

State and National Register of Historic Places Nomination  
September 2009

# THE KAMMAN BUILDING

755 Seneca Street  
Buffalo, Erie County, NY 14210



*Photo by Jennifer Walkowski, CBCA Architectural Historian*

Prepared by:



Clinton Brown Company Architecture ReBuild  
The Pierce Building in the Theater Historic District  
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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## 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 The Kamman Building

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number 755 Seneca Street [ ] not for publication

city or town Buffalo [ ] vicinity

state New York code 36 county Erie code 29 zip code 14210

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation  
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

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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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	
<u>1</u>	<u>          </u>	buildings
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	sites
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>          </u>	<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**

Historic Resources of the Hydraulics/Larkin Neighborhood N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCIAL/TRADE  
Specialty store  
Office  
DOMESTIC  
Multiple Dwelling

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT  
Under development

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN  
Romanesque Revival

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone  
walls brick w/ Medina sandstone accents  
roof membrane  
other wood frame rear porches

**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

**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.
- 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: \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance:**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

**Period of Significance:**

ca. 1883-1884

**Significant Dates:**

ca. 1883-84

**Significant Person:**

**Cultural Affiliation:**

**Architect/Builder:**

Franklin Wellington (F.W.)Caulkins

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## 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of Property** .18 Acres

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 |    |     
Zone Easting Northing

3 18 |    |     
Zone Easting Northing

2 18 |    |   

4 18 |    |   

### 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.)

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Jennifer Walkowski, Architectural Historian [Edited and Arranged by Dan McEneny, NY SHPO]

organization Clinton Brown Company Architecture, pc date September 2009

street & number 653 Main Street, Suite 104 telephone 716-852-2020

city or town Buffalo state NY zip code 14203

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## Additional Documentation

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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 Kamman Group LLC (Robert Stark, Managing Partner)

street & number 303 South Park Avenue telephone 716-856-6448

city or town Buffalo, NY state NY zip code 14204

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

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**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**

**Exterior**

The Kamman Building is a four-story brick commercial building which is located on the south side of Seneca Street between Van Rensselaer and Hydraulic Streets in the city of Buffalo, Erie County, NY. This area of the city is generally referred to as the "Hydraulics" neighborhood, taking its name from the early Hydraulics canal which linked this section of the city to the Erie Canal. The lot is rectilinear with an angled northern boundary and measures approximately 105 feet wide along Seneca Street and 125 deep. The building is surrounded with paved asphalt parking lots to its west, east and south, and further south is located the Larkin at Exchange office building which forms a back-drop for the Kamman Building when looking south from Seneca Street. While the immediate area is primarily vacant lots and parking areas, the few remaining buildings in the area consist of a few scattered small brick commercial buildings from the 1800s mixed in with some more modern commercial properties.

The Kamman Building is rectangular in overall form, with an angled northern façade which follows the angle of Seneca Street. The building measures approximately 45 feet west-east by 80 from north to south on its long western side. The Kamman Building is a four-story masonry and wood framed edifice with a basement level. As a steel "I" beam is visible above the first story on the northern façade, it appears that some steel members were utilized for additional structural support along the north and south elevations, with additional steel beams supporting the recessed light well of the western façade. As Seneca Street was the primary commercial artery, the north facing façade was designed as the most elaborate primary façade, with the east, west and south facing facades designed in a simpler manner. Although the isolation of the building allows it to be largely visible on all four sides today, this was not originally the case as the street was lined with similar 2-5 story brick commercial buildings which formed a continuous street line across both sides of Seneca Street. Notable features in the massing of the building are a slight projecting bay at the north-eastern corner of the building (which originally linked it to its neighbor at 759 Seneca), a recessed light-shaft of the upper three stories at the western façade and the three-story wood frame porches which are located at the south of the building.

The Seneca Street (north) elevation of the Kamman Building is a symmetrical, seven bay façade which features a ground floor commercial storefront below three upper floors. The façade indicates that the first floor was divided into two separate commercial spaces with a central entry door to an upper floor stair at the center of the façade. At each corner of the storefront are cast iron pilasters which are segmented into rectangular panels and topped with lion head ornamental brackets. Each storefront contains plate glass windows, some minor modern materials and updates, and large solid panels across the upper portions. The western storefront (755) contains a recessed entryway flanked by large display windows, and contains a ca. 1930s-50s contemporary signboard which is bolted onto the façade, perhaps concealing original transom windows. The paneled wood entry door on the 755 storefront may be original, as it appears to match one depicted in a ca. 1940s photograph of the 757 storefront. The eastern storefront (757) features an off-center entry door at the north eastern corner of the building with altered sidelights and two large plate glass windows to its west. Although somewhat concealed, this storefront also may contain original transom windows hidden by a signboard. The modern steel central door of the façade is framed by cast iron pilasters, features a sign advertising its previous tenant (the Amber Medical Group) and is topped by a sign dubbing the building "The Kamman." Although likely originally concealed

