

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 NIAGARA LITHOGRAPH COMPANY

other names/site number _____

name of related multiple property listing N/A

2. Location

street & number 1050 Niagara Street [] not for publication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 [X] 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 [X] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [] nationally [] statewide [X] 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

Niagara Lithograph Company
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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	TOTAL

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(enter categories from instructions)
INDUSTRY/Communications facility/
printing plant

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)
HEALTH CARE/Clinic
DOMESTIC/Multiple Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)
OTHER: Industrial daylight factory

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)
foundation stone
walls brick, precast concrete
roof membrane
other

Narrative Description

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

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- A** Property 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

Industry

Period of Significance:

ca. 1903-1967

Significant Dates:

1903, 1967

Significant Person:

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect/Builder:

Lansing & Beierl

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 # 35,336**
- 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: _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 1.08 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>117</u>	<u>671371</u>	<u>4753196</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Annie Schentag, Kerry Traynor [Edited by Jennifer Walkowski, NYSHPO]
organization hta preservation specialists date 7/27/2020
street & number 422 Parker Avenue telephone 716.864.0628
city or town Buffalo state NY zip code 14216

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

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.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner (Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name _____
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20503

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Narrative Description of Property

The Niagara Lithograph Company building is a two-story brick building on Niagara Street located between Albany Street to the north and Prospect Avenue to the south in Buffalo, Erie County, New York. The brick building, which was originally designed as a factory, is located on the west side of Niagara Street, and appears as a two-story building above grade on Niagara Street. The building also has a two-story basement, which is visible from the west at the CSX/Beltline railroad tracks near the Niagara River. The topography of the lot slopes downwards towards the Niagara River to the west, allowing for the two-story basement, where the sidewalk and east elevation are substantially higher than the west elevation facing the river.

The neighborhood surrounding the Niagara Lithograph Company Building was historically, and remains, a mix of commercial and industrial businesses, and residential properties. Industries tended to cluster along the west side of Niagara Street due to the access it provided to the Black Rock Canal and rail lines located behind the properties. Across the street the neighborhood was defined by modest houses that lined the east side of Niagara Street, representing the western edge of the residential communities that stretched eastward on streets such as Fargo Avenue and Prospect Avenue.

Designed by Buffalo architects Lansing & Beierl, the minimally detailed industrial building was constructed in 1903 for the Niagara Lithograph Company, which served as a printing press for lithographic images and text for a wide range of clients. The building served as a lithography factory until 1992, first for the Niagara Lithograph Company and then subsequently for other lithograph companies that resulted from a series of corporate mergers beginning in 1967. The building is currently used as a health care facility, with a large waiting room on the first floor facing Niagara Street, and offices and exam rooms to the west. The second floor, which only exists above the east end of the building was historically, and is currently used as offices. Apartments are located to the west in the basement, which is above grade. The area to the east in the basement retains its historic open plan, defined by the column grid. The sub-basement reflects its historic function, housing work rooms, machine shops, material storage spaces and a large furnace. Access through loading doors at the sub-basement to railroad lines facilitated the movement of goods.

Exterior

The Niagara Lithograph Company at 1050 Niagara Street is a brick building designed by Lansing & Beierl as an industrial factory and offices. The second floor does not extend across the entire first floor, and only occupies approximately half the space of the first floor to the east. The building's primary elevation faces Niagara Street to the east at a minimal setback from the sidewalk. There are three

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entrances into the building along Niagara Street: the main entrance, through a set of double doors with large transom enters the main lobby of the medical facility, while an entrance immediately to the north and south access a smaller lobby and stairs. Secondary entrances and a stair tower are located along the north elevation. The building has large window openings defining each elevation. The cornice is articulated very simply with brick, and the overall massing presents a horizontally-emphasized footprint from Niagara Street, which also stretches westward in the lot towards the CSX/Beltline railroad, Interstate 190 and the Niagara River. The stone foundation is visible at street level, with basement windows partially visible from Niagara Street.

East Elevation

The east elevation, facing Niagara Street, is minimally detailed in keeping with the historic, industrial function of the building. The raised limestone foundation is visible at grade. The window openings at the basement have been infilled with concrete block set back in the plane of the wall. The two-story elevation presents twelve bays, each identical except for the sixth, seventh and eighth bays which contain entrances. Nine-over-nine aluminum-clad wood windows, with limestone sills and steel headers, are located in each bay. Minimal brick detailing articulates the cornice, just below the roofline. Overall, the elevation presents a relatively uniform, simple rhythm that befits a factory building.

The main entrance is through a set of nine-light paneled aluminum-clad wood double doors, with five-light transom and steel lintel at the seventh bay. Historic drawings indicate that this was historically the main entrance. Immediately to the south and north, at the sixth and eighth bays are secondary entrances, which lead into small lobbies and stairs. The entrance to the north features paired six-light aluminum-clad wood doors and four-over-over sash windows above, headed with a steel lintel is an original fenestration. The entrance to the south has a single six-light paneled aluminum-clad wood door, and six-light sidelight, with lower panel. A six-over-six aluminum-clad wood window with steel lintel is located above. The entrance was added after the period of significance, likely in the 1970s or 1980s.¹

South Elevation

The south elevation faces Prospect Avenue and downtown Buffalo, and consists of twenty-one bays stretching westward towards the rear of the property and the Niagara River. The uniform rhythm of bays continues on this elevation, although it also reflects a change in height from two stories to one story after three bays. The three bays to the east are detailed similarly to the east elevation and feature nine-over-nine aluminum-clad wood windows in each bay on the first and second floors. The bays to the west

¹ Historic drawings indicate that this entrance is not original, and a window occupied this bay instead. The entrance was created, altering the east elevation, after the period of significance.

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feature paired nine-over-nine aluminum-clad wood windows with stone sills and a segmental brick arch at the head. A brick chimney is visible between the third the fourth bay, rising above the two-story roofline.

The basement level is partially visible to the east, gradually becomes more visible towards the rear of the building. Basement windows are partially visible beginning with the first bay, and by the eighth bay, towards the center of the south elevation, the basement windows are in full view. As the grade of the site slopes downwards towards the rear of the building as it approaches the CSX/Beltline railroad to the west. Simple stone sills adorn the windows, and although the original windows have been in filled the segmental-arched heads remain.

North Elevation

The north elevation is similar to the south elevation, with paired nine-over-nine aluminum- clad wood windows featuring steel lintels at the first and second floors at the three bays to the east. The window at the middle bay on the second floor is a tripartite unit. At the bays to the west the windows are paired nine-over-nine aluminum-clad wood units with a segmental brick arch at the head. The sills are all limestone. The basement window openings at the twelve bays to the east, and at bays fifteen, eighteen and nineteen have been infilled with painted concrete block. At last two bays to the west the basement windows are paired nine-over-nine aluminum-clad wood sash units.

A canopied entrance, accessed by a set of stairs, is located at the top of the raised basement at bays eight and twenty. The first floor window opening at this location has been infilled with concrete block. A non-historic gray brick and stone stair/elevator tower is located at the thirteenth and fourteenth bays from the east. An aluminum storefront entrance accesses the stair tower at the raised basement. The windows at the first floor are paired one-over-one aluminum-clad wood units. A second aluminum storefront entrance into the raised basement is located at bay seventeen. This entrance accesses the apartments.

West Elevation

The west elevation faces the Niagara River, Interstate 190 and adjacent rail lines. This elevation repeats the same uniform rhythm as on the other façades. The three-story, eleven-bay-wide elevation consists of a sub-basement and basement level, and a first floor. The entire elevation is brick and does not feature the limestone foundation visible at the raised basement on the other elevations.

Paired nine-over-nine aluminum-clad wood windows are located at the basement and first floor. The window openings at the basement level are slightly shorter than those at the first floor and feature steel

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lintels at the head, while the first floor windows have segmental brick arches. The sills are stone. The openings at the fifth and sixth bays from the north originally extended to the floor level and likely had a loading/unloading function. The opening has been infilled at the lower level and is now consistent with the fenestration at the other bays. The sill remains at the original opening location. Paired stile-and-rail wood doors remain extant at the sub-basement occupying the loading bay at the center of the elevation. The remaining openings at this level have been covered with board.

Interior

The basic plan of the Niagara Lithograph Company reflects the industrial function of the building, which was designed to maximize illumination, ventilation, and spatial efficiency. The building includes a basement and sub-basement level, constructed primarily of stone walls and concrete floors, which served primarily as storage space, work space and also contained the boiler room. The western portion of the raised basement level with its window openings, at the west end, houses as apartments. The remainder of the basement is open, defined by rows of square wooden columns, with some metal columns added for additional support.

The first floor, though originally an open day-light factory plan, now functions as a health care facility, with offices and exams rooms inserted into the space. The main entrance and lobby, off Niagara Street to the east, maintains the industrial character of the building the original hardwood floors, wood plank ceiling and painted brick masonry walls remaining extant. A metal machine track remains visible at the ceiling. exposed, unadorned steel columns, polished concrete floors, painted brick walls and a metal machine track remaining exposed at the ceiling. Throughout the first floor the wood plank ceiling remains visible above steel beams, which are supported by simple steel columns. Concrete floors remain extant below carpet. Concrete floors and brick walls form the first floor space, lit by the multiple windows present on the elevations.

The second floor is significantly smaller in square footage than the first floor, occupying the eastern portion of the building. Wood columns support wood beams within the space. The floors are wood and the ceiling varnished wood beadboard. Wood stairs connect up to a small mezzanine space to the west, which houses an office.

Entrance Lobbies, Stairs & Waiting Rooms

The main entrance into the health care facility is located off Niagara Street and leads to a small lobby and set of stairs ascending to the main waiting room. The walls are painted brick and ceilings decorative pressed tin. A sliding fire door separates the waiting room from the elevator lobby.

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A second entrance is located to the north of the main entrance and accesses a stair connecting to the basement and second floor. This entrance provides a private entrance for the second floor tenant, and historically would have provided vertical access throughout the building without having to traverse the factory floor. The concrete stairs feature simple metal pipe rails. A second stair and means of egress is located to the south of the main entrance on Niagara Street, connecting the entrance and first floor levels.

There are three entrances along the north elevation. The main entrance is located at the exterior stair tower and leads to a large waiting room for a pediatric health clinic. The floors are all hardwood and the ceilings exposed wood plank. The metal machine rail remains visible at the ceiling. A second entrance to the west leads to a corridor accessing the apartments, while to the north is an employee entrance.

Sub-Basement & Basement

A door to the west on the north elevation accesses the west portion of the basement where six apartments are located. The apartments are oriented east-west, looking out along the Niagara River. The west wall within the apartment is painted brick, with windows set within the masonry opening. Square wood beams supporting wood beams remain exposed in the apartments. A corridor running north-south accesses the apartments and connects them to doors on the north and south elevation.

The area of the basement to the east retains its open floor plan defined by square wood columns and beams, concrete floors and limestone foundation walls. This portion of the basement is accessed internally via stairs from the entrance to the north on the east elevation. The elevator to the east also provides access to the basement.

The sub-basement is accessed by a wood stair, with wood baluster rails and newel posts located at the southwest corner of the basement. The sub-basement includes a boiler room with much of the original equipment intact, and exterior access to the rear of the building near the rail tracks and Niagara River. Some fire safety equipment also remains in the basement. Original wood windows and wood stile and rail doors accessing the rail line remain extant, although they have been covered on the exterior with plywood.

The basement and sub-basement provide insight into the structural system used for supporting the weight and vibrations of the heavy machines that once occupied the first floor production room. Wooden columns are interspersed with cast iron columns, and steel and wood beams run the length of the room at several points, indicating that the need for additional support arose, likely in response to the

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increased weight of equipment above. Historic drawings indicate both wood and cast iron columns as well.

First Floor

At the primary entrance on the east elevation, one enters into a small vestibule before ascending a few stairs into a small waiting area. Original decorative tin ceilings remain extant in the vestibule which enters into the main room of the first floor. This space historically functioned as a loading bay, originally for horse drawn wagons, and then trucks, explaining the change in level between the sidewalk and first floor. To the south of the waiting room is the elevator lobby, separated by a sliding fire door. Beyond the waiting area and elevator lobby are offices and exam rooms. The perimeter walls are all painted brick, while the interior partition walls are gypsum board. The ceilings are wood plank above steel beams supported by simple steel columns. The hardwood floors have been covered with carpet tile. At large open office is located along the south elevation the column grid and structural system is visible.

The western portion of the first floor is occupied by a pediatric clinic and has a separate entrance and waiting room along the north elevation. The industrial character of the building is evident within the waiting room, with hardwood floors, brick perimeter walls, with windows set within the masonry opening, and metal machine track visible below steel beams and the wood plank ceiling. To the north of the waiting room are exam rooms, a nurse's station and offices.

