

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DRAFT

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name LAFAYETTE FLATS

other names/site number Lafayette Apartments

name of related multiple property listing N/A

2. Location

street & number 115-135 Lafayette Avenue [] not for publication

city or town Buffalo [] vicinity

state New York code NY county Erie code 029 zip code 14213

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination [] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements as set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [] nationally [] statewide locally. ([] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. ([] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register [] see continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register [] see continuation sheet
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain) _____

Signature of the Keeper

date of action

LAFAYETTE FLATS
Name of Property

Erie County, New York
County and State

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	
_____	_____	buildings
1	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
1	_____	TOTAL

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

_____ N/A _____

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

_____ N/A _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(enter categories from instructions)

_____ DOMESTIC/ multiple dwellings _____

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

_____ DOMESTIC/ multiple dwellings _____
_____ VACANT _____

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

_____ Late 19th and Early 20th Century Revivals/
Classical Revival _____

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation _____ limestone _____
walls _____ brick _____
roof _____ asphalt _____
other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

LAFAYETTE FLATS

Erie County, New York

Name of Property

County and State

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 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 that 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 boxes that apply.)

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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance:

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Social History

Period of Significance:

1897 - 1939

Significant Dates:

1897, 1926, 1939

Significant Person:

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect/Builder:

E.P. Brink & Sons, Architect

Schmidt Brothers, Builder/Developer

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested. **NPS #36,985**

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by historic American Building Survey # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal Agency

Local Government

University

Other repository: _____

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 1

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

Narrative Description of the Property

The 36-unit Lafayette Flats is a three-story apartment building located at 115-135 Lafayette Avenue between Barton Street to the west and Herkimer Street to the east in Buffalo, NY. The L-shaped building consists of two parts, with the larger, five-row, thirty-unit portion of the building facing Lafayette Avenue, and the smaller, single-row, six-unit portion of the building facing Barton Street.¹ An exterior porch and passageway runs east-west, perpendicular to Barton Street, between these two portions of the building along its south elevation. Designed by E.P. Brink & Son and constructed by the Schmidt Brothers in 1897, the Lafayette Flats is stylistically reminiscent of a row house type apartment building, with Classical Revival styling and Syrian archways defining each entrance.

Located on Lafayette Avenue with a few additional units facing Barton Street, the neighborhood surrounding the Lafayette Flats is primarily residential in character. Situated between two commercial corridors, with Grant Street to the east and Niagara Street to the west, the buildings adjacent to the Lafayette Flats are mostly single-family and multi-family dwellings. The majority of these residential buildings are freestanding houses, typically two stories high and constructed out of brick or timber. Given this context, the Lafayette Flats presents a substantially denser massing than the surrounding area, offering thirty-six units within a single apartment complex rather than the one or two unit houses that are located nearby. The building is setback from the street approximately the same distance as the other freestanding dwellings, about four feet, with simple concrete sidewalks providing access to the stairs, porches and entrances in each row. Each row features twin entrance doors located under a Syrian archway with precast concrete voussoirs, accessed by a set of concrete stairs and small concrete porch landing enclosed by a wrought iron handrail. The property is landscaped simply, with green lawns facing Lafayette Avenue and Barton Street. The south side of the property features a paved concrete parking lot that is hidden from the street at its western and northern ends due to the presence of the L-shaped apartment building. A metal porch and passageway run the length of the L-shaped south elevation on all floors of the building. The design of the porch is original to the building, providing access to the rear entrance into each apartment, but it was replaced with the current metal porch after the period of significance.

The Lafayette Flats was designed specifically to accommodate a large number of residents in a new suburb of the city, approximately three-and-one-half miles from downtown Buffalo. The building provides thirty-six apartment units, with two units per floor in each row. There are two entrances into each row, each accessing a set of stairs with an apartment on each floor, for a total of six units per row. The units are stacked to mirror each other on each floor. This apartment building, reminiscent of the row house typology with Classical Revival styling, illustrates a distinctive architectural response to the issue of designing standardized urban

¹ The term 'row' here constitutes what may otherwise be called a group of bays but has been given a distinctive term referencing the Row House type to avoid confusion. To clarify, each row features a single archway with paired entrances, whereas each apartment unit is two bays wide- making each row four bays wide.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 2

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

housing in Buffalo and recalls an important aspect of the late-nineteenth-century residential growth and development in the city of Buffalo.

The Lafayette Flats retains a significant degree of character-defining features on both the exterior and the interior. Original windows, Classical Revival ornamentation and the repeating rhythm of bays remain intact on the exterior, as does the overall interior plan and circulation that typifies this style of apartment building. As one of very few examples of middle-class apartment buildings remaining intact in the city, the Lafayette Flats contributes to the history of architecture as well as the history of urban development and social patterns in Buffalo, NY.

EXTERIOR

The portion of the building facing Lafayette Avenue is five-rows wide, while the one facing Barton Street features a single row. The raised Onondaga limestone foundation is faced with a decorative precast concrete panel detailed as four courses of deeply raked curved bands painted grey on the elevations facing Lafayette and Barton Streets. The fourth course functions as a watertable and is continuous across the elevation. Above the raised basement on the primary elevations is a buff brick laid in common English bond with finely attenuated mortar joints, while the secondary elevations feature common red-brick. Each row features a single-story Syrian arch that springs from the concrete porch, framing the recessed entrance. Within the recessed entrance are two doors, each leading to a first-floor apartment and set of stairs accessing the stacked units on the upper floors. A three-story polygonal bay window flanks both sides of the entrance archway in each row. The windows are nearly all one-over-one double hung wooden sash units on the primary elevations, while some two-over-two double-hung wooden sash windows are located on the secondary elevation and in the court spaces. Some replacement windows with the same proportions do occur. A continuous pressed metal entablature, with egg and dart molding, paneled frieze band and bracketed eaves is continuous across the elevations facing Lafayette and Barton Streets. Overall, many of the exterior features are characteristic of the repetitive rhythm of the row house type of apartment building.

The exterior areas that face away from the streets serve as secondary space that was historically shared by the residents. Much like a courtyard, this shared space forms an L-shape from the south and west ends of the building. A landing with metal handrails runs the length of each floor on these elevations, providing a back-porch space that is contiguous between the two buildings in the complex. While a porch historically occupied this space, today the porch is a replacement of the original. This replacement occurred after the period of significance.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 3

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

North Elevation

The north elevation, facing Lafayette Avenue, is five bays wide with each bay defined by a centrally located stair accessing a recessed entrance bay framed by a broad, single-story Syrian arch with precast concrete voussoirs. The foundation's rusticated courses are interrupted at the hexagonal bays by two windows, and by the entrance porch. Within the recessed entrance at each row are two wood, stile and rail doors with upper glazed panel, classically detailed with molded trim. Above the door is a simple rectangular transom. The ceiling of the recessed entrance is wood beadboard. Above the arch at the first and second floors are two, one-over-one double hung wooden sash windows with molded precast sills. The window on the second floor has a segmental arched precast concrete header, while the one on the third floor has a simple, rectangular precast concrete header. On both sides of the arch framing the entrance is a three-story hexagonal bay. The windows in each face of the row are separated by precast classically detailed concrete pilasters with full entablature supporting a simple spandrel panel. The precast has been painted. A raised band at each pilaster is in line with the meeting rail of the window sash. At the third-floor level the pilasters are detailed with vertical lines in relief below the raised band, suggestive of fluting. A decorative pressed tin entablature, with paneled frieze band, egg and dart detailing and scrolled brackets at the eaves extends across the elevation.

West Elevation

The ornate pressed tin entablature and decorative raised basement of the façade continue along the Barton Street elevation, which also features buff brick with finely attenuated mortar joints. The fenestration on this elevation is arranged in response to the programmatic function of the rooms behind. The two windows to the north on each floor are slightly wider than the two to the south. The windows are all one-over-one wooden sash units, with precast sill and segmental head. At the bay to the south three casement windows are set within the masonry opening on each floor. It appears, given the brick sill and steel lintel, and slightly different colored brick at the edge that the openings were cut into the masonry and are not original.

At the south end of the Barton Street elevation is the primary entrance block. This block is a single row wide and features the same detailing as the rows facing Lafayette Avenue. Between the two portions are concrete steps accessing a breezeway connecting through to the rear porch. Simple metal railings, and a deck at the roof level are visible on the second and third floors of the metal platform.

East Elevation

The east elevation faces Herkimer Street and features an unpainted Onondaga limestone foundation and red brick. Some of the brick has been painted red at the north end, above the foundation. There are no projecting bays at this elevation. Two brick chimneys are visible at the unadorned roofline, at the first and the fourth bay

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 4

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

from the north. The decorative molded precast concrete at the raised basement on the north elevation turns the corner at the east elevation, revealing the relationship between the cladding and stone foundation. The buff brick visible on the north elevation also turns the corner where it is toothed to the adjacent red brick.

The window openings have been infilled with brick, except for those at the second bay from the south where two-over-two wooden sash windows remain extant. The openings feature a segmental arch head and precast sill. The window openings at the first bay from the north have been partially infilled and a smaller, wooden hopper window, with brick sill installed.

To the south the three-story porch platform is visible. At the first floor the platform is concrete, accessed by a set of concrete stairs, while at the second and third floors it is metal. Metal railings and a metal canopy at the roofline are also visible.

South Elevation (Service Elevations)

The service elevations are only visible from the south end of the property, as this was historically a private space only accessible by tenants. The elevations located at the "back" (south) of the apartments provided a secondary entrance accessed by a continuous platform at each floor. The three-story covered walkway also served as one contiguous porch on each floor and connects the portion of the building facing Barton Street with the portion facing Lafayette Avenue. The continuous surface of this elevation contrasts with the separately articulated row house type of character of the north (front) elevation. The first floor of the walkway is concrete while the upper floors feature metal decking supported by beams which are tied into the masonry wall and metal columns. The basement of both buildings is accessed via concrete stairs on the service elevations; interrupting the walkway at the first floor. Metal pan stairs to the east and west access the second and third floors of the platform, which features simple metal railing. Metal stairs with simple handrails provide access from the first floor and from the second floor in the first, third and ninth bays from the east. While Sanborn maps indicate that there was historically a porch here, the original porch (likely made of wood) was replaced after the period of significance in 1949.

The windows on the service elevation are aluminum clad wood hopper units. The original window openings were reduced in size and infilled with brick when the hopper units were installed. Doorways are located on each floor in each bay, which formerly served as access to the kitchen of each unit and thus served as secondary, service entrances. The original doors remain visible on the interior. A large brick smokestack rises to the west of center with the name 'M. Franklin' outlined in a buff brick color in contrast to the red brick.

The elevation to the south adjacent to the drive accessing the back, service entrances of the apartment units is similar to the east elevation, with brick toothing where the buff masonry meets the red brick, limestone

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 5

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

foundation, and return of the decorative entablature and molded concrete facing at the foundation. The brick at the first floor has been painted red. The masonry openings have been infilled with brick, and a smaller hopper window with brick sill, with the exception of those at the second bay from the east where the original two-over-two wooden sash window remains extant. The masonry openings all feature a concrete sill and segmental arch at the head.

