NPS Form 10-900
(Oct. 1990)

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NAT REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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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 Taylor Signal Company/ General Railway Signal Company

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 1738 Elmwood Avenue [ ] not for publication

city or town Buffalo [ ] vicinity

state New York code NY county Erie code 029 zip code 14207

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.)

Ruth L. Pierpont DSHPO 3/31/14
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)

for Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper date of action 5.27.14

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

[X] private
[ ] public-local
[ ] public-State
[ ] public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

[X] 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/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION
Manufacturing Facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Work-in-Progress

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

No Style – Industrial

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone
walls Brick
roof Asphalt
other Wood/ Metal/ Glass

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

Taylor Signal Company — Name of Property

Erie County, New York — County and State

8. Statement of Significance

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

[X] **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.

[X] **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)

Industry

Transportation

Architecture

Period of Significance:

1901 - 1907

Significant Dates:

1902, 1904, 1906, 1907

Significant Person:

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect/Builder:

Esenwein & Johnson

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):

[X] 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: _____

Taylor Signal Company	Erie County, New York
Name of Property	County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.57

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	18	18353518	4765197575	3	18		
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.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Martin Wachadlo and Francis R. Kowsky

organization _____ date 2/12/2014

street & number 368 West Avenue telephone 716.949.6169

city or town Buffalo state NY zip code 14201

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 Rocco Termini, Signature Development

street & number 489 Ellicott Street telephone _____

city or town Buffalo state NY zip code 14203

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

Taylor Signal Company/ General Railway Signal Company: Description

Overview-

The former Taylor Signal Company / General Railway Signal Company factory, located in the City of Buffalo, Erie County, New York, is a largely intact industrial facility built in the first decade of the twentieth century. Constructed between 1902 and 1906, the complex largely retains its as-built appearance, consisting of a rectangular two and three-story brick factory building with a central light court and wings that project east and west from the southern side, and a three-story brick office building at the northeast corner connected to the factory by a hyphen. The factory complex is built of brick pier construction, with load-bearing brick piers around the exterior and an interior structure of steel posts and beams supporting reinforced concrete floors / ceilings. The space between the piers was originally filled with windows, now filled with concrete block and glass block; the brick spandrels and steel lintels remain. The principal façade is east, facing Elmwood Avenue, while the south façade faces the former New York Central Belt Line. Architectural embellishment is minimal, limited to crenelated parapets and small rosettes in the window lintels on the factory, in addition to brick drip moldings and a metal entrance canopy on the office building. The interior is also largely intact, retaining its original open floor plan and other features such as stairways, elevators, fire doors and flooring. Comparison with a c. 1906 drawing (Fig. 1) of the complex, at the time of its completion, shows that the factory complex appears the same today, except for the blocked fenestration. This illustration corresponds with the 1916 Sanborn map of the site. The major exception is the forge shop, a free-standing building with monitor roof behind the nominated complex; badly damaged by fire in 1907 (after the General Railway Signal Co. had left), it was then rebuilt and altered significantly over the years, and finally demolished.