Second Floor

The second floor is accessed internally via the stairway to the north along the east elevation, and the elevator. This floor, which is located to the east, is three bays deep and features two relatively large rooms to the north and south. The floors are hardwood, the perimeter walls painted brick, and square columns support wood beams below wood ceiling joist. Wood stairs along the wall to the west access a small mezzanine office. Small non-historic windows on the west wall look out over the roof above the first floor of the remainder of the building.

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Statement of Significance:

Summary

The Niagara Lithograph Company building, constructed in 1903 at 1050 Niagara Street, is significant for its industrial architecture associated with the once-prominent lithography industry in the City of Buffalo, Erie County, New York. The building was designed by notable local architects Lansing & Beierl for the Niagara Lithograph Company, a company that was nationally renowned for their printing products and technological innovations. This history reveals a series of technological improvements applied to both production methods and machines, and these changes can be traced to the structural fabric of the building. The factory's original floor plan, layout and structural support system addressed needs that were specific to the technical requirements of this lithographic company, providing substantial insight into the architectural history of this industry. As the industry changed, the Niagara Lithograph Company applied these changes to its operations at 1050 Niagara Street, where the building itself absorbed this history of advancements and improvements. As one of very few known remaining industrial buildings specifically designed for the lithographic industry from this time in the City of Buffalo today, the Niagara Lithograph Company building provides a substantial contribution to the history of this industry and its architectural manifestations during the twentieth century.

The property meets National Register Eligibility requirements Criterion A in the area of Industrial History and Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The company occupied the building from 1903-1992, but it underwent a series of corporate mergers that resulted in major changes to its production methods and machines after 1967. By this time, the lithograph industry had converted to more digital and laser cut methods of printing, marking the end of an era for both the Niagara Lithograph Company as well as for the earlier analog forms of printing the company had employed. The interior of the building has not been significantly altered and retains sufficient integrity to allow for an understanding of the structural and design requirements of the lithograph industry.

The period of significance begins in 1903 and ends in 1967, when the Niagara Lithograph Company consolidated with the Sale Lithograph Company to form Sale-Niagara Inc. This era corresponds to the period during which the Niagara Lithograph Company, and the lithography industry itself, was at its peak. While the company continued to operate after 1967, until 1992, the period of significance reflects the time when the company was independently owned and operated, before a series of large corporate mergers occurred and traditional practices were substantially altered. All notable architectural changes and developments occurred to the building during this period as well. After remaining vacant for a number of years the building was rehabilitated in 2018-2019 to function in health care related services on the first floor and apartments in the west portion of the basement.

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Lithography in Buffalo

The lithography industry experienced many technological changes during the twentieth century, but the fundamental process operates on the same basic principles that emerged during its initial invention in the eighteenth century. First developed in Germany by Alois Senefelder in 1798, the lithographic process continued to develop during the first half of the nineteenth century. As new materials and machines emerged in the 1850s, the process became more commercially viable, leading to the establishment of several lithographic firms in the United States and Europe.

Based on the notion that water and oil do not mix, lithographic prints are the result of a chemical process that somewhat resembles photography. Lithography, which literally means ‘writing on stone,’ capitalizes on the repellent action of water and a greasy substance, which can then be used to create positive and negative space in an image or text. The process begins by taking a stone or other material, traditionally limestone, and grinding it down to create a very flat surface. An artist then draws the desired image on the stone with a greasy crayon. Once the drawing is completed, it is ‘fixed’ with an etch, usually a combination of gum arabic and a small quantity of nitric acid, to prevent the greased image from spreading or bleeding. The nitric acid also opens the pores of the stone, enabling the gum and grease to enter more easily. Meanwhile, the gum arabic surrounds the greasy areas, sealing it against the water that is soon applied during printing. Due to the mutual repulsion of grease and water, the image attracts the oily ink but repels the water. Thus, when the surface is moistened and inked, the ink adheres to the greasy drawing and not the wet stone. Once the stone is fully prepared and treated, it is then put through a press with paper placed on top of the stone. Under this pressure, the ink is transferred to the paper, resulting in an image in reverse, a mirror image of the original drawing. This process can be repeated thousands of times using the same stone, and this quality made widespread reproductions possible in newspapers, magazines, and books. While the basic concept remained the same, the lithographic industry experienced many technical advancements over the next few centuries.

The substantial history of lithography in Buffalo attests to the city’s economic, industrial and cultural prowess from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century. For a city of its size, Buffalo boasted a significant number of lithographers by the 1850s. Some scholars have attributed Buffalo’s early prestige as a lithographic center to its continually expanding immigrant population, many of whom brought new European lithographic techniques with them from abroad.² The first city directories list a number of printers, but the occupation of “lithographer” was not specified in these documents until 1838, which referred to the business of ‘Hall and Mooney, Lithographers and Engravers’ located over a bookstore at 206 Main Street. Hall and Mooney boasted printing lithographs in colors, making Buffalo one of a select few cities to offer color lithography this early, along with Philadelphia and New York.³

² Anne Marie Serio, “Buffalo Lithographers, 1838-1890,” (Buffalo Historical Society, 2004), 2.

³ Serio, 1.

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By the 1860s and 1870s, the printing press was developing new steam powered rotary machines with automatic inking and dampening mechanisms that greatly expedited newspaper production. This process did not translate well to lithography, however, as the rotary principle could not be applied to stone, since stones would not be able to bend within the cylinders it would be required to pass through. Inspired by these new rotary developments, lithographers began experimenting with thinner metal materials in place of stone. By 1875, Robert Barclay created a rotary version of lithography press that printed on tin, and by the 1880s, metal plates had replaced stone on a large scale. Lighter to maneuver, easier to store and more plentiful than limestone, many lithographic companies, including the Niagara Lithographic Company, used metal plates made of tin or aluminum by the 1890s.

Several other lithographic companies had been established in Buffalo by the 1880s, though none of their buildings survive intact today. Located mostly in the downtown region along Swan, Washington and Main streets, lithographic companies began to multiply in the city to meet increasing demand for printing. The majority of lithograph products at this time were seen in the form of maps or images in newspapers, books and posters, and calendars, as well as providing printing services for bound volumes, journals or pamphlets. Lithograph companies also specialized in fine art prints and posters, although they were significantly more expensive to produce and thus were made less frequently than reproducible images for publications. One of the most notable companies was Clay, Cosack and Co., which began on Main Street and then moved to the Commercial Advertiser Building to be closer to one of their major clients at 251-255 Washington Street (demolished). In 1870, the company split and Clay & Richmond formed, focusing their efforts primarily on chromolithographic trade cards and labels for a variety of products. Cosack also continued to work in lithography, founding his firm at the same time, and building a new structure specifically for his lithographic business near Lake Erie on the Niagara River Waterfront, at 444 Niagara Street (demolished). When Clay retired in 1886, the company became known as the Richmond Lithographing Company, which moved to 66 Carroll Street two years later. By the 1890s, Buffalo's lithographic industry had fallen behind those of other cities, which may be attributed in part to factors such as overexpansion, or failure to keep abreast of new demands.⁴ By 1895, the Richmond Lithographing Company, which boasted a legacy as one of Buffalo's oldest companies in the industry, closed due to financial struggle. This company was soon to become the Niagara Lithograph Company, ushering in a new era for the lithograph industry in Buffalo. The company's emergence at this time contributed to a revival of the lithographic and printing arts in Buffalo during that period, which ensured the city's prominence in the field for decades to come.

History of the Niagara Lithograph Company

⁴ Serio, 2

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The Niagara Lithograph Company's substantial history provides insight into the scale of their operations at 1050 Niagara Street. The company remained in operation at 1050 Niagara Street for nearly ninety years, from 1903 until 1992, experiencing a number of mergers and transformations that ensured its longevity at the site. During this time, the Niagara Lithographic Company continually outfitted the building with updated technology, established a reputable program for employee benefits, and achieved international renown for a wide range of its products. A closer look at the operations, policies and products of Niagara Lithographic Company can provide insight into the lasting impact of this corporation on the lithographic industry nationwide, the local labor population in the Buffalo metropolitan region, and the building at 1050 Niagara Street itself.

A few months after the Richmond Lithographing Company closed in 1895, a group of businessmen purchased the former business and the Niagara Lithograph Company was formed. Officially incorporated in 1896, the company announced its starting capital at \$40,000 in *American Stationer*, listing Hugo Munro, John McWilliams and his son in law Horace Reed as the primary owners and investors.⁵ The Niagara Lithograph Company initially began mostly as a family-run business. Two of the three original founders were related, and many more family members became employees over time. John McWilliams and his son in law Horace Reed banded together to found the company, along with Hugo Munro. Prior to their purchase, McWilliams built the house at 94 Oakland Place in Buffalo as a wedding gift to his daughter Mary and Horace Reed. McWilliams had previously worked as an assistant to William P. Northrup, of the reputable Matthews and Northrup lithography firm, before purchasing the former Richmond Lithographic Company with Horace Reed. Once the company was established, Horace's brother William Reed was hired as Sales Director. McWilliams served as President of the Niagara Lithograph Company until his death in 1912, when Horace Reed assumed the position.

First established at the former Richmond Lithographing Company building located at 444 Niagara Street, the Niagara Lithograph Company soon outgrew those facilities. As Reed recalled, "Quite vividly I remember being called to the pressroom at 444 Niagara Street to push the belt shift lever that started the first press- a flat bed stone press, size 28 x 38, running at the top speed of 700 impressions per hour."⁶ His description of those first years demonstrates the early stage of machinery that the company soon improved. Using a flat bed stone press, rather than a mechanized or rotary press, could only produce about 700 impressions an hour. That number was to be multiplied exponentially in just the decade to follow.

McWilliams and Reed employed several talented staff members from the company's inception, and continued to provide competitive employee benefits for both skilled and unskilled workers for decades to come. Horace Reed later recalled these early employees by name, and some even continued to work for the company into the mid-twentieth century. He recalled, "The first skilled workman employed was F.C. Schnautz, an engraver; the

⁵ "Incorporated," *American Stationer* 39 (1896), 432.

⁶ Horace Reed, *Niagara Lithograph Company, 1896-1946* (Buffalo, NY: Niagara Lithograph Company, 1946), 29.

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second, Charles Kuehnell, shipper, third, William Wollen, pressman. All of these remained with the Company until removed...August Fey of the art department, is still in the Company's service."⁷ Hiring skilled artists with machine operators, pressmen and shippers, the company included a particularly diverse combination of skilled craftsman and unskilled laborers that attests to the unique qualities of the lithography industry. Reed himself addressed the specific tasks that each worker excelled at, stating "I recall too the stone planer; the hand graining by George Traub and Chris Schaick; the painstaking tracing, by steel pointed pencil, of each minute detail on a sheet of gelatin, the red chalk offset the tone; Aldag and Antoine making some of the colors dot by dot-stippling it was called; John Carlson who made the controlling black drawing and went on to a high place among American painters."⁸ Notable artists worked alongside laborers, sales directors, binders and shippers, creating a diverse employee environment that worked towards a collective task.

Within just two years, the company's production expanded beyond the capacity of the building at 444 Niagara Street, and moved to 80 Exchange Street in 1898 to accommodate larger machinery. The company purchased the property, formerly occupied by the Frank Machine Company, and refit it with improved lithographic machinery.⁹ While there, the company continued to expand, adding a department for printing on metal in order to take advantage of new technological developments. A company pamphlet later explained this move, stating "the equipment of the plant at 444 Niagara Street was not of the latest type, even for that era, and the building though of recent construction was unsuited structurally for the purpose."¹⁰ Acknowledging outdated equipment as early as 1898, the company was not afraid to expand and develop alongside the latest technical innovations. Once it relocated at 80 Exchange Street, the company stated, "expansion continued with the installation of a department for printing on metal."¹¹ This innovation marked an important turning point in the lithographic process, and correspondingly in the company's history. Metal, rather than stone, was easier to acquire, produce, manipulate and store. This department, which began at 80 Exchange Street and then moved with the company to 1050 Niagara Street, paved the way for introduction of offset printing that occurred in the next few years.

As the company continued to expand and evolve under Reed's leadership in the 1910s and 1920s, the employee base grew to exceed 75 people. Furthermore, branch offices were established in New York City and Cleveland under Munro's supervision, creating several more positions. Initially set up as sales divisions, they later "extended to include an art department and other facilities."¹² One of the most notable employees of the New York branch office was Helen Reilly, who started working for the company in 1907 and rose substantially in the ranks of administrative staff. Reed later described her as having a "grasp of manufacturing and estimating details for which it would be difficult to find an equal," and she later became Vice President of Operations in

⁷ Reed, 5.

⁸ Reed, 29-30.

⁹ "News," *American Machinist* 21 (March 3, 1898), 42.

¹⁰ Reed, 5.