INTERIOR

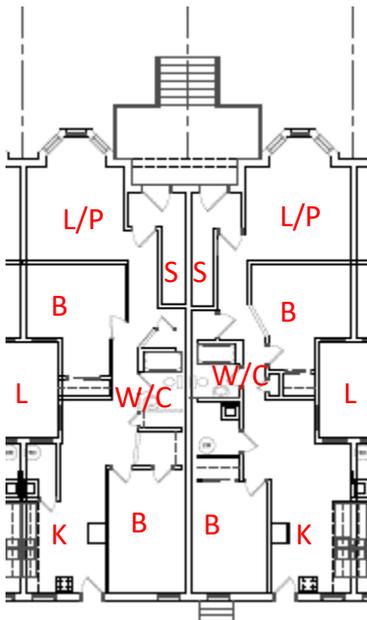
The basic plan of the Lafayette Flats reflects its original function as a multi-family residential building with 36 independent apartment units. There is one building with two components in the apartment complex – a five row building with thirty units and a single row building with six units. The arrangement of the units is structurally organized with a masonry bearing wall dividing each unit and each row. A window well centrally located along the bearing wall allows light into the apartment interiors. Within each row there are two entrances, each accessing three units, one per floor. The entrances lead to a wooden stair, with turned baluster rails, handrails and simply detailed newel posts that rises to land at an apartment on each floor. Each apartment unit has two-bedroom, and six or seven rooms in total. While some variation occurs in the plans between the first-floor units and the upper units, and the end units to accommodate the stairwells and internal lightwells, overall, the unit plans repeat on each floor and mirror each other between adjacent units. Many of the units retain their original material fabric, including wood sash windows, aprons, stools and casing; hardwood floors, and plaster walls. The organization of the apartments has not been significantly altered with a family room/parlor located at the bay window, bedrooms located adjacent to window wells for light and ventilation, and kitchens located to the rear, adjacent to the back, service entrance. The major alteration to plan includes small alterations to bedrooms to increase closet space and new partition walls to accommodate a room for water heaters and laundry appliances.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

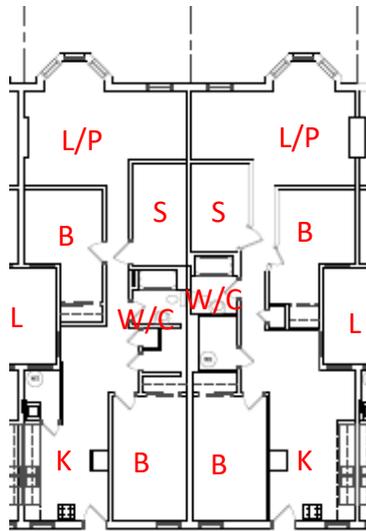
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 6

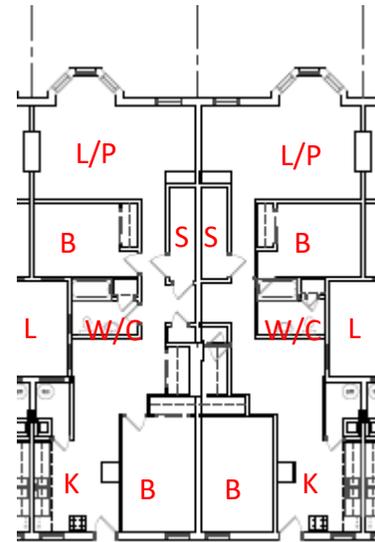
Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State



Typical 1st Floor Plan



Typical 2nd Floor Plan



Typical 3rd Floor Plan

Key:

L/P – Living Room/Parlor; B – Bedroom; W/C – Bathroom; K – Kitchen; S – Stairwell; L – Lightwell

Stairs, Stairwells and Corridors

The stairs and stairwells remain in their original location, with the majority of historic materials intact. There are two stairs and stairwells in each row, accessed through an original wood door with one light in the top half panel and a decorative wood sill with dentil details below. A transom window is located above the door. This door provides access to the stairwell and the first, second and third floor units. A short entrance corridor on the first floor leads to the entrance of the first-floor unit, located directly adjacent to the stairwell. The wood stair, with turned baluster rails, square newel post with simplified Classical Beaux Arts references, and wood handrail rises to the second and third floors and is lit from above by a skylight. Entrance into each apartment occurs at the stair landing on each floor.

The wood risers and treads have been covered with carpet. The wood stringer and baseboard remain extant. Wood handrails, with square wood posts and caps, wood baluster rails and landing newels where subtle Classical inspired detailing remains.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 7

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

Basement

There is a separate basement under the single row and six row portions of the building. The basement serves primarily as a storage area, where the stone foundation walls are visible. The basement is accessible through a door and sunken concrete stairs below grade at the service elevations. A concrete floor lines the basement, although it was likely a dirt floor at the time of initial construction. Some areas have suffered significant water damage, and the basement windows are missing or have been boarded in most of the eastern, western and southern areas of the building. Wood beams are visible on the ceiling, and additional support is provided by metal columns inserted below the beams. Wood partition walls have been inserted to delineate storage areas for the units above.

First Floor

All the first-floor units throughout the Lafayette Flats feature a similar floor plan, although some variations occur in a few units due to subsequent alterations. One enters a typical first floor unit from the small entrance corridor accessed through the primary entrances. The corridor runs the length of the apartment connecting living/parlor spaces with bay windows facing the street, with bedrooms, kitchen and back, service door. The living room is the only room located at the street elevations, and in a typical first floor unit features hardwood floors, plaster walls and ceilings, and plenty of light provided from the bay windows. The one-over-one wooden sash original windows remain extant at all of the bay windows, with the exception of those facing Barton Street. The wood aprons and stools remain extant throughout.

A bedroom is located across the corridor adjacent to the lightwell in the first-floor units and at the rear corner next to the kitchen. The bedrooms typically have hardwood floors, although in some locations the floors are covered with carpet. The window at the bedroom adjacent to the lightwell is a two-over-two double hung wooden sash unit, while the one at the rear corner is a smaller hopper unit. It is likely that the hopper units were installed when the heating system was upgraded as the space below the hopper window is recessed to accommodate a radiator. Across from the bedroom along the corridor is the bathroom. The location of the bathroom has not been altered and is an organizing feature, as is the lightwell in the units.

The kitchen is located to the rear of each apartment, with access from a door on the south elevation. The door with single upper light is original. A hopper window, with radiator below is located adjacent to the service door. The lightwell, with original two-over-two wooden sash window also provides light and ventilation into the kitchen. Most of the kitchens feature replacement tile or linoleum floors. A small closet is located between the bedroom and the kitchen, usually containing a water heater and placed either adjacent to the light well window or on the opposite wall.

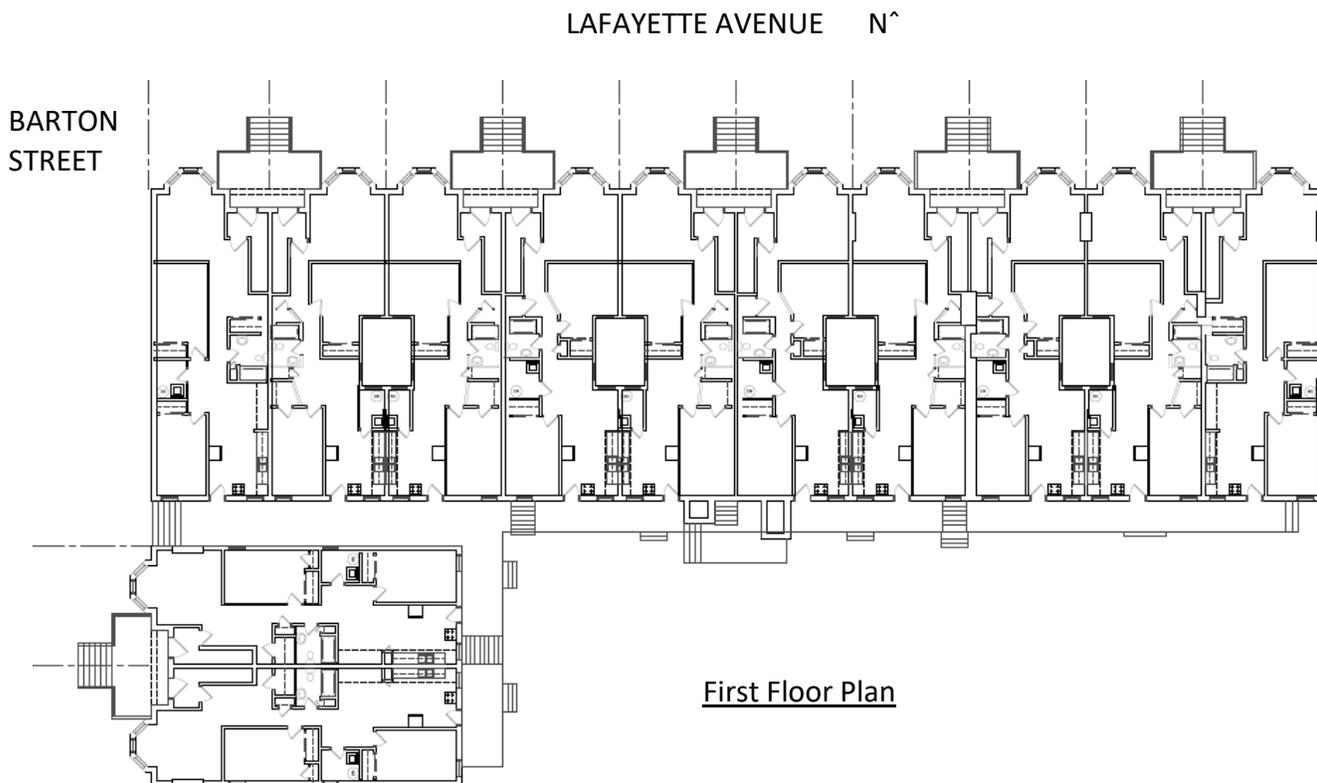
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 8

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

The interior plan is consistent in each first-floor unit, although each unit mirrors the one adjacent. The end units and the units facing Barton Street do not have a lightwell and, as a result the corridor is not angled to gain space in the bedroom and the bathroom is slightly larger.



Second Floor

The plan of the second-floor units is generally the same as the plan of the first-floor units, with some alteration to accommodate an entrance off the stairwell rather than from the first-floor entrance foyer. As on the first floor, the plan of the second-floor units mirrors each other back and forth, stacking the bathrooms near the stairwell and the lightwells on the opposite walls.

Entrance into the typical second floor unit occurs at the stair landing as opposed to the base of the stair, as is the case on the first floor. The result is a slightly larger living room at the front of the unit. The apartment corridor connects the living room, with a bay window at the street elevation to the kitchen and service spaces to the rear/south. In addition to the bay window, a single one-over-one wooden sash window is located in the living

