



National Casket Company Building

Onondaga County, NY

**5. Classification**

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

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

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

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	<b>Total</b>

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

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/ TRADE/ specialty store

COMMERCE/ TRADE/ business

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/ NOT IN USE

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Art Deco

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

REVIVALS/Late Gothic Revival/

Collegiate Gothic

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: BRICK

roof:

other:

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National Casket Company Building

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Onondaga County, NY

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### **Narrative Description**

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

#### **Summary Paragraph**

The National Casket Company building is a three-story brick and cast-stone commercial building built in 1930 and located at 719 East Genesee Street, east of Syracuse's downtown business district. The building consists of three full floors and a partial basement. Structural steel framing supports walls of structural clay tile with brick and cast-stone veneer. The primary (south) elevation, along with the southern portions of the east and west elevations and a south-facing return at the east are faced with dark red wire-cut brick and ornamented with cast stone in imitation of granite. The three-bay-wide facade is symmetrically arranged with wide brick pilasters, large window openings, and a central main entrance set within an arched cast-stone surround. The flat roof features an articulated parapet with cast-stone ornament at the south elevations. The north elevation and north portions of the east and west elevations are unadorned, with a common brick veneer. With the exception of a few original steel windows at secondary elevations, all of the windows have been replaced with aluminum-clad sash.

The interiors reflect an organization of high-ceilinged and ornately detailed public-facing showrooms and office spaces at the first and second floors, which are embellished with stylized Tudor-arched openings, faux-stone wall treatments, wood flooring, heavy crown molding, boxed beams, and wall paneling. Utilitarian secondary spaces for the storage and movement of goods in the basement, first-floor loading dock, and on the third floor are unadorned. Alteration of interior space configurations for various tenant uses is evident at the first and second floors; however, the building's architectural features and finishes are still clearly visible. The third floor has been more significantly altered through the subdivision of space using non-historic materials such as exposed steel studs and translucent fiberglass panels on a non-orthogonal plan.

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### **Narrative Description**

#### ***Exterior***

The National Casket Company building is located in a neighborhood of primarily early twentieth-century commercial buildings mixed in with older small-scale commercial buildings and surface parking lots surrounding Forman Park, a block-long public park situated in a wide median formed by East Genesee Street. The building occupies nearly its entire narrow, 0.2-acre lot and is set back from East Genesee Street by a concrete sidewalk. Immediately to the west, it is separated from a two-story, nineteenth-century brick former residence by a narrow side yard. To the east is a two-story, brick and glass office building built ca 1990. Directly to the north, a public alley separates the building from a 0.27-acre asphalt parking lot.

The National Casket Company building is three stories tall atop a partial basement. It is L-shaped in plan. A three-bay-wide by nine-bay-deep portion to the south faces the street and includes the façade, while a four-bay-wide section forms the rear of the building. One bay of the north section can be seen from the east alley, where

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National Casket Company Building

---

Onondaga County, NY

a concrete ramp provides access to both sections and to the adjacent building (which is not connected). The building's structural system consists of a steel frame with interior partitions of structural clay tile and exterior walls of clay tile faced with brick and cast-stone trim. The southern portion of the building is faced with dark red wire-cut brick in common bond, while the northern (rear) portion is faced with a lighter colored common brick in common bond. Window and door openings throughout generally have steel lintels. Throughout the southern building volume, the cast-stone features have light and dark aggregate simulating the appearance of granite. With the exception of the south-facing elevations, the roof parapets are unadorned with a simple sheet metal coping.

The three-bay-wide façade is oriented south to East Genesee Street and is symmetrically arranged with a centered primary entrance at the first floor. The foundation is of cast stone and extends to form sills for the first-floor windows, with an opening containing a bronze grille to either side of the entrance. At the first through the third floors, the bays are delineated by wide, slightly projecting brick pilasters, which extend above the parapet and terminate in an ornamental, stepped, cast-stone coping. With the exception of the first-floor entrance, at each floor level each bay contains a single large window opening with a cast-stone sill, steel lintel, and non-historic tripartite aluminum-clad window. The first- and second-floor windows have transoms, while the third-floor windows do not. The brick spandrels between floor levels are enlivened with cast-stone plaques featuring stylized Art Deco floral motifs, while the parapet above the third-floor windows contains a band of cast-stone ornament in each bay. The entrance is set within a segmental-arched cast-stone surround featuring geometric patterns. The cast-stone transom above the surround consists of a series of Gothic arches. The door is a double-leaf glazed oak door with a transom and bronze handset.

East of the façade, a one-bay-wide bay is set back approximately eighty-five feet from the sidewalk within a narrow courtyard. It has a large opening at the first floor and window openings at the second and third floors, all with brick flat-arch headers featuring cast-stone keystones. The first-floor opening is partially infilled with plywood and a non-historic steel door. The second-floor opening has a cast-stone sill and a pair of non-historic one-over-one windows with transoms, while the third-floor opening has a cast-stone sill and non-historic two-light window. Three small cast-stone plaques enliven the stepped parapet above.

The east elevation consists of a five-bay-wide portion facing the narrow courtyard between the National Casket Company building and the adjacent building at 721 East Genesee Street. The remainder of the east elevation is almost completely obscured by 721 East Genesee Street, which abuts it. The visible portion of the elevation has a cast-stone foundation, though shorter than the raised foundation on the south elevation, with several non-historic basement windows. Much of the foundation is obscured by the ca.1990 concrete ramp leading to an elevated platform which provides access to both the National Casket Company building and 721 East Genesee Street, which are not connected.

The first floor, from south to north, features two pairs of non-historic one-over-one windows with transoms, a single non-historic one-over-one window with a louvered transom, a secondary entrance via a double-leaf

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National Casket Company Building

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Onondaga County, NY

glazed oak door with bronze handset, a historic four-light paneled wood door with a six-light transom, and three single non-historic one-over-one windows. The single and paired windows, along with the six-light door, each feature cast-stone sills and brick flat-arched headers with cast-stone keystones. The primary entrance includes a shallow inset flanked by brick pilasters with cast-stone capitals; however, a canopy or portico which originally existed is no longer present, and the area immediately above the entry is finished in non-historic stucco. The second floor features only two single non-historic one-over-one windows, one over the entry and the other to the far north, each with a cast-stone sill and brick flat-arch header with cast-stone keystone. The third floor has five evenly spaced window openings south of the south-facing return, with sill and header details matching those below, but with non-historic single-light sash. North of the south-facing return, a small portion of the third-floor elevation is visible above the adjoining roof of 721 East Genesee Street. The visible portion has two window openings, each with a cast-stone sill, an unadorned, brick, flat-arched header, and a non-historic window.

The front (wire-cut red brick) portion of the west elevation is three bays wide, with a cast-stone foundation containing non-historic basement window sash. The first floor has two historic window openings, each with a cast-stone sill, a brick flat-arched header with a cast-stone keystone, and a pair of non-historic one-over-one sash with transoms. The second and third floors each have only a single non-historic window opening with fixed sash. A distinction between the more decorative wire-cut brick toward the front and the common brick toward the rear is obvious.

The north (rear) elevation, is utilitarian in appearance with a narrow, poured concrete foundation and no ornamentation. The first floor, from north to south, has a large historic window opening with a pair of twenty-five-light steel sash, a historic window opening with a single twenty-five-light steel sash, a historic door opening with a five-panel wood door, and another large historic window opening with a pair of twenty-five-light steel sash. Steel sash at this elevation and the east elevation are glazed with wire glass. The second floor of this portion of the elevation contains four non-historic window openings with fixed sash, and the third floor has two non-historic window openings with fixed sash.

The flat roof has membrane roofing and is nearly covered with solar panels mounted to low-profile racks weighted with concrete blocks. A brick chimney with simple corbeling is located at the east elevation near the south-facing return. The roof is accessed via a stucco-clad shed-roofed stair tower adjacent to a taller stucco-clad flat-roofed elevator bulkhead at the northwest corner of the building.

### ***Interior***

The interior of the National Casket Company building reflects its original use as commercial showroom and office space, with public-facing primary spaces such as corridors, stairs, offices, and showrooms having more refined finishes and a higher degree of ornamentation than secondary spaces, which include the basement, first-floor loading dock, and third-floor storage space. The exterior treatment of the narrower, more ornamented south (front) volume and the utilitarian rear volume is reflected in the internal organization of space. The full basement is present only under the south volume, with a ramp leading up to a large interior loading dock at the

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National Casket Company Building

---

Onondaga County, NY

first floor of the rear volume. The materials and ornamentation of the interior are in keeping with the building's function and exterior styling and include the use of faux-stone wall finishes, pilasters, heavy crown moldings and boxed beams at the ceiling, wide baseboards, molded medallions, wall panels set off by moldings, and period light fixtures. The first and second floors feature high ceilings and the extensive use of uncased, stylized Tudor-arched openings. Windows throughout the first and second floors generally have simple wood sills and surrounds. Minor alterations for use by various tenants include the addition of sinks, showers, cabinetry, and kitchenettes.

The full basement at the southern volume is largely open, with the building's structural steel framing, poured concrete floors, and wood joists and subfloor visible. Walk-in coolers and a built-in safe are among the few partitioned spaces in the basement. The exterior walls are parged and painted, while the interior partitions of structural tile and brick are generally painted. Along the eastern wall, a stair to the first floor winds around a passenger elevator shaft. Immediately north is a small restroom, beyond which is the largest of the partitioned basement spaces, containing electrical and plumbing equipment. A concrete ramp at the northwest corner leads up to the first-floor loading dock.