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Reed, 5.

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New York. As many of the employees were male, Reilly's career at the Niagara Lithograph Company is a remarkable achievement.

The predominantly male employee base may have been due at least in part to the physically demanding aspects of working with the lithographic presses. Employee rosters reveal that women were employed on the factory floor, however, although it was exclusively in the Bindery department. Staff lists from 1946 report approximately 122 employees for the Buffalo office that year, and about 13 of them were women. All of these women worked in the Bindery, which may not have been as dangerous as the other presses. Historic images confirm this department was operated primarily by female employees, as they seem busy at work receiving books to be bound and prepared for shipping.

The large employee pool of the Niagara Lithograph Company attests to its economic success, reputable production process, and cutting edge design. Some departments were larger than others, and there is a clear distinction between the more creative aspects of lithographic production and the mechanical, physical side of its labor. The press department employed over 25 men, and another 25 men were tasked with maintenance, shipping and 'general factory labor.' The physical demands of these jobs are not to be underestimated, as workers were often manipulating heavy, fast moving machinery with intense precision, so as not to make any expensive mistakes. Conversely, nearly 20 employees were listed in the artist department, attesting to the company's encouragement of original creative designs, but only 10 were entrusted with the precise tasks in the transfer department.¹³ The diversity of tasks and numbers of employees at work in each department attest to the scale of production that occurred at the Niagara Lithograph Company.

The company also boasted an outstanding record of employee loyalty, perhaps due in part to the excellent benefits it provided to workers. While the company does not explicitly state whether or not its employees were enlisted in a union, it certainly provided several incentives on its own terms. In their promotional pamphlet, the Niagara Lithograph Company stated that all employees received fully paid vacations, life insurance benefits, a Christmas bonus and healthful working conditions.¹⁴ Buffalo has hosted a number of pivotal moments in the history of printing unions, including the International Typographical Union convention that was hosted in the city in 1887 and the 1906 strike for the eight hour work day, led by Local No. 2., the German-American sector of the same union. Whether in response to these union movements or in order to prevent potential disruptions, Niagara Lithographic Company offered particularly attractive employee benefits to both skilled and unskilled workers. The company's reputation as a beneficent employer is further demonstrated by the longevity of the staff there. Oscar Cosack served as art superintendent for 37 years, William Gottleman worked at the press for nearly 30 years, and Fred Schutz entered the company in 1899 and was still employed there 47 years later, in 1946. In addition to these extraordinarily long careers, the Niagara Lithograph Company also maintained at

¹³ Ibid, 32.

¹⁴ Ibid, 12.

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least 36 people with over 20 years of experience there, indicating the potential for both stability and mobility. Employing both skilled and unskilled workers in a variety of roles, the Niagara Lithograph Company provided not only jobs, but also careers.

Operating for nearly a century, the Niagara Lithograph Company produced a diverse array of products over time. Reflecting changes in the industry, in technology and in cultural tastes, the company slowly transformed its offerings from trade cards and calendars to posters and novels. While the company began by producing lithographs for newspapers and trade cards on special order, their business accelerated after they exhibited calendars and posters in the 1900 Universelle Exposition in Paris. The company soon marketed itself as an expert in poster design and printing, during an era when lithographic posters were becoming increasingly popular on the streets of Paris and throughout Europe.

During World War I, the Niagara Lithograph Company lent its services to the U.S. Government, printing posters in an attempt to aid the war effort. Additionally, the company began making large quantities of stamps at this time, assisting the government in keeping up with the demands that the War created. An article in *National Lithographer* celebrates the company's actions in 1917, stating:

The demand for War revenue stamps by the Government is so great that it is practically impossible for the Bureau of Engraving and Printing at Washington to handle all work connected with the issue; therefore, it was decided to contract for some of the largest issues with private concerns. To the Niagara Lithographing Company, of Buffalo, was awarded a contract for producing a vast number of these stamps. The Niagara company, which uses the Huebner-Bleistein machines, made up sheets containing 1600 stamps each, and are running their presses from seven o'clock til one o'clock in the morning- eighteen hours per day- so it will be seen that the big Buffalo shop is materially helping the Bureau in this extraordinary demand.¹⁵

The ability to deliver such a massive quantity of products in assistance to the government attests to the large scale of printing operations that occurred at 1050 Niagara Street during World War I. Furthermore, the Bureau's choice of the Niagara Lithograph Company over any other company to aid with this demand attests to their highly respected reputation and products.

The Niagara Lithograph Company again printed posters during World War II, encouraging the purchase of government bonds and other forms of soldier support. By the 1950s, the company was able to print a wide array of items, ranging from uniquely creative artwork to mass-produced stamps, newspaper images, and pamphlets. As technology began to change the lithographic industry in the post-war period, the company evolved alongside these transformations, offering new services such as bookbinding, corporate printouts and

¹⁵ "War Revenue Stamps by Process" *National Lithographer* 24 (1917), 36.

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poster boards. When the company consolidated with Sale Lithograph Company to form Sale –Niagara Inc. in 1967, they shifted their emphasis a bit more towards paperback books and large volume productions. By 1992, when the company again merged with Miken Companies, their client roaster boasted companies such as The National Geographic Society, Dell, Scholastic, Simon & Shuster, Harper Collins, Bantam Doubleday and Random House. Among their most notable works at this time was a series of John Grisham novels, for which they produced more than 13 million hardcover and paperback covers. Throughout their lengthy history, the Niagara Lithograph Company printed a wide variety of products in order to adjust their services to changing client needs.

Building Operations at 1050 Niagara Street, 1903

The company's choice for their new building at 1050 Niagara Street reflected a growing trend in industrial waterfront use. While initially many industries had clustered around the terminus of the Erie Canal, the Buffalo River, City Ship Canal and mouth of Lake Erie downtown and to the south, businesses began spreading northwards along Niagara Street around 1870. Niagara Street's proximity to the Niagara River was a substantial advantage for many businesses that sought to utilize the hydroelectric power generated by that river twenty miles away at Niagara Falls. Industries that relied heavily on electricity to power their machines, such as the Niagara Lithograph Company, increasingly built new factories, warehouses and other industrial facilities along Niagara Street in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Furthermore, extensive rail tracks followed the length of the river from the city towards Niagara Falls, providing ample access for shipping along rail lines directly from the back of properties on Niagara Street. As a result, the street tended to provide a mixture of commercial and industrial businesses, dotted with a few residences. More houses tended to occupy the side streets emanating eastward from that busy corridor, creating working-class and middle-class residential neighborhoods nearby, such as the West Village Historic District (NR 1980). By the time the Niagara Lithograph Company began constructing their new building at 1050 Niagara Street in 1903, the street contained several other industrial businesses as well. The *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map* from 1899 shows a large brewery, a power company and warehouse facility on the same block of Niagara Street just south of Albany Street. By 1925, the map shows an oil company, metal company, screw company, medical supplies manufacturer and feed warehouse as well. Property along the west side of Niagara Street, such as the Niagara Lithograph Company's location, was noticeably more valuable than on the east side of the street, primarily because of their direct access to the Niagara River and adjacent rail lines.

When the Niagara Lithograph Company hired the notable architecture firm of Lansing & Beierl to design their new headquarters at 1050 Niagara Street, they did so with expansion in mind. Echoing their experience of what Reed called "cramped quarters" at their first two locations, the company founders were likely determined to build a new space large enough to ensure they would never feel cramped again. Having already adjusted their workspaces multiple times to accommodate new machinery and techniques, the company worked with Lansing

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& Beierl to create a space that could easily be reconfigured to accommodate future inventions. While it is difficult to know exactly to what degree the architects and the client mutually communicated their ideas, the resulting building clearly suited their needs at the time of its construction and for many years henceforth. The result was a building that provided “more than two acres of floor space, ample light, modern power plant, private railroad switch, etc., realized all expectation and would doubtless be numbered among the world’s finest plants devoted to color printing.”¹⁶

On the first floor, the main operations room was somewhat typical of a daylight factory. Providing plenty of uninterrupted space, the room could easily accommodate several large machines and equipment. Surrounded by large windows on three sides, the factory floor was provided with additional lighting through the eleven skylights located above the room. Lansing & Beierl’s drawings indicate that several departments coexisted within this single massive room and lithographs likely tended to flow throughout the space between departments. Generally, the path of a print-in-the-making would travel in a looped shape around the first floor, beginning and ending near the entrance at the center.

Due to the sensitivity of some of the materials and chemicals involved in the lithographic production process, the space includes some sections that were partitioned off from one another with thin dividing walls. On the west side of the first floor, several of these ‘rooms’ contained flammable, dangerous, or sensitive materials, architecturally segregated from the large moving machinery that occupied the rest of the large portion of the floor. The drawings reveal that paper was kept in a room of its own, likely due to the cost and sensitivity of the material, as well as its irreplaceable role in the process. Moving from south to north, partition walls continued to delineate the metal finishing room, the coating and varnishing room, and an even smaller partition room within the latter for paint, a highly flammable material.

The metal press department was located adjacent to this partitioned area, where the metal would have been initially prepared for drawing and then printing. Although partitioned off from one another due to chemical sensitivity, these spaces were strategically designed in tandem, in order to provide a logical flow to the workspace that mimics the lithographic production process itself. Metal would first be finished, then coated and varnished before passing through to the metal pressroom, where it would be flattened in preparation for design. Revisions, adjustments and alterations to the product at hand may have altered this path in reality, but the drawings reveal that the layout of these spaces was designed specifically with the tasks of lithographic production in mind.

The western portion of the first floor is divided from the eastern portion of the floor by a thicker wall, over two feet thick. Five ovens were located in the center of the first floor on the western side of the space, surrounded

¹⁶ Reed, 6

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by 4-inch hollow tiled walls and fireproof doors. Several doors connected the western rooms to the eastern ones, located at intervals on both sides of the centrally placed ovens. A passageway ran through the entire center length of the first floor, serving as a circulatory corridor that enabled people and prints to travel through and between departments as needed.

The eastern half of the first floor did not include partition walls as in the west, and instead featured a more open floor plan that likely enabled the company to move departments around as they saw fit. Moving from north to south along the path of production, the artists and transfer department was located adjacent to the lithograph pressroom. Artists would design and edit the images required, and then pass them to the transfer department who would place them on the pressed metal they received next door. Divided by another wall, these designs, once transferred, would pass through a door into the lithograph pressroom for final printing.

Notably, this portion of the first floor featured twice the amount of skylights than the western rooms, further indicating their different uses and needs. The need for adequate lighting was especially important in the artists and transfer room, where precise and detailed work would have been required in order to produce quality work. The architects' attention to providing ample lighting and open spaces not only reflected typical daylight factory approaches to lighting, but also specifically addressed their client's needs.

After being printed in the lithograph pressroom, the printed products would complete their loop of the first floor, returning to the edge of the western portion of the floor into the bindery and shipping room. Separated by a wall to protect the equipment from flammable materials, as well as dust or machine grease, the bindery room marked the final assembly of the product, where it would be gathered and then packaged for shipping. Adjacent to the passageway and wagon entrance, the bindery and shipping room was conveniently placed in order to ensure maximum efficiency of movement. Once it was complete, the product could be loading onto the wagons and transported out of the building to its destination.

The original spatial organization and layout of 1050 Niagara Street indicates the detailed attention that Lansing & Beierl devoted to synchronizing this purpose-built factory with the lithographic process itself. The use of partition walls and fireproof doors ensured that valuable materials and chemicals would not be contaminated, ignited or destroyed. The strategic presence of a central passageway, connecting to a wagon port, united the company's individual departments, each utilizing different materials and machines. The placement of these departments reveals a particular sequence, specifically organized within the building to maximum efficiency within a continuous workflow. Traveling in a u-shaped loop originating in the southwest corner of the building, the product would flow seamlessly from one department to the next until it was completed and would exit the building. The particular layout of these spatial units reveals an architectural sense of movement, specifically designed to create safe divisions within a continual workflow that is unique to the lithographic production process.

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While the majority of the lithographic process occurred on the first floor, the second floor was designed mainly for the administrative offices located there. Separated from the industrial activity located on the first floor, the second floor functioned as office spaces for the sales department and managing officers. Large windows on the west side of the building not only ensured these offices would have sufficient daylight, but also provided excellent waterfront views of the Niagara River and Canadian coastline. While today this floor has been substantially muddled due to more recent alterations, the second floor functioned as a distinct space for managers and salesman to conduct business away from the industrial operations on the first floor. This division of spaces between floors reflects the different types of work that occurred in each room.