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behind a sign panel or other decorative detail, a large structural steel beam is visible running east-west between the first and second floors to the east of the Kamman placard. On this beam is inscribed "CARNEGIE 1883" which indicates the steel appears to have come from the Carnegie Steel Plant in Pittsburgh, PA and was manufactured in 1883. Above the ground floor, the red brick and stone façade features square-headed windows on the second and third floor which are grouped in a series of three and linked by a common massive stone header, each group flanking the central axis of the facade. A central slightly projecting pavilion (which carries the placement of the ground floor door through the upper floors) is located at the center of the upper three floors, and contains a square headed window surrounded with rusticated stonework on the second and third floors. The stone is carried through as rusticated quoins on the second story corners of the building. The fourth floor is slightly different from the lower floors as it contains round-headed arcaded windows with stone voussours and the central window in the pavilion features a more distinct label molding. Throughout the north façade the wood double-hung windows are in various states of deterioration, and those at the fourth floor are generally in the best condition and feature a rod-top sash. The parapet of the building contains a band of bracketed brick molding. Notably, at the easternmost corner of the building, the cast iron storefront contains a molded panel in the pilaster base inscribed with "F.W. Caulkins Architect."

The west and east facades contain multiple segmental-arched windows with no evidence of infill or alteration to their original appearance. Many voids still feature original wood-framed windows which are in various stages of deterioration. The western façade features a recess above the first floor which acted as a light-well amongst the crowded buildings, and the ground floor contains no windows on this elevation. This ground floor wall of the western façade shows some evidence of replacement, as the brick has been cut and repaired or altered at an unknown date. The eastern façade contains a beige-painted silhouette of the neighboring 759 Seneca which was demolished. In the slight projection along the north-east corner of the building, a modern steel door has been inserted into the east face of the projection in what was likely an original door opening. While the segmental brick relieving arch is still partially present, the doorway is cut into the existing wall. Perhaps one of the most unique features of the building is the series of wood framed porches which are stacked on a brick first floor extension at the south of the building. Each porch of the second, third and fourth floor contains a simple wood railing with open balustrade, several square support columns, and stairs which connect the floors. The side walls of the porch are closed with older wood panels, painted in the same grayish paint as the porches themselves, and the second floor porch is almost entirely enclosed by wood above an older brick parapet wall although the original framing members are still visible. Attached to the brick first floor of the south elevation is a crude storage shed of unknown date constructed of scrap wood and built into the landing of the second floor porch. The porches are largely intact in both their character and their materials, but are in need of substantial repair and stabilization.

**Interior**

The interior of the building is largely devoid of original historic materials, and it is essentially a masonry building shell. The basement is brick floored and contains several massive corbelled brick piers and wood columns with large stone bases which support the upper stories. The ceiling height is low, less than six feet in height, and it is a rough-finished space. Evidence of a collapsed and abandoned stair is located on the eastern side of the basement, below the previous 757 commercial space. The remains of a large, cylindrical furnace are located beneath the western 755 space. The stacked stone foundation walls are visible from within the basement



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but not visible on the exterior. Floors throughout are wood plank and all walls are exposed brick. While the lower three stories contain remnants of some of the original plaster and lath finish, the fourth floor appears to have been left unfinished. Ceilings are all exposed joists (and rafters at the fourth-floor) with cross-bracing. All three upper floors feature doors on the south end of the building which open to the porches, and while these are modern replacements on the first, second and third floors, the paired panel doors on the fourth-floor may be original to the building.

On the ground floor, the most significant feature is the central stairway which is accessed via the entry at the center of the north façade, although this stair is missing its balustrade, handrail and decorative apron. The ground floor also features a series of rather large cast iron columns with decorative pseudo-classical capitals which form a colonnade near the western and southern walls. These show evidence of green and yellow paint, which may indicate interior color schemes for the commercial spaces. At the western wall, the cast iron columns support a steel beam which in turn supports the recessed exterior upper wall of the building. At the central north-south axis of the building runs a series of more delicate cast iron columns. While the 757 storefront façade is flush along the exterior north wall and bears some interior traces of the paneled storefront façade which was dates to at least the 1940s, the 755 storefront features large display cabinets flanking its recessed entry. These turquoise-green painted wood framed cabinets feature large multi-light glass access doors and transoms, with storage below. The eastern wall of the building is inset slightly to accommodate an entry door on the south face of the projection which originally connected the Kamman Building to its neighbor at 759 Seneca. This brick wall section features rounded corners and a wood paneled door which matches that found in the 755 storefront and is possibly original. Also in the north-eastern projection is a doorway which likely existed to allow passage between the two connected buildings, although the door is not original and the door header shows evidence of replacement. The wall surfaces of the ground floor were originally plaster and lath, with grooves set into the brick to allow for a nailing strip to be installed, and some evidence of the lath strips still remaining. While much of the flooring is wood plank, there are traces of tile mosaic flooring in the 757 commercial space. The octagonal tile mosaic seems to have been in a white color with a white and dark green Greek-key bordered motif, although it is covered in most areas by an adhesive material which likely secured a later flooring material.