The interior loading dock occupies the entire northern volume at ground level. Like the basement, it is largely unfinished, with concrete floors, exposed steel and concrete framing, and parged or painted walls. Along the west wall, a large, partitioned space with window openings to the loading dock appears to have historically been a shipping office or similar space. A freight elevator and stair at the northwest corner provide access to the first through the third floors (and the stair continues to the roof). A ramp at the southeast corner of the loading dock leads up to a landing with a doorway on the south-facing return and continues up to the first floor. A short flight of stairs at the southwest corner of the loading dock also leads up to the first floor.

The primary entry to the building from East Genesee Street opens into a carpeted vestibule with marble wainscoting, and a short flight of marble stairs leads up to the main north-south corridor at the first floor. Large tripartite windows with transoms and bronze grilles below look into the commercial spaces to the east and west of the entry stair. The walls of the main corridor are parged and incised to imitate the appearance of ashlar stone, with paneled wood wainscoting below. East and west of the corridor are tenant commercial spaces. The space to the east has been somewhat altered with the addition of a commercial kitchen and serving counter with a cantilevered dropped ceiling. The commercial space to the west runs the length of the south volume and includes numerous non-historic partitioned spaces, including a hallway and multiple small rooms. In general, these partitions do not obscure the building's interior architectural details, including boxed beams and pilasters, which remain visible. East of the primary corridor, a small lobby leads to a carpeted entry vestibule for the side door, the building's primary stair, which winds around the passenger elevator shaft, and historic men's and women's restrooms with penny tile flooring. The doorways leading to the side entrance vestibule, primary stair, and restrooms feature stylized arches, while the entry vestibule has a pair of shallow blind arches.

All of the first-floor spaces feature wood floors, heavy wood crown moldings, pilasters, and boxed beams at the painted plaster ceilings. Period suspended light fixtures with glass shades are located in the vestibule, commercial spaces, and corridor, and historic sconces are located on the primary stair between the first and second floors. Numerous non-historic light fixtures are also present.

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National Casket Company Building

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Onondaga County, NY

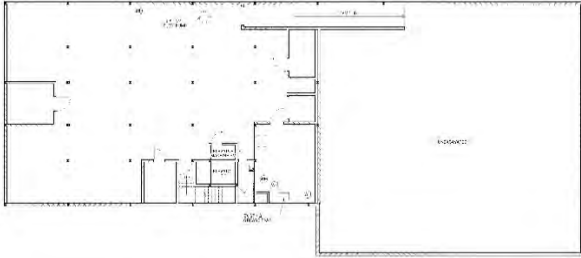
The open-newel primary stair has marble risers and treads like those at the main entry, along with square wood newels and handrails with iron balusters. The faux-stone wall treatment continues along the stair from the first to the second floor and into an elevator lobby at the second floor. This space also features wood flooring, a heavy crown molding, and a shallow stylized arch containing the elevator door and a small closet. South of the elevator lobby is a wide, double-loaded, carpeted corridor. The faux-stone wall treatment of the elevator lobby continues along the corridor, terminating at a stylized arched opening near the corridor's midpoint. Single-panel wood doors with transoms (one with sidelights, set into a shallow arch) lead from the corridor into six partitioned rooms. Three additional interconnected rooms are located west and northwest of the elevator lobby. North of the elevator lobby are men's and women's restrooms and a narrow, non-historic, double-loaded corridor with nine partitioned rooms accessed via paneled wood doors with transoms. Most of the second-floor rooms have at least one wall featuring panels set off by molding, and some spaces also feature small, molded medallions as ornament. Ceilings throughout are painted plaster. Flooring finishes vary and include original stained pine flooring as well as laminate wood flooring and carpet. Not all of the interior walls at the second floor are original, as evidenced by the lack of crown molding along one side of the rear volume corridor as well as steel studs visible at an opening in at least one location in the front volume. Similar to the first floor, these non-historic partitions do not compromise the building's architectural details, which remain visible and in good condition. Several period pendant light fixtures are present, along with numerous non-historic fixtures. The second-floor restrooms have sheet vinyl flooring, dropped acoustic tile ceilings, and non-historic fixtures and stalls. At the far northwest corner of the second floor is a small service lobby for the freight elevator and the secondary stair, which leads from the first floor to the roof. The service lobby has narrow hardwood flooring and stained baseboards.

In contrast to the high degree of ornamentation between the first and second floors, the primary stair from the second to the third floor has concrete treads, steel risers, and parged and painted walls with a simple mounted wood handrail. The open-newel winding secondary stair has concrete landings and treads, steel risers, square metal newels and balusters, wood handrails, and parged and painted walls below the third-floor landing. Above this landing, the walls are painted hollow clay tile.

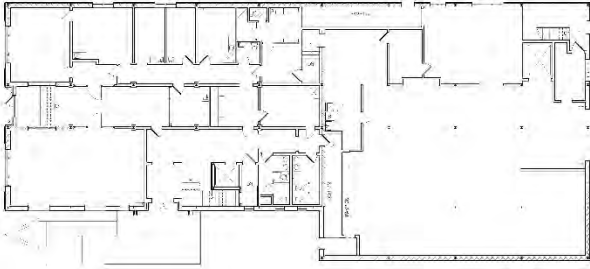
The third floor is partitioned into numerous rooms of various sizes with non-orthogonal walls utilizing non-historic materials such as exposed steel studs and translucent fiberglass paneling. Much of the interior structural steel framing is visible, along with the original narrow hardwood floors. The ceiling appears to be painted fiberboard, to which electrical conduit and junction boxes are surface mounted. HVAC ducts and lighting are suspended from the ceiling, which is lower than the first- and second-floor ceilings. However, this room was originally utilitarian in character and purpose, intended for storage.

National Casket Company Building

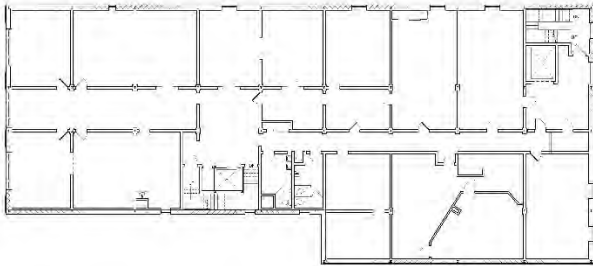
Onondaga County, NY



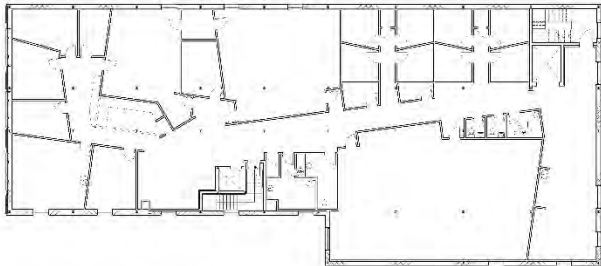
Existing Basement Plan



Existing First Floor Plan



Existing Second Floor Plan



Existing Third Floor Plan



National Casket Company Building

Onondaga County, NY

### 8. Statement of Significance

#### Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

#### Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

#### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

#### Period of Significance

1930-1974

#### Significant Dates

1930

#### Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

#### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

#### Architect/Builder

Architect – Gustavus A. Young

Builder – Dawson Brothers

#### Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance begins with the building's construction in 1930 and extends to 1974 in recognition of National Casket Company's occupation and use of the building for this entire period. The company continued to be used as a sales office until 1981.

#### Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

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National Casket Company Building

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Onondaga County, NY

### Summary Paragraph

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

The National Casket Company building, 719 East Genesee Street, Syracuse, is significant under Criterion A in the area of Commerce for its significant association with the largest twentieth-century manufacturer and distributor of caskets and funeral supplies in the United States and as a distinctive, intact example of the company's specific purpose-built sales showroom, office, and warehouse type. The National Casket Company grew from its origins as a local manufacturer founded in Oneida, New York, in 1876, acquiring numerous local and regional firms until it was the largest supplier of caskets in the United States.<sup>1</sup> At its zenith, the company had showrooms in more than thirty cities and offices throughout the northeast and midwest, even extending into Texas and North Carolina. In New York, showrooms were located in some of the more major cities, including Manhattan, Brooklyn, Albany, Oneida, Buffalo, Rochester, and Williamsburgh [sic], as well as Syracuse. National Casket Company operated a sales office with showrooms in Syracuse beginning in about 1902 and constructed the building at 719 East Genesee Street in 1930. While not the only casket company in Syracuse, the new building was considered both prestigious and convenient – offering rapid transportation of its product from nearly Oneida, a dignified and comfortable showroom, and maintaining its pivotal role the city's funeral industry for half a century until the early 1980s.