Lithography Process and Technological Transformations, 1903-1967

The Niagara Lithograph Company continually updated their machinery as technology progressed, and the building at 1050 Niagara Street underwent a number of physical changes in order to support these new machines and processes. The industry experienced a major transformation in 1903, the same year the Niagara Lithograph Company building was constructed, when Ira Washington Rubel created an offset press for printing on paper. Offset lithography soon dominated the industry, and is based on the notion of applying an intermediary step to the printing process. Rather than printing directly from the stone or metal onto paper through a stamping press, an offset press runs the metal through a series of rubber cylinders. Historian Gerald Ward describes the basic mechanics of this process, in which “One cylinder carried a curved metal printing plate automatically inked and dampened, the second a rubberized ‘blanket’ to relay the image, the third a sheet of paper to be printed.”¹⁷ Essentially, these cylinders were used to transfer the image from the metal plate to the cylinders and then onto paper. This indirect transfer, or offset process, provided consistent, rich reproductions, and soon became the dominant method of lithography.

As offset presses were invented contemporaneously to the completion of 1050 Niagara Street, the company installed these new machines shortly after they relocated to the building. President Horace Reed stated, “Almost simultaneously with the opening of the new Niagara plant the first offset press was installed. In this innovation Niagara became a pioneer in the trend from manual to automatic and scientific reproduction methods.”¹⁸ The company constantly demonstrated commitment to technical advancement throughout the first half of the twentieth century, updating their equipment and procedures to reflect new innovations nearly every five years. The quest for speed and efficiency became a primary concern for many lithographic companies at this time. In an era where mass production soon touched virtually all aspects of American life, the ability to create multiple reproductions at relatively low cost ensured lithography’s survival at a time of immense

¹⁷ Gerald W. R. Ward, “Lithography,” *The Grove Encyclopedia of Materials and Techniques in Art* (London: Oxford University Press, 2008), 39.

¹⁸ Reed, 6.

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technological change. By the 1910s, offset printing presses reached speeds of 5000-6000 sheets an hour. Offset lithography had already become the dominant form of production in the industry by this time, just a decade after its invention. In the United States, 560 offset presses were installed by 1912, and the Niagara Lithographic Company counted itself among these establishments. This kind of quick transition to new machines and techniques established the pace of transformations that the company would undergo in order to stay up to date in the industry for over sixty years.

By 1916, the Niagara Lithograph Company incorporated another new innovation, known as the Huebner-Bleisten device. Developed by William C. Huebner and his partner Bleistein from their headquarters at 1200 Niagara Street, the device aimed to improve the accuracy, detail and speed of printing color lithographs. As neighbors just a few blocks away, the Niagara Lithograph Company worked with Huebner in applying some of his early experiments to the lithographic production process. One company booklet even suggests that the machine may have been tested out at 1050 Niagara Street in advance of its official patent, indicating the collaborative methods of the Niagara Lithograph Company in their commitment to technical advancement. Reed reflected on this important period of the company's history, stating:

At this stage an inventive genius, William C. Huebner, appeared upon the scene, advancing theories of color printing of revolutionary character. The basic idea in Huebner's method was that of coordination of plate making and printing at high speed...He was invited to join the Niagara [Lithograph Company] organization with view to collaboration with its own technicians in realizing some of the objectives of which he had dreamed. This association proved to be highly constructive and advances were made which have had their influence on the subsequent history of the industry. More significant, however, the Niagara Lithograph Company had entered the realm of research, and the fields of inquiry opened through the efforts of Huebner and other experts brought salutary and far-reaching results, among these the development of the Lithotone process.¹⁹

Although Huebner began filing patents for the machine in 1916, Reed's recollections insinuate that his methods were tested out at 1050 Niagara Street even earlier. As this narrative indicates, the development of this process occurred in several stages, and the Niagara Lithograph Company was an integral part of this transformational endeavor.

The Huebner-Bleistein method marked a pivotal moment in the development of color lithography, and thus the Niagara Lithograph Company was both a privileged witness and vital collaborator in the early stages of its development. Attempting to streamline the color printing process, Huebner developed his method through trial and error, using the Niagara Lithograph Company headquarters as a place for testing out his experiments. In

¹⁹ Reed, 17.

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doing so, he developed a method where “All photographic work and duplication of forms is under the control of micrometer scales, introducing an element of accuracy which has never before existed in any plate making process.”²⁰ This accuracy was enabled by the process in which “there are no transfers, but instead each plate, no matter how many times repeated, is an original- direct from the negative.”²¹ Using photographic techniques for making several reproductions from a single negative, Huebner’s method provided a degree of detail, consistency and quality at unprecedented speeds. Reed was not the only one to identify Huebner as an important figure in the field of lithography, as several specialists have also echoed this statement. In his book *A History in Color*, historian Louis Siplely similarly remarked, “The individual to emerge as one of the greatest, if not the leading, figure in twentieth century photolithography was William C. Huebner.”²² His developments were crucial to the lithographic industry, offering standardized production methods as a higher grade of color printing than ever before.

The impact of the Huebner-Bleistein method was soon demonstrated by its use in several projects conducted at 1050 Niagara Street during World War I, when the Niagara Lithograph Company was contracted by the federal government to print a large amount of war revenue stamps. An article in *National Lithographer* marveled at its productivity in 1917, stating “The quality of work turned out by the Huebner-Bleistein methods are fully up to expectations, and the fact that the originals are steel plate engravings, which have to be duplicated, speaks well for the Huebner-Bleistein process as well as for the expert handling of it by the Niagara [Lithograph] Company.”²³ The device changed the industry in a short time, gaining a foothold in prominent lithographic companies across the country within a year or two. By 1920, lithographers as far away as Japan began using the Huebner-Bleistein technology, indicating the truly global impact of this patent, first developed on Niagara Street in tandem with the Niagara Lithograph Company.²⁴

Despite their impressive production techniques, the Huebner-Belistein machines were also prohibitively expensive and significantly heavy devices. Due to the extreme cost of these machines, which were still quite rare in this early phase, one industry professional noted, “There are comparatively few lithographic establishments that can afford to have these machines.” Another practical concern, reflected in the actual structure of 1050 Niagara Street, was the weight of the machines. As one professional described, “Certainly the machines are wonderful. Ponderous affairs that weigh upwards of twenty tons, yet delicately balanced and as responsive to the touch of the master mind as the keys of a cathedral organ.”²⁵ Portraying the Huebner-Bleistein equipment as mechanical marvels, the company also recognized that they came with a few complications.

²⁰ Frank Griswold, “Who Makes Good Plates,” *The Graphic Arts: A Magazine for Printers and Users of Printing* 6 (National Arts Publishing Company, 1914), 233.

²¹ Ibid

²² Louis Siplely, *A History in Color* (Macmillian, 1951), 55.

²³ “War Revenue Stamps by Process” *National Lithographer* 24 (1917), 36.

²⁴ John Clark, “Indices of Modernity,” *Being Modern in Japan* (University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 28.

²⁵ Ibid.

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Weighing over twenty tons, installation of these machines required an incredibly strong supporting structure. These concerns over weight likely prompted the addition of several steel beams to the preexisting wooden support columns in the basement of 1050 Niagara Street. Although it is unclear whether they were added specifically to lend support to the heavy Huebner-Bleistein machine or for some other machine, the subsequent installation of additional support systems demonstrates this need to structurally accommodate increasingly heavy machinery as technology improved over time.

The physical nature of the lithographic process demanded certain technical specifications in building design. The sensitive nature of paper, metal and chemical materials not only required the separation of rooms, but also necessitated a form of climate control within the building. As Reed identified, “the problem of control of moisture and temperature,” as “a chief cause of variation in register in printing.”²⁶ Environmental conditions that were too damp, dry or dusty could create inconsistencies in printing, or worse, a fire in the building. Fireproofing was a significant concern for lithographic companies, particularly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when materials were still highly flammable. In 1908, for instance, the Buffalo Courier lithographing plant at 197 Main Street experienced a large fire, with over \$250,000 in damage- a crippling amount of money at the time.²⁷ Catastrophes like these demonstrated a tangible need for climate control within a lithographic factory, in order to protect the people, products and investments inside. To prevent fire, a sprinkler system was installed throughout the factory. Beginning in 1918, the Niagara Lithograph Company employed three firemen at 1050 Niagara Street, each of whom worked in shifts of eight hours a day, seven days a week. The company described its need for these firemen in *The Labor Commission*, stating, “the firm is engaged in the lithographing business and it is necessary to keep the workroom at an even temperature at all times...the process of manufacture is necessarily continuous.”²⁸

The Niagara Lithograph Company made several adjustments to the building at 1050 Niagara Street to ensure these climate problems would be addressed. After careful investigation, Reed wrote, “it was decided to equip the entire plant with the new air conditioning system. The innovation proved an immediate success, so that with fastened windows, and independent of weather conditions, the indoors climate may not be regulated at will.”²⁹ The early history of air conditioning in fact has roots in Buffalo, as well as in the lithographic industry itself. Invented in 1902 by Willis Carrier at the Buffalo Forge Company, this early form of climate control system arose in response to a demand from their client, the Sackett-Wilhelms Lithographing Company in Brooklyn, who sought to consistently regulate the temperature of their printing plant. Many lithographers struggled to maintain their temperatures, as humidity in the air would cause the paper to expand or contract in heat. By installing air conditioning a few miles away from the site of its original invention in Buffalo, the Niagara

²⁶ Reed, 7.

²⁷ “Buffalo Fire,” *The New York Times* (Feb 15, 1908), 14.

²⁸ “The Bulletin of the Department of Labor” *The Labor Commission* 4.5 (1918), 115.

²⁹ Reed, 7.

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Lithograph Company utilized the advanced technology at its disposal in order to create ideal climate conditions for the lithographic process.

Technical advancements continued into the mid-nineteenth century, as new materials and machines were constantly being developed in order to increase the speed and quality of reproductions. Transparent plastic plates were developed following WWII, marking the first major step away from metal plates, which had tended to expose employees to dangerous fumes. Advancements in color printing also continued to improve, and where previous methods required printing colors in at least three separate printings, new technology enabled color images to be printed in a single pass. The Niagara Lithograph Company continued to update their equipment and methods as the industry progressed, stating in 1946, “Recently we placed contracts for even newer and more modern equipment- a camera, photocomposing machines, power proving press, layout tables, and large, fast running two-color presses.”³⁰ As technology progressed, so too did the press rooms at the Niagara Lithograph Company, which updated its equipment into the 1960s.

History of the Building Since 1967

The era between the 1960s and the 1980s proved to be an extremely transitional time for lithography. New techniques emerged that replaced human laborers and also created new roles within the workplace. Increasingly, machines were invented that could perform tasks more consistently and quicker than the workers that had been trained to do so in previous generations. Continuous tone lithography became viable in 1960, when hand drawn or photo positives on translucent film could be transferred by UV light to sensitized polymer coated aluminum plates. Historian Jesse Adams Stein has addressed the impact these developments had on laborers, stating, “The introduction of newer technologies in typesetting, press-machining and bookbinding resulted in the swift disappearance of specific printing trades and associated job losses, particularly during the period between the 1960s and 1980s...as well as new positions for which many press-machinists retrained.”³¹ While artists maintained their role in designing and executing the initial image, even their role was changed when computers were developed to create the image with lasers in the late 1970s. In retraining how to operate machines that performed their former daily tasks, employees at places like Niagara Lithograph Company experienced a transition in identity, Stein asserts, from viewing their role as a craftsman to a desk clerk. Other lithographic corporations continued to endeavor at this time, but only by constantly adapting and reworking the role that new machines, materials and techniques played in a rapidly changing industry. Once the Niagara Lithograph Company merged with Sale Lithograph Co. in 1967, the transition to a new era of lithographic production was complete and thus marks the end of the period of significance at 1050 Niagara Street.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Jesse Adams Stein, “Masculinity and Material Culture in Technological Transitions,” *Technology and culture* 57 (January 2016), 26.

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After the merger in 1967, the Sale-Niagara Company continued to use the building as an industrial printing facility. City building permits indicate that the company updated four motor starters and temperature control wiring for air conditioning units nine years later in 1976, indicating continued use of the building. In 1977, Sale-Niagara was purchased by Walter Jaworski of Miken Companies, and the company became known as Miken Systems. During this time, Miken Systems likely added the second entrance to the east façade, adjacent to the vehicular delivery entrance. By 1989, Miken Systems listed their primary address at 75 Boxwood Lane in Cheektowaga, indicating that the company had moved their major operations away from the building at 1050 Niagara Street by that time. Some evidence indicates that the building continued to be used for lithographic production, however, as one *Buffalo News* article stated in 1998, “Miken Companies Inc. will continue to lease [1/3] of the space at 1050 Niagara Street.”³² At this time, Ciminelli Real Estate Corporation purchased 1050 Niagara Street, and soon advertised that they were seeking new tenants, indicating that Miken Companies had completely relocated to Cheektowaga by the year 2000. In 2004, the *Buffalo News* listed City Wide Industries, a film production company, at 1050 Niagara Street, and it was likely at this time that the second floor offices were renovated, replacing many of the original materials and plan. The company remained there until about 2006, when the building was put up for sale.