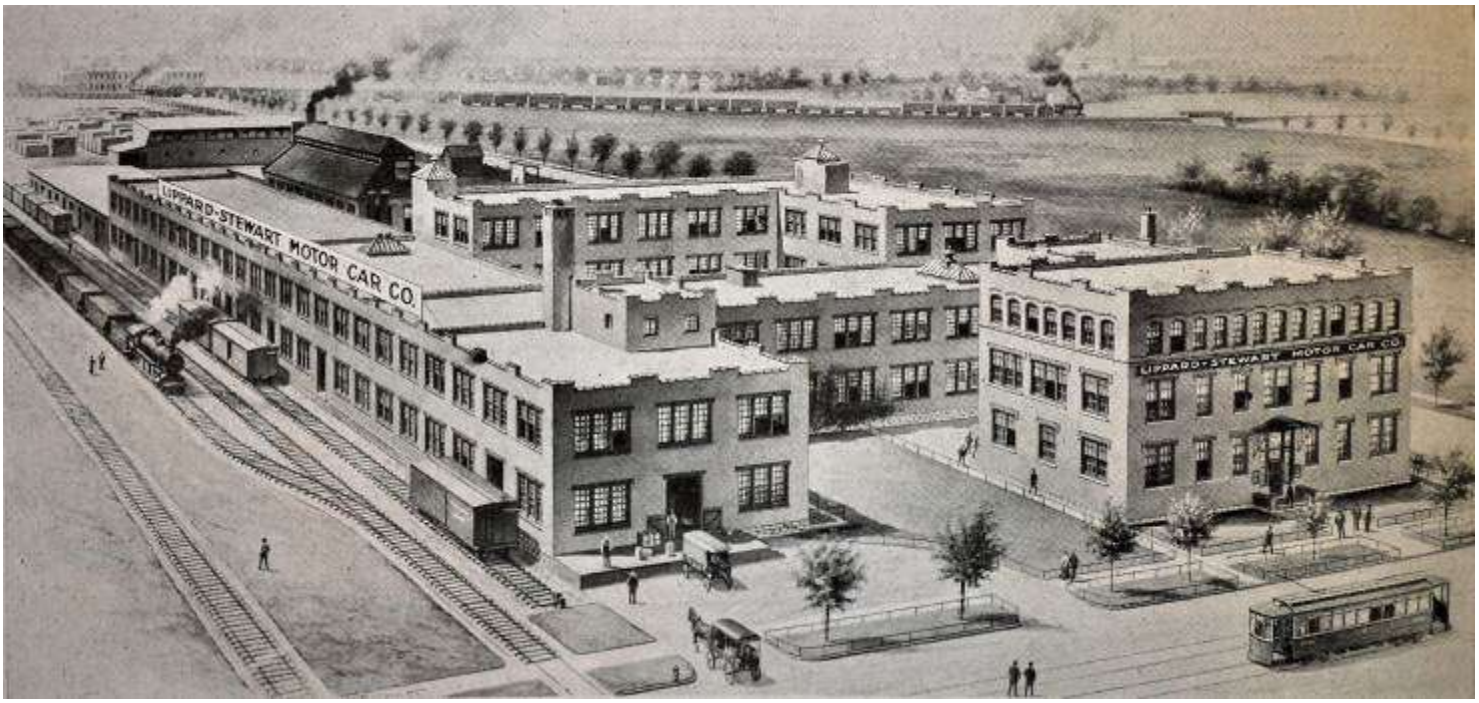
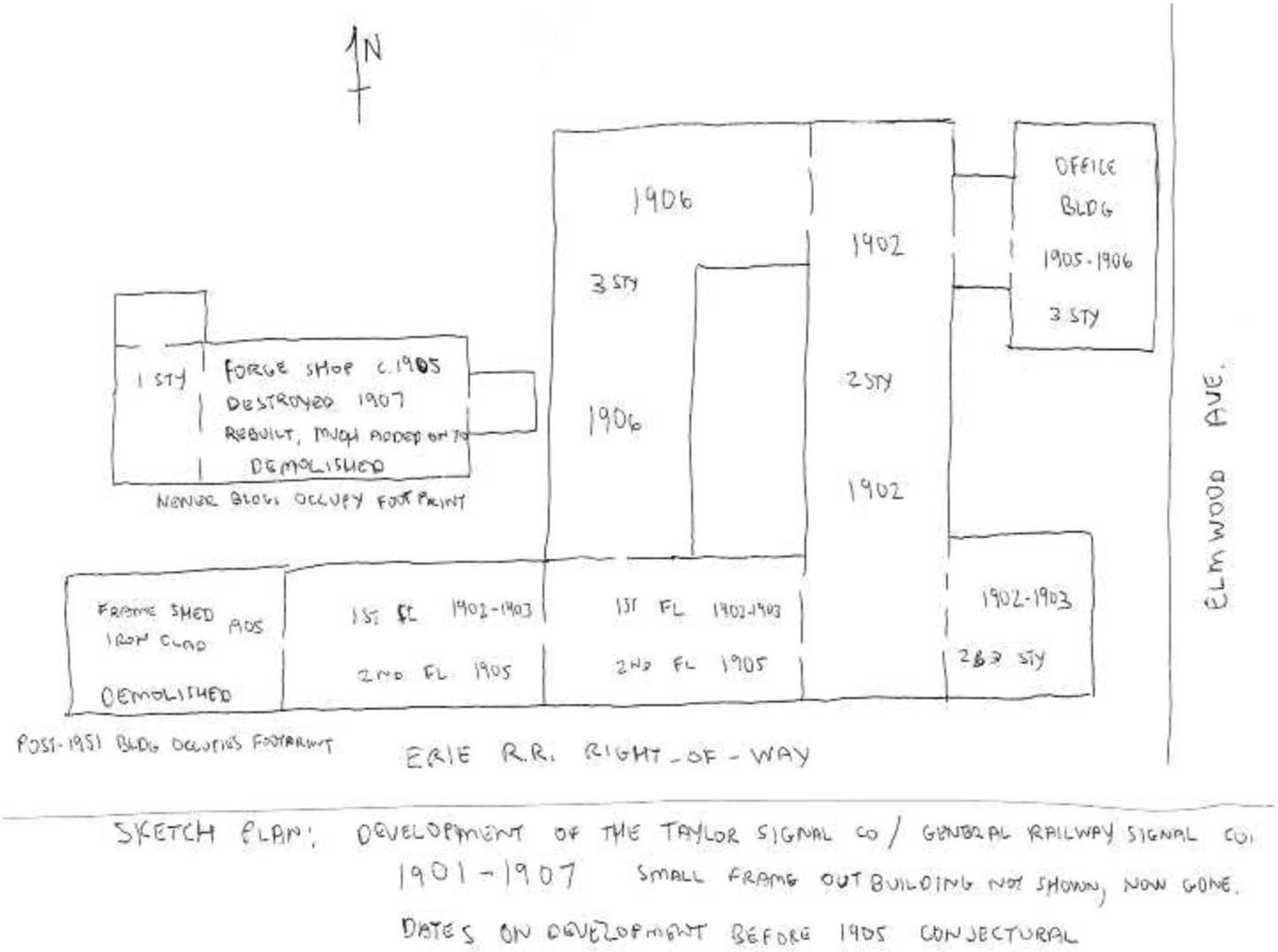


