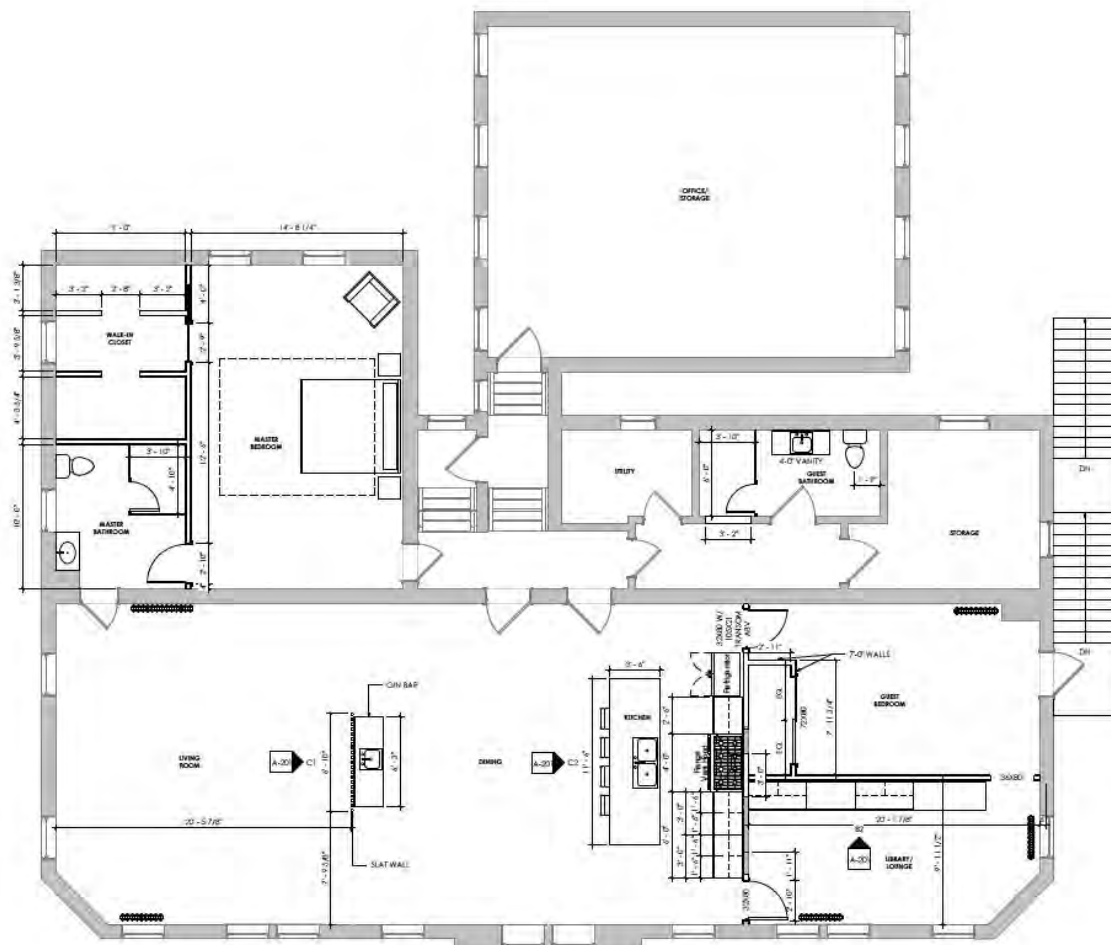
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Second Floor Plan



(A1) Second Floor Plan
1/4" = 1'-0"

Integrity

Overall, the building retains a good degree of architectural integrity to convey its significant function as Buffalo's first PAL Center. Many original materials are intact, including wood window casings, door surrounds with transoms, tin ceilings, and wood wainscoting. After a fire in 1954, the heavily damaged roof and the interior jail cells were removed to convert the building to new recreational, community use in 1955. The barn was demolished in 1957. The plan reflects its use as a PAL Center, with large classrooms arranged around a small central corridor, converted to apartment space ca. 2023 in a portion of the second floor. While the interior of the building appears to retain many finishes and features of the original police station, the loss of the jail cells and third floor space reflects adaptations of the building to the PAL era. of integrity indicative of the PAL era. Today it is a good example of a nineteenth-century Romanesque Revival style police station converted for use as the city's first PAL Center in 1955.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Social History

Period of Significance

1955-1974

Significant Dates

1955; 1957; 1974

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Frederick Mohr

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Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance is defined by the period in which PAL occupied the building, as it architecturally demonstrates that use and social significance most clearly. The period begins with the renovation and opening of the PAL Center in 1955 and ends in 1974 at the fifty-year mark, as the PAL Center continued to operate until 1993.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

(Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Austin Street Police Athletic League (PAL) Center, located at 348 Austin Street in Buffalo, Erie County, NY, is significant under criterion A in the area of Social History for its association with the recreational programs developed for juveniles and teens by Buffalo's Police Athletic League's and for its specific relationship to community youth in the Black Rock neighborhood. Reused from a former police station, the Austin Street building was Buffalo's first PAL Center, offering a program that proved important in mentoring young people and preventing juvenile delinquency in the city. Originally constructed in 1894 as a Romanesque Revival style police station for Precinct 13, the police station closed following a fire in 1954 and the severely damaged roof structure was removed. When the building re-opened in 1955 it was the first PAL Center in the city. The renovated two-story community center was run by the Police Athletic League, a non-profit organization that provided City of Buffalo youth with recreational, educational, cultural, environmental, and juvenile delinquency prevention programming in a structured and supervised setting. In the 1950s and 1960s, the PAL operated several Community Centers throughout the city with game room activities, sewing and cooking classes, dancing, and sports programming for neighborhood kids, including a boxing program exclusively at the Austin Street site. The Austin Street PAL Center served as a social anchor for the neighborhood, reducing juvenile crime and increasing community connections amongst Black Rock youth.

The building also meets the registration requirements as an example of Public Architecture under the *Historic Resources of the Black Rock Planning Neighborhood, Buffalo, Erie County, NY* Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF). The form states that eligible Public Architecture within the survey boundaries must be "directly associated with a significant historical context; must have been constructed during the period of significance; and must display the distinctive features characteristic to the period of construction." The building is located within the geographic boundaries of the Black Rock Planning Neighborhood and was built in 1894, within the MPDF's period of significance. The building also displays the distinctive features characteristic to the period of construction, particularly its Romanesque Revival style features such as Medina sandstone, broad round stone arches, and lintel with the carved words 'Police Station No. 13.' The period of significance is defined by the period in which PAL occupied the building, as it architecturally demonstrates that use and social significance most clearly. The period begins with the renovation and opening of the PAL Center in 1955 and ends in 1974 at the fifty-year mark, as the PAL Center continued to operate until 1993.

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Narrative Statement of Significance

Neighborhood Context: Black Rock¹

For much of its early history during the first half of the nineteenth century, the Lower Black Rock neighborhood was a largely unsettled, undeveloped area on the fringe of the growing City of Buffalo to the south. The area near 348 Austin Street, north of what is now Hertel Avenue, comprised mostly farms until the late nineteenth century. In 1853, the City of Buffalo extended its boundaries, annexing all of the Town of Black Rock and receiving a new city charter. By the beginning of the 1850s —the canal towpath in Black Rock—at the foot of Amherst, Austin and Hertel —had become a significant manufacturing center with several flour mills, cooperages (barrel factories), and lumber mills. The arrival of the railroads during the mid-nineteenth century fostered the continued economic diversification of Buffalo and Black Rock into a more densely populated, more heavily industrialized area. With industry and community development the population of Black Rock rose from approximately 1,400 in 1855 to 2,200 in 1875.

Although some initial planning occurred in the area shortly after the Civil War-era, it was not until the completion of the Belt Line railroad, which encircled the City of Buffalo in the 1880s, that the Black Rock and Hertel area saw rapid growth and residential development. Already a significant railroad center for the country, in 1883 the powerful New York Central Railroad constructed a new rail line which encircled the city just beyond the areas which were settled and developed at the time. This rail line was known as the Belt Line, as it formed a belt around Buffalo. This Belt Line railroad not only provided for circulation in and around the city, but it was also linked to the New York Central's massive network of rail lines which laced the country. As a result, many industries chose to relocate or construct facilities adjacent to the Belt Line as an easy and cost-effective means to receive raw materials and ship final products. In addition to the freight capacity, the Belt Line railroad also provided city residents an easy transportation system; the conveniently spaced stops on the rail line provided access to any part of Buffalo for the cost of a nickel. Many of the stops were located in sections of the city which were less populated, such as the station at Amherst Street in Black Rock. As a result of the burgeoning industrial growth along the Belt Line in the Black Rock neighborhood, this section of the city became an enclave of immigrant laborers, attracted to settle in the area by the numerous employment opportunities.

Capitalizing on the Belt Line railroad as a means to transport large numbers of people and also quantities of freight and materials, Buffalo's Pan American Exposition grounds were constructed adjacent to the southeast end of the Black Rock neighborhood, on the east side of Elmwood Avenue in 1900 and 1901. Constructed in

¹ This section was adapted from the MPDF for the Black Rock neighborhood, as the building meets the requirements for Public Architecture within the boundaries. More information on neighborhood context can be found here: Jennifer Walkowski, *Historic Resources of the Black Rock Planning Neighborhood*, State and National Registers of Historic Places: Multiple Property Documentation Form.