After remaining vacant for a number of years the building was purchased and rehabilitated in 2018 – 2019 to function in health care related services on the first floor and apartments along the west elevation of the basement level. The portion of the basement to the east, with its extensive column grid to accommodate the weight of machinery and vibration on the first floor, has not been rehabilitated and retains its original plan. The sub-basement has not been rehabilitated and remains in a similar condition to when the building functioned in the printing industry. The open second floor space and upper mezzanine office also remain in a similar condition to when the building was vacated in 2006.

Notable Architects, Lansing & Beierl

Founded in 1892, the architecture firm Lansing & Beierl designed several notable buildings in Buffalo and the surrounding region. Both Williams Lansing and Max G. Beierl had previously worked as draftsmen at the celebrated firm of Green & Wicks, where they met and soon established their own firm. Lansing & Beierl designed several prominent residences, including Lansing’s own Colonial Revival house at 29 Oakland Place (1897) and the Colonial Revival house for Horace Reed, President of the Niagara Lithograph Company, at 94 Oakland Place (1894). Among the numerous residential projects attributed to Lansing & Beierl are the Hotchkiss House at 37 Oakland Place (1897-8) and the Shingle style Coatsworth House at 16 Lincoln Woods Lane (1897). The firm designed a few churches, including the Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church (1894-1896, NR 2009), the Gothic revival Central Presbyterian Church (1910) and the Romanesque revival St. Francis

³² “Sale on Niagara Street,” *The Buffalo News* (July 25, 1998), 12.

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Xavier RC Church (1911-13). Perhaps one of the firm's most notable works is the C.W. Miller Livery Stable (1892-94, NR 2007).³³

Williams Lansing was born on October 1st, 1860 to one of Buffalo's oldest and most prominent families. After graduating from Buffalo State Normal School he went to Colorado and spent several years on western ranches before returning to Buffalo to work in the architectural office of Green and Wicks. After founding his partnership with Beierl in 1892, Lansing also designed a few notable buildings outside of the firm, most notably the Connecticut Street Armory (NR 1995) with State Architect Isaac Perry in 1898-1900. In 1901, Lansing served as Supervisor of Architecture at the Pan-American Exposition, a prestigious title that continued to garner interest in the firm for the next decade.

Their partnership dissolved in 1910, when Lansing joined the firm of Bley & Lyman. Beierl pursued different types of projects at this time, evident in his work as a general contractor for the construction of 1875 Niagara Street. Lansing died after suffering a stroke on September 30th, 1920 at his home at 200 Bryant Street.

Summary

The Niagara Lithograph Company building is significant for its long history associated with lithographic printing, occupying the building at 1050 Niagara Street as an independent operation for over sixty years, from 1903-1967. The lithographic industry experienced many technological and economic changes during these decades, reflected in the advent of many new machines and methods that continually replaced one another. As the former president of the Niagara Lithographic Company stated in 1946, "In brief, the history of the company both in respect to the plant and its equipment has been one of continuous adjustment to the latest discoveries of science and invention."³⁴ The building at 1050 Niagara Street reflects many of these changes, as it was constantly altered in order to provide sufficient space, workflow, and structural support for the advancement of the company's interests within the competitive context of the lithographic industry. For over sixty years, from 1903-1967, the Niagara Lithograph Company was a prestigious name in the field of lithography, and their operations at 1050 Niagara Street represented the cutting edge of design, technology and innovation. The building itself was a direct aid to the company in this accomplishment, as a purpose-built industrial structure designed by Lansing & Beierl to accommodate the continually evolving methods and machines that both typify and reveal the lithographic production process.

³³ Jennifer Walkowski, *Elmwood Historic District (West)*, Edited by Daniel McEneny. NR Ref. No 12000996, State and National Registers of Historic Places Nomination. (Albany: NY State Historic Preservation Office, October 2012), 262.

³⁴ Reed, 6.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary is defined with a heavy line on the attached maps with scale.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses all property historically and presently associated with the Niagara Lithograph Company.

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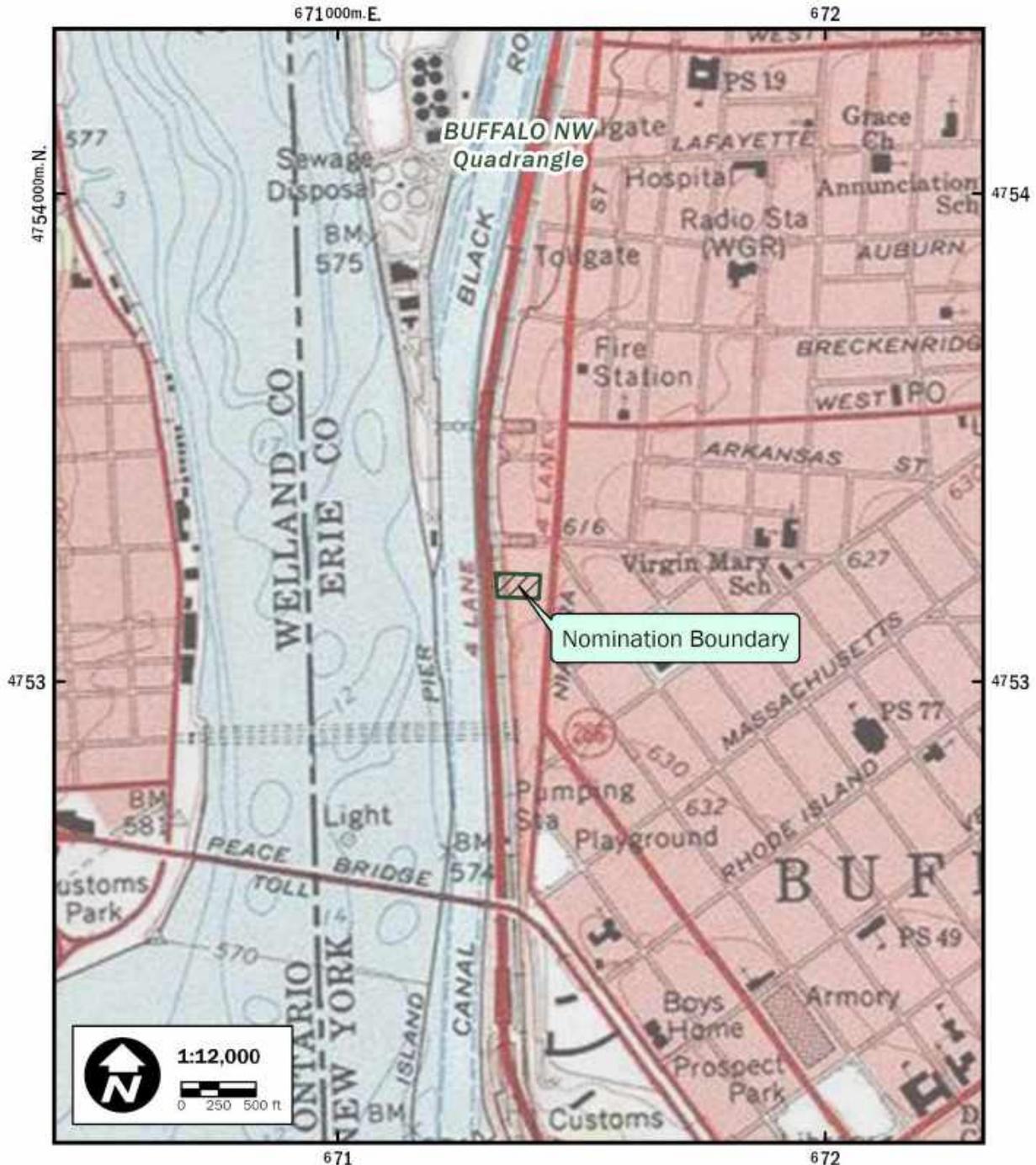
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Niagara Lithograph Company
City of Buffalo, Erie County, New York

1050 Niagara Street
Buffalo, NY 14213



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

Nomination Boundary



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Niagara Lithograph Company
City of Buffalo, Erie County, New York

1050 Niagara Street
Buffalo, NY 14213



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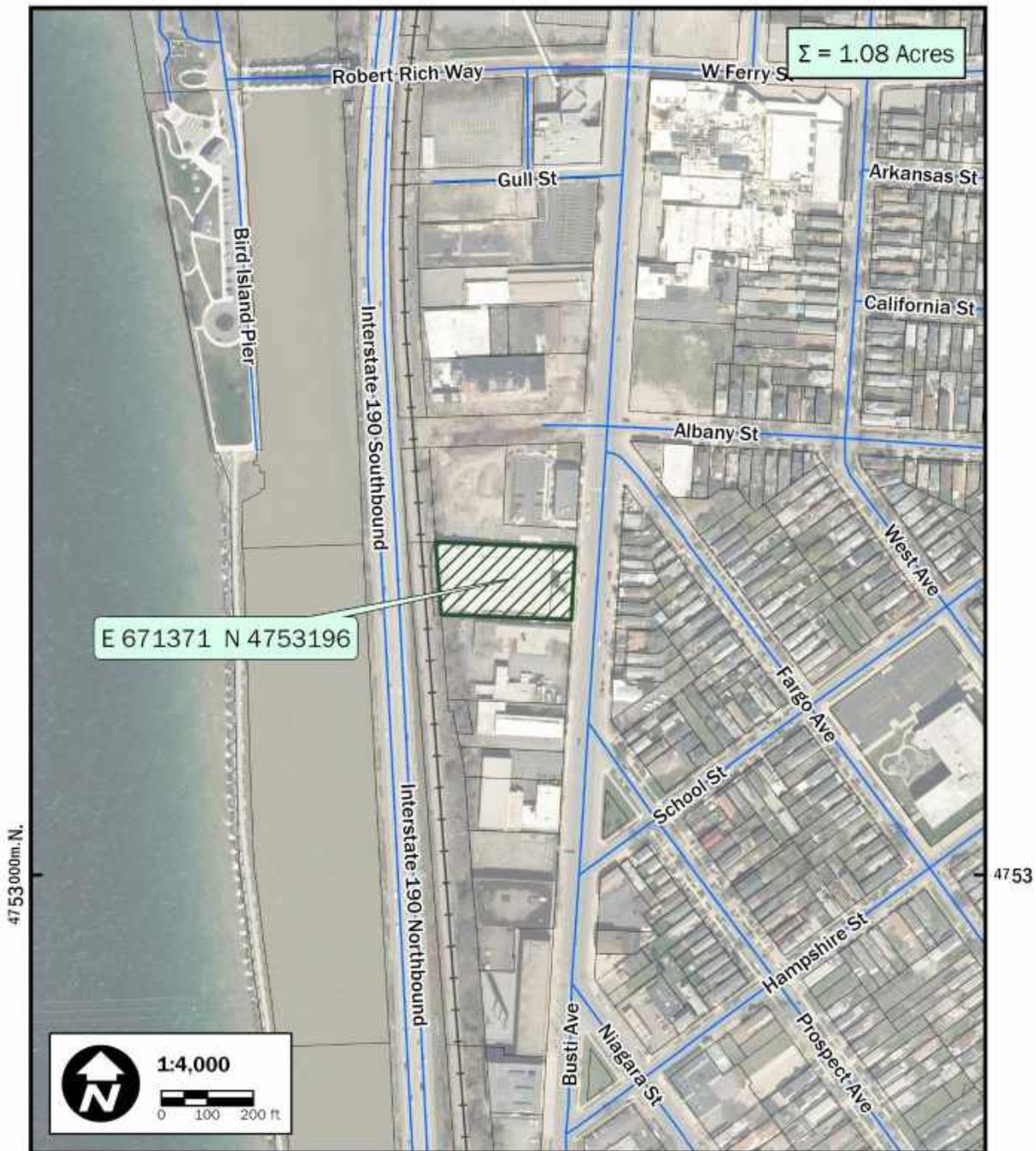
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1050 Niagara Street
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Additional Information

Photo Log;