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

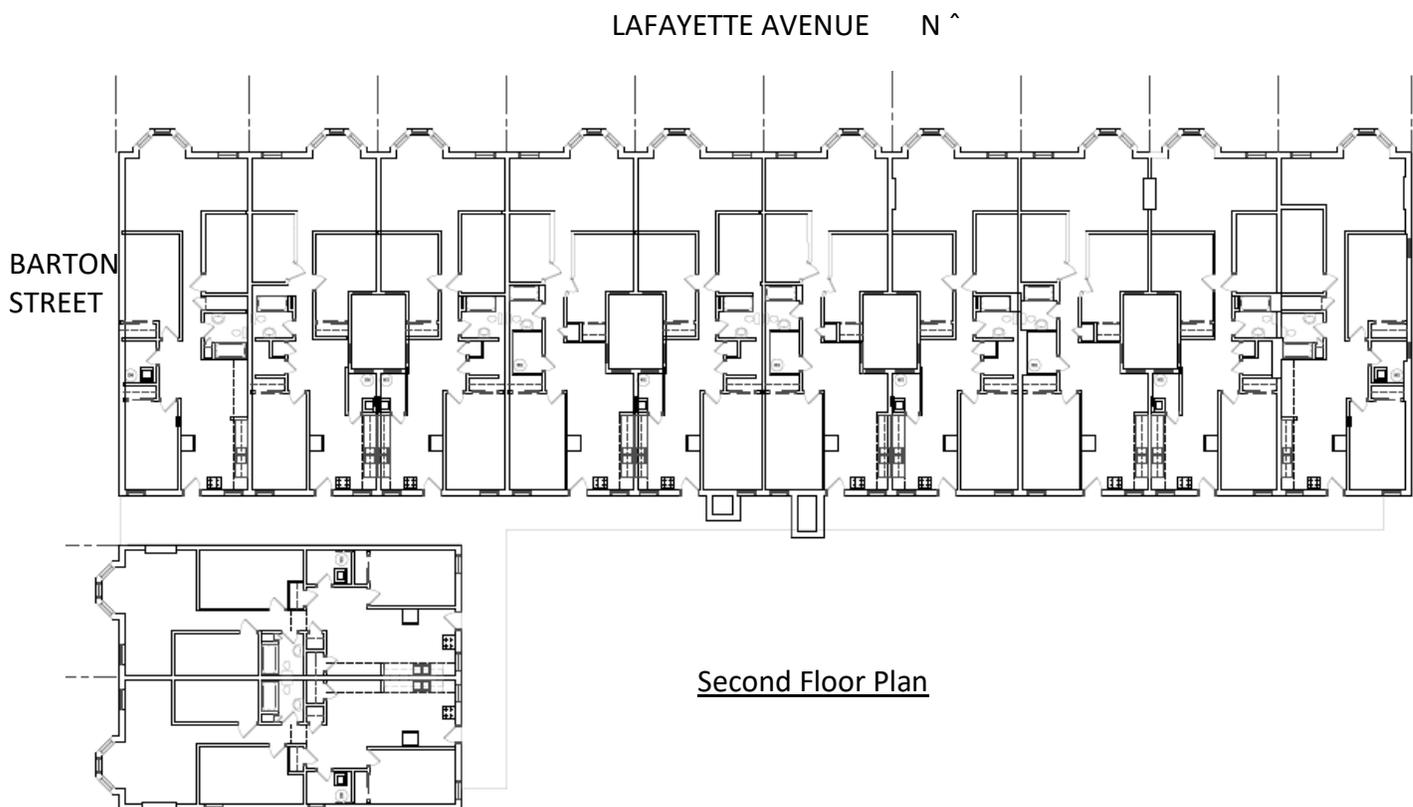
Section 7 Page 9

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

room, above the entrance vestibule and door below. Hardwood floors remain extant in the living room and bedrooms; however, it has been covered with vinyl tile or linoleum in the kitchen.

The lightwell retains original two-over-two wooden sash windows and provides light and ventilation into an adjacent bedroom, kitchen and utility room. The kitchen is located toward the rear of the unit and retains the original wood door with single light accessing the platform at the service elevation.

As is the case on the first floor, the second-floor units retain their original plan as well as many original windows and materials.



Third Floor

The plan of the third-floor units is similar in organization to that on the first and second stairs with some slight modifications. Two-bedroom units are located on the third floor and the bathroom is located adjacent to the light well, as opposed to the opposite wall. The location of the bathroom and its finishes has not been significantly altered on any floor indicating that the slight variety in plan is an original condition. The living

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

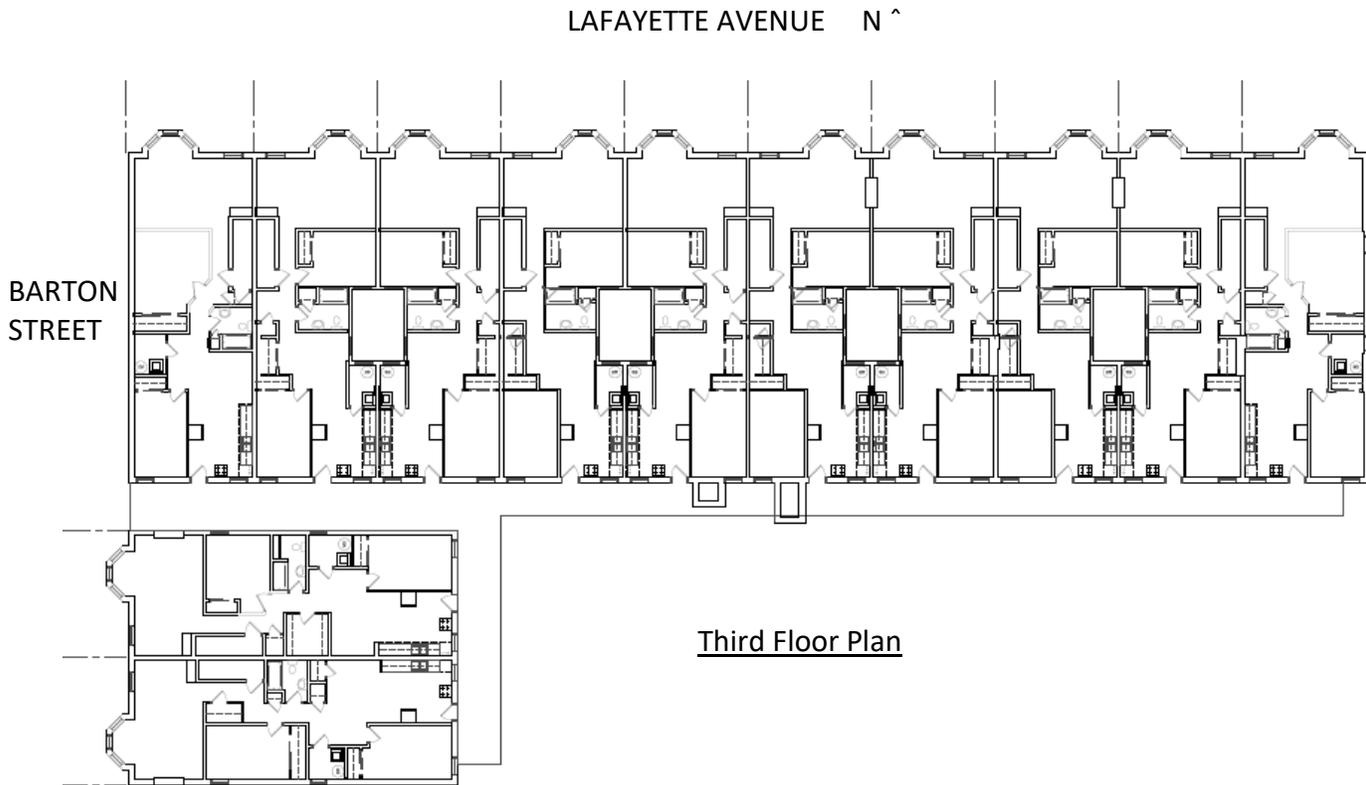
**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 10

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

room, with bay window and single double-hung sash, has not been significantly altered. An original built in seat remains on the wall behind the stair in the living room. Hardwood floors and plaster walls remain throughout. In some units the floors are covered with carpet.

The kitchen is located toward the rear of the unit, a small square, boarded window above a radiator and door accessing the platform on the service elevation.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 1

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

Statement of Significance:

The Lafayette Flats, constructed in 1897 at 115-135 Lafayette Avenue, is significant as a large, multi-unit apartment designed to accommodate the growing middle-class in the city of Buffalo during the late nineteenth century. Organized on a large rectangular site situated between Barton Street to the west and Herkimer Street to the east, the 36-unit apartment complex was purpose-built to accommodate a multi-family housing solution in Buffalo's upper west side neighborhood at a time of population growth. In anticipation of the need for more housing for the middle class in this northwestern area of the city, the contractors and real estate developers known as the Schmidt Brothers purchased the entire lot facing Lafayette Avenue at the corner of Barton Street and hired the architecture firm E.P. Brink & Son to design the Lafayette Flats in 1897.

The Lafayette Flats is significant under Criterion A in the area of Social History for its important impact on the residential settlement patterns and development of Buffalo's upper west side neighborhood, specifically apartment dwelling for the middle-class. At the time of its construction in 1897, this block of Lafayette Avenue was sparsely settled. As the streetcar transportation networks located on Grant Street to the east and on Niagara Street to the west encouraged development in Buffalo's upper west side neighborhood, the Lafayette Flats was designed to accommodate new middle-class residents between these bustling commercial corridors. For approximately 50 years, this building brought middle-class and upwardly mobile working-class tenants to the neighborhood in large numbers throughout the early to mid-twentieth century. In this way, the Lafayette Flats was the first building to substantially encourage the denser style of residential settlement for this neighborhood in a pattern that became characteristic of the early twentieth century.

The Lafayette Flats also merits consideration under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as a rare example of an apartment building with Classical Revival styling in Buffalo, NY. Designed by E.P. Brink & Son, the building exhibits a repetitive interior plan that reflects an interest in maximizing cost efficiency in its design and construction. This emphasis on affordability was balanced with ornamental details on the exterior lending a more sophisticated aesthetic approach to this otherwise simplistic design. Classical Revival details such as a decorative frieze band, overhanging eaves with brackets, large arches over each of the twin entrances and three-story hexagonal bays with square columns would have made the repetitive façade, reminiscent of a row house typology, attractive to middle-class tenants. The number of apartments has not been altered and the organization of the plan retains a high level of integrity characteristic of this style of apartment building. The period of significance begins in 1897, when the Lafayette Flats was constructed, and ends in 1939, when the broader historic context of residential settlement patterns had fully changed the Lafayette Flats to a working-class tenant population due to the predominant trend of middle-class residents moving to the suburbs.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 2

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

Neighborhood Context, 1897-1939

The construction of the Lafayette Flats in 1897 made a substantial impact on the physical and social settlement patterns of the surrounding upper west side neighborhood henceforth. In the years leading up to the construction of the Lafayette Flats, Lafayette Avenue, formerly known as Bouck Avenue, was largely undeveloped before the Lafayette Flats were constructed. Similarly, Barton Street was not even extended north of Breckenridge until 1888.² The *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map* from 1893 illustrates the numerous empty lots that were available at this time. The 1893 map indicates only two single-story dwellings were located on the north side of Lafayette Avenue between Barton Street and Herkimer Street, with only a handful of dwellings located in the immediate vicinity. Furthermore, all of the lots on the south side of Lafayette Avenue between Dewitt to the west and Congress Street to the east were unbuilt. This offered a substantial opportunity for a real estate developer or contractor, such as the Schmidt Brothers. Able to purchase and unite several of these lots into an uninterrupted chain of lots, the Schmidt Brothers capitalized on the relative vacancy of the area in order to construct a single, large apartment complex rather than a series of independent dwellings.

Both anticipating and encouraging the need for new housing solutions, the Schmidt Brothers hired E.P. Brink & Sons, an architecture firm with considerable experience designing apartment buildings, to design and construct the Lafayette Flats in 1897. The building first appeared in the Buffalo City Directory as the 'Lafayette Apartments,' but by 1904 the name had been changed to the 'Lafayette Flats' and this historic identity remained throughout the period of significance and into the 1940s.³ Designed to attract middle-class tenants to the area, the establishment of the Lafayette Flats exponentially increased the number and density of residents on the street at a single moment with a lasting impact. Rather than the gradual increase in population and dwellings that was a more typical development pattern in other areas of the city, this portion of Lafayette Avenue experienced a sudden construction boom in residential buildings at the turn of the twentieth century. Drawn to the neighborhood for its access to several streetcar lines located just a short walk away in multiple directions, many upwardly mobile working-class and middle-class citizens moved to the upper west side neighborhood at this time.

Two major streetcar lines were within a few blocks of this portion of Lafayette Avenue, making the location of the Lafayette Flats ideal for middle-class commuters who could afford to migrate away from the central city. One major streetcar line ran on Niagara Street, four blocks west of the Lafayette Flats, and another ran on Grant Street, two blocks east of the building. While no streetcar line ran down Lafayette Avenue, there was one on

² Buffalo Bureau of Engineering, *Index to Records of Streets, Public Grounds, Waterways, Railroads, Gas Companies, Water Works, Etc., of the City of Buffalo, from 1814 to 1896* (Buffalo, NY: Bureau of Engineering, 1896), 172.