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

**1.) Introduction**

The Kamman Building is significant under Criteria C as an excellent example of late-nineteenth-century Romanesque Revival architecture in Buffalo, NY. Located in a neglected section of Buffalo known as the Hydraulics, the Kamman Building was once one of many multi-story brick commercial buildings which lined both sides along Seneca Street. Today, this area has lost a majority of its historic architecture as many buildings were demolished in the twentieth-century following years of neglect and economic hardship in the area. Despite losing its neighboring buildings, the Kamman Building now stands as one of only a handful of original nineteenth-century commercial buildings in the Hydraulics neighborhood, and as it has been minimally altered during its almost 130 year history, it is an excellent and unique example of the early commercial history of this area.

**2.) Brief History of the Hydraulics Neighborhood<sup>1</sup>**

The Kamman Building is located in the Hydraulics, Buffalo's earliest manufacturing district and one of America's most important industrial heritage sites. The Hydraulics, an industrial precinct about a mile east of downtown Buffalo and centered at the intersection of Seneca and Swan streets, was established in 1827 by a private corporation, the Buffalo Hydraulic Association, that built a canal to the district from Big Buffalo Creek to furnish the young city with its first source of water power.<sup>2</sup> Led by banker Reuben B. Heacock, the Buffalo Hydraulic Association was declared one of Buffalo's most important civic initiatives, establishing "mill privileges of incalculable advantage to the city and the country."<sup>3</sup> By 1836, accounts indicate three saw mills, a woolen factory, a pail factory, a factory for turning bed posts, a grist mill, a brewery, and a tannery were in operation at the Hydraulics, and a village of 500 inhabitants grew up around them.<sup>4</sup>

The hydraulic works were quickly superseded by rapid innovations in steam power as well as the considerably more powerful and efficient millraces established at Black Rock, Niagara Falls, and Lockport, and by 1836 the Hydraulic Association was already subjected to considerable infighting and a lawsuit that divested the corporation of much of its property, rights, and powers. The water-powered mills dwindled in the face of competition and amid a devastating national economic recession from 1837 to 1842, and quickly the neighborhood was forced to adapt to new purposes. Though the Hydraulics dwindled and the canal was even

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<sup>1</sup> Information in this section is provided by Hydraulics historian and enthusiast, Chris Hawley. For additional information and background to the Hydraulics neighborhood, refer to the National Register Multiple Property Form (MPDF) for Historic Resources of the Hydraulics/Larkin Neighborhood.

<sup>2</sup> "To incorporate the Buffalo Hydraulic Association," passed March 8, 1827, 50th Sess. Chap. 58, New York State Laws of 1827, p. 43; Lankes, Frank. "The Hydraulics." Niagara Frontier (Buffalo & Erie County Historical Society) Spring 1955: 7-9.

<sup>3</sup> Cray, L. P. A Directory for the Village of Buffalo: Containing the Names and Residences of the Heads of Families and Householders, in Said Village, on the First of Jan. 1828. Buffalo: L. P. Cray, 1828.

<sup>4</sup> A Directory for the City of Buffalo; Containing the Names and Residence of the Heads of Families and Householders, in Said City, on the First of May, 1836. Buffalo: Charles Faxon, 1836.

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blamed for fueling the city's cholera epidemic in 1849, the mill district represented the seedlings of Buffalo's industrial economy.<sup>5</sup>

The Hydraulic Canal would fade from significance and ultimately be filled by the early 1880s, but the Hydraulics namesake that characterized the district's early identity would persist even after it the source was long forgotten. The rail infrastructure laid out through the Hydraulics would, more than the canal, lay the groundwork for the rapid development of the industrial enclave. The establishment of the Buffalo & Attica Railroad, which ran through the Hydraulics and was part of a chain of railroads (to be subsumed into the New York Central rail empire by 1853) that connected Buffalo to Albany for the first time in 1843, was the first linchpin predicating the district's later development as a manufacturing area of national significance.<sup>6</sup>