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what had previously been vacant land, the exposition grounds were designed with a large rail station installed at the northern end, linking the fair to the Belt Line and the national rail lines. Following the close of the Pan-American Exposition in late 1901, this entire section of Buffalo experienced tremendous growth and development. Specifically, in the Black Rock neighborhood, the years around the turn-of the twentieth-century witnessed the creation of many of the area's streets, including Chandler and Grote Streets. This was the dawn of a new age of industrial development in the neighborhood. Like the exposition grounds, many of these new industries located along the Belt Line railroad tracks along streets such as Chandler Street and at Amherst Street near Churchill Street. Industries along Chandler Street in 1900 include the Acme Malleable Iron Works (demolished) at Military Road, Buffalo Weaving Company (demolished) near Bridgeman Street, and the Clark Manufacturing Company (demolished).

By the early 1900s, the neighborhood became home to several prominent industrial and manufacturing companies, as well as home to a significant population of immigrant laborers. The Black Rock community attracted many Eastern European immigrants, drawing a significant population of Polish, Hungarians, and Ukrainians to the area. This working-class immigrant group constructed simple, modest and functional housing in the area, and the housing stock in the neighborhood consisted primarily of small one and one-and-one-half story workers' cottages or two-story multi-family dwellings. The workers' cottages were popular throughout Buffalo's Eastern European-settled areas, including the Hydraulics neighborhood around Seneca and Swan Streets and throughout the East Side communities. This type of small, affordable house was typically front-gabled, wood-frame construction with telescoping rear additions for additional space. Workers' cottages afforded working-class families their own home while being small and relatively inexpensive. These narrow houses could be built to conform to the typical long, narrow rectangular parcels, common through the city's industrialized and working-class areas.

While some initial development and settlement in the Lower Black Rock neighborhood began in the mid-1850s, it was not until the twentieth-century that this neighborhood truly began to flourish. The Belt Line railroad became a source of jobs, business and population growth for the community beginning in the 1880s. Over the next several decades, the community continued to grow as a combination of industrial businesses, churches and public services, such as the Precinct 13 police station, arose to meet the needs of this population.

History of the Police Station, 1894-1954

Designed by architect Frederick Mohr in 1894, the building housed Buffalo Police Department offices, jail cells, and police dormitories when it opened in 1895. Planning for the building began as early as 1892, when Police Commissioners proposed a Precinct 13 station to serve the growing Black Rock community.² The city began asking for proposals in early 1894, and architect Frederick Mohr was contracted for \$23,500. William Baynes and Co. undertook the carpentry work, John Danforth handled the heating and ventilating system, and the wrought-iron fence and gates were contracted to Charles Ernst.³ Construction on the police station and

² *Buffalo Evening News*, January 14, 1892.

³ *Buffalo Commercial*, April 23, 1895.

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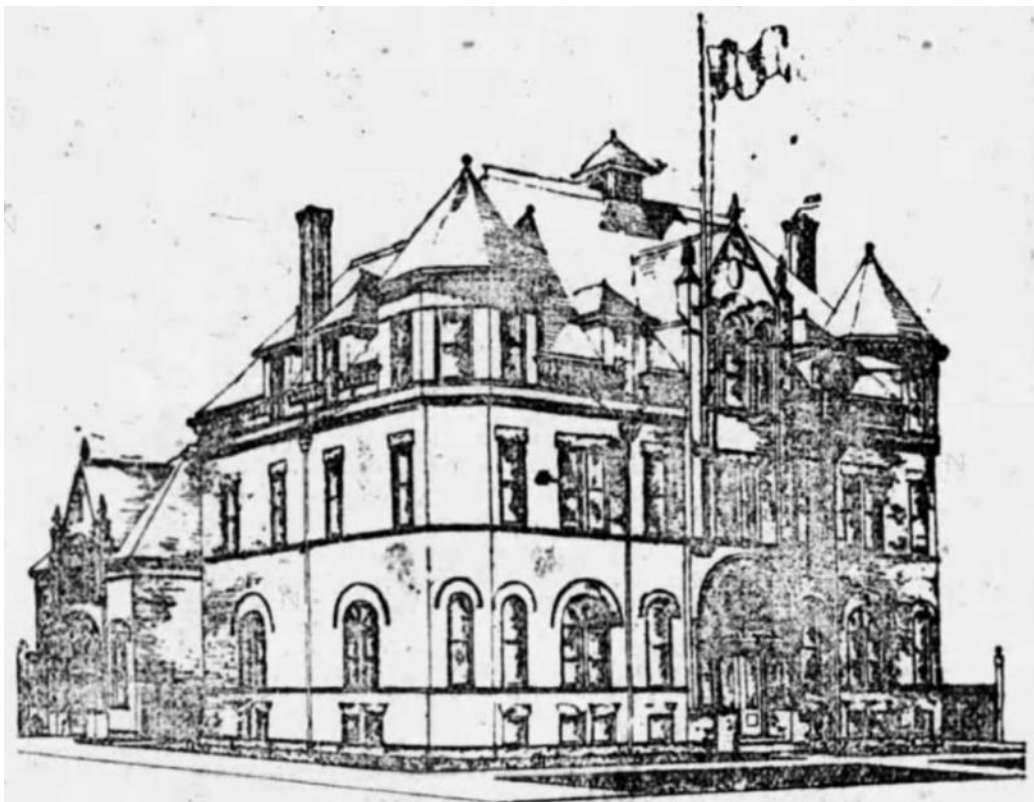
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accompanying barn/carriage house was completed by 1895, and the building opened as the Precinct 13 station early that year.

Precinct 13 was constructed as a late-nineteenth-century Romanesque Revival style police station, with many of the original materials intact, reflecting original conditions on both the exterior and interior. The building was “practically a 3-story building,” with the third floor containing one large room that was used as a gymnasium and drill room. As originally designed by architect Frederick Mohr, the police station had a large and architecturally distinguished upper floor, housed in a massive, hipped roof, with decorative turrets and dormers. The north end of the property also contained a large barn, used as a stable for the horses and for storing wagons and carriages used by the police force.



NEW POLICE STATION NO. 13, AUSTIN AND JOSLYN STREETS—FRED'K MOHR, ARCHITECT.

Illustration of building by architect Frederick Mohr, 1895

From *Buffalo Morning Express* (April 14, 1895).

The basement contained the wash, kitchen and pantry, boiler and coal room, water motor and a large room with holding cells. On the first floor was a large office, which was connected with the main entrance by a spacious vestibule with plate glass doors. The office was arranged so as to enable the doorman to have a full view of all parts of the first floor. The reserve room, captain’s quarters, room for specials and the matron’s room were also on the first floor. The station contained eight cells for men and three for women or juvenile prisoners. On the

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second floor there were two large dormitories containing twelve beds each and lockers, rooms for the sergeants and a general toilet room. A one-and-a-half-story patrol barn was also designed by Mohr, accommodating ten horses and weapon storage until it was later converted for automobile use.⁴ The barn was demolished in 1957 to make way for the present parking lot.

The building housed hundreds in its jail cells over several decades, as it was the center of law enforcement for the entire Precinct 13. Perhaps most notably, the cells held the assassin Leon Czolgosz, who was brought there after he shot U.S. President McKinley at the Pan American Exposition in 1901.⁵ He was later moved to another station in the following days. Through the early-to-mid twentieth century, the station served Precinct 13, an area bound by the city line and Elmwood Avenue, south on Elmwood to the center line of Scajaquada Creek, along a continuation of the Niagara River, along the waterfront to the city line and along the city line back to Elmwood.

In 1951, the first suggestion of closing the Austin station appeared in newspapers. At that time, the station was allegedly in “deplorable condition,” and there had been discussions of moving the Precinct 13 headquarters to Hertel Avenue. By 1952, Captain Leo J. Miller, in charge of the Austin Street station at the time, stated, “if the present Austin Station at 348 Austin St is moved to the proposed Hertel Ave site, it will become possible, in the event of consolidation to move the eastern boundary of the precinct from Elmwood to Delaware. The present Colvin Precinct could thus be reduced sufficiently to be combined with the Cold Spring Precinct, doing away with another station.”⁶ The construction of a new station on Hertel Avenue had been decided by 1953, when the cornerstone for the new Precinct 13 station was laid in September.

The building served as the Precinct 13 police station until 1954, when the Buffalo Police Department consolidated its 17 precincts into 14 precincts and closed three stations as a result.⁷ At that time, the new police station was completed on Hertel Avenue and the Austin Street station was emptied.

That same year, the Austin station had a significant fire. The fire led to the damage to and removal of the third-floor gymnasium space, and the temporary closure of the building while it was converted into the PAL Center. Plans for the PAL Center to take over the police station were made before the fire occurred. One article announced on April 21, 1954 “The Austin Station will become available [as the new PAL Center] when the new police station [on Hertel] is ready.”⁸

History of the Austin Street PAL Center, 1955-1999

When the Precinct 13 offices were moved to a new facility on Hertel Avenue in 1955, the building was converted for use as a community recreational facility known as the Police Athletic League (PAL) Center.⁹ The

⁴ “New Police Station,” *Illustrated Buffalo Express*, April 15, 1895.

⁵ “We Will Take Care of Him,” *Buffalo Enquirer*, September 13, 1901.