³ The words Flats and Apartments are used interchangeably in period City of Buffalo Directories. This nomination recognizes the building at 115-135 Lafayette Avenue as the 'Lafayette Flats' rather than the 'Lafayette Apartments' to avoid confusion since the building was identified as the Lafayette Flats throughout the vast majority of its history. This choice reflects the most typical and historically recognizable name for the building.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 3

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

West Delavan Avenue just one block north of the building. Both of these streetcar lines provided regular access to the upper west side neighborhood from areas downtown, including the central business district but also the commercial corridors that emerged around these streetcar lines in the late nineteenth century. By 1884, Guy Salisbury, a local writer, could state that “Now we have eleven miles of well-built double track street railways...running sixty elegant passenger cars that make regular trips every five and ten minutes, greatly facilitating the travel and intercourse between the distant sections of the city, rendering a suburban residence a cheap, accessible and desirable home.”⁴ As was so often the case in Buffalo and other American cities, the streetcar was the catalyst for widespread residential development in the upper west side neighborhood. While at first these streetcars were drawn by horses as early as 1860, by the early 1890s they had been converted to electric streetcars and therefore offered faster service. The Niagara Street line was electric by 1891, and the Grant Street line was electric by 1893. As in many other instances throughout the city, establishing these electric streetcar line made a direct impact on the settlement patterns of the surrounding neighborhood. With access to these lines just a few blocks away, the location of the Lafayette Flats was situated in an excellent position to take advantage of these transportation networks.

Within just a few years, this portion of Lafayette Avenue went from a quiet, sparsely settled street to a denser residential neighborhood that could accommodate roughly three times the population it once had. The *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map* from 1900 illustrates the impact that the construction of the Lafayette Flats had on the neighborhood. The Lafayette Flats was the most densely developed block of Lafayette Avenue, with one apartment building accommodating 36 units within a single block. More dwellings, however, appear on this map than on the 1893 map, as lots had been purchased and new houses constructed by 1900. Even beyond the block occupied by the Lafayette Flats, Lafayette Avenue became much more densely settled than it had been in 1893. By 1900, the south side of Lafayette Avenue, as well as the entire block of Barton Street south of Lafayette Avenue, had gone from a series of empty lots to a streetscape of two-story residential dwellings.

As early as the 1890s, the construction rate of middle-class housing in this area was rising rapidly. One reporter observed in 1890 that “Last week over one hundred applications were made to build frame residences” in the area between Niagara Street and Grant Street above Auburn Avenue and below Forest Street.⁵ This area, which includes the location of the Lafayette Flats, had formerly been considered as an area just outside the eastern edge of Black Rock, a commercial-industrial community arranged around the Niagara Street corridor. By the early to mid-1890s, however, the area between Breckenridge Street and Forest Street, Niagara Street and Grant Street began appearing as the upper west side in atlases and newspapers. This new identity emerged in tandem with the extension and paving of streets into the region, such as Barton Street in 1888, as well as the appearance of more residential construction in larger numbers through the 1890s.

⁴ Guy Salisbury, *History of Buffalo, Volume II* (Buffalo, 1884), 124.

⁵ H. S. Pickett, “Buffalo,” *Architectural Era* 3 (September 1889), 195.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 4

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

Community services, storefronts and churches also developed in the neighborhood to accommodate these new residents. While the primary commercial corridors were located on Niagara Street to the west and Grant Street to the east, the streets surrounding the Lafayette Flats remained primarily residential with a few community-oriented centers emerging around the turn of the twentieth century. The Riverside Hospital was established at the southwest corner of Barton Street in 1899, shortly after the Lafayette Flats was constructed at the southeast corner of Barton Street. This hospital, initially founded on Niagara Street in 1892, was thought to be “the only hospital controlled and owned by a woman physician in Buffalo- Dr. Lillian Craig Randall.”⁶ Serving both men and women in the community, this hospital, which later became Lafayette General, provided healthcare facilities for the newly developed Lafayette-Barton neighborhood for several decades. Some small-scale businesses began to emerge in the neighboring blocks by 1900 as well, with a drug store, mechanic and hardware store all located within a few blocks of the Lafayette Flats, as well as the Grace Episcopal Church on Lafayette Avenue at Congress Street. Overall, however, the area immediately adjacent to this apartment building was primarily residential in character, situated between a several block radius of the larger commercial corridors of Grant Street and Niagara Street.

Many of the residents who settled in the upper west side neighborhood, and the Lafayette Flats, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a mixture of Anglo-Americans, particularly Canadian and English immigrants. Portions of the west side were historically known as an Italian settlement area, particularly the lower west side that was densely settled by Sicilians. Another group of Italians, the Abruzzi, settled in the northern portion of the city somewhat near the upper west side, in the area surrounding East Delavan Street, east of Main Street.⁷ As the map in Figure 4 depicts, however, the upper west side was sandwiched between these two Italian populations, and was occupied instead by Canadian and English residents.⁸ Given the proximity to these two Italian populations it is possible that some of the Sicilians or Abruzzi may have made their way into the area, but census records do not show any substantial evidence of this. Instead, many of the first residents at the Lafayette Flats were born in Canada or England, if not New York State or elsewhere in the United States. For instance, at least six of the first tenants were Canadian born, including F.B. Sipprell, who later became a successful local photographer along with his sister Clara Sipprell. English immigrants also appeared at the Lafayette Flats in the Buffalo City Directory by the turn of the twentieth century, including the families of Alfred Coates, a foreman, and Edmund Greaves, a clerk. Due to the ethnic prejudices that some of Buffalo’s other immigrant neighborhoods regularly experienced throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the characterization of the Lafayette Flats neighborhood as a “large Anglo-American district encompassing the

⁶ “Riverside Hospital,” *Buffalo Medical Journal* 51 (1896), 872.

⁷ Scott Eberle and Joseph A. Grande, *Second Looks: A Pictorial History of Buffalo and Erie County* (Buffalo: Donning Co., 1993), 93-95.

⁸ A.D. Price, “Housing Buffalo’s Black Community,” *African Americans and the Rise of Buffalo’s Post-Industrial City, 1940-present*, Vol 2 (Buffalo NY: Buffalo Urban League, 1990): 89-111.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 5

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

upper west side,” further identified the area as a relatively stable, Caucasian middle-class community.⁹ The upper west side was not, as many fear-mongering newspapers and their readers worried, “crowded tenements full of swarthy, dirty, and lazy Italians.”¹⁰ Characterized primarily as a community of American-born, Canadian-born and English-born residents, the upper west side resisted the typical associations many Buffalonians had with the crowded, noisy, working-class communities to the south and east of the neighborhood. The construction of the Lafayette Flats in 1897, which was architecturally designed to attract and encourage the growth of the neighborhood as a middle-class enclave, both impacted and reinforced this socioeconomic classification of the upper west side.

The upper west side neighborhood continued to grow throughout the early twentieth century, and the Lafayette Flats maintained its position as an affordable yet dignified middle-class housing accommodation throughout this time. The *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map* of 1916 illustrates that the density of these streets increased by that time, as virtually every lot was occupied by a typical two-story residential dwelling. The area remained predominantly residential, characterized primarily by the presence of two and two-and-a-half story frame houses that were typically occupied either as single family or multi-family units. While the Grant Street and Niagara Street corridors had become increasingly dense with storefronts and industrial businesses, this area of Lafayette Avenue remained a residential neighborhood, albeit one that was remarkably denser than it had been in the early 1890s.

By the 1930s, changes to the citywide transportation network began to affect the upper west side neighborhood. Advances in transportation technology resulted in the conversion of streetcar lines to bus routes. By the late 1930s, the streetcar lines on Grant Street, Niagara Street and Delavan Avenue had all become bus routes. Grant Street remained a bustling commercial corridor, and Niagara Street featured a combination of industrial factories and commercial storefronts. While the architectural fabric of the Lafayette Flats neighborhood remained much the same, changes in transportation and a subsequent shift in settlement patterns affected the demographic composition of the upper west side. As automobiles became more affordable for the middle class, people began to commute farther away from the city. Those who could afford an automobile were no longer restricted to the streetcar and bus line routes, and they began to settle in areas outside the city line that were even further north of the Lafayette Flats. These broader socioeconomic changes directly affected the demographic trends of the Lafayette Flats. Many of the building’s upwardly mobile middle-class tenants migrated towards the suburbs during this time, as new government programs incentivized individual homeownership for the white middle class during the mid-to-late 1930s. By the onset of World War II in 1939, most of the middle-class tenants had left the Lafayette Flats to live further away from the city in a settlement pattern that was now consistent across the United States. The tenants that remained at the Lafayette Flats after

⁹ *Buffalo Morning Express* (Buffalo, NY), Sept 26, 1921, 5.

¹⁰ *Buffalo Morning Express* (Buffalo, NY), March 3, 1892, 3.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 6

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

1939 were predominantly working class, as they could not afford to move away from the city at that time. The conversion of the streetcar lines, the increased affordability of the automobile, and the emerging context of suburban settlement patterns all transformed the demographic composition of the Lafayette Flats to a predominantly working-class tenancy by 1939.

Apartment/Flat Living in Buffalo, 1880s-1939

The years leading up to the turn of the twentieth century marked an important and optimistic era in Buffalo's history, a time when an influx of middle- and upper-class citizens sought comfortable housing accommodations within the city boundaries. Buffalo was a thriving, wealthy industrial and port city, commencing in earnest with the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825, and continuing through the middle decades of the twentieth century. As Buffalo's population increased, high-density housing became necessary in order to accommodate this new influx of residents. The city was a "working" city, crowded with industry and immigrant workers, and as a result, the wealthy upper class and emerging middle class moved away from the city to the suburbs. In general, the socioeconomic status of this diversity of residents directly correlated to their relative distance from the industries located south of downtown and along the waterfront. The streetcar, first horse drawn, then steam and then electric, made it possible for the middle and upper middle classes to commute some distance away from the industries and commercial density downtown at the end of the work day. Residing in more comfortable accommodations than the tenements and working-class housing directly adjacent to the industrial sector, these streetcar commuters settled in areas near downtown, particularly in Allentown, the lower west side and along Niagara Street. The further away from these industrial sectors one could afford to commute, the higher their socioeconomic status tended to be. The Elmwood district, Linwood Avenue and Franklin Street corridor offered middle and upper-middle-class accommodations, while Delaware Avenue and the areas adjacent to Delaware Park hosted grand mansions, estates and, increasingly, luxurious high rise apartments outfitted with the latest amenities. The Lafayette-Barton area was located further north, indicating a primarily middle-class and working-class population that would typically commute to other areas via the streetcar lines on nearby Grant Street or Niagara Street.