The completion of the Buffalo & Aurora Plank Road in 1849 brought the Hydraulics into even greater regional focus, abetting the district's accessibility and capacity for retail development. The Buffalo & Aurora Road, a turnpike connecting the city line (then just east of the Hydraulics proximate to what is now Smith Street) to the village of East Aurora, served as a veritable highway for farming traffic entering the city from the southern tier of Erie County.<sup>7</sup> The road developed the Hydraulics, and in particular Seneca Street, into furtive ground for wholesale grocers, meat shops, leather dealers, slaughterhouses, taverns, carriage manufactories, and merchants dealing in other amenities linked to the crowded traffic of the corridor. Seneca Street in the Hydraulics would remain a heavily traveled commuter route until 1959, when the opening of the Niagara Thruway (I-190) halved traffic on the street and eviscerated its once vibrant retail strip.<sup>8</sup>

By the 1870s, the intersection of important rail corridors through the Hydraulics connected the industrial precinct to the farthest reaches of the continent, bringing it within intimate proximity of national markets for mass-produced goods and the raw materials necessary for their production, cheap Pennsylvania coal in particular.<sup>9</sup> In 1882 the New York Central completed the Belt Line circling within the city, enhancing efficiencies for manufacturing as well as connections to the city's dispersed labor market.<sup>10</sup> The geography of the neighborhood at this "iron crossroads" led to the location and expansion at the Hydraulics of the large firms that dominated its rustic urban landscape. By 1905, the Larkin Company, F. N. Burt & Co., the Keystone Warehouse Co., the Sizer Steam Forge, the American Radiator Co., and the Hoefner Soap Works, could be counted among the major elements of a prodigious industrial district.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>5</sup> "On the cholera pandemic." Buffalo Commercial Advertiser 17 Sept. 1849.

<sup>6</sup> Larned, J. N. A History of Buffalo, Delineating the Evolution of the City. New York: The Progress of the Empire State Company, 1911.

<sup>7</sup> Buffalo - Old and New: A Chronological History of the Queen City of the Lakes. Buffalo Courier, 1901.

<sup>8</sup> O'Hara, Don. "F. X. Winkler's store to close, ending 111 years in business: Family owned grocery landmark at 760 Seneca in 'Hydraulics' to shut its doors Wednesday." Buffalo Evening News 15 Mar. 1968.

<sup>9</sup> Smith, Alfred Holland. The New York Central Railroad: 1831-1915. New York: J. Kempster Co., 1915; Wallace, William. Statement showing the importance of the Buffalo and State Line Railroad, and its connection with the several great routes from the Atlantic Ocean to Cincinnati and the Mississippi River. Buffalo: Steele's P, 1850; Speech of Samuel P. Lyman, on the opening of the Erie Railroad, Astor House, May 14, 1851. New York: John Belcher, Printer, 1851.

<sup>10</sup> Anderson, Dale. "The Belt Line: The old Belt Line railroad circling through Buffalo is still in use. Some even think it could be revived as part of our transit system." Buffalo News 26 July 1986: Gusto 3.

<sup>11</sup> "Buffalo's modern marvel: A place which people come from far and near to see and where a trainload of soap can be made in a single kettle." Buffalo Express 11 Oct. 1908: 11; Griggs, Lee. "Burt Co. is world's largest maker of setup boxes: Three to four million units a day." Buffalo Courier Express 21 Sept. 1952, sec. 5: 12; "New warehouse: Keystone Warehouse Company welcomed friends to informal opening: Mammoth structure: Six acres of floor space are now ready for the storage of merchandise of all kinds." Buffalo Commercial Advertiser 30 June 1904; "Sizer & Williams Steam Forge, Mill & Red Jacket, resumes operation." Buffalo Morning

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By 1915, the Hydraulics was a hotbed of industrial innovation and the test site for some of the latest ideas in architecture and engineering. Most famously, the Larkin Company, one of the largest mail order firms in America, commissioned Frank Lloyd Wright in 1904 to design the Larkin Administration Building on Seneca Street. Infamously, the building was demolished in 1950, attracting widespread condemnation from the architectural community and leaving a black mark on Buffalo's history for which the city still attempts to make amends.<sup>12</sup>

Though the district's preeminence as a manufacturing center has considerably faded, alongside Buffalo writ large, from a former highpoint in the most recent sixty years, the industrial heritage resources of the Hydraulics, in particular the former factory and warehouse buildings of the Larkin Company, are fueling new economic development and private reinvestment in the neighborhood, perhaps setting the stage for the district's reemergence as important center for work, living, and entertainment.

### 3.) The Kamman Family and the Early History of the Kamman Building

The Kamman family played a significant role in Buffalo's thriving slaughterhouse and meat packing industry from the mid-nineteenth-century into the twentieth-century. Like many in the Hydraulics neighborhood, the Kammans were of German descent, and brought their skills as butchers from Germany to the thriving meat packing industry of Buffalo in the mid-nineteenth century. The family had a nearly century long tradition as "master butchers" in Buffalo, handing the tradition down through the generations.