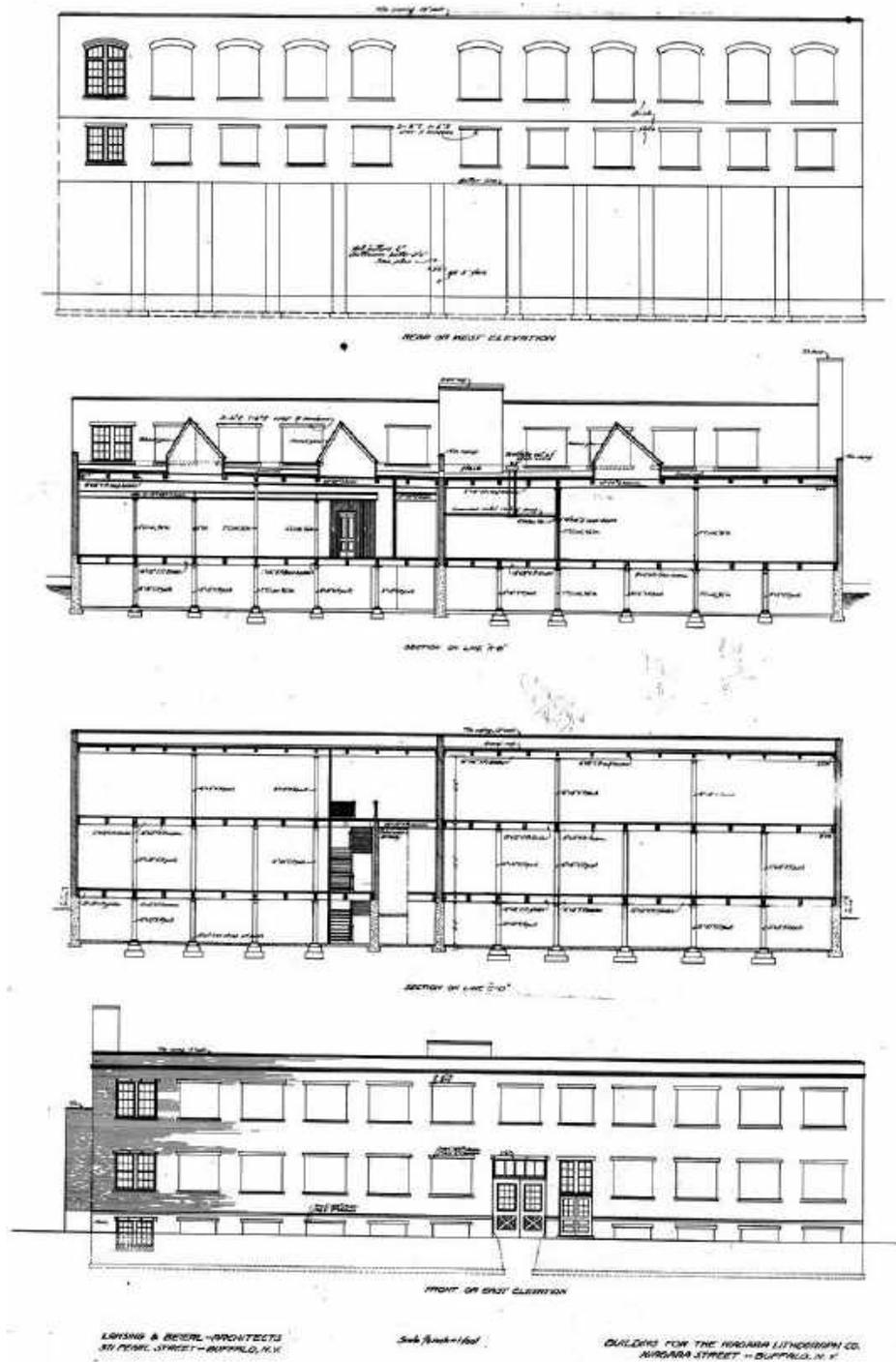
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Original Drawings, 1903. Lansing & Beierl
Figure 1. 1050 Niagara Street: Elevation



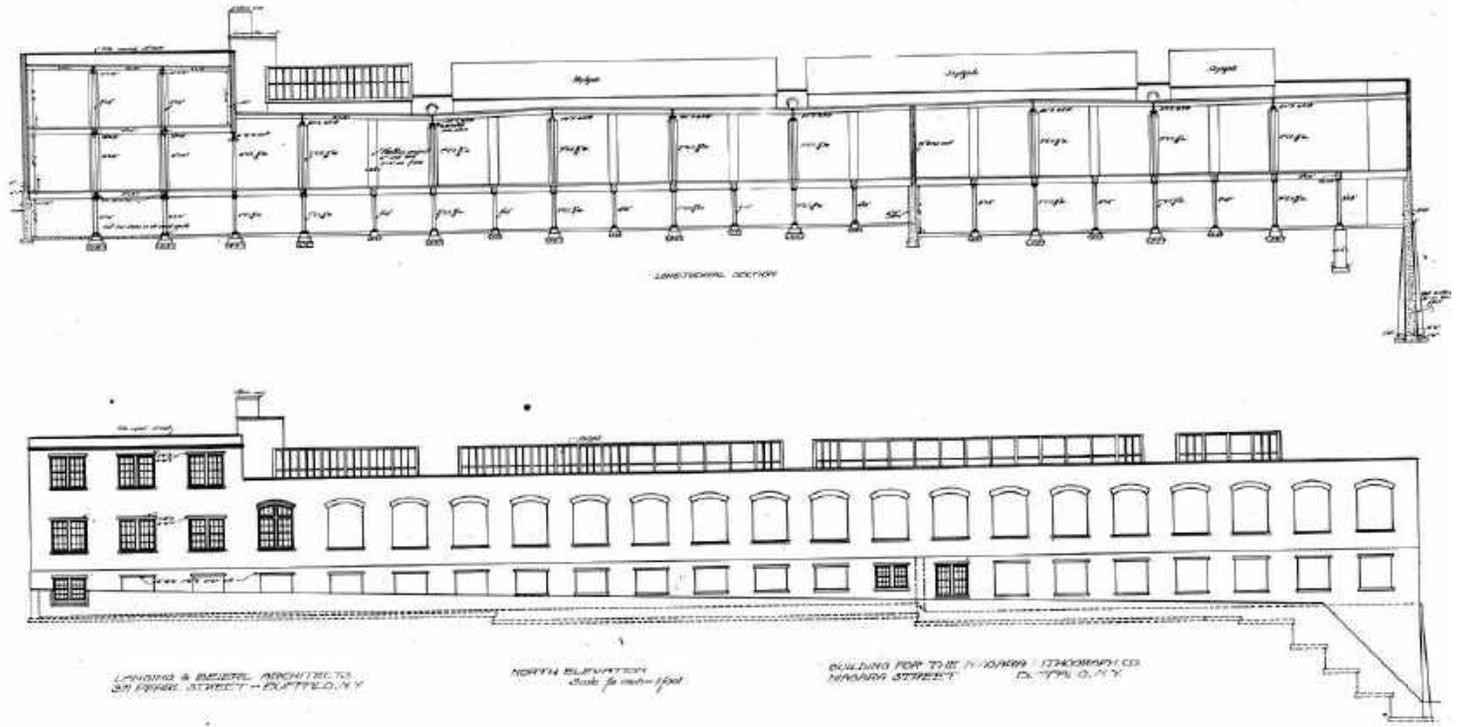
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Figure 2. 1050 Niagara Street: Longitudinal Section



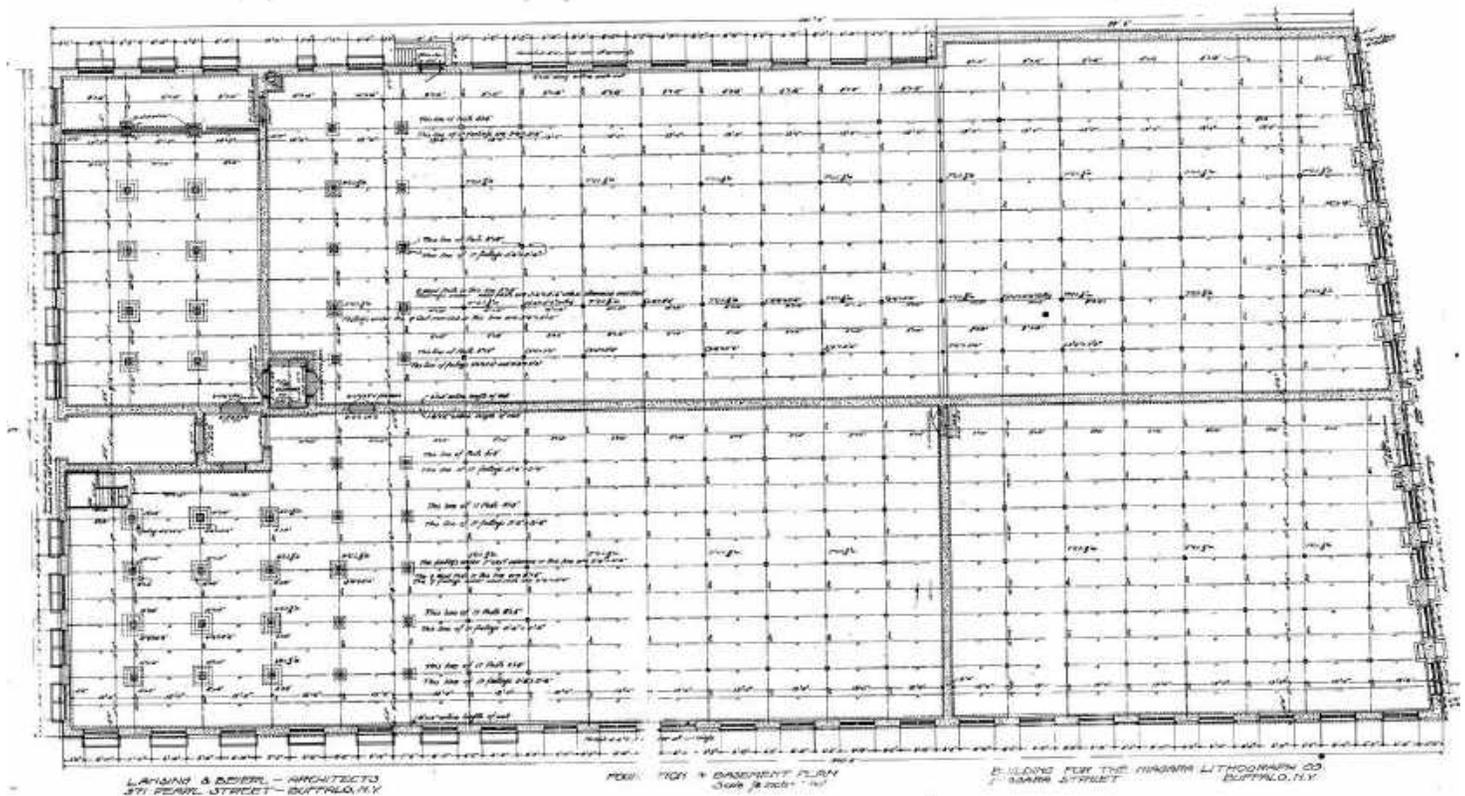
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Figure 3. 1050 Niagara Street: Basement



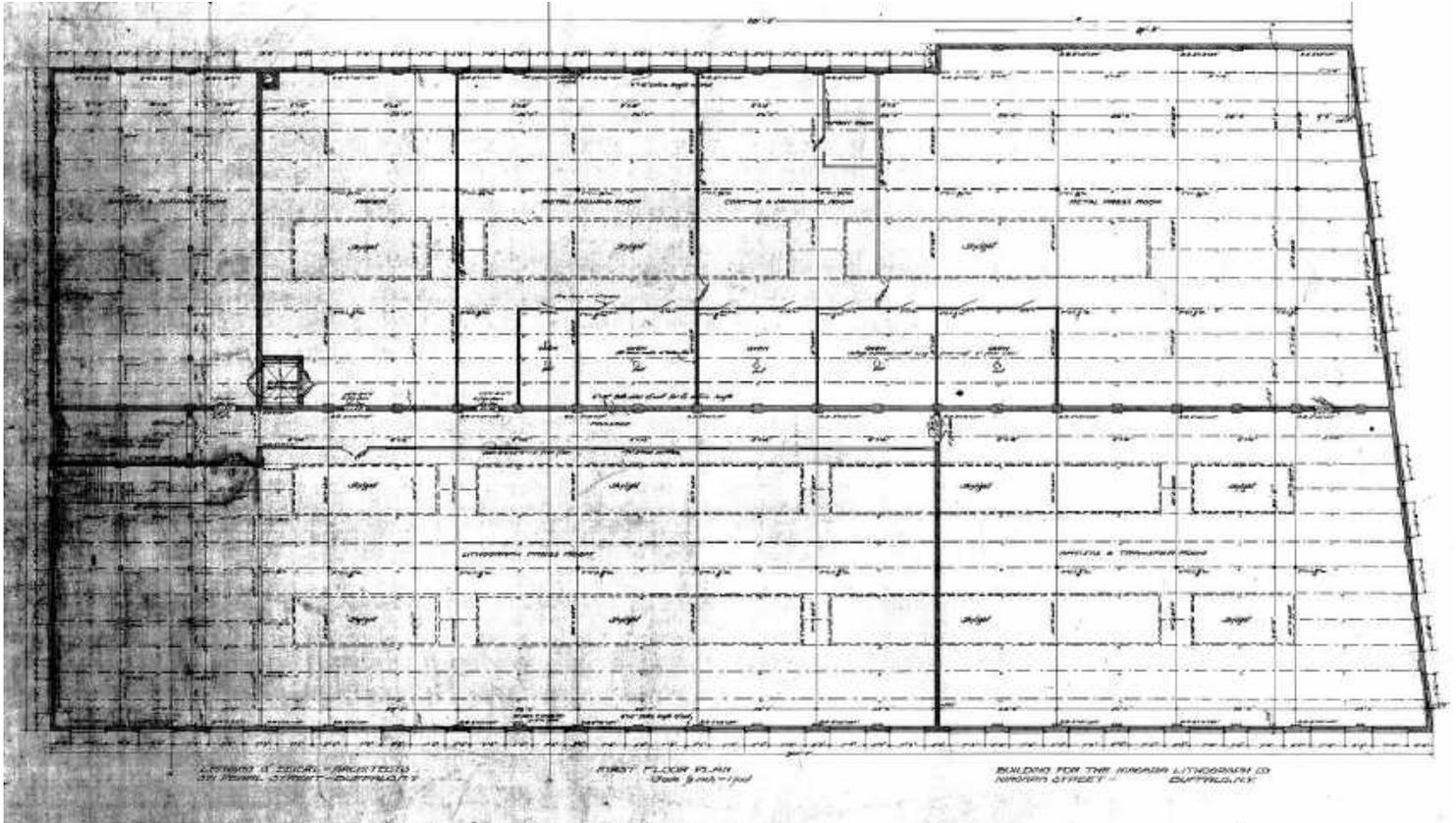
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Figure 4. 1050 Niagara Street: First Floor