⁶ “Noepfel is Pleased with Department, But Plans Improvements,” *Buffalo Evening News*, October 29, 1952.

⁷ “Noepfel is Pleased with Department, But Plans Improvements,” *Buffalo Evening News*, October 29, 1952..

⁸ “Police Station, Fire House May Be Made PAL Centers,” *Buffalo Evening News*, April 21, 1954.

⁹ “Old 13th Precinct Police House Soon to Be PAL Center,” *Buffalo Evening News*, November 9, 1955.

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PAL Center became a community gathering space, hosting many classes, recreational gatherings, and athletic facilities for the surrounding neighborhood.

The former police station was refurbished to house recreational and educational programs for PAL in 1955. Although the city paid for the remodeling, policemen contributed time and effort to help complete it while businessmen and civic leaders contributed money and furnishings.¹⁰ Once the center was converted, the PAL Center was financed without using tax funds but rather from proceeds from a high school football game it sponsored each fall. This football game was the sole source of funding for PAL Center programming each year.

Some of the original large rooms were easily converted with minimal and reversible disruptions to the original plan. This 1950s conversion included new painting, electrical work, new flooring, and consolidation of about a half dozen small rooms into larger spaces. The original hipped roof, damaged by the fire, was replaced with a flat roof at this time, reducing the building to two stories.

There was a dedication ceremony on April 14, 1956, followed by an open house event attended by hundreds of neighborhood children. A plaque was placed at the entrance in memory of twenty-two officers killed in the line of duty. At the open house, “hundreds of youngsters overflowed the old station house for the dedication ceremonies and their first glimpse of the renovated building.” The turnout was so large that the building had to close forty-five minutes later, in order to prevent “hazardous conditions” after enthusiastic youngsters and a few parents filled halls, stairways and every room.”¹¹ The popularity of the place continued to attract the city’s youth; by September 1956, 2,400 boys and girls had enrolled at the PAL Center.

Social Activity at the Austin Street PAL Center

The PAL Center was designed and programmed to create strong social connections between Black Rock youth, as well as familiarize them with the police officers in the area. The two-story PAL Center had a craft room, boxing and exercise room, two recreation rooms, library, all purpose room, and a locker-shower room. The boxing space and locker room were located in the old cell block space, removed during the 1955 conversion. An officer who had been stationed there during the 1940s remarked, “The change in the building is amazing to anyone who had been here before...The renovation job has produced an entirely different atmosphere in the 60-year-old building. One example is the gymnasium with a 16-foot square boxing ring. It occupies space formerly used as a cell block.”¹² A utility room, equipped with juke box, soda machine, tables, and dancing space, took the place of old reserve room. A combined tv and reading room replaced the captain’s and lieutenant’s offices. The large second floor room once used by the Civil Defense Auxiliary was converted to a brightly designed game room where pool, ping pong, and shuffleboard was played.”¹³ Downstairs, “special features for the girls

¹⁰ “PAL Youth Center Hailed at Dedication,” *Buffalo Courier-Express*, April 15, 1956.

¹¹ “PAL Youth Center Hailed at Dedication,” *Buffalo Courier-Express*, April 15, 1956.

¹² “PAL Youth Center Hailed at Dedication,” *Buffalo Courier-Express*, April 15, 1956.

¹³ “PAL Youth Center Hailed at Dedication,” *Buffalo Courier-Express*, April 15, 1956.

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are a downstairs kitchen with an electric stove, fridge, washing machine and dryer... as well as an upstairs sewing room with two electric sewing machines and a hair dryer.”¹⁴

Each of these new spaces was used for PAL Center programming, comprised of police-supervised socialization, recreation, and educational activities during the after-school hours. Women instructors supervised activities for girls, with an upstairs sewing class and grooming instruction classes. A complete kitchen was installed in the basement, where basic cooking classes were taught. Instructors were sourced from Buffalo State College’s teaching program, where senior undergraduates gained experience teaching at PAL. Boys could learn woodworking, carpentry, and the use of power tools by instructors as well. In the crafts room, boys and girls made items such as plastic bracelets, wall plaques and other handicraft.

The Austin Street PAL Center was the only PAL Center to include a boxing ring, a considerable draw for many area boys. The regulation size boxing ring was open to youth, where lessons were taught to older teenagers three evenings a week by Eddie Michaels, onetime Buffalo ring champion. Ted Whitfield, a notable welterweight, got his start at the Austin Street PAL Center. Aside from the boxing ring, the PAL Center offered an exercise room. More broadly, the PAL organization sponsored citywide basketball and baseball leagues amongst its other PAL Centers by the 1960s.

Freeform activities occurred in the game room and dancing room, where youth could play ping pong, billiards, shuffleboard, checkers, and dance to the jukebox. These spaces were supervised by police, often out of uniform. This type of unstructured, social activity brought youth into the PAL center and off the street. One attendee, Diane Kopra of 77 Clay Street, stated, “I’d rather dance in here than on the street.” Diane was also learning to sew on the center’s sewing machines. From 7-9:30 on some nights, teenagers aged thirteen to eighteen took over the space, where “a jukebox is whirling all the time.”¹⁵

PAL programming was intended not just to provide recreation, but also to prevent juvenile delinquency. As the city’s first PAL Center, the Austin Street Center established the organization’s emphasis on structured activities to get youths off the streets and into a safe, supervised environment. As one newspaper noted, “instead of hatching juvenile mischief, youths are flocking to the PAL Center for supervised recreation and lessons in arts and crafts.”¹⁶ PAL tended to focus on areas where youth were more at risk, hoping to prevent juvenile delinquency and improve children’s social and time management skills.

The hours of operation reflected this goal as well, as the PAL Center was open from 3:00 PM-9:30 PM at night. This was believed to be “the critical hours, a time when juvenile idleness can be dangerous.”¹⁷ Children under the age of thirteen would attend the PAL Center from 3-5:30, with thirteen to eighteen-year-olds arriving later, from 7-9:30. The center closed from 5:30-7, as “otherwise these children would never go home for supper.”¹⁸

¹⁴ “PAL Youth Center Hailed at Dedication,” *Buffalo Courier-Express*, April 15, 1956.

¹⁵ “PAL Center Clicks in Big Way and Cuts Juvenile Mischief,” *Buffalo Evening News*, October 4, 1956.

¹⁶ “PAL Center Clicks in Big Way and Cuts Juvenile Mischief,” *Buffalo Evening News*, October 4, 1956.

¹⁷ “PAL Center Clicks in Big Way and Cuts Juvenile Mischief,” *Buffalo Evening News*, October 4, 1956.

¹⁸ “PAL Center Clicks in Big Way and Cuts Juvenile Mischief,” *Buffalo Evening News*, October 4, 1956.

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The PAL Center remained well attended by city youth for several years, with enrollment remaining around 2,000-2,500 into the 1970s. Even as several other PAL Centers opened around the city, particularly on the East Side, during the 1960s, the Austin Street Center remained an anchor for youth activity amongst Black Rock residents.

Few changes were made to the building during the first decades of the PAL Center's operation. The barn was demolished in 1957, anticipating an outdoor play area at the PAL Center that year.¹⁹ The area was fenced and paved with a hard asphalt surface, with playground equipment added after the necessary \$4,000 was raised over the next year. The building remained in use as the PAL Center through the late twentieth century, closing in 1993. Despite some alterations during the second half of the twentieth century, the building retains integrity of materials, form, and plan to convey its original functions as a police station and PAL center.

Context: Buffalo's Police Athletic League (PAL), 1954-present

The Police Athletic League (PAL) was a local organization founded in Buffalo in 1954, based on the model founded in other American cities. New York City's PAL was established as early as 1914, for instance. These organizations followed a similar model, wherein after-school centers and recreational leagues were established and supervised by nonprofit PALs to assist in preventing juvenile delinquency in inner-city neighborhoods. Most PAL Centers were run by uniformed officers until the 1960s, when many centers were then supervised by civilian executive directors or officers in civilian clothes. Eventually, PALs united into the National Association of Police Athletics/Activities Leagues, Inc., based in Jupiter, Florida, today.

Buffalo's PAL provided City of Buffalo youth with recreational, educational, cultural, environmental, and juvenile delinquency prevention programming in a structured and supervised setting. Established in 1954, PAL's operations began with summer activities before it was able to open a permanent location at Austin Street. In summer 1955, PAL opened four day-camps, sponsored a bicycle rodeo, and organized a junior baseball league. During this time, PAL also worked with the City of Buffalo to obtain the funding necessary to convert the former Precinct 13 station at 348 Austin Street into a permanent PAL location. When the Austin Street PAL Center opened in April 1956, it was the first in the city.

The popularity of the Austin Street PAL Center with neighborhood youth led to the establishment of several more centers throughout the city over the next few years. The second PAL Center opened in 1956, at 377 Kensington Avenue near Fillmore Avenue. A third location opened at 138 Spruce Street later that year.

Many of PAL's centers were located in refurbished buildings rather than new construction, but within a few years there was a debate about switching to new construction for financial reasons. In addition to the adaptively reused Precinct 13 station on Austin Street, the Kensington Center was in the old PS 61 and the Spruce Street Center used the former headquarters of Engine No. 4. In 1957, PAL publicly debated the benefits of prioritizing

¹⁹ "Outdoor Play Area Started At Austin St PAL Center," *Buffalo Evening News*, August 13, 1957.