Figure 1 – 1906 drawing (note: The Lippard-Stewart Motor Car Company, who occupied a portion of the building in 1916, altered the rendering to promote their business)

Site-

The former Taylor Signal Company/ General Railway Signal Company facility is located on the west side of Elmwood Avenue in North Buffalo, at the northwest corner of Elmwood Avenue and a CSX railroad corridor, the former New York Central Belt Line. Elmwood Avenue is a major north-south thoroughfare connecting North Buffalo with downtown, some four miles distant; the immediate vicinity is industrial in character. Directly across Elmwood Avenue is the former plant of the American Radiator Company, to the south of which is the former Pierce-Arrow Motor Company (NR listed); to the south, across the railroad is the former Houk Manufacturing Company / Wire Wheel Corporation of America (NR Listed). A short distance to the north of The Taylor Signal Company property is the intersection with Hertel Avenue, a major east-west commercial artery through North Buffalo. Three blocks to the south is the intersection with Amherst Street, an important residential street running east-west through North Buffalo. To the east and west of Elmwood are neighborhoods of predominantly middle class frame houses, interspersed with "flats," two story domestic buildings with apartments for individual tenants on each level. The rectangle of land of the Taylor Signal Company complex and that of the surrounding area is level, with the exception of the underpass just south on Elmwood Avenue that allows automobile and pedestrian traffic to pass under the railroad that runs alongside the property.