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Figure 5. 1050 Niagara Street: Second Floor



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Figure 6. The Niagara Lithograph Company, from *Buffalo Today: Industrial and Commercial*, 1914



PLANT OF THE NIAGARA LITHOGRAPH COMPANY

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Historic Images, ca. 1946, from *The Niagara Lithograph Company, 1896-1946*

Figure 7. Entrance



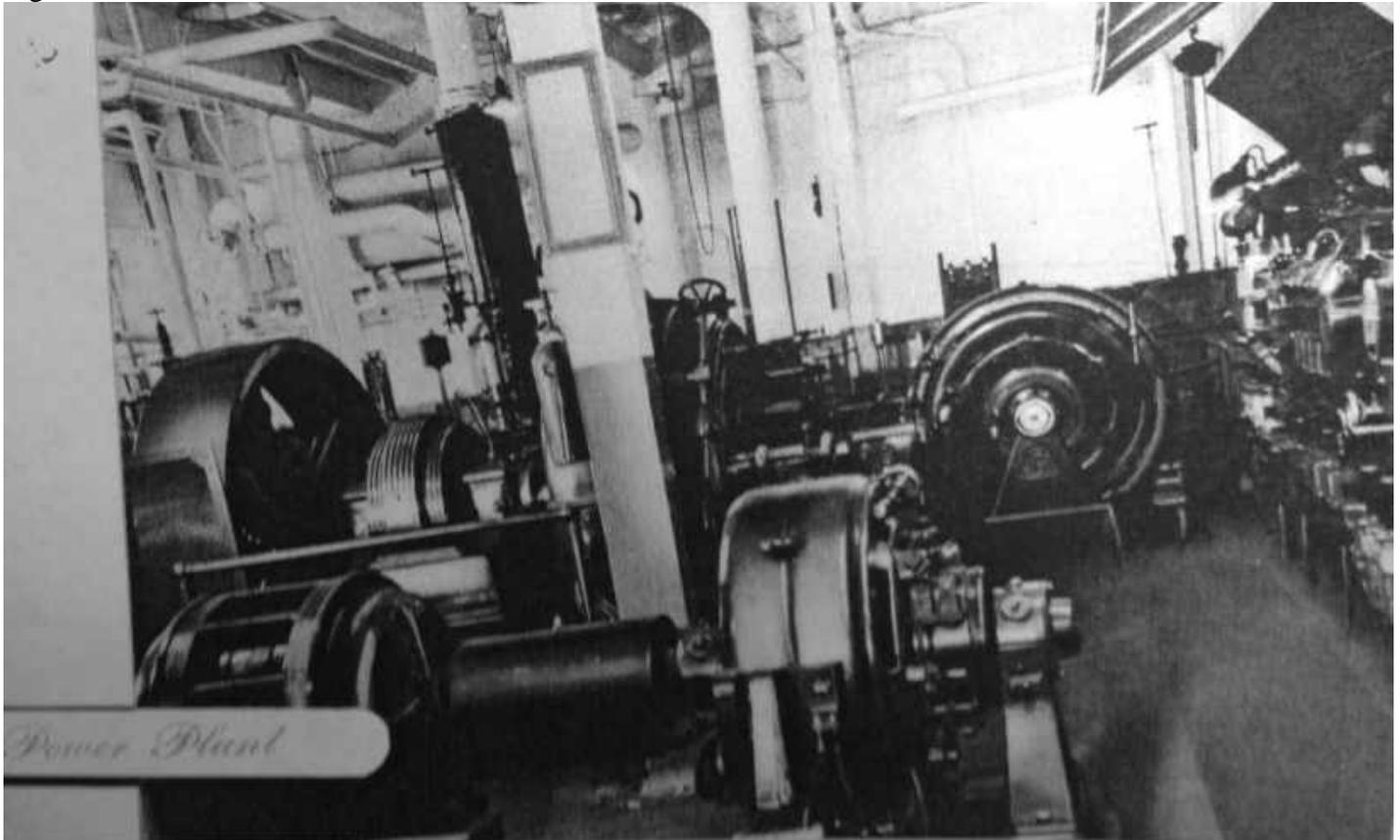
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Figure 8. Power Plant



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Figure 9. Graining Department



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Figure 10. Art Department



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Figure 11. Transfer Department



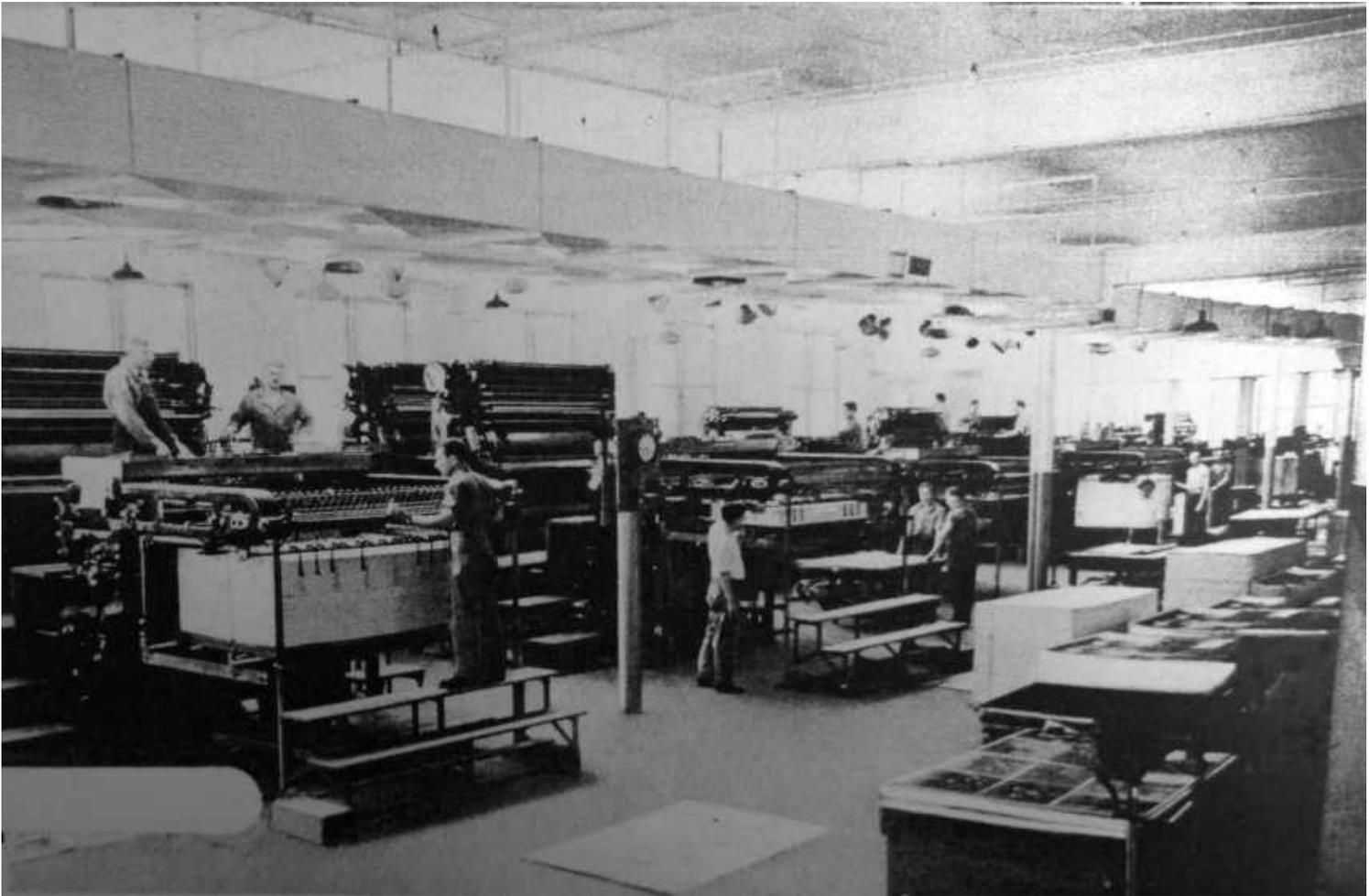
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Figure 12. Printing Department



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Figure 13. Bindery Department



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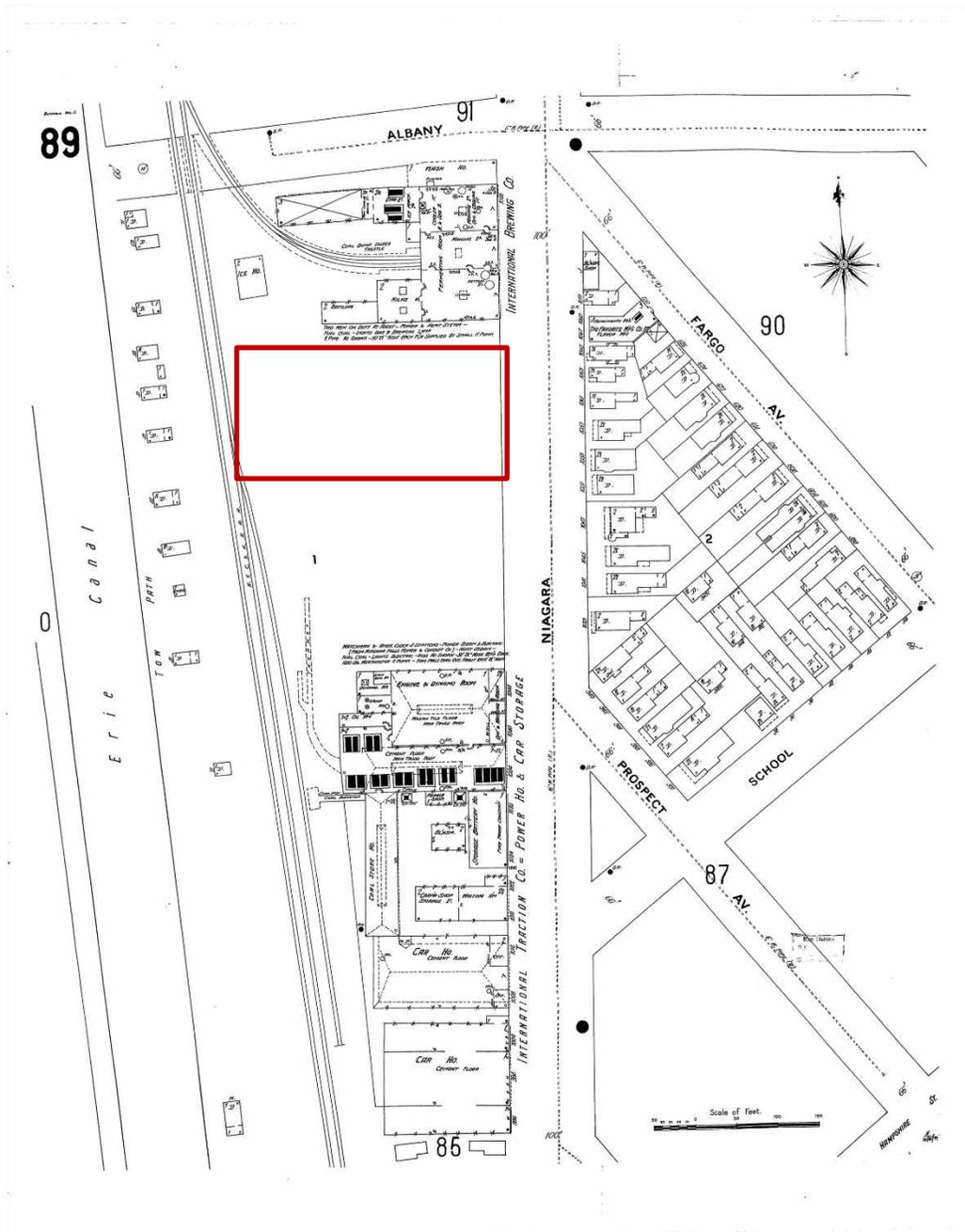
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Sanborn Fire Insurance Map
Vol 1, Sheet 89, 1899.