The Kamman Building was constructed ca. 1883-84 on property owned by the J.F. Kamman Slaughterhouse.<sup>13</sup> Brothers John F. and Henry C. arrived in Buffalo in the mid-1800s, emigrating from Hanover, Germany, and each established their own butcher shops and markets by the 1860s.<sup>14</sup> While Henry C. ran his shop 573-575 Seneca, John F. began purchasing property in the 700 block of Seneca between the 1850s and the early 1860s. Here in the center of a large parcel of land, the J.F. Kamman Slaughterhouse with its series of barns, processing

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Express 22 May 1874: 4; "Sizer's Steam Forge: Particulars of its destruction - Fifty men thrown out." Buffalo Commercial Advertiser 14 July 1890: 10; "Radiator plant: That of Standard Company in this city has been bought by the American Radiator Company." Buffalo Commercial Advertiser 3 Feb. 1899: 9; "A. Hoefner & Sons sell soap plant." Buffalo Courier Express 18 Jan. 1929: 6.

<sup>12</sup> The best available account of the Larkin Administration Building is Quinan, Jack. Frank Lloyd Wright's Larkin Building Myth and Fact. New York: University Of Chicago P, 2006.

<sup>13</sup> This section of the Hydraulics was once owned by Reuben B. Heacock, a prominent Buffalo banker and political figure. Heacock was originally from Columbia County, N.Y. before he came to Buffalo in 1811 as one of the area's earliest pioneers. He partnered with Abel M. Grosvenor to establish a general store under the name of Grosvenor & Heacock on Main Street. Heacock owned a "large stone house" in what became the Hydraulics neighborhood, and was instrumental in the settlement and prosperity of the community. In 1827 the Buffalo Hydraulic Association, led by Augustus Porter and Heacock, was incorporated by the state of New York to create water power and mill privileges at falls at the Little Buffalo Creek. The Buffalo Hydraulic Association purchased nearly all the land now considered the Hydraulics neighborhood from Holland Land Company. As a result of his association, Heacock was instrumental in the creation of the Hydraulics canal which helped bring industry, commerce and trade into the eastern section of Buffalo. In 1840 Heacock co-founded a woolen mill in the Hydraulics in the hopes of establishing the area as a textile center. As a large landowner, many of the properties in the Hydraulics area can trace their ownership back to Heacock, who divvied up the neighborhood as business and industry began to prosper. Heacock died in 1853.

<sup>14</sup> Both John F. and Henry C. were sons of Henry and Mary Kamman. The elder Henry was also a butcher in Germany and, after he joined sons John F. and Henry C., in Buffalo as well. Another Kamman brother, Charles, worked as a butcher briefly in Buffalo before setting up a successful meat packing and butcher shop in Detroit, Michigan. The elder Henry died in Buffalo in May, 1864.

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buildings and sheds was constructed. By the 1870s, fronting onto Seneca Street on the property was a shop run by the Kamman family located at 759 Seneca which also acted as the family homestead for several members of the large Kamman clan. Small wood-framed structures also existed along the street line, according to 1872 and 1884 atlas depictions of the property.

Interestingly, the Kamman Building appears to have been constructed as a commercial building for other tenants and not for the Kamman meat business. Built on the Kamman property on the site of the earlier small frame buildings, the Kamman Building appears to have been constructed to capitalize on the growth and commercialization of Seneca Street in the late nineteenth-century. The unique series of wood porches on the south face of the building, which would have allowed the tenants and residents of the upper floors a bit of fresh air in the otherwise stifling crowded, industrial area, appear to have been a slightly later addition to the building, dating to about 1888-89.<sup>15</sup> While the original function of the building, and the reason for its construction, are unknown, the first listed tenant appears to be Samuel B. Stewart who ran a plumbing and gas fitting business out of 755 Seneca in 1884 and may have possibly been a residential tenant of the building as well. On October 5, 1893, the South Buffalo Post Office Station "D" was opened at 755 Seneca, serving as the first post office branch in this area of the city. By 1899, Andrew Keller and Henry Deuchler opened the Keller and Deuchler Drug Store in 757 Seneca.<sup>16</sup> Upper floors of the building served residential needs; in the 1890s several members of the Schwert family boarded in the building, and even as late as the 1930s and 40s the Kamman Building housed several residential tenants.

The Kamman family meat markets did eventually operate from the Kamman Building. By 1903 the Kamman Brothers Wholesale Butcher shop was located in 757 Seneca in the building, run by brothers John D. and William H., sons of John F. Kamman.<sup>17</sup> By 1908 the store was kept in the family meat business, and was home to the John H. Kamman Meats outfit, son of Henry and a cousin of John D. and William H.<sup>18</sup> While Buffalo was home to numerous Kamman family members, most of whom were all related and in the butchering industry, the Kamman Building property at 755-757 Seneca Street was owned by John F. Kamman from the 1860s until he passed the parcel to his son John D. Kamman who in turn owned the property until he sold it to the Larkin

<sup>15</sup> The early views from these porches, sometimes called "piazzas" on early Sanborn maps, must have not provided much in the way of scenery. The rear porches directly overlooked the slaughterhouse at the south of the property; the noise and smell from the slaughterhouse must have been atrocious.