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new construction instead. The Capital Expenditures Subcommittee stated “a firm position favoring construction of new buildings instead of buying old ones and renovating them as PAL or community centers.”²⁰ This was primarily a financial argument, as the subcommittee believed new construction would be much more economical to maintain and supervise. Accordingly, a proposal was rejected for the city purchase of the Capitol Theater in South Buffalo as a PAL center. Around the same time, the city tabled the proposal to buy Holly Hall in 833 Fillmore Ave as an East Side center, as it wanted to build new for financial reasons. This was particularly frustrating for PAL, as it had been looking unsuccessfully to establish a PAL Center on the East Side for three years. The organization stated, “it is an area of high delinquency and heavy population and a lack of recreational facilities.”²¹

Other PAL Centers in Buffalo

Three more PAL Centers opened in the next few years, in different areas of Buffalo’s East Side. In 1958, a PAL Center opened in the Cold Spring neighborhood, serving the area bounded by Best Street, Main Street, and Humboldt Avenue. The center included five shuffleboards and two ping pong tables, a game room, arts and craft shop, photography room, woodcraft room and girls’ lounge. A PAL Center opened at 406 Jefferson in the late 1950s as well. In 1959, PAL opened a center in E. Utica, in the adaptively reused Humboldt Casino building. Apparently, this reuse could be conducted more affordably than new construction, continuing the overall trend in PAL history of refurbishing preexisting buildings. By 1959, PAL Center membership reached 8,000, a combined total of all centers across the city.²²

By 1965, there were seven PAL Centers in the City of Buffalo. PAL centers had been very well attended, with 20,000 people in the eight to eighteen age range are ‘card carrying’ members of the seven PAL centers total. Most of these members were active participants in the PAL centers, with the average monthly attendance around 17,950.²³ The success of the PAL centers in preventing juvenile delinquency led one local newspaper to state, “we need more PAL.” By 1967, another new PAL Center opened in the former Summer Lovejoy Methodist Church at 199 Summer Street, and PAL centers were located in the Houghton and Willert Park neighborhoods as well. Some of these are extant, but the building at 346 Austin Street remains the first in the city.

The presence of PAL Centers made a significant impact on youth throughout the City of Buffalo during the 1950s-1970s. In 1964, there was a decrease in juvenile crime in Buffalo, bucking a national trend. That year, there were 108 fewer instances of juvenile crime than in previous years. Community leaders and politicians directly credited PAL and PAL Centers with this improvement, stating, “I feel citizens participation on PAL governing boards and other similar groups has cut juvenile crime in Buffalo...The success of PAL centers is cause for optimism in Buffalo.”²⁴

²⁰ “New Construction Favored for PAL, Community Center,” *Buffalo Evening News*, June 14, 1957.

²¹ “Purchase of Hall For Boys’ Center Requested By Two,” *Buffalo Evening News*, May 21, 1955.

²² *Buffalo Evening News*, January 26 1956.

²³ Virginia Dell, “Juvenile Delinquency Down in 64 in City,” *Buffalo Courier-Express*, March 4, 1965.

²⁴ Virginia Dell, “Juvenile Delinquency Down in 64 in City,” *Buffalo Courier-Express*, March 4, 1965.

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The PAL centers were the primary method of pursuing the organization's emphasis on preventing juvenile delinquency. Most of the PAL Centers were located in officially recognized 'high delinquency' areas of Buffalo. By the mid-1960s, five of the seven PAL Centers were directed by uniformed policemen from PAL. This police presence was meant to humanize, rather than intimidate, the police force for area youth. PAL chose this police presence, as "youngsters have a chance to get to know policemen and their work; that way there's always a policeman in the neighborhood."²⁵ This also gave police officers a chance to get to know local youth in return. As one stated, "when they're here [at the PAL Center], we know they are off the streets; their parents know where they are."²⁶ PAL Centers provided youth with safe, fun, supervised recreation, and educational activities, preventing juvenile delinquency and increasing mutual recognizability between police and youth in multiple underserved neighborhoods around Buffalo during the late twentieth century.

By the 1980s, PAL Center attendance was decreasing. In 1994, after a period of declining enrollment and building closings, a commitment was made by former Buffalo Mayor Anthony Masiello as he entered office to rebuild the PAL, pledging to provide quality athletic and educational programming once again to the boys and girls of the City of Buffalo. He accomplished this by providing seed money to PAL generated from proceeds from his inaugural ball and through the collaboration of the Buffalo Police Parks and Recreation and PAL employees.

In 1997, a memorandum of understanding was signed, formalizing the cooperative relationship between the city and PAL. This allowed PAL staffers to work alongside recreation personnel to provide a wide range of services again. By 1999, PAL again served over 20,000 children annually, through remaining PAL centers and the 'Cops and Kids' programs. Delinquency prevention, educational, recreational, athletic, and cultural activities were included in their extensive program. PAL's operations included after-school activities, day camps, sports camps, arts and crafts, basketball and baseball leagues, prevention seminars, tutoring, and tennis lessons. PAL remains a non-profit organization in Buffalo today, with six city-wide community centers and a seasonal sports league.

After the Period of Significance

While the period of significance ends in 1974 at the fifty-year mark, the building continued to serve as a PAL Center to the Black Rock neighborhood on Buffalo's north side for several more decades. The surrounding community demographics shifted substantially during the 1970s and 1980s, when the neighborhood experienced a loss in population due to suburban flight and loss of industries in the area. Some physical changes to the building also occurred after the period of significance ended in 1974, such as the replacement of some of the windows and the sandblasting of the brick by the Hamilton, Houston and Lownie firm in 1979.

²⁵ Dell, 5.

²⁶ Dell, 5.

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In 2005, the building was purchased by Andrew McLellan, who renovated the building interior to house his firm Environmental Education Associates. Drywall partition walls were inserted to subdivide some of the larger spaces, such as in the south end of the second floor. The renovations were featured in a local newspaper, where McLellan stated, “We’re certainly respecting the historic integrity of the building.”²⁷ The building was locally landmarked by the Buffalo Preservation Board in 2020.

Summary

The building at 348 Austin Street is significant under Criterion A in Social History due to its association with the history of the Buffalo Police Athletic League (PAL). Constructed in 1894, it served as a police station for Precinct 13 until it was closed in 1954. After a fire that same year, the building was refurbished in 1955 to become the city’s first PAL Center. The Austin Street PAL Center provided recreational and educational programming in a police-supervised setting in order to prevent juvenile delinquency amongst high-risk youth. Today, the building retains more architectural integrity from the PAL Center era than from its original function as a police station. The period of significance spans from 1955-1974, reflecting the PAL Center era. The building also meets the registration requirements as an example of Public Architecture under the *Historic Resources of the Black Rock Planning Neighborhood, Buffalo, Erie County, NY* Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF).

²⁷ Jonathan Epstein, “Preservation Board Backs Landmark Status for Black Rock Police Station,” *Buffalo News*, July 25, 2020.

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9. Bibliography

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- Epstein, Jonathan. "Preservation Board Backs Landmark Status for Black Rock Police Station." *Buffalo News*, July 25, 2020.
- "New Construction Favored for PAL, Community Center." *Buffalo Evening News*, June 14, 1957: 31.
- "New Police Station." *Illustrated Buffalo Express*, April 15, 1895: 34.
- "Noepfel is Pleased with Department, But Plans Improvements." *Buffalo Evening News*, October 29, 1952: 48.
- "Old 13th Precinct Police House Soon to Be PAL Center." *Buffalo Evening News*, November 9, 1955: 54.
- "Outdoor Play Area Started At Austin St PAL Center." *Buffalo Evening News*, August 13, 1957: 4.
- "PAL Center Clicks in Big Way and Cuts Juvenile Mischief." *Buffalo Evening News*, October 4, 1956: 53.
- "PAL Will Dedicate Austin Recreation Center on April 14." *Buffalo Evening News*, April 4 1956: 30.
- "PAL Youth Center Hailed at Dedication." *Buffalo Courier Express*, April 15, 1956: B1.
- "Purchase of Hall For Boys' Center Requested By Two." *Buffalo Evening News*, May 21, 1957: 30.
- Walkowski, Jennifer. *Historic Resources of the Black Rock Planning Neighborhood*. State and National Registers of Historic Places: Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2010.
- "We Will Take Care of Him." *Buffalo Enquirer*, September 13, 1901, 11.

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preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested) **NPS # 44793**
 previously listed in the National Register
 previously determined eligible by the National Register
 designated a National Historic Landmark
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.1819 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 42.941499 | Longitude: -78.892796 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale.