Built by and for the National Casket Company during its decades-long dominance of the funeral supply market, the building at 719 East Genesee Street also meets Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an elegant and highly intact example of the sales office typology developed by the National Casket Company in the early twentieth century. Based on an evaluation of five extant sales offices, this typology combined “selection rooms,” offices, and warehousing in a single multi-story building that was replicated with stylistic variations throughout the 1920s and 1930s in several of the company's northeast markets. These buildings were located just outside city centers, with easy access by automobile or streetcar. Extant examples typically consist of a three- to four-story rectangular or L-shaped volume divided vertically, with showrooms and offices grouped near the three- to four-bay-wide façade and warehousing and support spaces grouped at the rear of the building. Rear or side loading docks allowed for caskets and supplies to be moved in and out of the buildings, and vertical circulation was separated, with passenger elevators near the main entries and freight elevators at the rear. Ornamentation was lavished on the façades and adjacent portions of the side elevations, with plainer materials at the rear. Likewise, a much greater degree of ornamentation was used for the interior materials and finishes in the public-facing spaces (showrooms, corridors, and stairs) than for the warehousing and support spaces. The concern for the comfort of customers during the selection of caskets and associated products is evident in the large amount of space reserved for selection rooms, which allowed multiple families to be served simultaneously. The Syracuse building, designed by local architect Gustavus A. Young and built by the Dawson Brothers Company, followed this typology and combined elements of the Art Deco, Tudor and Collegiate Gothic styles. These include Art Deco features, such as the geometric ornament and piers that project above the roof parapet, emphasizing the three-story building's verticality; brick with cast-stone trim, Tudor arches, and heavy moldings that represent the Collegiate Gothic style. Young designed at least one other local showroom for National Casket, that in Albany, which was nearly identical to the Syracuse buildings.

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<sup>1</sup> “Then & Now: National Casket Company Firm Among Oneida's Biggest, Oldest”. *Oneida Daily Dispatch*, reprinted from August 1951, accessed April 8, 2024, <https://www.oneidadispatch.com/2015/01/06/then-now-national-casket-company-firm-among-oneidas-biggest-oldest/>.

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National Casket Company Building

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Onondaga County, NY

The building retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, feeling, and association. It retains the exterior materials and details, overall interior space configuration, and finish materials and ornament that convey its use as a casket showroom and sales office. It is an excellent example of the combined showroom-warehouse typology developed by the National Casket Company in the early twentieth century, retaining the exterior characteristics of the type (massing, customer and service entrances, and façade treatment), as well as the hierarchy of customer-facing and secondary spaces at the interior.

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## Narrative Statement of Significance

### *Development of Syracuse and the East Genesee Street Corridor*

Syracuse developed into a major manufacturing center in New York State in the nineteenth century. Proceeds from the sales of state-owned lands set aside for salt production helped to fund the construction of the Erie Canal, which was completed from Syracuse to Utica in 1820. The full length of the canal, connecting Albany with Buffalo, was completed in 1825 and allowed the shipment of salt and other products to more distant markets while greatly boosting the economy in New York State and beyond. Less than a decade after the canal's opening, the first railroads were constructed through Syracuse; by midcentury, many of these had consolidated into the New York Central Railroad, which would eventually provide freight and passenger service throughout New York State and much of New England and the Midwest. The junction of multiple rail lines in Syracuse allowed the city to become a regional distribution center for many goods and products.<sup>2</sup>

Syracuse grew rapidly in the second half of the nineteenth century, as manufacturing eclipsed salt production as the dominant industry in the city and neighboring villages. Metalworking shops which had produced kettles and pans for the salt industry began to produce agricultural implements and consumer goods, initiating a transition to general manufacturing as the leading economic driver. The city's population exploded from 25,226 in 1855 to 137,249 by 1910, eventually reaching a peak of over 220,000 in the 1950s.<sup>3</sup>

The City of Syracuse expanded physically from the mid-nineteenth century through the early twenty first century, annexing land that would become new residential neighborhoods on its periphery. Horse-drawn trolleys began operating in 1860 and offered routes from downtown along East Genesee Street in 1870. Electric trolleys were introduced in 1888, and additional lines built over the ensuing decades spurred residential development in neighborhoods farther from the city center.<sup>4</sup> East Genesee Street, originally a wagon road connecting Syracuse to nearby villages and hamlets, became one of the primary streetcar lines serving the neighborhoods east of downtown, and, later, an important automobile thoroughfare connecting downtown to the eastern neighborhoods and suburbs beyond.

With its close proximity to the business district centered several blocks west, the 700 block of East Genesee Street experienced several waves of development and redevelopment as commercial uses spread into once-residential areas. At the turn of the twentieth century, the buildings surrounding Forman Park consisted of

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<sup>2</sup> Dennis J. Connors, "Syracuse," in *Encyclopedia of New York State*, ed. Peter Eisenstadt (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Connors, "Syracuse."

<sup>4</sup> Onondaga Historical Association (OHA), "The first modes of urban public transportation in Syracuse," accessed June 2023. <https://www.cnyhistory.org/2015/03/the-first-modes-of-urban-public-transportation-in-syracuse/>.

National Casket Company Building

Onondaga County, NY

fashionable residences belonging to professional and business families.<sup>5</sup> Early commercial buildings on the block included the 1914 Regent Theater at 820 East Genesee Street (not extant) and an auto sales building at 805 East Genesee Street designed by prominent architect Ward Wellington Ward and completed in 1919. By 1924, three houses south of the park had been replaced with the Neoclassical-style First Church of Christ, Scientist, while the westernmost residence on the north side of the park had been replaced with the 1935 McMillan Book Company building (which, in turn, was replaced with the present Crowne Plaza Syracuse in 1969).<sup>6</sup> At this time, the Forman Park area (along with nearby blocks) was something of a medical district, with several homes also serving as physicians' and dentists' offices, as well as purpose-built office buildings such as the 1926 Medical Arts Building at 713 East Genesee Street (now the Parkview Hotel).<sup>7</sup> In 1930, the National Casket Company building replaced a substantial Queen Anne-style house at 719 East Genesee Street owned by the Shoemaker family. The *Syracuse American* noted that the loss of the "landmark" home was part of the "march of progress commercial developments are making around the former central business district."<sup>8</sup> As the century wore on, the remodeling and replacement of residences with commercial buildings after the 1930s, as well as the eventual demolition of all remaining residences on the south side of the park in the 1960s, resulted in the commercial character evident today on the 700 block of East Genesee Street.

### ***History of the Casket and Funeral Industry***

The National Casket Company building at 719 East Genesee Street is significant as a sales building for a nationally important company. The multi-billion-dollar American casket and funeral supply industry had humble beginnings as a side-line for village cabinetmakers. Their simple pine boxes had a stark ubiquity that eventually inspired a euphemism for death itself. Hexagonal boxes called coffins were the earlier form of funeral furniture in America.<sup>9</sup> Coffins had removable lids and were tapered to fit the human form. By the mid-nineteenth century, remains were increasingly transported and buried in caskets, which are rectangular boxes with hinged lids. Since cabinetmakers were already equipped with horses and wagons to deliver furniture, they were often asked to "undertake" the responsibility of transporting the deceased in their casket or coffin to the burial site. This service originated the term "undertaker," leading to the creation of a profession dedicated to the mortuary and logistical direction of funerals.<sup>10</sup>

The first significant innovation in coffin design occurred in 1848 with Dr. Almond Fisk's development of a cast iron, "mummiform" coffin. The Fisk coffin was designed to be airtight to provide short-term preservation of the remains to facilitate transportation over longer distances, or to contain a contagious disease, such as cholera or yellow fever.<sup>11</sup> These coffins were first exhibited at the New York State Fair in Syracuse in 1848 and caused a

<sup>5</sup> Syracuse City Directories, ca. 1900-1991. Collection of the Onondaga Historical Association, Syracuse, NY.

<sup>6</sup> G.M. Hopkins, *Atlas of the City of Syracuse, New York* (Philadelphia, PA: G. M. Hopkins Company, 1908); G.M. Hopkins, *Atlas of the City of Syracuse, N.Y. and Suburbs* (Philadelphia, PA: G. M. Hopkins Company, 1924); G.M. Hopkins, *Atlas of the City of Syracuse, N.Y.* (Philadelphia, PA: G. M. Hopkins Company, 1938).

<sup>7</sup> Syracuse City Directories, ca. 1900-1991, Collection of the Onondaga Historical Association, Syracuse, NY.

<sup>8</sup> "Landmark in 700 Block Will Be Razed," *Syracuse American*, June 16, 1929.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Beardsley, *A Brief History of the Funeral Supply Industry in the United States* (Casket & Funeral Supply Association of America, 2013), 12.

<sup>10</sup> Beardsley, "History of the Funeral Supply Industry," 11.

<sup>11</sup> Allison Meier, "The Cast Iron Coffin That Was Too Creepy Even for the Victorians," *Atlas Obscura*, accessed April 8, 2024, <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/morbid-monday-fisk-mummy-case>.