<sup>16</sup> Born in 1865, Andrew Keller was a rather prominent Buffalo citizen. Learning the pharmacy business from his father, Stephen Keller, who opened a drug store in the 1870s at 761 Seneca Street, Andrew Keller expanded his father's business into locations at 761, 739 and the location in the Kamman Building at 757 Seneca Street. In addition to serving as a prominent pharmacist in the area, Andrew Keller was elected to serve a three-year term as a City Councilman in 1894. During World War I he also served as chairman of the District 1 Draft Board and as a lieutenant in the Police Reserves, Precinct 2. Andrew Keller was also a prominent local member of several fraternal groups including Buffalo Lodge 846, the Buffalo Consistory, Ismailia Temple, and other groups. Keller died at his home in East Aurora, NY in January, 1941.

<sup>17</sup> Upon the death of John F. Kamman in September, 1879, a majority of his estate was left to his sons, John D. and William H. It appears that the J.F. Kamman Slaughterhouse property and business likely also were transferred to the two sons as well, becoming known as Kamman Brothers Wholesale Butchers by the 1890s.

<sup>18</sup> John H. Kamman was perhaps the most successful and prominent butcher of the Kamman family. Born to Henry C. and Hannah Kamman and brother of Charles H. Kamman (also a butcher) in Buffalo on July 3, 1866, John H. Kamman was brought up in his father's butcher shop at the Washington Market before he began forming the John H. Kamman Company in 1904. The John H. Kamman Company was one of Buffalo's leading butcher shops and meat markets in the early twentieth-century, operating over 30 locations around the city, and when John H. retired in the early 1930s, his business was reported as one of the largest in the north-eastern region.

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Company in 1916. By 1926, the slaughterhouse once owned by J. F. Kamman to the south of the Kamman Building was owned and operated by Frank Beecherer. The Larkin Company used the building for unknown purposes, apparently continuing to rent both residential apartments and commercial spaces, and the only known modification of the building was done by the company in 1931 listed as an order to “alter brick stores.” This “alteration” may have possibly been an updating and modernization of the storefront façade (installing the large, plate glass windows which likely do not date to the 1880s) or the brick repair work visible on the western ground floor, but the vague nature of the building permit issued and the lack of original images or plans for the Kamman Building leaves this question unresolved. The Larkin Company sold the building in the late 1930s as the company faced eventual bankruptcy and closure.<sup>19</sup>

Throughout much of its life, the Kamman building played an important role as a commercial and residential building in the Hydraulics neighborhood. The local community would have visited the building to purchase meats from the Kamman butchers, used the Post Office to mail their letters and notes, and visited the pharmacy to get medicines when they were ill. Like many of the neighboring properties along Seneca Street, it played a dual role, serving as commercial and residential space. With the booming industrial and manufacturing facilities in the area, including the canal, the railroad and the Larkin Soap Company, many of the workers needed places to reside and upstairs apartments and boarding houses like those of the Kamman Building provided affordable housing to people working in the local community.

#### 4.) Franklin Wellington (F.W.) Caulkins

Obviously proud of his creation, Buffalo architect Franklin Wellington Caulkins had his name and role as architect molded into the cast iron decoration of the Kamman Building, forever marking his role in the building’s history.<sup>20</sup> Little is known about the elusive architect, and many of his architectural creations have been demolished and forgotten, yet Caulkins was once one of Buffalo’s most respected and prolific architects in the nineteenth-century.

Born in Hartford, Connecticut in 1855, F.W. Caulkins established his architectural practice in Buffalo in 1878 in the Townsend Block at Main & Swan Streets. An adept practitioner of nearly any style of the day, Caulkins designed several homes in Buffalo including the Elizabethan-style James Smith House at 741 West Ferry Street (ca. 1880s, demolished), the Romanesque Forsythe House at 410 Delaware (unknown date, demolished), and his own intricate Stick Style house at 415 Franklin Street (1882). His series of eclectic Queen Anne-style residences at 69, 51 and 55 Symphony Circle along with 430 Delaware Avenue are all contributing buildings to

<sup>19</sup> It has been speculated that the Larkin Company purchased the building in preparation for clearing the 700 block of Seneca Street in the event that an additional factory or warehouse building for the company would be constructed. During the early twentieth-century, the Larkin Company was actively increasing the size of its factory complex in the area. Between 1898 and 1912, the Larkin Company constructed just to the west of the Kamman Building several massive factory buildings including a Power House at Larkin and Seneca Streets (1902), a massive factory building at Seneca and Van Rensselaer (1898-1907), the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Administration Building (1906) and the Larkin Terminal Warehouse building on Exchange Street (1912). Many neighboring blocks in the Hydraulics were being purchased and cleared for these massive factory buildings, and it is possible that the 700 block of Seneca Street was considered for another expansion which never came to fruition.