While the upper and middle classes tended to live in 'apartments,' the working class lived in 'tenements.' Apartments and tenements were quite different from one another as documented in an 1880 article in *Carpentry and Building*. "In tenement houses the rooms for a family are from two to four in number, while few or no conveniences are provided, and the finish throughout is of the plainest order. In apartment houses the number of rooms in each suite ranges from four to ten, while the appointments are of the better class." Tenement housing was typically overcrowded and lacked proper light and ventilation. The deplorable living conditions were

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 7

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

documented in 1890 by Jacob Riis, whose photographs were published in *How the Other Half Lives*.¹¹ Apartments were not constructed for the poor. They were constructed for families “who in other respects are uncomfortably housed on account of the crowded condition of the city” and have therefore investigated “the subject of flats and suites of apartments, hoping to find in them a satisfactory solution to the problem of how to live comfortably and economically.”¹² The apartments were often “luxurious beyond the pursue of the private owner, and free from the cares connected with heating, cleaning hallways, clearing snow and many minor duties which devolve upon the independent householder.”¹³ In 1890, a prominent architect named John Pickering Putnam argued that apartment living provided a number of benefits: “economic savings, architectural interest, social cooperation, increased health and efficiency, decreased crime through group surveillance, and freedom for women to work outside the home” in addition to a shared sense of community.¹⁴

The apartment house in Buffalo is not noted in the City Directories with a listing of buildings until 1896. Prior to this time the heading “Flats and Apartment Houses” referred readers to “Boarding Houses.” Apartments constructed prior to that date, such as The Florence (ca. 1892, extant) are listed by street address only. Prior to 1896 there were a handful of apartment houses in Buffalo including The Bachelor (ca. 1887, demolished) at 331 Franklin Street and The Trubee (ca. 1869; ca. 1889) at 414 Delaware Avenue.¹⁵ The Trubee was a mansion constructed in ca. 1869, and then converted into an apartment house by ca. 1889. The Bachelor was constructed as an apartment house and was likely one of the earliest buildings of this type in Buffalo but has recently been demolished.

As documented in the City Directories and the 1889 *Sanborn Map*, by 1896 seventy-two apartment buildings had been constructed outside of downtown Buffalo. This suggests that real-estate developers, including the Schmidt Brothers, saw an immediate opportunity and market to be pursued for capital gain. The Lafayette Flats was a product of this era. By 1900, the number of apartment buildings had almost doubled to 133. In addition to Buffalo’s population increase at the turn of the century, contributing to the significant increase in apartment numbers was likely the Pan American Exposition, and the need to provide housing for the large number of visitors expected to descend upon the “City of Lights” in 1901. In the next decade the construction rate slowed down considerably and only 158 apartment houses are listed in the 1910 City Directory. Apartment houses continued to be constructed, but never with the same intensity that occurred between 1896 and 1900. The 1915

¹¹ In 1890 Jacob Riis published *How the Other Half Lives*, a collection of photographs that documented the living conditions of the poor. The book received national attention and brought attention to the deplorable condition of tenements.

¹² “French Flats and Apartment Houses in New York” *Carpentry and Building*. 11.14 (1880), 2.

¹³ Walter H. Kilham, “The Planning of Apartment Houses,” *Brickbuilder* 11 (1902): 245. Kilham discusses the advantages of apartment living and the two types of apartments: housekeeping apartments and non-housekeeping apartment hotels.

¹⁴ Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 145.

¹⁵ The Charles F. Sternberg House was designed by George M Allison in ca. 1869. Samuel C. Trubee built an annex, evidenced on the 1889 Sanborn Map and turned the estate into a 100-room hotel, which commanded a \$3 a night rate during the Pan American Exposition. The 1887 City Directory notes storefronts and tenants at 331 Franklin Street. The 1886 Directory does not.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 8

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

City Directory lists only 162 apartment houses and by 1920 there were only 180, most of which were constructed in newer suburbs farther away from downtown outside the city lines.

Apartments constructed during the boom years between 1896 and 1910, including the Lafayette Flats, catered to a variety of individuals and incomes. Some apartments were small, catering to young married couples and professionals, providing a “stable, home-loving people, not the fly-by-night transients so frequently found in small apartments.”¹⁶ Others, such as the Parke Apartments (NR listed) constructed in 1924, and 800 West Ferry Street (NR listed) constructed in 1929, were home to a wealthy class who had moved out of their large Delaware Avenue mansions in favor of “familiar luxury and comfort without the necessity of hiring serving staff or the burdens of larger property ownership.”¹⁷ Beginning in the late 1920s the luxury and smaller apartments constructed closer to the city began to see a change where the “impermanence of their resident neighborliness has nearly disappeared within their walls.”¹⁸ A Buffalo newspaper article contrasted the prevailing attitude in 1933 of apartment dwellers who generally kept to themselves as opposed to “thirty or forty years ago, [when] living under the same roof was actually deemed a basis for friendship; and the residents of a flat frequently entertained the people in the building.” In the late nineteenth-early twentieth centuries, it was not unusual for a tenant to host summertime rooftop parties for the other tenants, and in the winter they formed card clubs.¹⁹ The young, newlywed couples and professionals moved out, however they were not replaced with other young couples or professionals, as those who could tended to move away from the encroaching city to suburban neighborhoods for their first home or apartment. Those who were unable to move away from the city inhabited the late nineteenth and early twentieth century flats, such as those at the Lafayette Flats. The Lafayette Flats is clearly situated within this history of apartment living and residential settlement patterns in Buffalo, from the time of its construction during an apartment building construction boom into the early and mid-twentieth century era of middle-class residents.

E.P. Brink & Son’s design for the Lafayette Flats maximized the number of units within the space allotted at an affordable cost, while also providing enough Classical Revival styling to attract a middle-class tenant. The overall massing of the building is stylistically reminiscent of the row houses that appeared in larger East Coast cities, which typically featured a relatively uniform and repetitive façade that provided individual entrances to each unit. While residents in a row house typically shared walls, the design of the units enabled residents to occupy independent space within a larger building of units, often even owning their unit within a row house building as a form of attached townhome. Although tenants at the Lafayette Flats did not have this level of independence, the exterior of the building resembles this style of organization, with a door providing access to

¹⁶ H. Katherine Smith, "Apartment Houses Where Friendliness Was Prevalent," *Courier Express* [Buffalo] 1 May 1933.

¹⁷ For a full discussion of luxury apartment living see the National Register Nomination for *Parke Apartments, Erie County, New York*.

¹⁸ Smith, 1933.

¹⁹ Smith, 1933

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 9

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

every three units. Rather than providing fully independent, multi-level units as in a row house, the Lafayette Flats provided three units for each entrance, one on each floor. Semi-individual entrances, shared amongst three units rather than all thirty-six, portion out the space as a compromise between the row house style and an apartment building with only one entrance shared by all tenants. Aimed instead at the middle class, the design for the building references the row house typology in order to create a sense of privacy with these separate entrances, while also maximizing the number of units inside by placing them on each floor. This separation of units by floor, rather than by row, also enabled the Schmidt Brothers to collect rent from thirty-six units, rather than twelve rows of units, thereby maximizing profit with an affordable cost of construction, repeatable plan and economically efficient design. This finance-motivated interior plan, however, was aesthetically softened on the exterior by the application of Classical Revival details such as pilasters, brackets and archways that would appeal to the middle class. This balance of affordability with aesthetics, of cost-efficiency with cost-effectiveness, is embedded in E.P. Brink & Son's design for the Lafayette Flats as a middle-class apartment building.

The Lafayette Flats, 1897-1939

The Lafayette Flats, an L-shaped apartment building comprised of 36 independent units, was designed by the architecture firm of E.P. Brink & Son in 1897 and constructed at a cost of \$50,000.²⁰ The building was commissioned and constructed by the Schmidt Brothers, a duo of general contractors with an interest in real estate development. As evidenced by the City Directories, the "boom" in apartment building did not occur until around 1896, suggesting that the Lafayette Flats is a relatively early example of speculative apartment building in Buffalo. This was likely conducted as a venture in real estate development, where the Schmidt Brothers identified the investment potential in this area of Lafayette Avenue during the period when the boom in apartment buildings occurred in Buffalo.

The Lafayette Flats was notably the densest form of housing in the upper west side neighborhood when it was constructed. This architectural style and settlement pattern contrasted in part with the freestanding residential dwellings located on the adjacent streets, but their residential functions were consistent with one another. As one of the first multi-unit buildings constructed in this portion of Lafayette Avenue, the dense presence of the Lafayette Flats attests to the catalyzing role it played in developing the area's real estate and inciting residential settlement patterns in the neighborhood.

Arranged in an L-shaped plan with a five-bay building facing Lafayette Avenue and the single row portion facing Barton Street, the complex was designed to maximize the amount of units on the property, which extends eastward nearly the entire block of Lafayette Avenue from Barton Street to Herkimer Street. The units are

²⁰ "Building Intelligence," *The American Architect and Building News* LV, no. 1108 (March 20, 1897): X.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 10

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

arranged around shared interior lightwells, which provide light into the units lining the otherwise dense interior of the block long building. The portion of the building facing Barton Street was built as part of the original design, and was oriented facing Barton Street rather than Lafayette Avenue in order to more efficiently use the space included in the corner lot on Lafayette Avenue, while allowing light and ventilation into the units. In addition to providing more units, the portion facing Barton Street provided an exterior boundary to include a more private, shared community 'backyard' space behind the L-shape organization. The prioritization of spatial efficiency and interior lighting schemes were common design interests in the construction of apartment buildings in the late nineteenth century, and therefore the Lafayette Flats is indicative of this era in plan, style and materials.

The building was only minimally altered since its original construction, and the first building permit after construction does not appear until 1926, nearly thirty years later. At this time, no change was made to the interior plans, but instead to repair and alter the three-story chimney located on the south elevation in order to update the heating system. This chimney alteration was conducted by M. Franklin, and this name still appears in brickwork rising from the chimney itself today.

The exterior details seen in the broad entrance archways, bay windows with square pilasters, and decorative frieze band and brackets at the roofline suggest that it was designed by someone with architectural training, and that it was constructed with the hope of attracting a middle-class or upwardly mobile tenant. Compared to the working-class tenements downtown and in industrial corridors, the apartments were relatively large, each with six rooms as described in a *Buffalo Evening News* advertisement from 1920.²¹ Each unit included two bedrooms, a living room, kitchen, pantry, and closet space. Although the units did not contain formal dining rooms as an upper-class apartment would have done, an eat-in kitchen accommodated this need for dining space. The relative size of the rooms and their arrangement within a repeating plan indicates the middle-class status of the tenants that the Schmidt Brothers aimed to attract with E.P. Brink & Son's design. The location of the building along Lafayette Avenue west of Grant Street, which was located far north of the central city and on the west side, suggests that the tenants were mostly middle-class commuters and a few upwardly mobile working-class residents who were able to afford something more comfortable than a tenement.

The Tenants

The first tenants noted in the 1898 City Directory resembled a mixture of skilled workers, married couples and foreign-born residents, typically from England and Canada. All of the 36 units were occupied in the first year after construction, with many of these first tenants staying in the building for at least two years. The majority of the tenants were listed as married couples, and some of them may have had children. The average age range of

²¹ "Advertisements," *Buffalo Evening News* (Buffalo, NY), June 22, 1920.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 11

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

the first group of tenants was approximately 23-47, and many of the married couples had been recently married. This suggests that these apartments served as interim housing for these couples, before they had older children or before they were able to purchase their own place or rent a larger one. The length of stays tended to vary amongst residents. While some stayed at the Lafayette Flats only 1-3 years, others stayed for up to 5-7 years. None of the first tenants were listed as single or bachelors.

The occupations of these tenants varied, but overall these tenants were middle class. Most were skilled workers with some degree of secondary or higher education. Two doctors and their families lived in the building for several years around the turn of the century: Dr. and Mrs. Samuel H Lynde and Dr. Calvin Barrick. Other occupations included a postman, two office managers, a grain merchant, three skilled carpenters and contractors, and a clerk for the Buffalo Chamber of Commerce. While these jobs varied between white collar and blue-collar positions, most of the occupations required some years of skill and experience to obtain the middle-management levels that these tenants held.

During the 1910s, the tenant population remained predominantly middle class. Only one of the original tenants still lived in the building, Dr. Samuel Lynde, who lived there for over 12 years. New tenants included John B. Hall and Sidney Rogers, and occupations remained a similar combination of skilled carpenters and clerks. By 1920, all of the units were still occupied, although none of the original tenants remained. An advertisement in the *Buffalo Evening News* from 1920 lists one of the apartments for \$40 a month, which would approximately \$490 a month in today's currency. This pricing would have continued to target middle or lower-middle-class tenants at the time, which is consistent with the original design for the building.