National Casket Company Building

Onondaga County, NY

stir amongst the fairgoers. After their initial launch, many consumers appreciated their preservative properties, while others were disturbed by the human-inspired contours of the coffins.<sup>12</sup> Dr. Fisk's product was acquired in 1853 by the Crane and Breed Casket Company of Cincinnati, Ohio, which was one of the first manufacturers of factory-produced, wood or metal coffins and caskets.<sup>13</sup>

The casket industry surged as production moved from the village cabinetmaker to the factory, and the developing industry soon saw an increase in advertising and innovation in casket materials and forms. Oversaturation of the market led to increasingly exaggerated or fantastical approaches to both advertising and product design. Notable examples of the latter include Philip K. Clover's patented casket that featured a built-in bomb to deter potential graverobbers, and Angelo R. Lerro's patented casket that allowed the deceased to be seated under a glass dome to "greet" well-wishers.<sup>14</sup> The City of Syracuse, where Dr. Fisk's cast-iron model was unveiled, was eager to host the factory of the Glass Casket Company, another impractical variation on traditional casket design.<sup>15</sup> One of the more enduring innovations was by Samuel Stein, who was interested in producing a casket that was akin to fine cabinetry rather than the plain pine box. His patented design was not a commercial success but was later displayed in the Patent Museum in Sandwich, New Hampshire.<sup>16</sup> Stein later introduced a cloth-lined casket at the Centennial Exhibition of 1876 and received national recognition. His Rochester, New York, factory (NR listed) was very successful and fabricated U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant's casket in 1885.<sup>17</sup>

### ***The National Casket Company***

Capitalizing on the transformation of funeral and burial practices made possible by rail travel, embalming, and other nineteenth-century innovations, the National Casket Company was, for much of the twentieth century, the dominant manufacturer and supplier of caskets and funeral supplies in the United States.<sup>18</sup> In Oneida, New York, the seeds of the National Casket Company were sown in 1876 when menswear vendors C. Will Chappell, Benjamin Chase, and John Tuttle purchased the undertaking and casket production business of E. W. Jones. The trio found the new sideline to be so profitable that within three years they sold their menswear concern to focus entirely on funeral products. Soon after, they acquired a Rochester casket business called Maxwell, McWheaney & Company, adding John Maxwell to their partnership. Chappell, Chase, and Maxwell Casket Company's substantial increase in market share was coupled with the erection of a new casket factory in Oneida. In 1890, Chappell, Chase, Maxwell & Company merged with two significant competitors: Hamilton, Lemmon, and Arnold of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Stein Manufacturing, the Rochester manufacturers of cloth-lined caskets. The new amalgamation, which was estimated to account for 75 percent of all fine burial caskets produced in the U.S., adopted the pithier and more ambitious moniker of National Casket Company.<sup>19</sup> Some

<sup>12</sup> Meier, "Cast Iron Coffin."

<sup>13</sup> Beardsley, "History of the Funeral Supply Industry," 15.

<sup>14</sup> Beardsley, "History of the Funeral Supply Industry," 15.

<sup>15</sup> "The Glass Casket Company," *Syracuse Journal*, May 11, 1876.

<sup>16</sup> "National Casket Has Long History," *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, December 22, 1874.

<sup>17</sup> Ted Bartlett, "Court Exchange Building – National Casket Company," Building-Structure Inventory Form, Division for Historic Preservation, New York State Parks and Recreation, August 1985.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Beardsley and John Marsellus, "Casket and Funeral Industry," in *Encyclopedia of New York State*, ed. Peter Eisenstadt (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005).

<sup>19</sup> "Then & Now" *Oneida Daily Dispatch*.

National Casket Company Building

Onondaga County, NY

accusingly referred to as the “Casket Trust.”<sup>20</sup> The newly consolidated company quickly expanded by additional acquisitions, and ultimately surpassed the Crane and Breed company as industry leader.<sup>21</sup> For a time, company letterhead included a graphic compilation of their holdings that they named “National City.”<sup>22</sup> After joining with the New Haven Casket Company (CT), the Chicago Coffin Company (IL), the Louisville Coffin Company (KY), the Elgin Manufacturing Company (IL), and more than a dozen others in 1899, the “Casket Trust” became so dominant that there was concern over rising prices.<sup>23</sup> Newspaper articles repeated the refrain “to die is costlier than to live.”<sup>24</sup> Company letterhead in the early twentieth century listed the National Casket Company’s locations: by 1905 there were offices in Albany, Oneida, Buffalo, Rochester, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Williamsburgh [sic], NY; Allegheny, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Scranton, PA; Baltimore, MD; Boston, MA; Chicago, IL; Hoboken, NJ; Indianapolis, IN; Louisville, KY; Nashville, TN; and New Haven, CT.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to caskets, the National Casket Company sold a range of funeral supplies, such as clothing for the deceased, color-coordinated rugs, its own branded embalming fluid, casket-lowering devices, and “funeral cars” which could be modified to serve as ambulances.<sup>26</sup> The company even included chapels in their Brooklyn and Manhattan showroom buildings (not extant), where funeral services were held.<sup>27</sup> By the 1920s, the company had twenty-four branch offices in fourteen states (including its Syracuse office), from Texas to Indiana and North Carolina to Massachusetts.<sup>28</sup> By the mid-1930s, there were National Casket Company display rooms in thirty cities.<sup>29</sup>

The National Casket Company’s first foray into Syracuse was with the acquisition of the Syracuse Casket Company, a factory established at 511 South Clinton Street in 1902.<sup>30</sup> At the time of the 1905 purchase, the Syracuse Casket Company factory employed seventy people, sizeable for a local business but no competition for National Casket Company. The conglomerate’s major competitor in Syracuse, Marsellus Manufacturing Company, was not considered for purchase, remaining the company’s primary regional competitor throughout its long tenure in Syracuse.<sup>31</sup> National Casket was apparently not interested in the production capabilities of the Syracuse Casket Company factory, instead moving production from the South Clinton Street factory to Oneida. As of 1905, National Casket Company’s eleven factories produced about 400,000 caskets annually serving about 23 percent of the deceased in the country.<sup>32</sup>

Though the National Casket Company closed the Syracuse Casket Company factory, the company maintained a presence in the city with a salesroom at 325 South Warren Street.<sup>33</sup> Later the factory was located on West Water

<sup>20</sup> “A ‘Casket Trust,’” *The Evening Post*, New York, NY, June 4, 1890.

<sup>21</sup> Beardsley, *History of the Funeral Supply Industry*, 29.

<sup>22</sup> Beardsley, *History of the Funeral Supply Industry*, 29-30.

<sup>23</sup> “Casket Companies to Form a Trust,” *Argus*, September 20, 1899.

<sup>24</sup> “To Get After Coffin Trust,” *Evening News*, Plattsburgh, NY, August 9, 1907.

<sup>25</sup> National Casket Company, Letterhead, April 24, 1903, Collection of EDR.

<sup>26</sup> “National Casket Company,” *Lowville Journal and Republican*, July 16, 1931.

<sup>27</sup> “Obituary,” *Daily Standard Union*, July 31, 1908; “Obituaries,” *Sun*, October 29, 1918; “Deaths in the Profession,” *Billboard*, September 25, 1925; “Henry H. Hobbs Services Today,” *New York Evening Post*, June 30, 1931.

<sup>28</sup> National Casket Company, “Rugs of Enduring and Lustrous Mohair,” Pamphlet, ca. 1920, Collection of EDR.

<sup>29</sup> National Casket Company, Magazine Advertisement, 1934, Collection of EDR.

<sup>30</sup> “The Syracuse Casket Company,” *Syracuse Journal*, March 7, 1903.

<sup>31</sup> “Trust Gets Local Plant,” *Telegram*, September 7, 1905.

<sup>32</sup> “To Build a Factory,” *Syracuse Herald*, September 1905.

<sup>33</sup> “Manufacturing to Oneida,” *Syracuse Herald*, September 27, 1905.

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National Casket Company Building

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Onondaga County, NY

Street.<sup>34</sup> These facilities were patronized by funeral directors who brought the bereaved to select and buy caskets for their loved ones. Later advertisements reflected this patronage chain: “The best way to select a casket is in our showrooms. Here your funeral director will show you a complete display with designs, materials, and prices to meet every need. Ask him to bring you here.”<sup>35</sup> These showrooms served the National Casket Company’s local clientele for decades, but by 1929, the company decided to build a new facility on the 700 block of East Genesee Street.

### ***“Dignified, But Modern”***

The National Casket Company’s new Syracuse location was considered both prestigious and convenient, as it:

*may be reached from all sections [of Syracuse] without going through the more congested business section and the setting in a semi-residential and business district across from Forman Park is most attractive. Moreover, a 20-foot alley at the rear of the lot gives easy access to shipping rooms and freight elevators.*<sup>36</sup>

The latter element of the property was necessary as caskets were not constructed at 719 East Genesee Street. The models were made at over a dozen factories, including the original facility in Oneida, and were brought into the sales building from the rear alley.

The new National Casket Company building was designed by Gustavus A. Young (1871-1958) and built by Dawson Brothers Company.<sup>37</sup> Young was a local architect primarily known in Syracuse for his hotel designs, including the former Dome Hotel (1927) at 202 West Jefferson Street, included in the Armory Square Historic District (90NR02123) and the former Hilton Hotel at 250 Harrison Street (Montgomery St-Columbia Circle Historic District Proposed Expansion, PDIL approved). Construction of the National Casket Company building occurred in early 1930.<sup>38</sup> The building’s grand opening was held in March 1930.<sup>39</sup>

The new building was typical of the sales office typology that the National Casket Company developed in the early twentieth century to combine showrooms, offices, and warehousing in a single multi-story building. Among the extant purpose-built National Casket Company sales offices that illustrate this type are the following (See figs 5-8):

- Syracuse, NY (719 East Genesee Street; 1930)
- Buffalo, NY (430 Virginia Street; 1923; contributing to Allentown Historic District [90NR01220])
- Albany (500 Central Avenue; 1937)
- Philadelphia, PA (1515 Fairmount Avenue, ca. 1930s)
- Scranton, PA (419 Poplar Street; 1930).

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<sup>34</sup> “3-Story Plant for Casket Company to Rise in City,” *Syracuse American*, January 5, 1930.

<sup>35</sup> Advertisement for National Casket Company, *Syracuse Journal*, February 13, 1931.