Illustrates property location, outlined in red, prior to construction of 1050 Niagara Street in 1903



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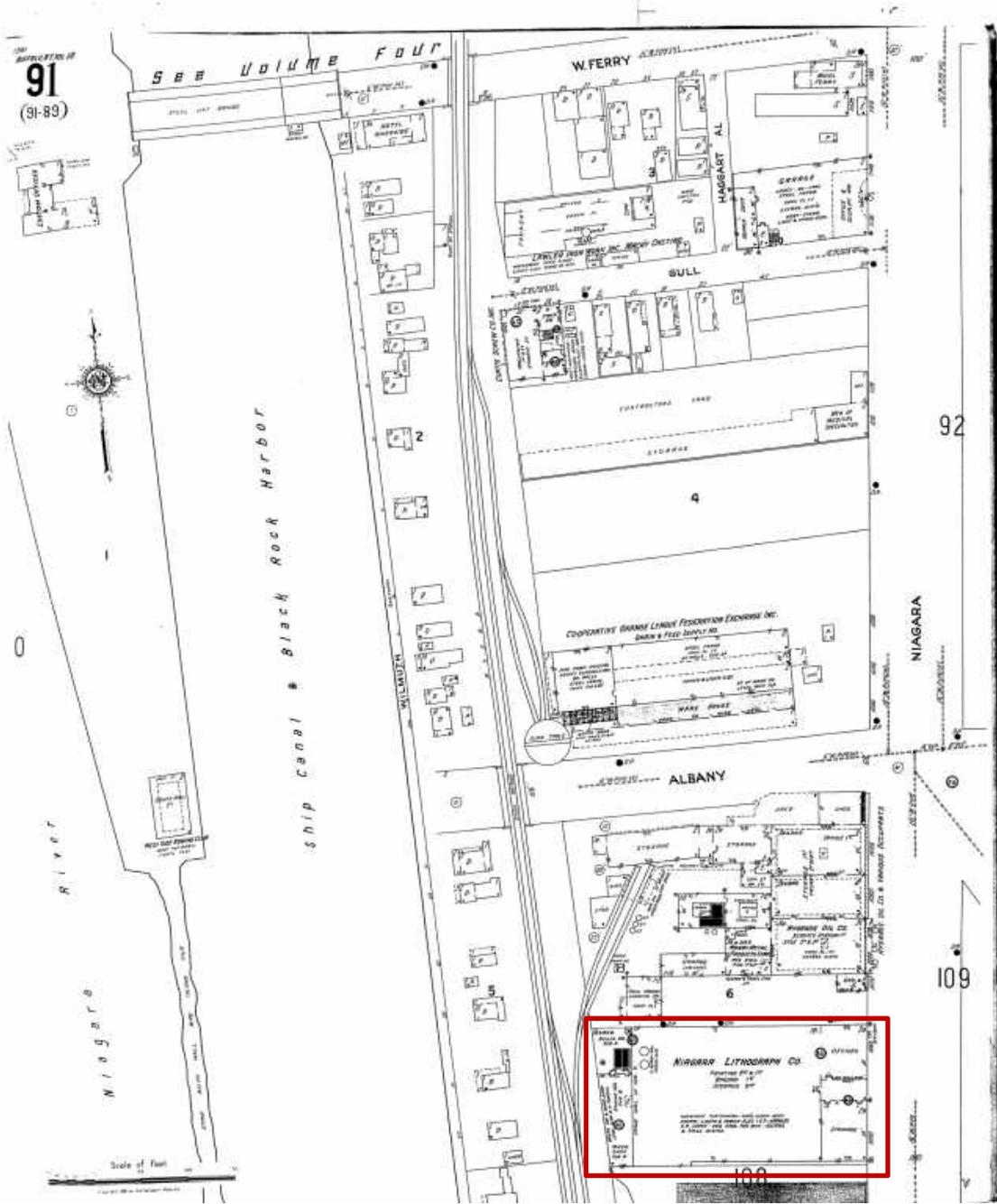
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Sanborn Fire Insurance Map
Vol 1A, Sheet 91, 1925.

Illustrates 1050 Niagara Street, outline in red in 1925



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Sample Exterior and Interior Photos



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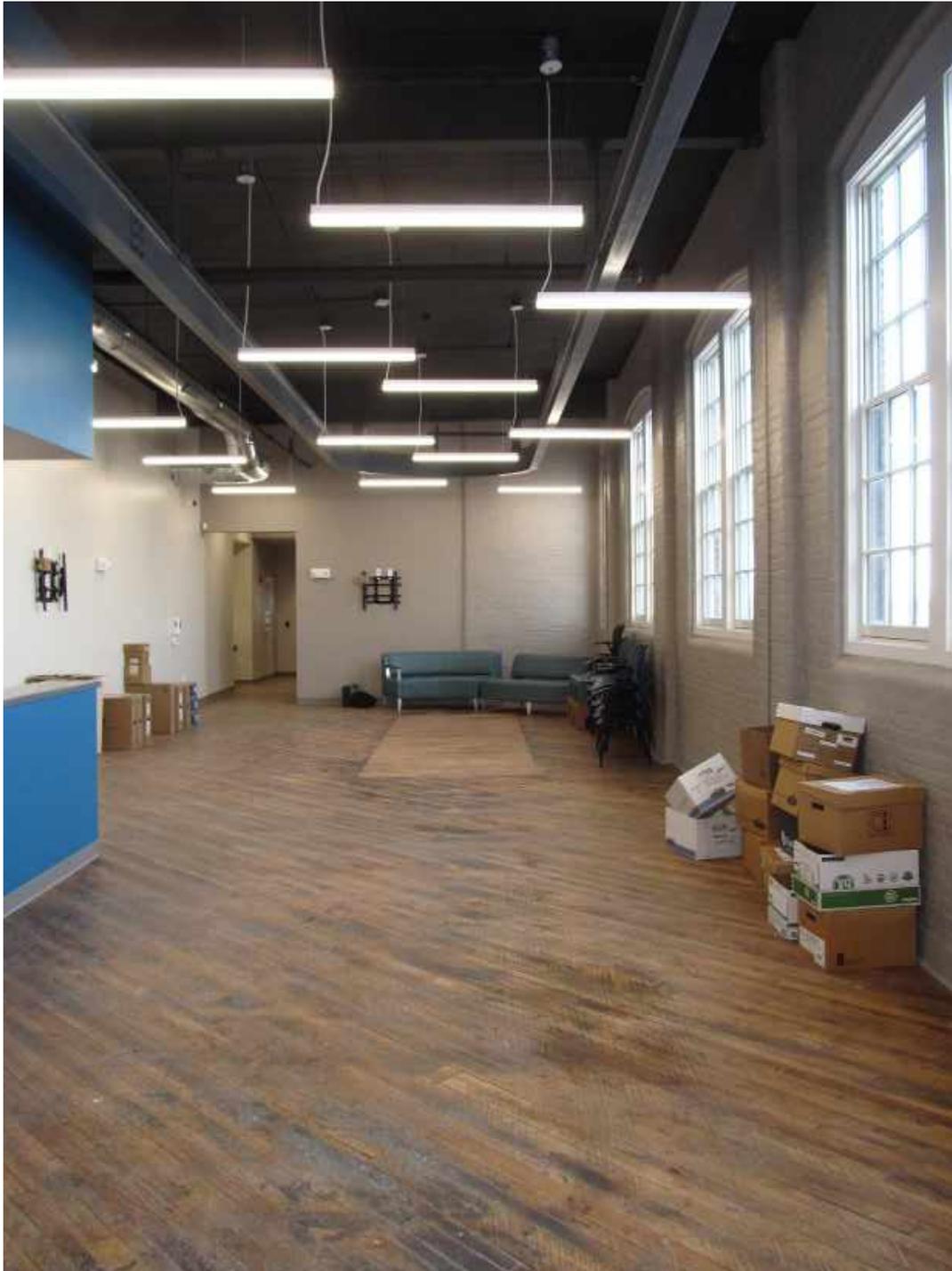


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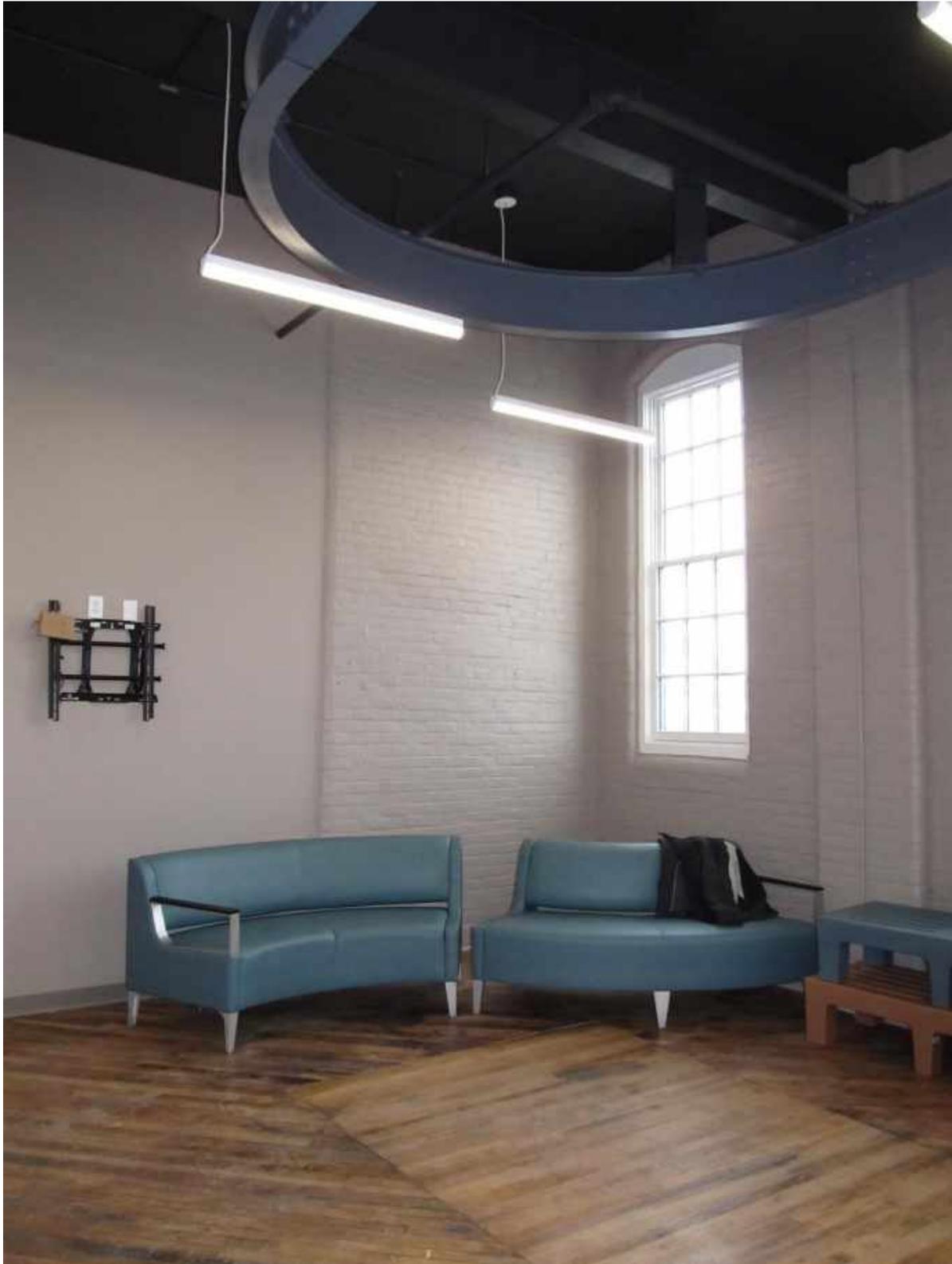


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