In the 1930s, tenants included Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Horn and Clara Sebold. More single residents begin to appear in the 1930s, some of whom included working women like Clara Sebold, who was a typist. Married couples, however, still represented the vast majority of tenants at the Lafayette Flats during the Great Depression. Occupations continued to include office-oriented and management jobs, although more unskilled workers began to appear in the City Directory by 1939 and into the 1940s.

By the time World War II began in 1939, the tenant population no longer resembled its original middle-class demographic, and had instead shifted to primarily unskilled workers and working-class citizenry. The Niagara Street and Grant Street streetcar lines were converted to bus routes by the late 1930s, and many middle-class residents were able to afford an automobile rather than relying on these transportation networks. Residential settlement patterns in America had greatly transformed by this time, as the majority of middle- and upper-class citizens began moving out of the city boundaries and into the newly formed suburbs during the 1930s. Freestanding single-family homes and individual homeownership were financially, socially and culturally prioritized as more desirable than apartment living by the 1940s, and by this time the population at the Lafayette Flats had fully transformed from a middle-class tenancy to a working-class tenancy. Due to this change in

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 12

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

tenant population as well as broader contextual transformations in the history of residential settlement patterns, the period of significance for the Lafayette Flats ends in 1939.

After the Period of Significance, 1939-2017

While the middle-class tenant population moved away to the suburbs after the period of significance in 1939, only a few significant alterations were made to the building afterwards. The rear veranda was altered in 1949, providing structural updates to the covered metal porch and walkway on all three floors of the south elevation. While the location and function of this porch were part of the original design of the building, providing a secondary, service entrance space to the units, it was replaced with the current porch in 1949. The owner at that time was listed as George Schakne, and he also repaired some of the front entrances in 1950. By 1961, building permits list 'Barton Apartments Inc.' as the owner of the building. In 1966, the building experienced a fire, and a building permit was filed in order to repair the fire damage and restore the building to its previous condition.

Despite these minor repairs and alterations, the building has continued to function in its original purpose as a multi-unit apartment building since its construction in ca. 1897. In March 2017, the building was subject to arson, damaging the third-floor units and decorative pressed tin cornice located closest to the corner of Lafayette Avenue and Barton Street. The upper units and damaged stair were reconstructed to match the historic floor plan prior to the fire. The pressed tin cornice that was damaged by the fire was reconstructed to match the existing historic.

Notable Figures

E.P. Brink & Son

E.P. Brink & Son designed the Lafayette Flats in 1897 as one of many apartment buildings designed throughout the firm's career. Composed of Edwin P. Brink (1824-1927) and his son Clifton D. Brink, E.P. Brink & Son specialized in apartment buildings and hotels throughout a long and prestigious career. Edwin Brink was an architect for many years before his son joined him in the firm, and he designed several large buildings throughout the Midwest before designing commissions with his son in Buffalo and the East Coast. Edwin Brink began in his career in Denver in the early 1880s, where he designed several wealthy mansions and a large hotel. The Albany Hotel, completed in 1882 (demolished 1976), and its exterior strongly resembled the Lafayette Flats, with similar three-story hexagonal bays.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 13

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State



DENVER'S ALBANY HOTEL (1885-1976)

Historic Image showing similarity of Denver's Albany Hotel to the Lafayette Flats²²

Brink spent the late 1880s in Kansas City, where he designed multiple commissions, including several dwellings and at least four commercial buildings, between 1886 and 1891.²³ By 1896, Clifton D. Brink joined his father in the firm, and they expanded their scope to Buffalo in order to design the 230-room hotel at the corner of Wells and Carroll Street, a 12-story brick building with steel skeleton (demolished).²⁴ E.P. Brink & Son received the \$50,000 commission from the Schmidt Brothers to design the Lafayette Flats just one year later in 1897.²⁵ Brink and his son lived at 93 West Mohawk Street (demolished) while working in Buffalo, and their office was listed in the Mutual Life Building from 1896-1898.²⁶

By the turn of the twentieth century, E.P. Brink & Son moved their firm to the East Coast, where they continued to build apartment buildings and hotels in Philadelphia and New York before settling in Washington D.C. in 1913.²⁷ The firm continued to design buildings until about 1924; Edwin Brink died in 1927. The Lafayette Flats is characteristic of their style of apartment building, and at 3-stories tall represents a more modest example of the 8, 9, and 10 story apartment buildings they would later build in larger cities on the East Coast.

²² James Bretz, *Denver's Early Architecture*, (New York: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 12.

²³ "E.P. Brink," *Inland Architect and News Record* 10 (1887), 11.

²⁴ "Buffalo," *American Architect and Architecture* (1896), 15.

²⁵ *American Architect and Building News* 55.1108 (1897), 10.

²⁶ *American Architect and Building News* 55.1108 (1897), 10.

²⁷ *Engineering News and American Railway Journal* 41 (1899); *Boyd's Directory of the District of Columbia* (Washington DC: R.L. Polk & Company), 1914, 17.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 14

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

Schmidt Brothers

William H. Schmidt and Frederick C. Schmidt, known professionally as the Schmidt Brothers, were experienced contractors who formed a construction company in the mid-1890s in Buffalo, NY. While little is known about their personal lives, the Schmidt Brothers both owned and constructed the Lafayette Flats in ca. 1897 as a speculative real estate venture. Their previous construction experience included the Great Northern grain elevator in Superior, Wisconsin Police Station Number 5 in Buffalo, and the engine room of the Erie County Hospital (all now demolished).

Summary

As a rare example of a Classical Revival styled apartment building, the Lafayette Flats represents a significant contribution to the architectural history and social history of Buffalo, NY. Constructed as a 36-unit apartment aimed to attract middle-class tenants in ca. 1897, the Lafayette Flats was constructed in response to the need for middle-class housing during a population boom at the turn of the twentieth century. Established on a portion of Lafayette Avenue at the corner of Barton Street that was otherwise sparsely settled at the time of construction, the Lafayette Flats catalyzed further real estate development in the surrounding neighborhood. The attached units, with one entrance for every three units, are reminiscent of the row house type of apartment building, and was designed to maximize spatial efficiency and substantially increase the population of this formerly quiet street, thereby influencing the residential settlement patterns in the neighborhood for decades to come. The Lafayette Flats is significant for its intact interior plan and exterior architectural design as an apartment building with Classical Revival details, as well as for the impact that the building made in establishing the residential settlement patterns of the surrounding neighborhood during the period of significance from 1897-1939.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 1

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

Bibliography:

A History of the City of Buffalo, Its Men and Institutions. Buffalo, New York: Buffalo Evening News Publisher, 1908. Print.

“Advertisements.” *Buffalo Evening News* (Buffalo, NY), June 22, 1920. Print.

American Architect and Building News. Vol 55.1108 (1987): 10. Print.

Bingham, Robert W. *Cradle of the Queen City: A History of Buffalo to the Incorporation of the City.* Buffalo Historical Society, Buffalo, New York, 1931. Print.

Boyd’s Directory of the District of Columbia. Washington DC: R.L. Polk & Company, 1914. Print.

Bretz, James. *Denver’s Early Architecture.* New York: Arcadia Publishing, 2010. Print.

Brown, Richard C. and Bob Watson. *Buffalo: Lake City in Niagara Land.* Buffalo: Windsor Publications, 1981. Print.

“Buffalo.” *American Architect and Architecture* (1896): 15. Print.

Buffalo Bureau of Engineering. *Index to Records of Streets, Public Grounds, Waterways, Railroads, Gas Companies, Water Works, Etc., of the City of Buffalo, from 1814 to 1896.* Buffalo, NY: Bureau of Engineering, 1896.

Buffalo Morning Express (Buffalo, NY), March 3, 1892. Print.

Buffalo Morning Express (Buffalo, NY), Sept 26, 1921. Print.

“Building Intelligence.” *The American Architect and Building News* LV, no. 1108 (March 20, 1897): X. Print.

Commerce, Manufactures and Resources of Buffalo and Environs: A Descriptive Historical and Statistical Review. Buffalo: Commercial Publishing Company, 1880. Print.

Conlin, Joseph. *The American Past: A Survey of American History, Volume 2.* Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 2002. Print.

Cutter, William Richard. *Genealogical and Family History of Western New York. 2.* New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1912. Print.

Dunn, Walter S. *History of Erie County, 1870-1970.* [Buffalo]: Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, 1972. Print.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 2

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

"E.P. Brink." *Inland Architect and News Record* 10 (1887): 11. Print.

Engineering News and American Railway Journal 41 (1899). Print.

"French Flats and Apartment Houses in New York," *Carpentry and Building*. 11.14 (1880): 2-3. Web. 15 Dec. 2013.

Hills, Frederick S. *New York State Men: Biographic Studies and Character Portraits*. 1. Albany: Argus Company, 1910. eBook.

Hopkins, Griffith Morgan. *Atlas of the City of Buffalo, Erie Co., New York: From Actual Surveys & Official Records*. Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins, 1891. Print.

Kilham, Walter H. "The Planning of Apartment Houses." *Brickbuilder*. 11. (1902): 245-252. Web. 15 Dec. 2013.

Larned, J.N., Hon. Charles E. Fitch, and Hon. Ellis H. Roberts. *A History of Buffalo, Delineating the Evolution of the City; with Sketches of the City of Rochester by the Hon. Charles E. Fitch, and the city of Utica by the Hon. Ellis H. Roberts*, 2 Volumes. The Progress of the Empire State Company, New York, 1911. Print.

Men of Buffalo: A Collection of Portraits of Men Who Deserve To Rank As Typical Representatives of the Best Citizenship, Foremost Activities and Highest Aspirations of the City of Buffalo. Chicago: A. N. Marquis & Company, 1902. Print.

Mott, Edward Harold. *Between the Oceans and the Lakes: The Story of Erie*. New York: John S. Collins, Publisher, 1899. Print.

Mueller, B. H. *Atlas of the City of Buffalo, Erie County, New York*. New York: American Atlas, 1894. Print.

Price, A.D. "Housing Buffalo's Black Community." Edited by Henry Taylor. *African Americans and the Rise of Buffalo's Post-Industrial City, 1940-present, Vol 2*. Buffalo NY: Buffalo Urban League, 1990.

"Riverside Hospital." *Buffalo Medical Journal* 51 (1896), 872-878. Print.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Buffalo, New York, 1889, 1900, 1916, and 1940. Pelham, New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1981. Print.

Severance, Frank. *Picture Book of Earlier Buffalo*. Buffalo: Buffalo Historical Society, 1912. Print.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 9 Page 3

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

Smith, H. Katherine. "Apartment Houses Where Friendliness Was Prevalent." *Courier Express* [Buffalo] 14 May 1933, n. page. Print.

The Buffalo Directory. Buffalo: Courier Company of Buffalo, 1893. Print.

Thomas, E.A. *Thomas' Buffalo City Directory*. Buffalo: E.A. Thomas, 1863. Print.