<sup>36</sup> “3-Story Plant,” *Syracuse American*.

<sup>37</sup> “La Nuova Sede Della Manifatturazione di Casse Funebri,” *La Gazzetta di Syracuse*, March 28, 1930.

<sup>38</sup> “3-Story Plant,” *Syracuse American*.

<sup>39</sup> “La Nuova Sede,” *La Gazzetta*.

National Casket Company Building

Onondaga County, NY

The company's Rochester building at 142 Exchange Street is also extant (NR listed); however, it was built in 1881 for a local casket maker and later acquired by the National Casket Company.<sup>40</sup> Based on the above examples, the typical sales office was three to four bays wide and three to four stories tall, with a public entrance on the façade and service/shipping entrances at the rear and/or side elevations. Buildings were located in downtown areas just outside the central business district, where they were easily accessible via automobile or streetcar. Ornamentation was concentrated on the façade and adjacent portions of the side elevations, with minimal or no ornament and more utilitarian materials to the rear. Most of the facades were divided into bays by shallow pilasters that rose above parapets and featured stylized decorative embellishments near the top. Almost all the windows were tripartite, and most had transoms. Buildings had center entrances within large decorative enframements. Embellishment tended to be eclectic and, like the nominated building, drew on Art Deco, Tudor and even more exotic styles. The buildings often extended the full width of a city block, allowing direct access by truck to loading bays facing a street or alley at the rear. When it was not possible to place loading bays at the rear, they were placed in a smaller wing and set back from the façade and the street. At the interior, the buildings were divided into public and private zones, with customer-facing spaces (selection rooms, corridors, lobbies, offices) towards the front of the building and warehousing and support spaces towards the rear. A passenger elevator and primary stair towards the front of the building served customers, while a second elevator and secondary stair at the rear allowed for the movement of caskets, supplies, and workers between floors. The National Casket Company building at 719 East Genesee Street is an excellent example of this sales office typology.

The National Casket Company Building is embellished in an eclectic combination of two architectural styles in use during the 1920s and 1930s: Art Deco and Tudor/Gothic Revival. This blend of styles aimed to convey a "dignified, but modern" aesthetic to house casket selection rooms.<sup>41</sup> The "modern" element in its design is its use of Art Deco forms and motifs. Art Deco (ca. 1920-1935) was commonly used in public and commercial buildings and is typified by geometric motifs and towers or vertical projections that emphasize verticality in the structure as a whole.<sup>42</sup> With only three stories, 719 East Genesee would not be considered particularly tall, yet the eye is drawn upwards by raised piers crowned with modest Art Deco ziggurats that project over the roofline and are embellished with geometric ornament. The appearance of height is enhanced by the use of shorter windows on the top floor. The spiraled leaves in the stylized floral medallions on the façade are also consistent with the style.

A drawing of the proposed building published in the *Syracuse American* suggests that Young intended the facade to be faced with smooth stone or cast stone block, which would have accentuated the modest Art Deco aesthetic.<sup>43</sup> The vertical thrust of the piers was enhanced in the original design by their stepped profiles, but this detail was lost in the transition to brick. It is not clear why brick was employed instead of smooth-faced

<sup>40</sup> Bartlett, "Court Exchange Building."

<sup>41</sup> "3-Story Plant," *Syracuse American*.

<sup>42</sup> William J.R. Curtis, *Modern Architecture Since 1900*, Third Edition (New York, NY: Phaidon Press Inc., 1996).

<sup>43</sup> "Landmark in 700 Block Will Be Razed," *Syracuse American*, June 16, 1929.



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National Casket Company Building

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Onondaga County, NY

stone or cast stone, though it is likely that the expense of those materials may have seemed imprudent in the volatile months after the Stock Market crash of 1929.

The central bay of the National Casket Company building has distinctly Gothic Revival forms which, in combination with the brick walls and cast-stone trim, created a staid and “dignified” appearance appropriate for a purveyor of funerary furniture. This aesthetic was commonly seen in educational architecture of Collegiate Gothic design (1890-1940). This stylistic variant is characterized by flat rooflines hidden by crenelated or stepped parapets, brick cladding, and restrained ornament and trim in cast or natural stone, with Gothic elements such as arched fenestration and tracery. The main entry of the building is arched, and its deeply recessed surround is lined with cast-stone moldings. This ornamentation is geometric and more consistent with Art Deco design elements than with Gothic imagery. The cast-stone transom above the entry is unambiguously Gothic as its molded row of pointed arches recalls the stone tracery of a Gothic window. Though most Gothic architecture of the 1920s was associated with education or churches, with the notable exception of the nearby Hills Building at 217 Montgomery Street (a contributing element in the Montgomery Street-Columbus Circle Historic District, 90NR02116), the National Casket Company may have incorporated these stylistic elements to evoke a faintly ecclesiastical air to welcome and comfort bereaved customers.

The executives of National Casket Company were apparently pleased with their eclectic new sales building in Syracuse. Eight years later, the company commissioned Gustavus Young to design another brick and cast stone sales building in Albany, New York.<sup>44</sup> This structure is still extant at 500 Central Avenue, and it illustrates the same typology that National Casket favored in this period. It is also recognizable as a variation on the Art Deco-Collegiate Gothic design of 719 East Genesee Street, Syracuse. It is not yet known whether Young designed any additional buildings for this company.

An account of the National Casket Company grand opening provides some indication of how the building’s interior was suited to the company’s sales needs. The front half of the first floor was dedicated to reception and administration, while the rear consisted of a large, open loading garage. The entire second floor was arranged into several large selection rooms used for displaying numerous models of wood or metal, including bronze, caskets. The basement was used principally for storage.<sup>45</sup> The third floor was not described in the newspaper, but its simple finishes indicate that it was also a secondary space.

Michael Beardsley, a longtime employee of Marsellus Casket Company and a historian of the funerary trade, notes that sales rooms were typically large and open with dozens of casket models on display. Doors were not part of the original showroom design as they might impinge upon the movements of browsing customers. Families would be assisted by their funeral director and possibly a casket salesperson as they examined the models. These large rooms could showcase a wide variety of caskets while allowing grieving families some

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<sup>44</sup> “Two National Companies to Move into New Quarters in December”, *The Knickerbocker News*, October 30, 1937.

<sup>45</sup> “La Nuova Sede,” *La Gazzetta*.

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National Casket Company Building

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Onondaga County, NY

room to move about in relative privacy.<sup>46</sup> The extant finishes at the second floor are consistent throughout, suggesting that the selection rooms were finished and decorated in a similar, coordinated manner. The selection rooms and first-floor customer-facing spaces were finished with heavy wood moldings, corner pilasters, wainscoting, and unframed Tudor arches that evoked the pointed arches in the blind tracery over the front entry. These finishes emphasized the “dignified” air that had been promised in the otherwise “modern” building.<sup>47</sup>

Though some of the interior layout has been altered on these floors, the woodwork has been preserved in most places. The Tudor arches on the second floor were preserved even when infilled to accommodate the addition of a door. Many period light fixtures are present in the building, though their variety suggests that some may not be original. Despite some layout modifications and the window replacements, the building’s retains sufficient integrity to convey its use during the period of significance as a retail showroom and warehouse and its illustration of the building type.

National Casket Company celebrated the completion of its new building with an open house on March 21, 1930. An open invitation to the public was published in the *Syracuse Journal*. Unlike many accounts of the business that touted the number of cities with branches or other evidence of financial success and market dominance, this invitation struck a personal tone by using phrases like “cordial welcome,” “convenience and comfort,” and “perfect privacy” to describe the building and, by extension, the value of its products. The invitation recognized that purchasing a casket is “one of life’s most trying obligations” and ensured the public that at 719 East Genesee Street, their funeral director would be able to guide them through a difficult purchase.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, as Michael Beardsley notes, the selection rooms were open to families 365 days per year, as was standard in the industry.<sup>49</sup>

### ***The Casket Industry in Decline***

The National Casket Company remained a leader in the funerary products industry for decades. The company acquired smaller casket companies from Massachusetts to Kentucky and by 1951 was still considered the largest casket supplier with branch sales offices in 34 cities and 15 factories.<sup>50</sup> In 1969, the company was purchased by Walco National Corporation though the National Casket brand was maintained. In 1974, Walco executives described National Casket as the second largest manufacturer of caskets.<sup>51</sup>

In Syracuse, the dramatic changes to the urban fabric and population from 1940 through the 1970s mirrored regional trends in the decline of manufacturing and the movement of people and businesses away from the older urban centers. Despite an economic recovery brought on by the boom in wartime production, many

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<sup>46</sup> Michael Beardsley to Kristen Olson, Electronic communication, May 31, 2023.

<sup>47</sup> “3-Story Plant,” *Syracuse American*.

<sup>48</sup> “National Casket Company Open House Invitation,” *Syracuse Journal*, March 20, 1930.

<sup>49</sup> Michael Beardsley to Kristen Olson, Electronic communication, May 31, 2023.

<sup>50</sup> “Then & Now,” *Oneida Daily Dispatch*.

<sup>51</sup> “National Casket Has a Long History,” *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, December 22, 1974.