The nominated property is a large contiguous building composed of two principal sections: a three-story former office building (1905-1906) that fronts on Elmwood Avenue in front of a two and three-story factory building with an interior light court (built in stages between 1902 and 1906). A three-story hyphen connects the former office building to the manufacturing complex. All buildings are of standard size red brick construction on a random local limestone foundation, with flat roofs and crenelated parapets.



SKETCH PLAN: DEVELOPMENT OF THE TAYLOR SIGNAL CO / GENERAL RAILWAY SIGNAL CO.
1901-1907 SMALL FRAME OUTBUILDING NOT SHOWN, NOW GONE.
DATES ON DEVELOPMENT BEFORE 1905 CONJECTURAL

Figure 2: Site Plan

Office Building-
The office building is a three-story rectangular brick building with a flat roof fronting on Elmwood Avenue. The principal (east) façade is a symmetrical composition, seven bays wide with a center entrance. The entrance door was originally framed by sidelights and a very large transom in leaded glass, now replaced by glass block; this entrance is sheltered by the original swayback canopy supported by decorative metal brackets with Gothic details. The window openings on the first and second floors feature stone or concrete sills and metal lintels with decorative rosettes; these lintels are framed by stylized Gothic drip moldings rendered in brick. The first and second floor window openings in the center and end bays are double the width of those in the intervening bays; these originally contained six-over-six double hung sash windows, with the wider openings containing pairs of sash windows. Concrete or glass block now fill the window openings of the office building. A slightly projecting belt course, five courses high, runs along the base of the third story, supported by a row of brick dentils, above which is a continuous band of thirteen segmental arch windows. These windows have stone or concrete sills and arched brick lintels topped by segmental arch drip moldings in brick one course high, supported by brick dentils. The crenelated parapet above the flat roof is topped by terra cotta tiles.

The north façade repeats the major elements of the east façade, such as the metal window lintels with brick drip moldings. This elevation is three bays wide, and the window openings on the first story are double width on the end bays and triple width in the center, while there are two triple width openings on the second story, with a double width opening in the east bay. The brick belt course on the base of the third story is continued from the front façade, above which is a band of seven segmental arch windows. The gabled parapet shown in the elevation drawing was removed within weeks after the building's completion in 1906, and replaced with the present crenelated parapet. The south façade is a mirror image of the north, with the exception of the center window opening on the first story, which is somewhat narrower than the double width openings flanking it. The west façade is broken by the three-story hyphen that connects to office building to the factory building, and is located north of center in the elevation. There are three bays to the south and two to the north, each composed of a single width segmental arch window opening on each story, with the belt course continuing along the base of the third story. The hyphen is three stories high, and also features the belt course continuing along the base of the third story. The north façade is three bays wide, with single segmental arch window openings on each floor and crenelated parapet at the roof; the south façade features double width window openings with metal lintels (without brick drip moldings) that stagger up the elevation, lighting the stairway within. There are single width segmental arch windows on the third story, with crenelated parapet above.

Factory Building-
The factory building is a two and three-story rectangular brick building with a central light court and flat roof with crenelated parapet. The crenellations are continuations of the brick piers above the top of the parapet, and are not present on the western sides of the building, where they could not be seen from Elmwood Avenue. Nearly all of the fenestration in the complex are wide openings that feature metal lintels with decorative rosettes and brick sills, many of which have metal caps; now filled with concrete and glass block, these openings originally contained nine-over-nine sash windows in groups of three.