Wright, Gwendolyn, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1981. Print.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 10 Page 1

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses all property historically and presently associated with the Lafayette Flats.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

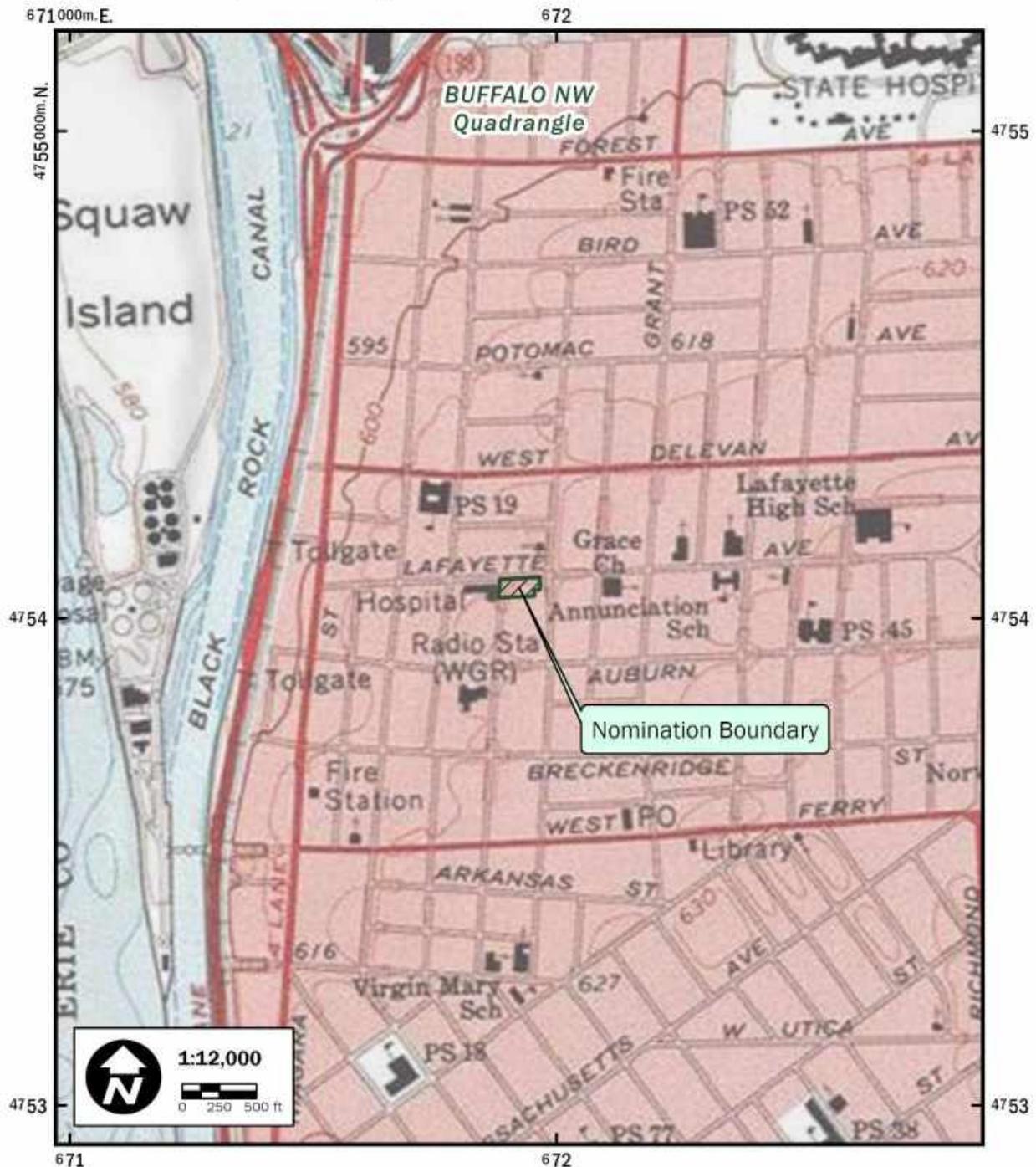
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 10 Page 2

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

Lafayette Flats
City of Buffalo, Erie County, New York

115-135 Lafayette Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14213



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 17N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter

Nomination Boundary



Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 10 Page 3

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

Lafayette Flats
City of Buffalo, Erie County, New York

115-135 Lafayette Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14213

672000m.E.



672

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 10 Page 4

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

Lafayette Flats
City of Buffalo, Erie County, New York

115-135 Lafayette Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14213

672000m.E.



672

Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 17N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter

 Nomination Boundary



Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 11 Page 1

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

Additional Information

Photo Log:

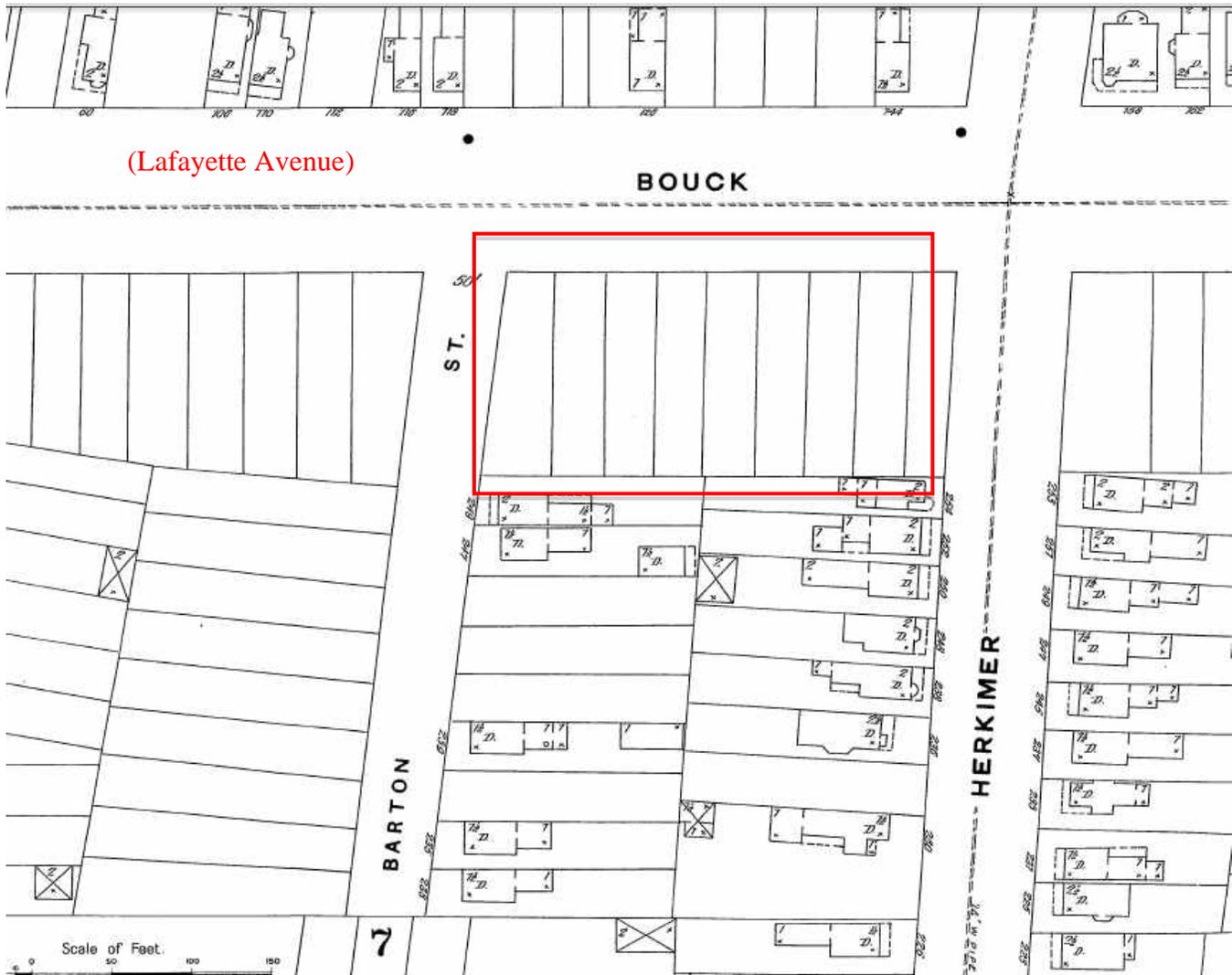
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 2

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

Figure 1. *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1893*
Volume 4, Sheet 153
Note that the location of the Lafayette Flats is vacant.



N^

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 3

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

Figure 2. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1900
Volume 4, Sheet 326

Note the significant development that has arrived in the area with the construction of the Lafayette Flats.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 4

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

Figure 3. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1916
Volume 4, Sheet 347

Note the consistency of the Lafayette Flats and the substantial growth of the area nearby.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

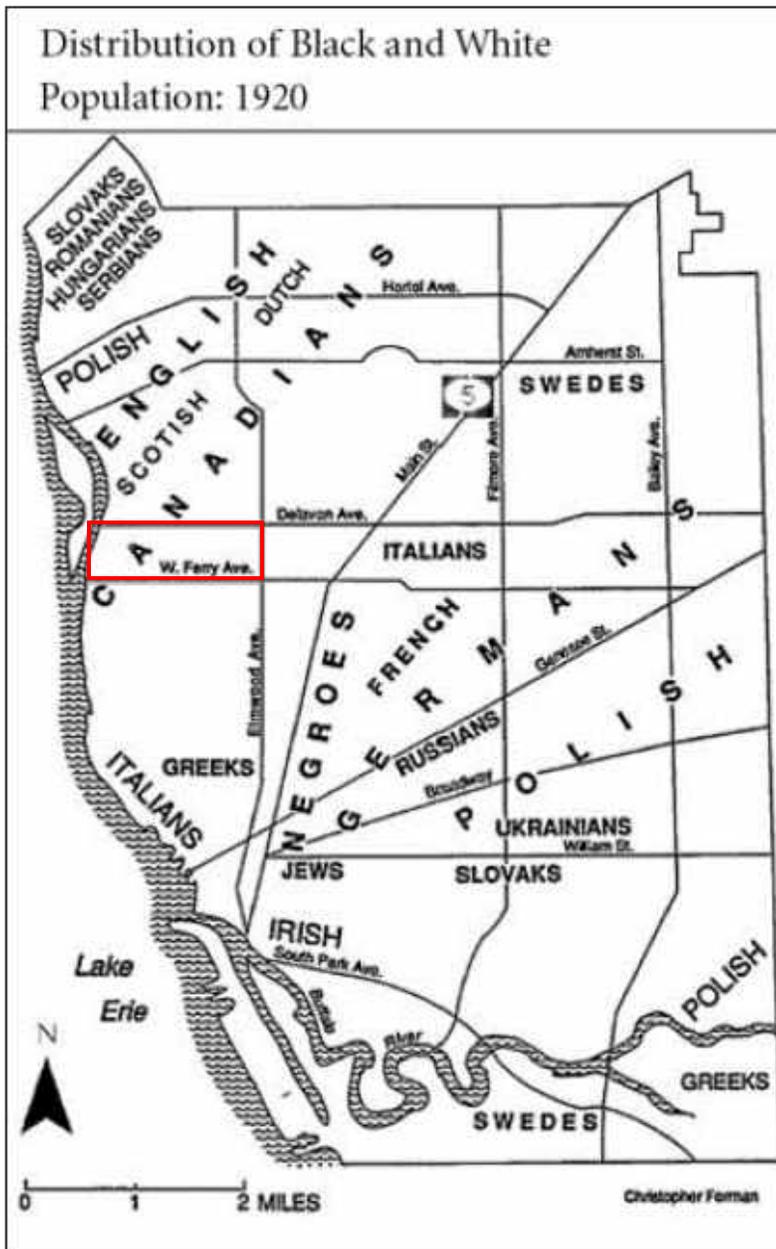
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 5

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

Figure 4. 'Ethnic Neighborhoods' Map.
From Price, 1990.

Note that the Lafayette Flats area, visible on the map between W. Ferry Avenue and Delavan Avenue, West of Elmwood, is identified as 'Canadians.' (Outlined in red).