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National Casket Company Building

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Onondaga County, NY

manufacturers relocated out of state or abroad after the war, while upper- and middle-class residents abandoned urban neighborhoods for the new automobile suburbs. In the context of center-city decline, funerary industry historian Michael Beardsley notes that National Casket Company was too heavily invested in their large, purpose-built showrooms located in downtown areas such as 719 East Genesee Street.<sup>52</sup>

In a 1975 series of articles discussing skyrocketing funeral expenses, the manager of the Syracuse branch of National Casket Company stated that competition in the industry was stiff and that “There are probably as many casket dealers going broke as car dealers.”<sup>53</sup> The casket industry was undergoing a significant change at this time, according to Michael Beardsley. Batesville Casket Company, a major competitor of National Casket Company, introduced a new business model that eschewed made-to-order, customized caskets in favor of a more limited selection of pre-made models that could be delivered in short order and stocked at the funeral home.<sup>54</sup> Funeral directors no longer needed off-site showrooms, and visits to the showrooms of buildings like 719 East Genesee Street were simply removed from the funeral arrangement equation. The *Herald American* cited casket costs in Syracuse and noted that National Casket Company had a \$40,000 cast-bronze model that had not been ordered for a quarter century.<sup>55</sup> Though it was not, perhaps, realized at the time, this unsellable bronze casket was a harbinger of the old industry model’s impending demise.

National Casket Company faded away not long after, going out “with a whimper.”<sup>56</sup> The building at 719 East Genesee Street was sold to an unrelated business in 1982, thus ending its association with National Casket Company. The building has subsequently been used for offices, a small ground-floor café, and a health spa. Alterations of the interior spaces, such as adding doors to the showroom archways, appear to have been conducted over the last forty years and were unrelated to the casket business. Despite these alterations, the building’s original spatial divisions are clearly evident and many of its finishes survive. It also clearly represents the typology developed by the National Casket Company to combine showrooms, offices, and warehousing in a single downtown building. This typology, which produced a number of buildings of striking similarity, was repeated by the company in multiple urban centers in the 1920s and 1930s. Not only were these buildings designed to allow grieving families and their funeral directors to select caskets and associated products in privacy and comfort, but they were a recognizable symbol of the largest U.S. manufacturer of caskets and funeral supplies in the twentieth century.

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<sup>52</sup> Michael Beardsley to Kristen Olson, Electronic communication, May 31, 2023.

<sup>53</sup> “Casket Prices Vary From \$95 to \$40,000,” *Herald American*, September 28, 1975.

<sup>54</sup> Michael Beardsley to Kristen Olson, Electronic communication, May 31, 2023.

<sup>55</sup> “Casket Prices Vary,” *Herald American*.

<sup>56</sup> Carly Stone, “Famed Casket Company in Oneida Recalled,” *Rome Daily Sentinel*, accessed May 10, 2023, <https://romesentinel.com/stories/famed-casket-company-in-oneida-recalled>.

National Casket Company Building

Onondaga County, NY

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National Casket Company Building

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Onondaga County, NY

National Casket Company. Letterhead. April 24, 1903. Collection of EDR.

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"Trust Gets Local Plant." *Telegram*, September 7, 1905.

"Two National Companies to Move into New Quarters in December." *Knickerbocker News*, October 30, 1937.

National Casket Company Building

Onondaga County, NY

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

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

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Approx. 0.2 acres  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1				3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				4			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

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

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

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The current property boundary indicated below reflects the historic property boundary excepting the area to the southeast of the ell, which has been infilled with a modern, concrete and brick ramp. This ramp was constructed in the late twentieth century, after the period of significance.

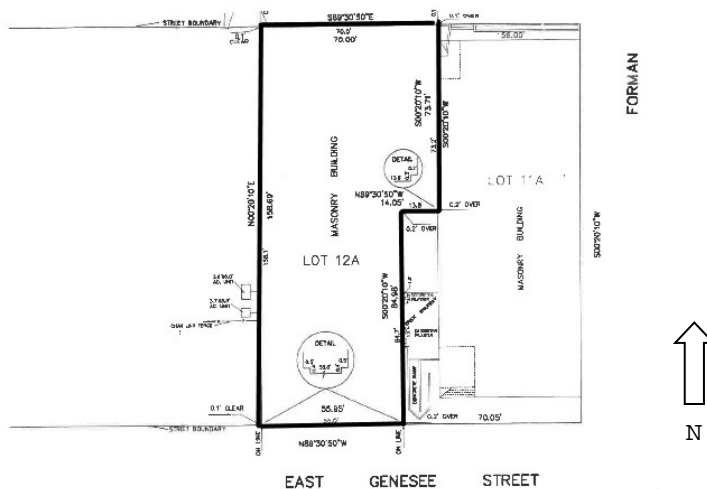
**Photo Views**

- Photo 1. Façade of 719 East Genesee Street, facing northeast.
- Photo 2. View of east wing, facing north.
- Photo 3. Rear elevation, facing south.
- Photo 4. View from first floor hall facing the front entry.
- Photo 5. View of first floor hall.
- Photo 6. First floor front room on east side of hall.

National Casket Company Building

Onondaga County, NY

- Photo 7. First floor front room on west side of hall.
- Photo 8. Side hall leading to east entry.
- Photo 9. Elevator and stairs, first floor.
- Photo 10. First floor warehouse space at rear of building.
- Photo 11. Ramp between warehouse space and commercial space.
- Photo 12. Elevator lobby, second floor
- Photo 13. Second floor hall, facing front.
- Photo 14. Second floor front room on east side of hall.
- Photo 15. Rear hallway, second floor.
- Photo 16. Room at rear of second floor.
- Photo 17. Freight elevator lobby, second floor.
- Photo 18. Rear stairs, second floor.



Current Property Survey

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Kirsten Olson and Andrea Zlotucha Kozub, Architectural Historians  
organization Environmental Design & Research, DPC date April 9, 2024  
street & number 217 Montgomery Street, Suite 1100 telephone 315.471.0688  
city or town Syracuse state NY zip code 13202  
e-mail kolson@edrdpc.com; azlotuchakozub@edrdpc.com

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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National Casket Company Building

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Onondaga County, NY

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

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

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

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**Photographs:**

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

Name of Property: 719 East Genesee Street

City or Vicinity: Syracuse

County: Onondaga

State: NY

Photographer: James Knittel

Date Photographed: January 2023

Description of Photograph(s) and number: see attached pdf

**Illustrations**

Figure 1. Elevation drawing published in the *Syracuse American* on June 19, 1929.



National Casket Company Building

Onondaga County, NY

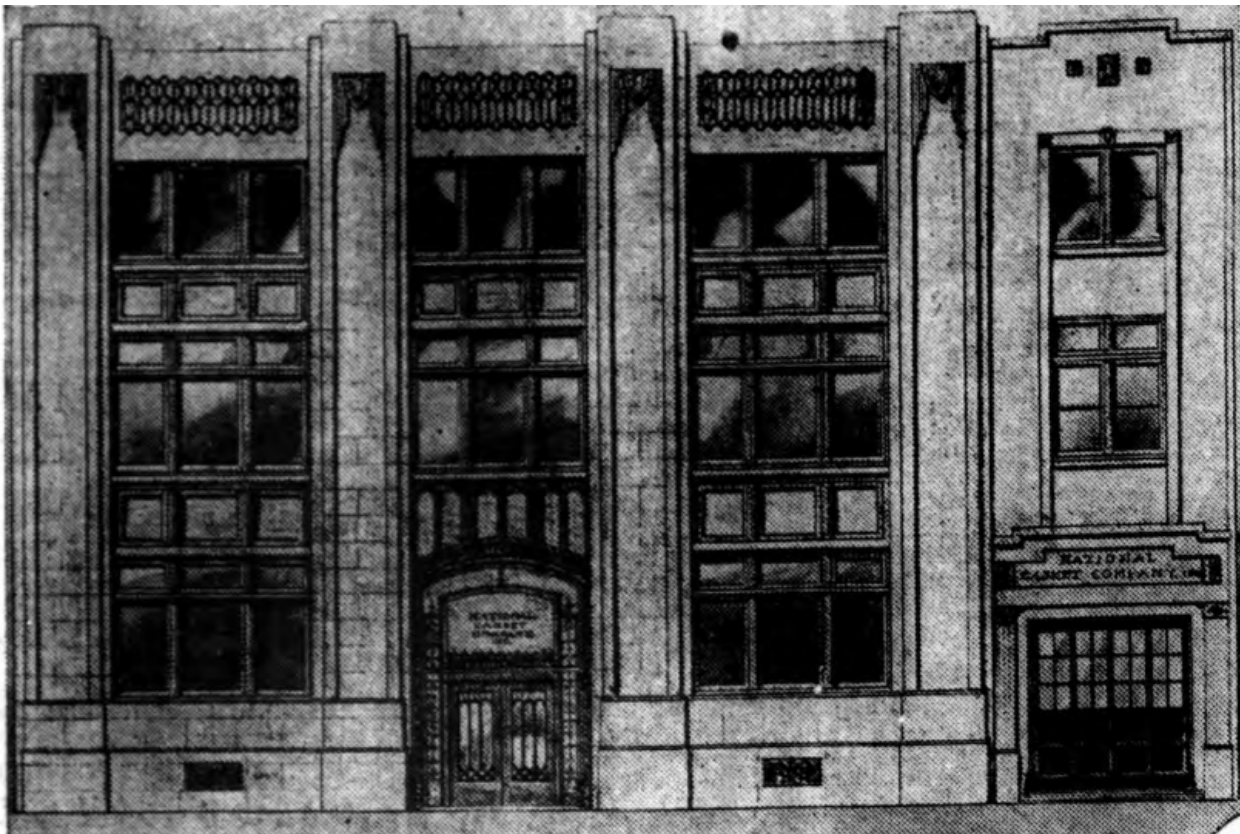


Figure 2. Elevation drawing published in the *Syracuse Journal* on March 20, 1930.