<sup>20</sup> While this is generally an uncommon practice, it was not the only time that Caulkins had installed such an advertisement on one of his buildings. On a similarly four-story commercial building at 85 Genesee Street (ca. 1890s) in Buffalo, Caulkins also placed such a cast iron panel on its primary façade.

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the Allentown Historic District (NR 1978). Caulkins was also noted for his commercial projects which included the oddly-shaped Chapin Building at the corner of Pearl and Swan Streets (ca. 1880s, demolished), the seven-story White Building (1881, now significantly altered) and the Richardson Romanesque style State National Bank building in North Tonawanda (ca. 1880s-1900). He also designed the Sloan Malt House (date unknown, demolished), which was located on Exchange Street on the same block as the Kamman Building. Caulkin's unique brick Gothic Revival style Prospect Avenue Baptist Church (ca. 1880s) is a contributing building to the West Village Historic District (NR 1978).

While many of Caulkins buildings are no longer standing, perhaps his best known contribution to Buffalo's architecture is his extensive renovation to the Austin Building at 110 Franklin Street (1833, altered 1880); Caulkins demolished much of the former Unitarian Church building built by Buffalo icon Benjamin Rathbun, completely rebuilding the edifice from the ground floor upwards. After a prolific and diverse career, Caulkins left Buffalo in 1903, living and working in Missouri, Texas and Louisiana before passing away in Bedford, Virginia in 1940.

### 5.) The Romanesque Revival

Romanesque Revival as an architectural style was popular in America primarily during the period from the 1870s into the 1890s. It is characterized largely through the use of polychromatic exterior finishes, rock-faced stone finishes, round-headed arches and arcades, corbels and belt courses. It is a style which emphasized solidity, security, permanence and perpetuity. It became a popular style in commercial architecture due to its masonry construction which added a fire retardant element to the building. Although the style was typically picturesque in its residential or ecclesiastical adaptations, the Romanesque Revival was characteristically more simplified for commercial architecture. Generally square or rectilinear in form, commercial buildings typically utilized the arcade and round arch, stonework and overall simplicity of form which are hallmarks of the style. Some buildings utilized more cost-effective brick construction with additional stone details. Romanesque Revival architecture drew from early Christian buildings such as those at St. Denis near Paris and the Basilica of San Vitale in Ravenna, Italy.

Perhaps the most prominent practitioner of the Romanesque Revival style in the United States was Henry Hobson Richardson. Many of Richardson's most well-known works are in his own Richardsonian Romanesque style, including the Ames Gate Lodge in North Easton, Massachusetts (1880-1881); the New York State Capitol in Albany (1867-1899, NR 1971); and the Buffalo State Hospital (begun 1870, NR 1973, NHL 1983). Richardson's use of the Romanesque Revival emphasized solid stone walls, round-headed arches, signature tower elements and short, robust columns.

The Kamman Building is an excellent example of the translation of this design idiom to a commercial project, and its color, materials and details are all typical of the Romanesque Revival style. It is a style which emphasized solidity, security, permanence and perpetuity, all of which seem evident in its use of brick and stone materials and its relatively simple and utilitarian architectural features. Romanesque Revival commercial buildings were typically built as a part of continuous rows of retail shops and stores, and the simple square form of the style lent itself to the close proximity. Given the usual confined, rectangular front façade of many

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Romanesque Revival commercial buildings, it was not uncommon to find storefronts which utilized terra cotta, wood or cast iron for decorative effects. The Kamman Building is typical of all of these elements of the Romanesque Revival commercial building; it originally was one of several adjacent and likely similar, brick commercial buildings which all lined Seneca Street in the late nineteenth-century. It features a cast iron storefront which still retains much of its decorative paneled pilasters, lion headed brackets and other elements which enlivened the otherwise somber stone and brick façade of the upper floors.

A popular style in Buffalo, the Romanesque Revival style was used in many of the city's churches, commercial and residential buildings. An architectural style used in many churches, civic and governmental buildings, the Richmond Avenue ME Church (date, NR 2008), the Connecticut Street Armory (1898-1900, NR 1994) and the terra cotta tile roofed Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church (1896, NR pending) all exemplify the style. Notable commercial works in the style include the Buffalo Gas Light Company Works (1848/1859, NR 1976), the White Brothers Livery & Boarding Stable at 428-430 Jersey Street (1889, NRE), and the multi-story building for the Barnes & Hengerer company located at 260-268 Main Street (1889). While these buildings demonstrate the diversity of shapes, forms and variations that is common in the Romanesque Revival style, like the Kamman Building, they all utilize heavy masonry and stone exteriors, round headed window and door voids and give a sense of weight, solidity and stateliness.