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 6

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

BEFORE REHAB



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 7

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 8

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 9

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

CURRENT/POST-REHAB PHOTOS



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 10

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 11

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 12

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 13

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 14

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

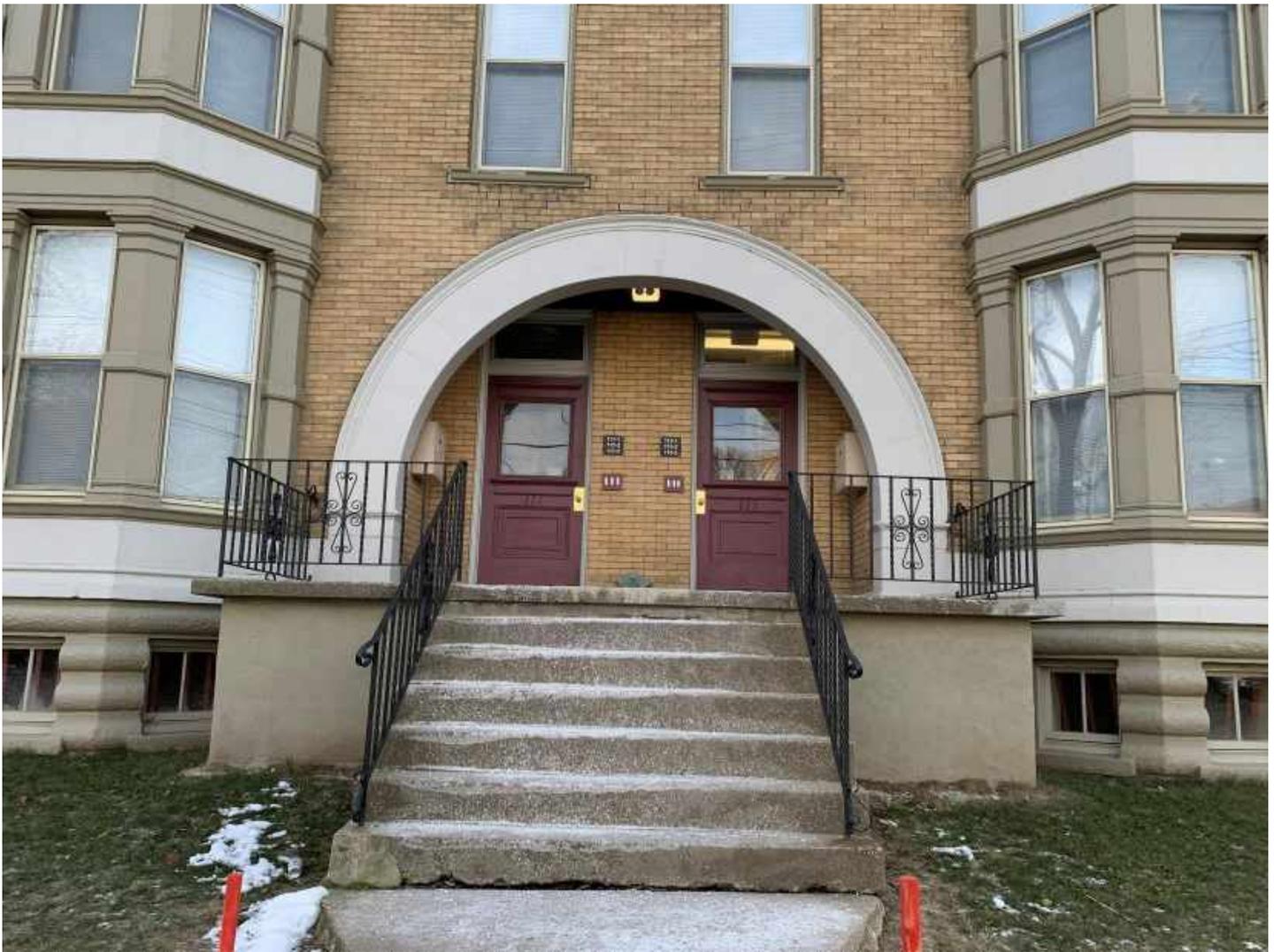


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 15

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

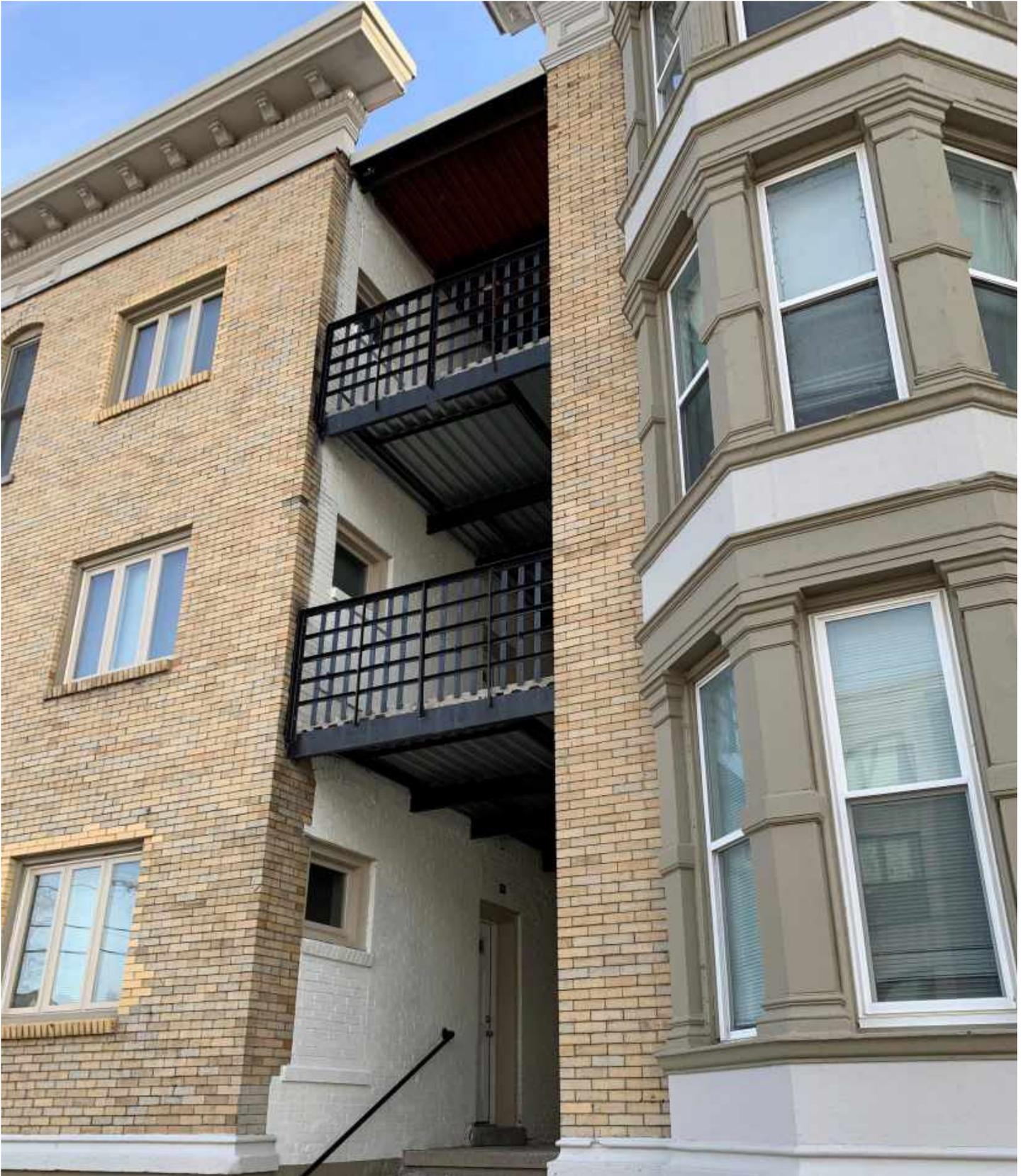


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 16

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 17

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

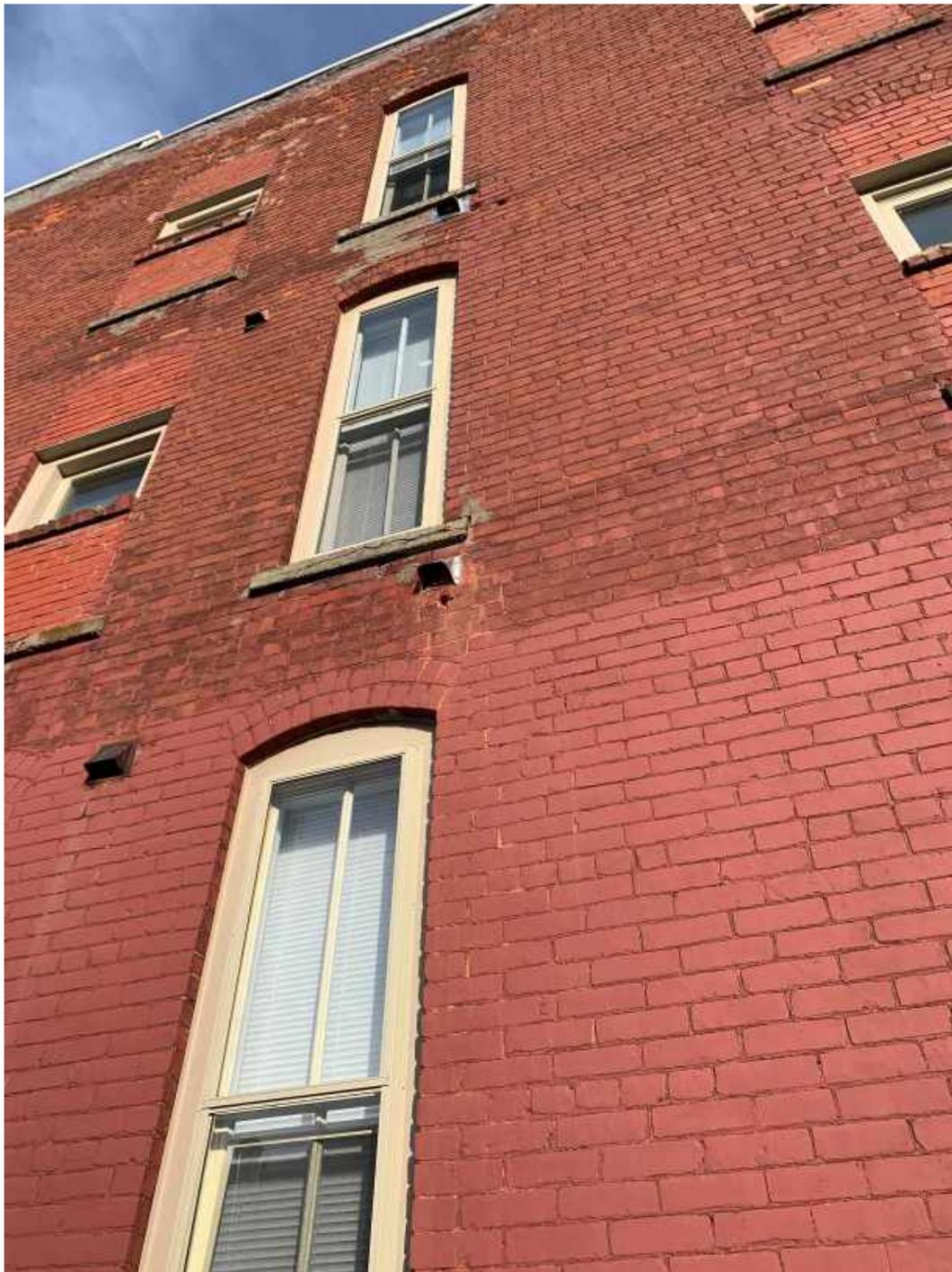


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 18

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 19

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 20

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State



**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 11 Page 21

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 22

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 23

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 24

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State



**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 11 Page 25

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 26

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 27

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 28

Lafayette Flats
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