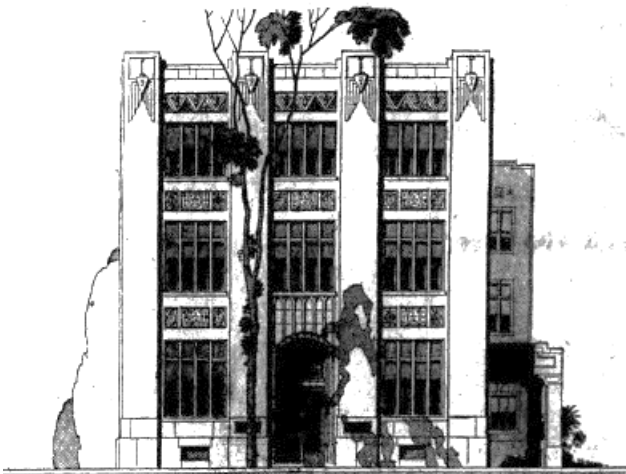
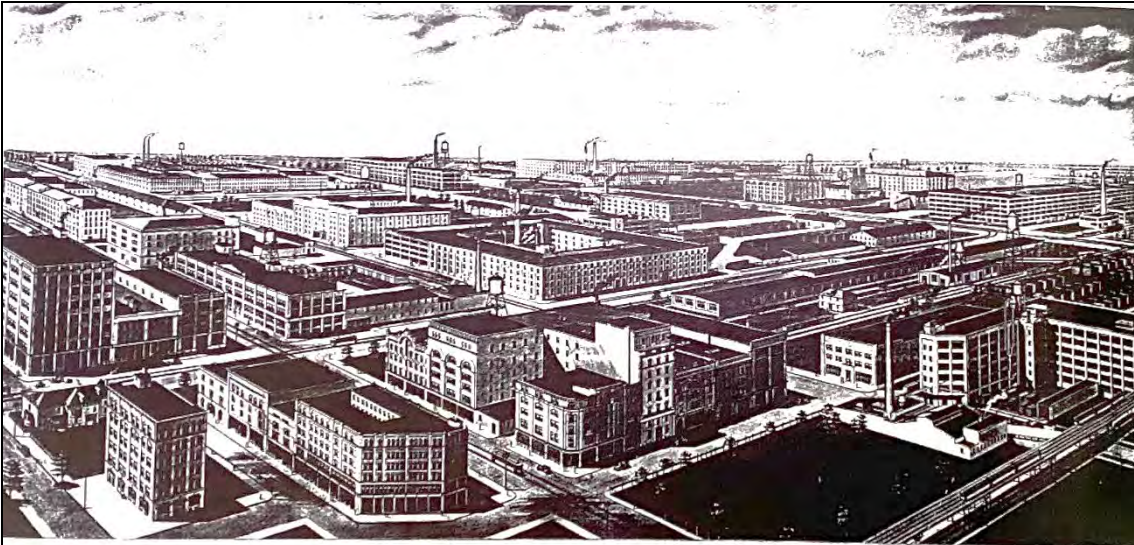


Figure 3. Illustration of the fanciful “National City” populated by National Casket Company buildings from across the country. Published in *A Brief History of the Funeral Supply Industry in the United States* by Michael Beardsley.

National Casket Company Building

Onondaga County, NY



THE NATIONAL CITY

A composite picture of the Sales Branches and  
Factories of the National Casket Company—  
the largest manufacturer and distributor of  
caskets and funeral supplies in the world

National City

National Casket Company Building

Onondaga County, NY

Figure 4. Postcard view of the National Casket Company factory in Oneida, NY. Collection of EDR.

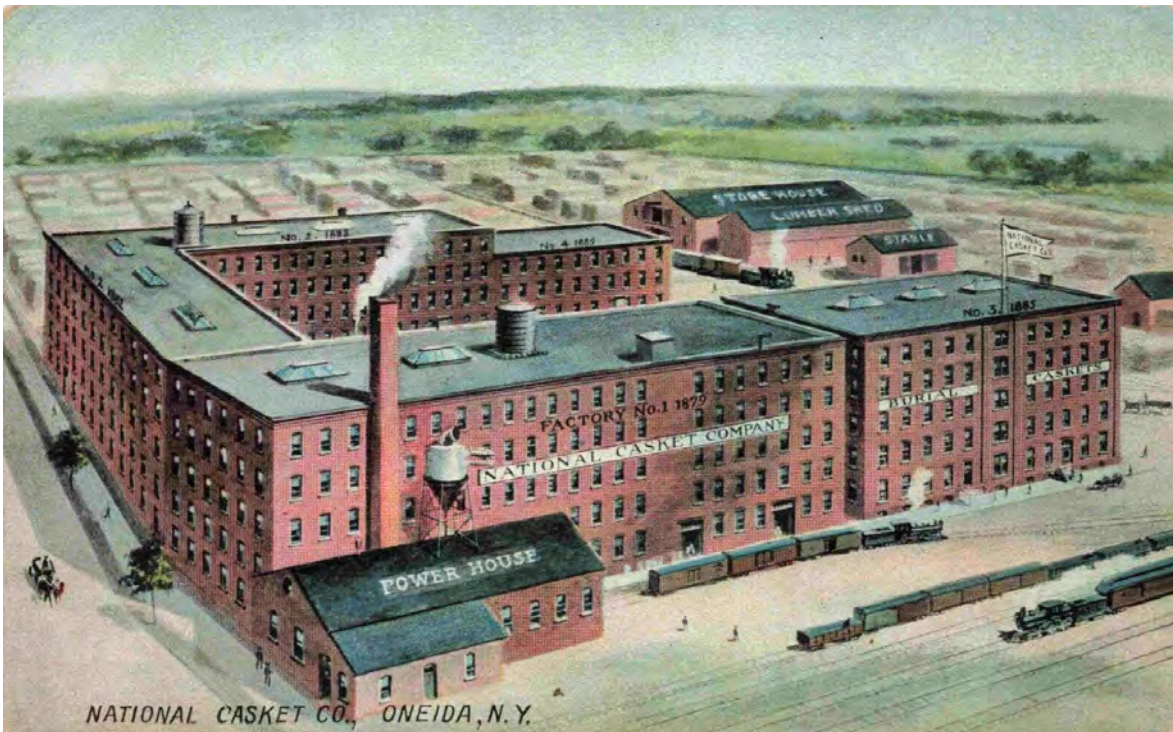


Figure 5. National Casket Company sales office, 500 Central Avenue, Albany, NY. Designed by Gustavus Young, completed 1937. Photo by EDR.



National Casket Company Building

Onondaga County, NY

Figure 6. National Casket Company sales office, 430 Virginia Street, Buffalo, NY. Completed 1923.



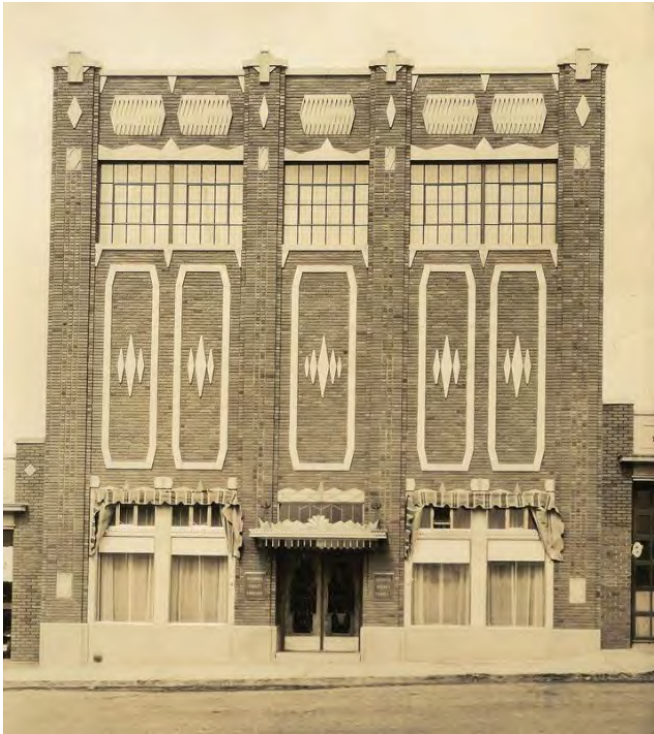
Figure 7. National Casket Company sales office, 1515 Fairmount Avenue, Philadelphia, PA. Completed ca. 1930s. Image available at [google.com/maps/](https://www.google.com/maps/).



National Casket Company Building

Onondaga County, NY

Figure 8. National Casket Company sales office, 419 Poplar Street, Scranton, PA. Completed 1930. Image available at <https://www.instagram.com/lackawannahistory/>.