### 6.) Recent History of the Kamman Building

The Kamman Building has been occupied by several commercial and retail operations during its life. It appears that the ground floor and second floor were typically utilized for these functions, while the third floor was used as residential space (apparently divided into two apartments). The function of the fourth floor is less clear; because of its possible unfinished interior, it seems likely that the floor was used as storage space for the commercial floors below.

After serving as a location for the John H. Kamman Meats shops and for Post Office D in the early 1900s, the building was later occupied by several medical groups including the offices of Dr. Michael McMahon (1930s-1940s) and dentists and physicians Max and Jacob Burstein (1950s-early 1960s) were located on the second floor. In the 1970s and into the 1980s, the Seneca Medical Center (later Seneca Medical Group) occupied portions of the Kamman Building's second floor. The Amber Medical Group, whose sign still hangs above the main entry door, was a tenant of the building in the late 1980s and into the 1990s. Other tenants included the John Schumacher's soft drinks located in 757 Seneca in 1932, a restaurant owned by Michael Norris in 757 Seneca in the mid-1930s- early 1940s, and later this commercial space was occupied by William Harding's fur repair shop in 1945. In later years the 757 storefront was vacant, while Keller's Pharmacy continued to occupy the ground floor of 755 until 1992.<sup>21</sup> The medical groups vacated the building in the early 1990s.

In much the same manner that the third floor was used as a boarding house in the late nineteenth-century, the Kamman Building housed two apartments in the twentieth century. In 1938, Frank W. Collins, a waiter, was

<sup>21</sup> It is believed that at the time it closed in 1992, Keller's Pharmacy was the longest running business in the Hydraulics neighborhood, being founded around 1872 by Stephen Keller, with later branches in several locations on Seneca Street.



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listed as a resident of 755 Seneca Street, and in 1956 Edmond J. Janiszewski, a salesman for Rich's Dairy, and his wife Verna resided at 757 Seneca Street. Given the span of time of the two residential listings, it seems likely that the building served as a residential address throughout the twentieth-century until probably the 1990s when the building was vacated.

After sitting vacant for several years amidst a declining neighborhood, the Kamman Building was purchased in 2007 by the architectural firm of Chaintreuil | Jensen | Stark Architects to serve as their Buffalo office location. The firm is interested in preserving the historic character of the Kamman Building, returning mixed-use commercial, office and residential functions to the neighborhood as a way to revitalize the still blighted area. CJS Architects are working with the firm of Clinton Brown Company Architecture to apply for historic tax credits and to create a plan for the rehabilitation of the building.

## 7.) Conclusion

The Kamman Building is a rare, relatively intact example of the type of dense commercial building fabric which lined both sides of Seneca Street in the mid- to late-nineteenth-century. Today, the Hydraulics neighborhood is a faded memory of its past as a center of thriving industry and manufacturing. Many people in Buffalo are unaware that an area known as the "Hydraulics" even exists, as this eastern fringe of the downtown area is now largely vacant, abandoned, neglected and forgotten. Architecturally, the area appears to have suffered during the twentieth-century; demolitions in the 1920s and the Urban Renewal campaigns of the 1960s and 70s eliminated much of the dense, clustered historic fabric of the area to make room for parking and vacant "shovel ready" lots. The Kamman Building shows some of the evidence of its lost neighbors along Seneca Street; the painted silhouette on the east wall of the Kamman Building outlines the roofline of the former adjacent three-story 759 Seneca Street building, demolished in 1966. Visible in the 1940s-era photograph of the street, the Italianate-styled building was constructed at least by 1872 (prior to the Kamman Building itself) and served as one of the primary residences for the Kamman family for many years. It also served as the location of the Kamman butcher shop during the mid- to late-nineteenth-century. The building was demolished in 1966, cleared for a parking lot.

There is new hope for the area, however. The recent conversion of the former Larkin Terminal Warehouse building on Exchange Street into the new Larkin at Exchange office complex has proven a successful catalyst for attracting business, development and activity in the Hydraulics neighborhood. The overwhelming success of the project is likely to spur new investment and growth into the area, such as the transformation of the Kamman Building into a new office, loft and commercial building. Historians and bloggers are taking a new look at the history, importance and character of the Hydraulics neighborhood, as a place where many of Buffalo's leaders, successful businesses, and cultural heritage originated. As one of the few remaining intact nineteenth-century buildings in the area, the Kamman Building will play an important role as a bridge between the old Hydraulics and the new Hydraulics neighborhoods, continuing its long history as a key residential, commercial and business location.

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