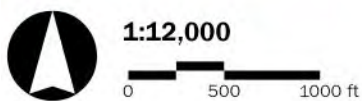
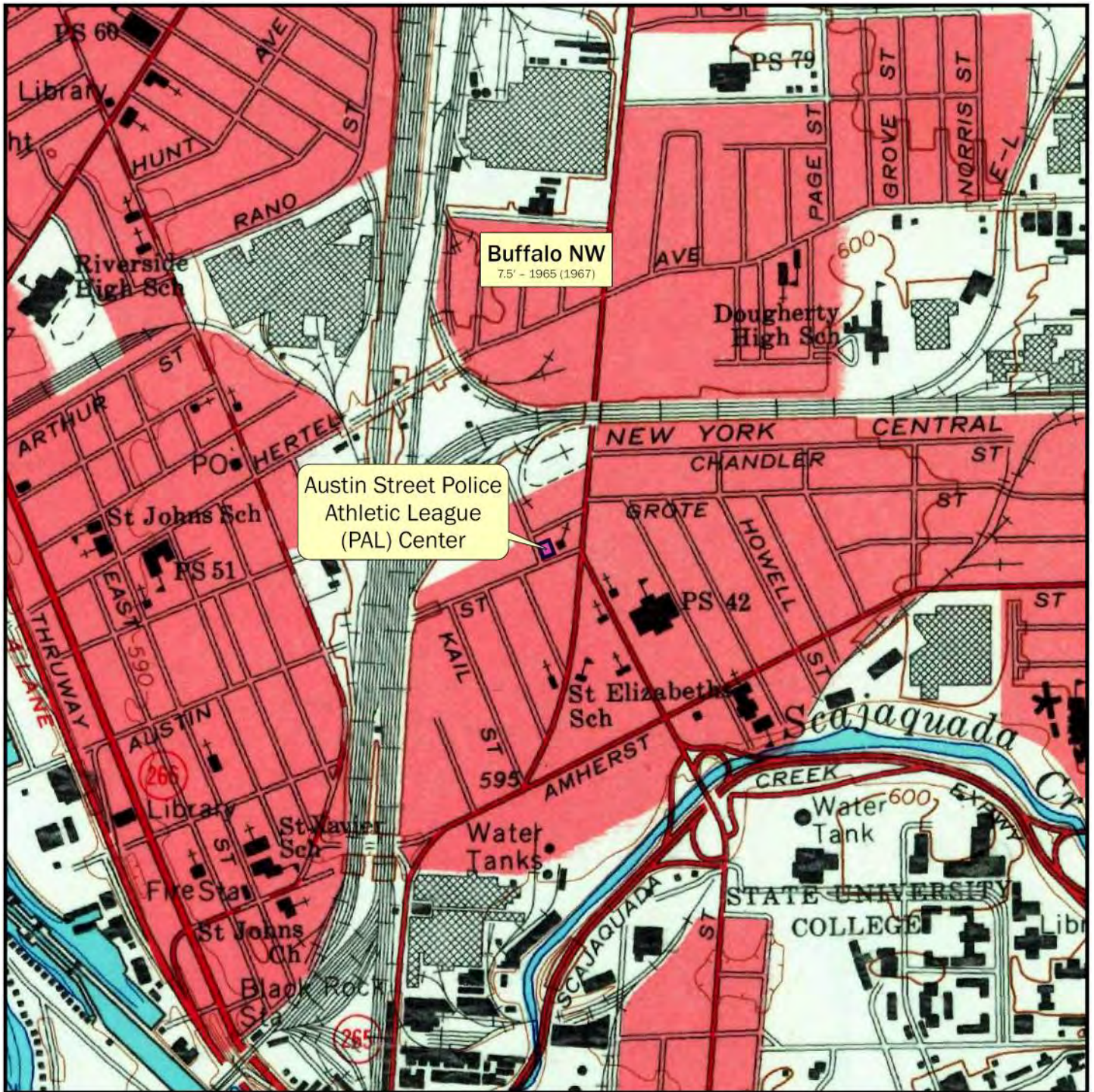
Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)


The boundary is drawn according to the original parcel and building located at 348 Austin Street, historically used as the PAL Center. The boundary encompasses all land historically and presently associated with the PAL Center.

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 Austin Street Police Athletic League (PAL) Center



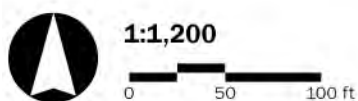
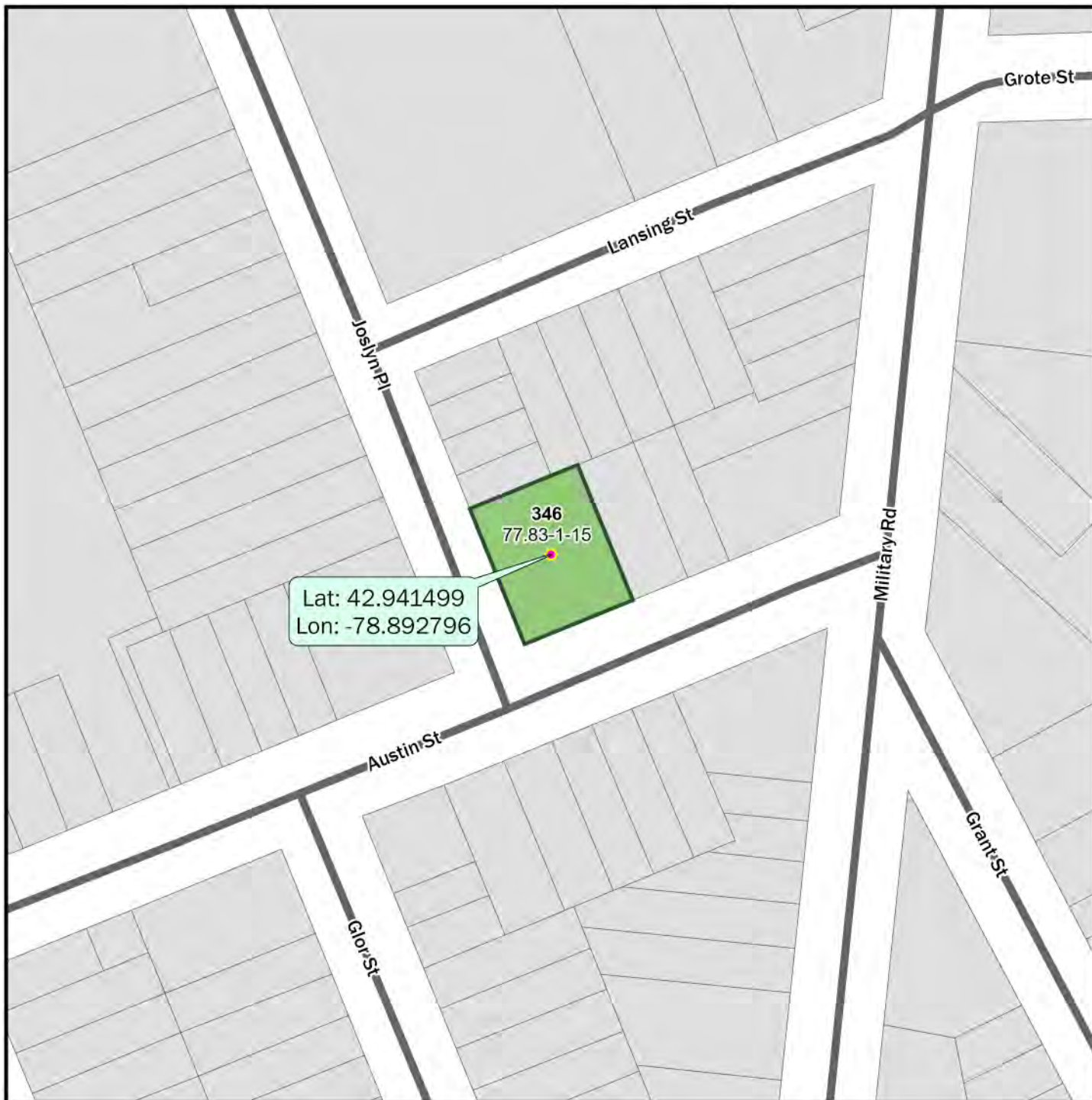
Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 17N



Mapped 04/16/2024 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO

AUSTIN STREET POLICE ATHLETIC LEAGUE (PAL) CENTER

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 Nomination Boundary (0.18 ac)  Tax Parcels



Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 17N

Erie County Parcel Year: 2021

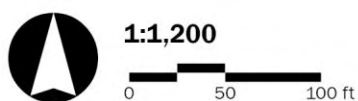
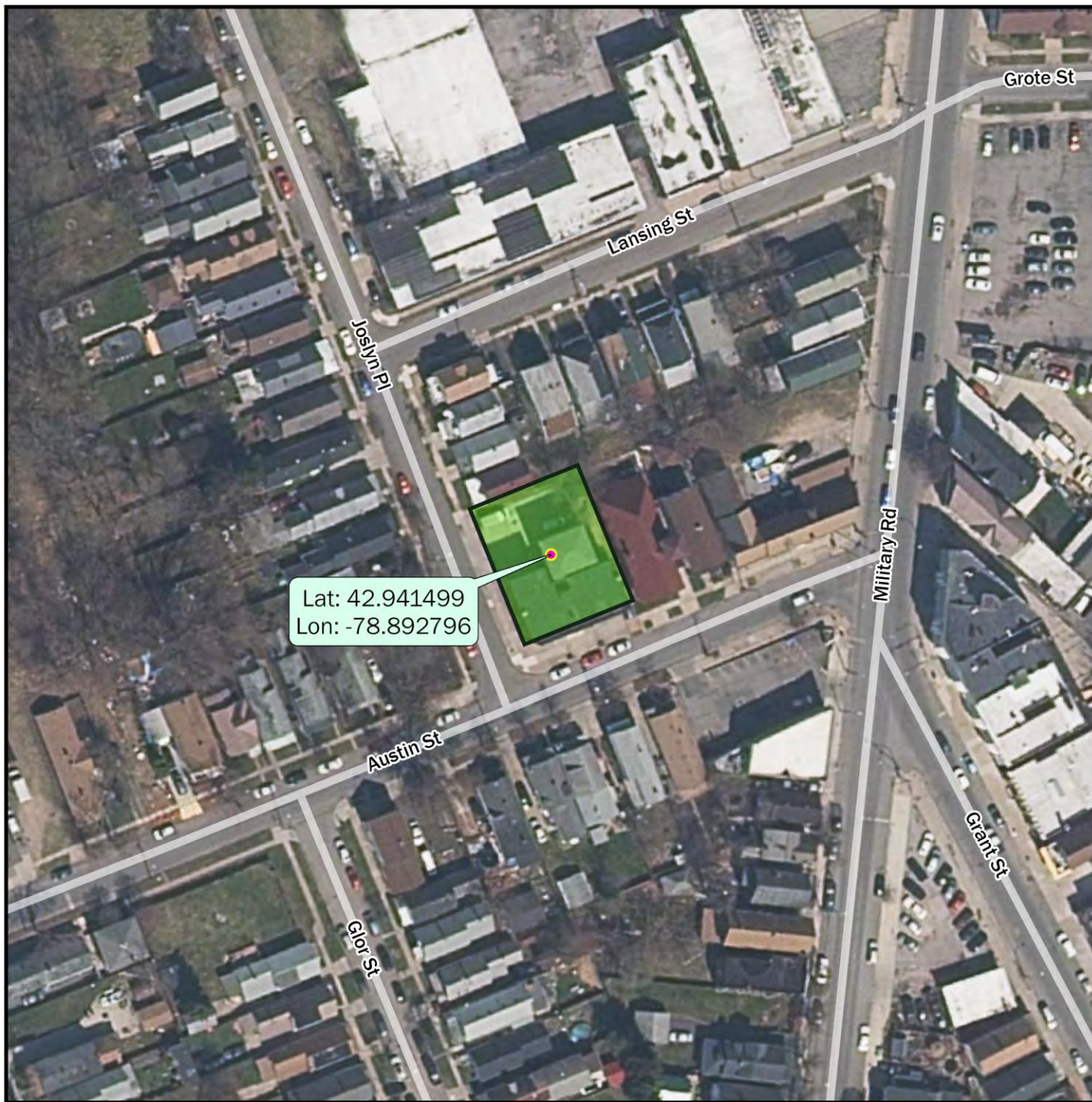
Mapped 04/16/2024 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO

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 Nomination Boundary (0.18 ac)



Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 17N

New York State Orthoimagery Year: 2021

Mapped 04/16/2024 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Annie Schentag, Ph.D. and Kerry Traynor, MS/MArch [Edited by Jennifer Walkowski, NYSHPO]

organization Kta preservation specialists date 4.26.24

street & number 422 Parker Avenue telephone 716.864.0628

city or town Buffalo state NY zip code 14216

e-mail ktraynor@kta-preservation.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

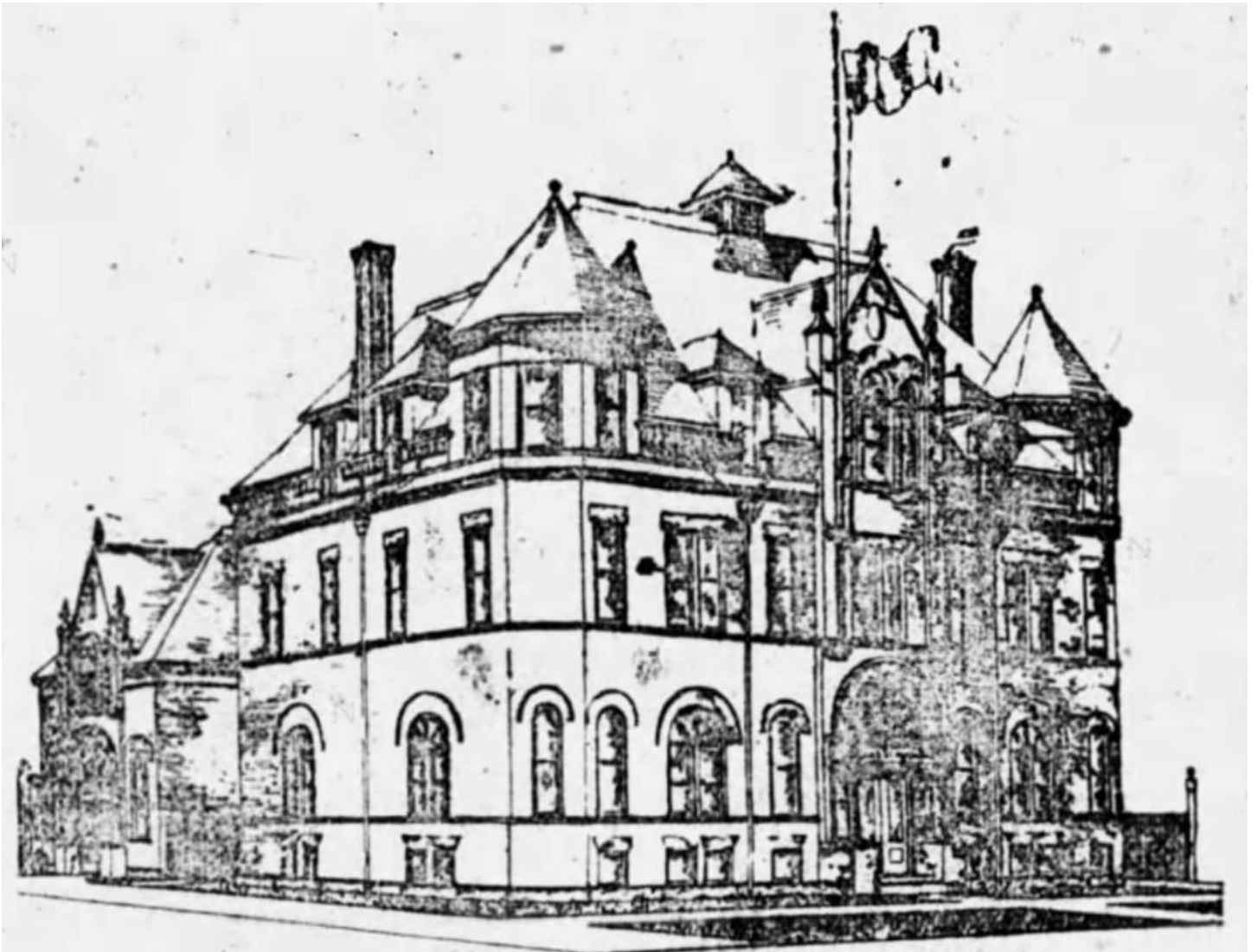
Illustration of building by architect Frederick Mohr, 1895. From *Buffalo Morning Express* (April 14, 1895). Note the illustration depicts the original third floor, roof, and turrets. This was replaced with a flat two-story roof after the 1954 fire.

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NEW POLICE STATION NO. 13, AUSTIN AND JOSLYN STREETS--FRED'K MOHR, ARCHITECT.

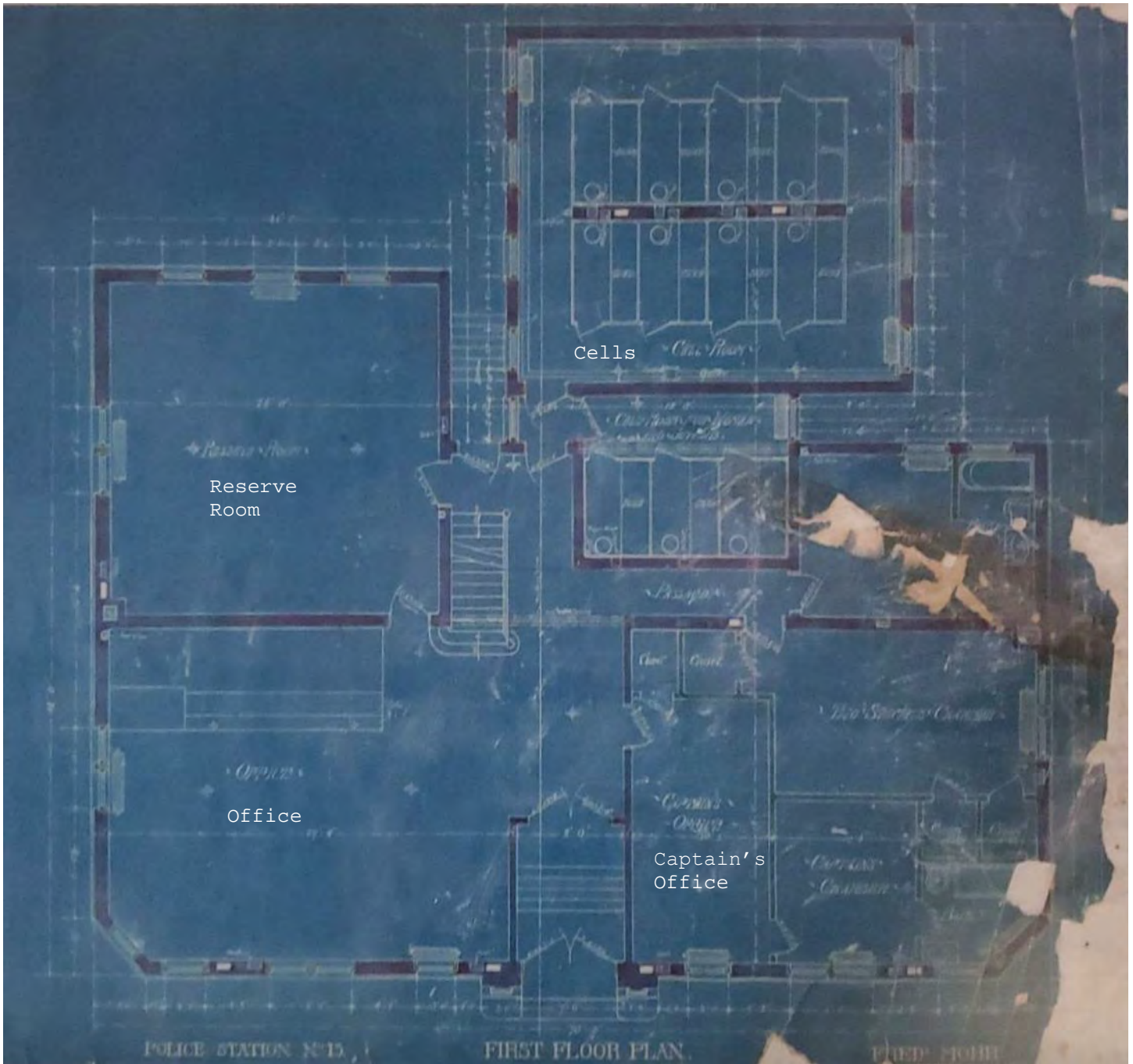
AUSTIN STREET POLICE ATHLETIC LEAGUE (PAL) CENTER