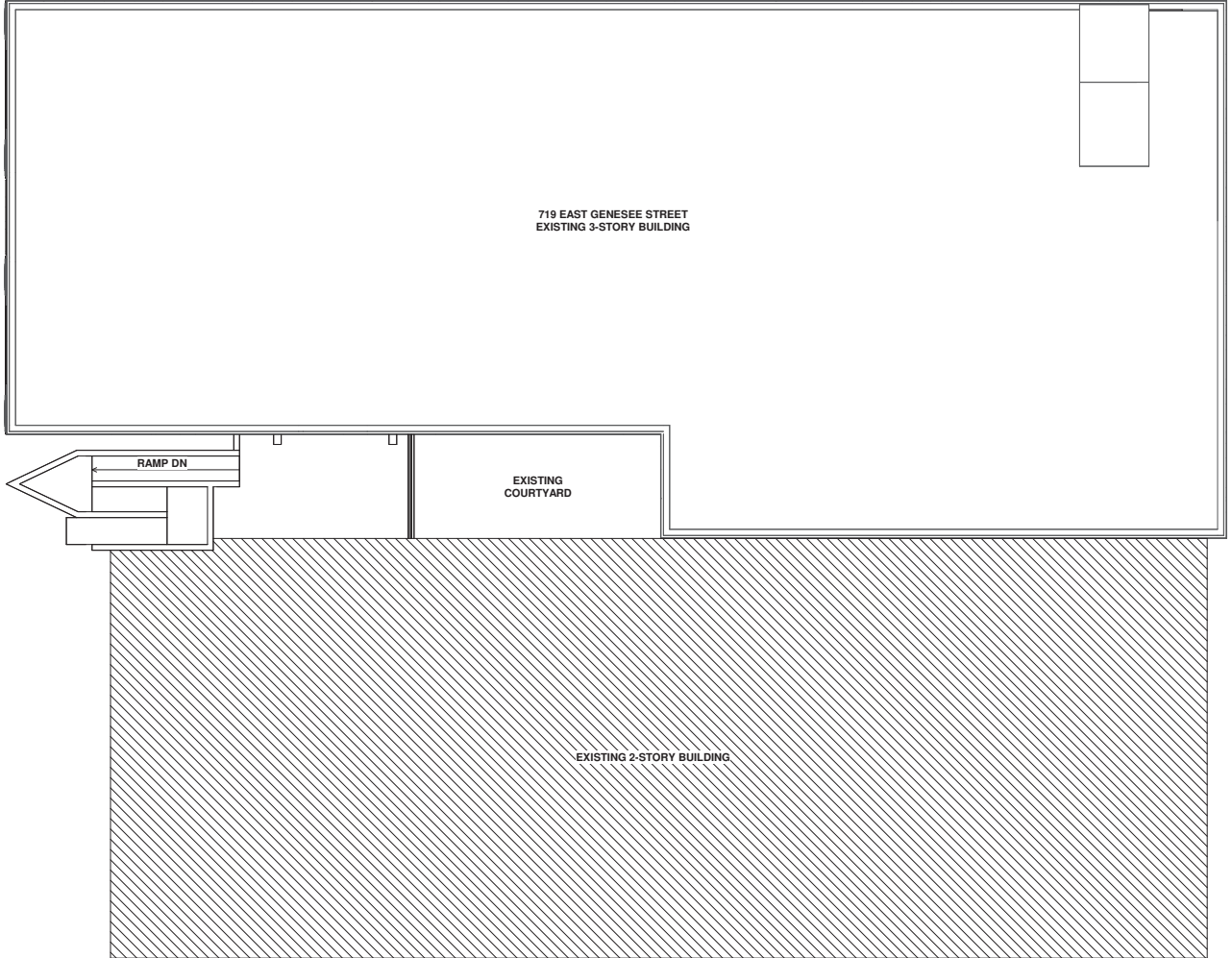


**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to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

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

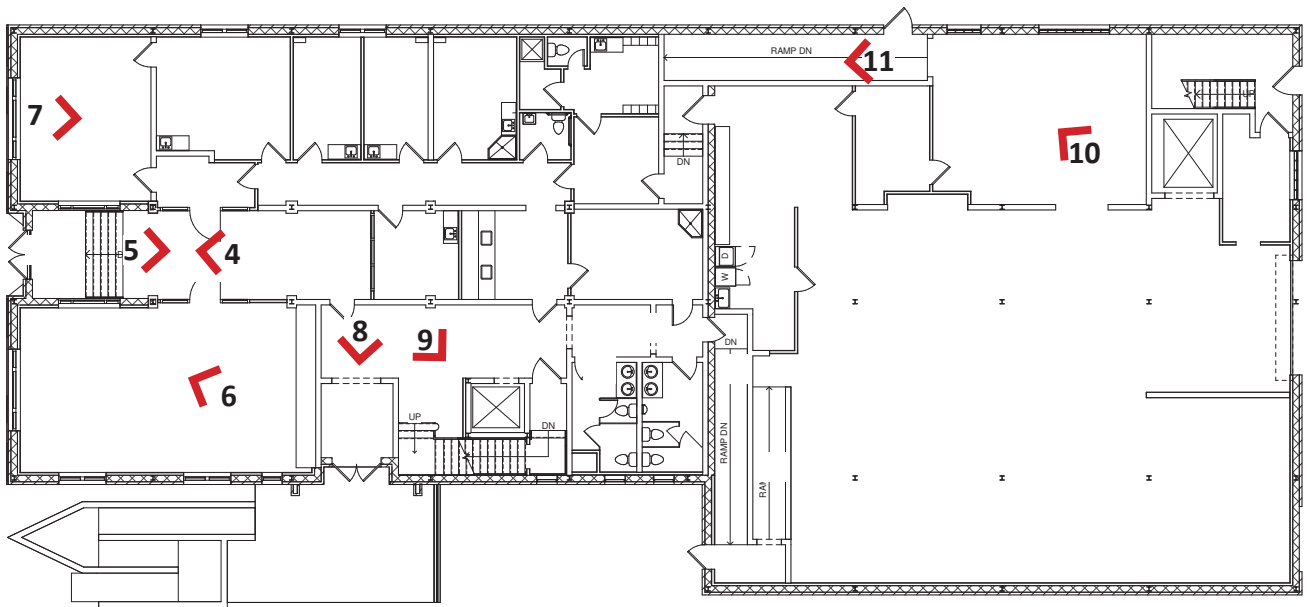


EAST GENESEE STREET



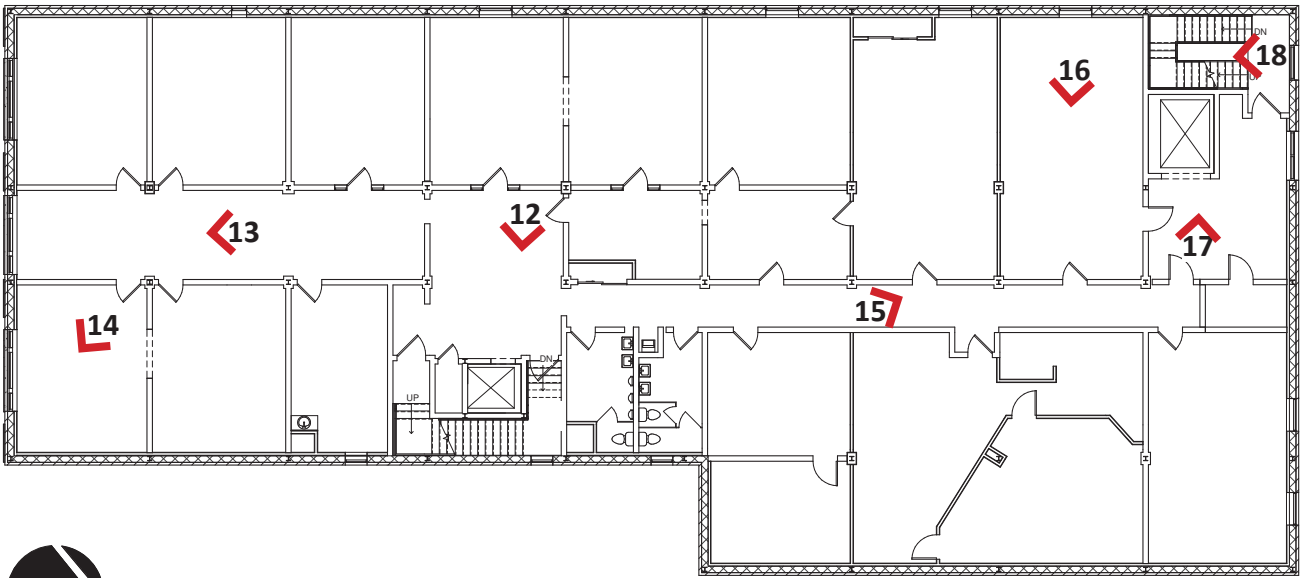
FORMAN AVENUE





N FIRST FLOOR PLAN





SECOND FLOOR PLAN



SOUP  
SMOOTHIES & JUICING  
BOWLS  
SHOTS & PROTEIN COOKIE  
BAKED GRAINS  
SWEETS  
CATERING PRICING  
WEDDING CAKE  
TASTING  
VEGAN & CLASSICAL FRENCH

RAIS' DOUGH BAKERY  
BREADS & DESSERTS

RAIS' DOUGH  
ON FORMAN PARK  
WESTTOWN BAKERY  
BAKE SHOP  
OPEN  
TUES-SAT













EXIT

1



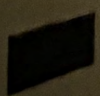


211





EXIT











SpaZen  
a day spa

SpaZen  
a day spa

719

RAI'S DOUGH  
WESTCOTT  
CERAMIC COMPANY



721

FDC  
↓

AM  
TO  
PM









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VEGAN &  
CLASSICAL

EAT SHOP  
DISHES &