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Original First Floor Plans (Precinct 13)



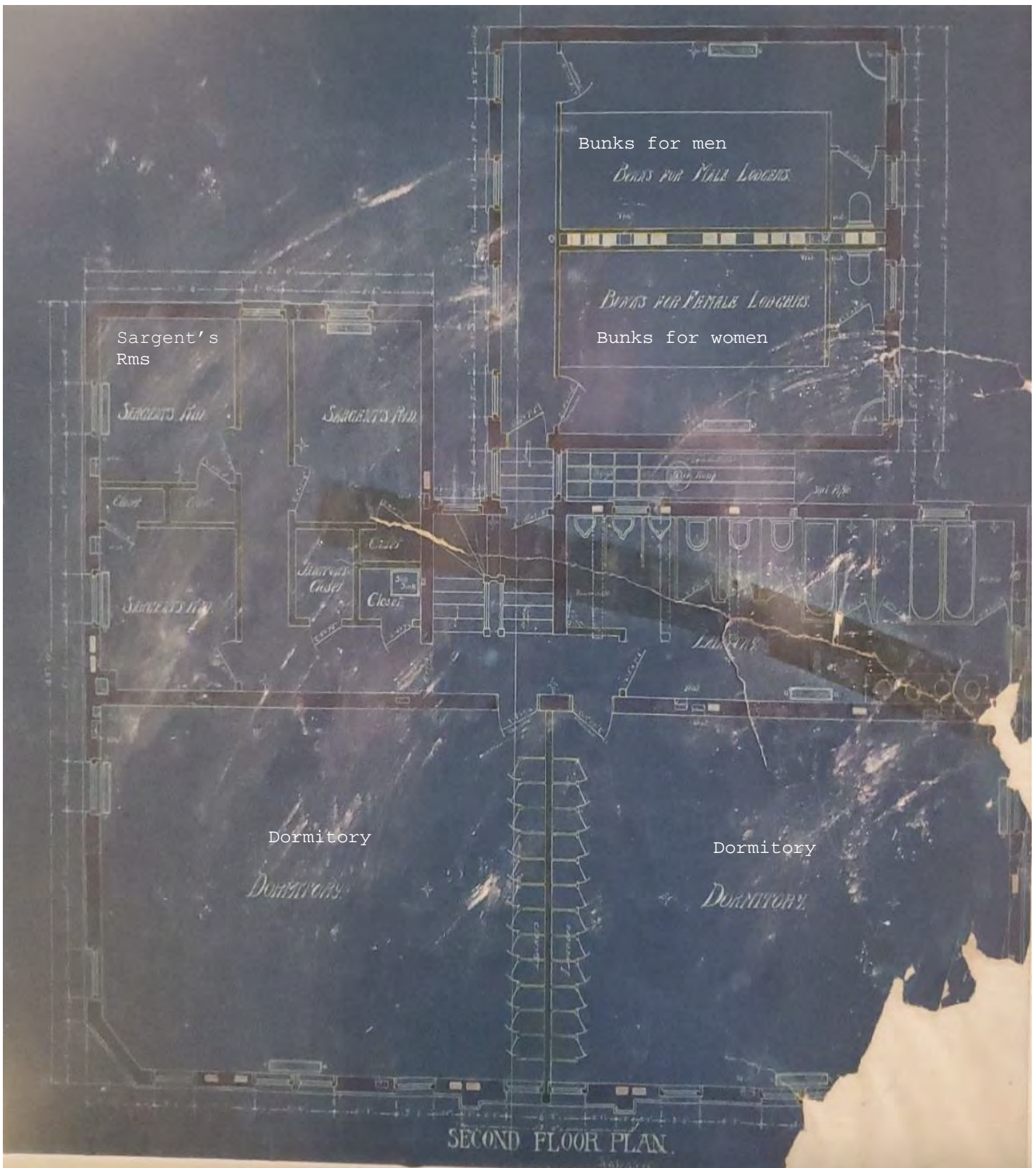
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Original Second Floor Plans (Precinct 13)



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Photograph of the first sewing class on opening day of the PAL Center from *Buffalo Courier-Express* (April 15, 1956).



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An art class, sponsored by the Albright Knox Art Gallery and led by a Buffalo State College instructor, at the Austin Street PAL Center in 1966.



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A cooking class at the Austin Street PAL Center in 1966.



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A lesson at the Austin Street PAL Center boxing ring in 1966.



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Photograph of the PAL Center ca. 1980



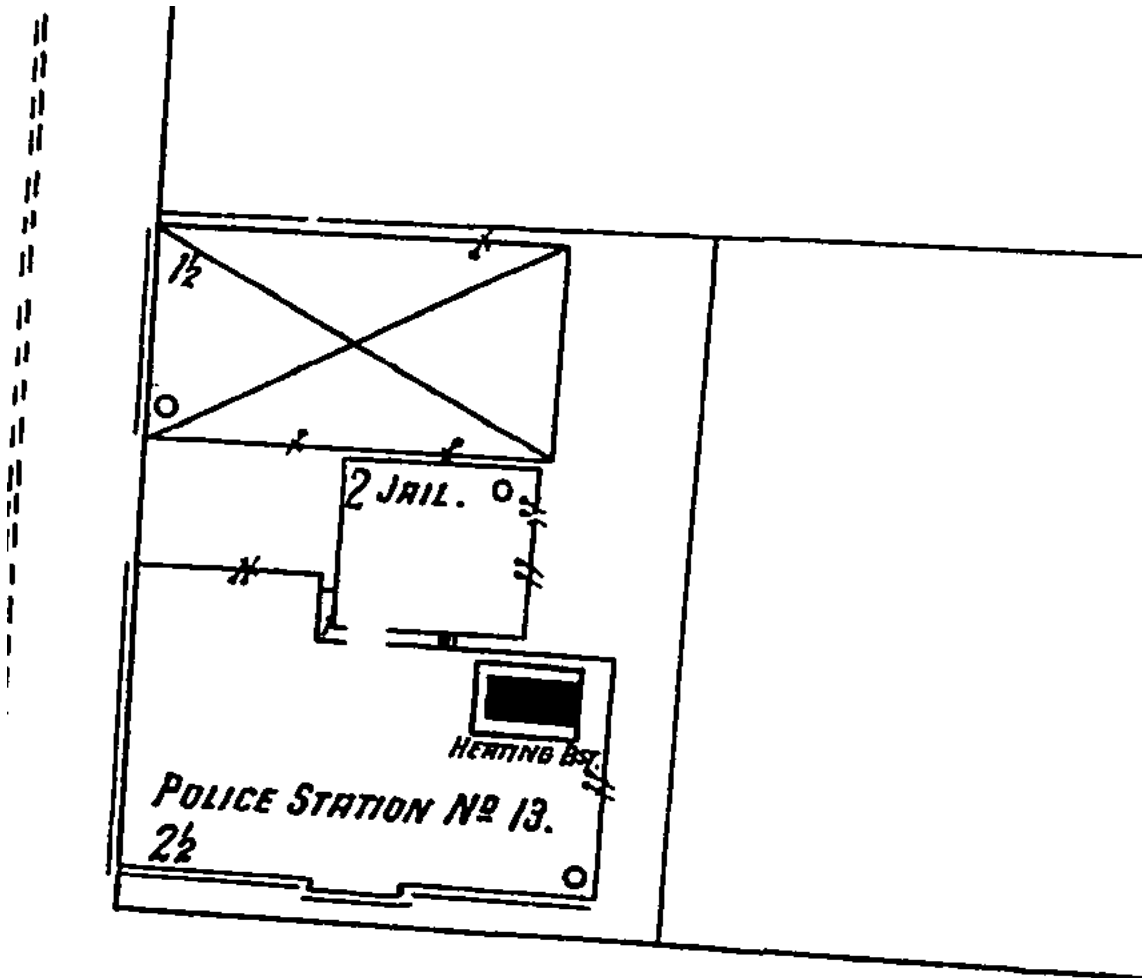
AUSTIN STREET POLICE ATHLETIC LEAGUE (PAL) CENTER

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Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1900.

This is the first map to depict the building and the barn (demolished 1957) as it was originally constructed in 1894.



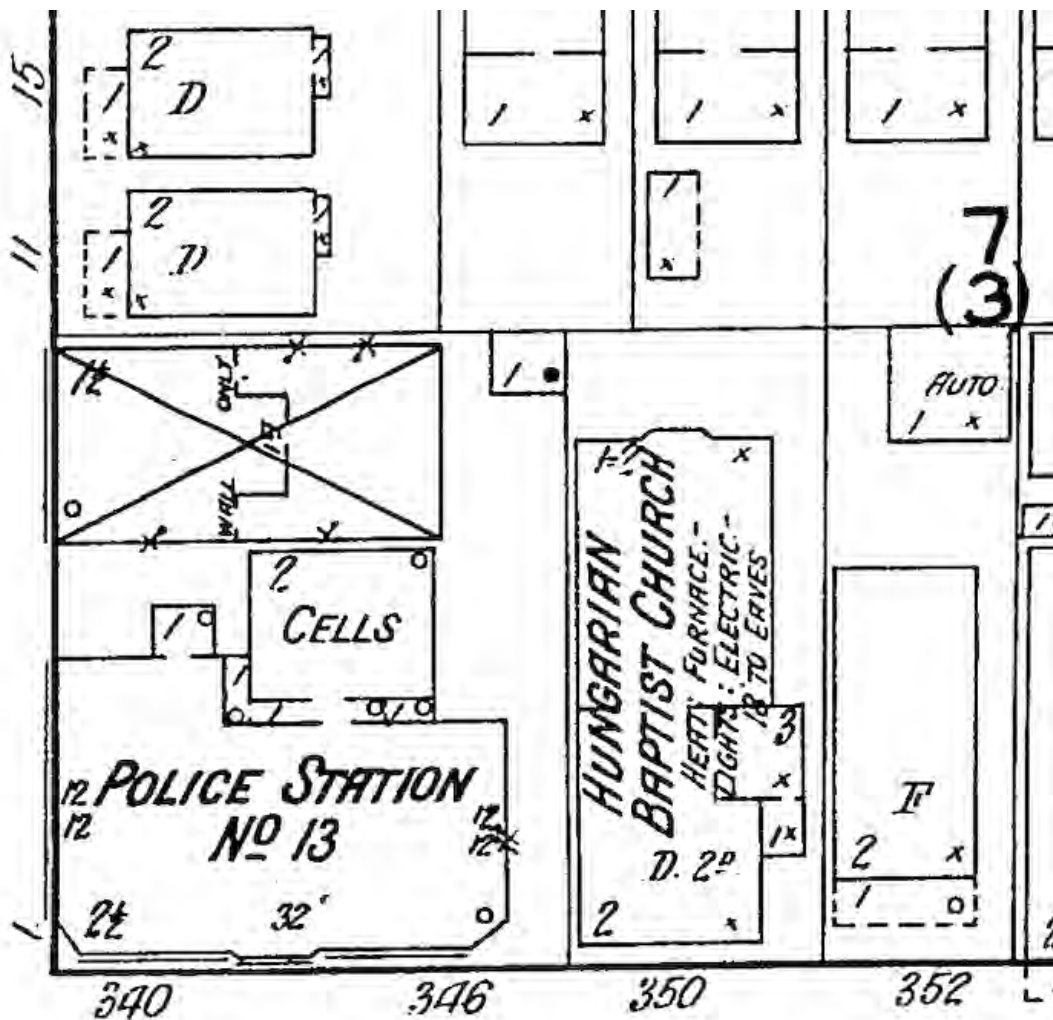
AUSTIN STREET POLICE ATHLETIC LEAGUE (PAL) CENTER

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Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1916.

Note the building still served as the police station at this time, with no major changes made. Development in the area had increased by this time.



10

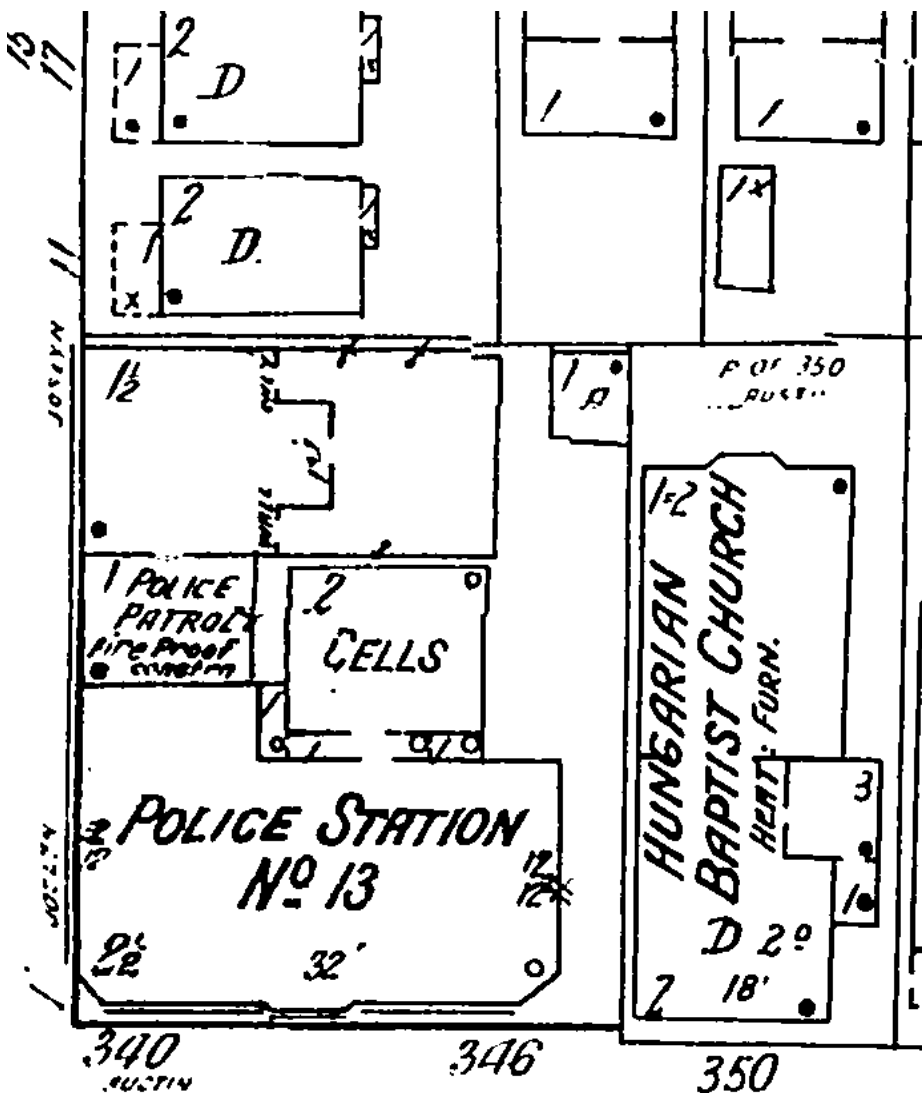
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Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1950.

This depicts the building a few years before the PAL Center occupied the space. Note the barn was used as an auto garage, with an addition for police patrol. The barn was demolished in 1957 once the building functioned as the PAL Center,



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Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Austin Street Police Athletic League (PAL) Center
City: Buffalo
County: Erie County
State: New York
Photographer: kta preservation specialists
Date Photographed: September 2023
of Photographs: 15

Photograph:

NY_Erie County_AustinStreetPALCenter_0001

View looking north showing south elevation.

NY_Erie County_AustinStreetPALCenter_0002

View looking northwest showing south elevation.

NY_Erie County_AustinStreetPALCenter_0003

View looking northwest showing corner and south elevations.

NY_Erie County_AustinStreetPALCenter_0004

View looking northeast showing west, corner, and partial south elevations.

NY_Erie County_AustinStreetPALCenter_0005

View south showing north elevation.

NY_Erie County_AustinStreetPALCenter_0006

View looking south at entrance hallway, first floor.

NY_Erie County_AustinStreetPALCenter_0007

View looking northwest towards primary stair, first floor.

NY_Erie County_AustinStreetPALCenter_0008

View looking south at office, first floor.

NY_Erie County_AustinStreetPALCenter_0009

View looking east at office, first floor.

NY_Erie County_AustinStreetPALCenter_0010

View looking northwest, classroom at northwest corner, first floor.

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NY_Erie County_AustinStreetPALCenter_0011

View up and north at the main stair towards the second floor, mid-landing.

NY_Erie County_AustinStreetPALCenter_0012

View looking southwest into second floor apartment. Note extant casing, stools, apron at windows and pressed tin ceiling.

NY_Erie County_AustinStreetPALCenter_0013

View looking west towards living area showing screen separating kitchen area from living area. Note extant pressed tin ceiling, casing and mullions at windows.

NY_Erie County_AustinStreetPALCenter_0014

View looking east towards kitchen area.

NY_Erie County_AustinStreetPALCenter_0015

View looking northeast into laundry room.

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



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