The east façade, behind the office building, has six bays south of the hyphen, with one bay to the north; the southernmost bay is narrower, and probably contained only a pair of sash windows. At the corner of this narrower bay a two-and-three-story wing projects eastward towards Elmwood Avenue, forming a courtyard between the office building to the north. The north façade of the wing (facing the office building) is three bays wide; the two easternmost bays have the standard width openings with metal lintels, the first story openings being doorways. The west bay has narrow segmental arch windows that stagger up the elevation, originally lighting a stairway. Above the two westernmost bays rises a third story, flush with the wall plane, with four small segmental arch window openings. The other elevations of the third story are set back from the façades and also have segmental arch openings; there is crenelated parapet and a square brick chimney at the southwest corner.

The east façade of the wing is three bays wide; the center bay on the first story has a narrower opening that was originally a large door that is now bricked in around a small modern door. The crenelations at the corners shown in the drawings are now missing. Between the first and second stories of this façade is a faded painted sign, with white lettering and boarder on a black background: "CENTURY TELEPHONE CONSTRUCTION CO"; smaller lettering beneath this name is not legible. The center bay is fronted by an original concrete pad that served as a loading dock. In front of the dock are a section of stone-paved roadway and a larger section of brick roadway that are contemporary with the factory complex.

The south façade of the factory is two stories high and eighteen bays wide. This façade seamlessly incorporates the wings that project from the east and west main elevations. There are wide doorways on the first story in the second bay in from each end (east and west). A vertical joint running the entire height of the façade is visible between the sixth and seventh bays from the east, indicating the different periods of construction. A faded painted sign, with white lettering on black background, is faintly visible above the second story windows, but only the word "COMPANY" is still legible. The vacant land in front of the south façade was formerly filled with the tracks of the Erie Railroad; the still active tracks of the former New York Central Belt Line are to the south. The west façade of the southwest wing is three bays wide. The second story windows are bricked in; a non-contributing c.1951 one-story steel frame and concrete block industrial building abuts the first story.

The main western façade is three stories high and eight bays wide. At the south end, adjacent to the southwest wing, is a stair and elevator bay that projects above the parapet, topped by a shallow pitch hip roof; there is a doorway at the base, and a small segmental arch window between the second and third stories, indicating the stairway. The four northernmost piers on the first story have buttresses with stone or concrete caps; the three northern buttresses are of brick, while the southernmost pier is concrete block. There is a wide doorway in the first floor, fifth bay from the north. The north façade of the factory is nine bays wide, three stories high at the western six bays and two stories high at the eastern three bays. Most of the brick pier between the third and fourth bays from the west has been replaced by concrete block. There is a large door on the first story, third bay from the east. Between the second and third stories of this façade is a faded painted sign, with white lettering and boarder on a black background, with remnants of two different letterings, apparently for the Century Telephone Construction Co. and the General Drop Forge Corp. Within the factory is a light court, three bays

wide on the north and south sides, and six bays wide on the east and west sides. These walls are treated in the same manner as the rest of the exterior of the factory.

Interiors-

Internally, the main entrance to the complex through the office building features a short flight of stairs leading up to a glazed vestibule. A modern door is flanked by side lights and surmounted by an original leaded glass transom. This space also retains an original radiator. The office building interior features an open floor plan on three floors, with steel columns (apparently encased in concrete) supporting exposed steel beams beneath the reinforced concrete ceilings / floors. On the third floor the ceiling is covered in concrete or plaster. A dumbwaiter remains from the original configuration, but the present interior partitions appear to post-date the General Railway Signal Co. ownership. A three-story hyphen connects the office building to the factory proper, and contains an original staircase.

The factory interior features an open floor plan. The brick piers on the exterior walls have rounded corners; the brick above the steel window lintels is corbeled to support the floor above. Reinforced concrete floors / ceilings are supported by exposed steel beams and posts. There are some brick wall partitions within the factory, some of which were originally exterior walls before additions were made. The openings in these walls are protected by original fire doors. The floors are connected by original staircases and elevators. Sections of the concrete floors have wood flooring, including wood block and strip flooring. A portion of the first floor in the southwest wing is rented out as a machine shop, giving an idea of the original use of the facility.

Taylor Signal Company/ General Railway Signal Company: Significance

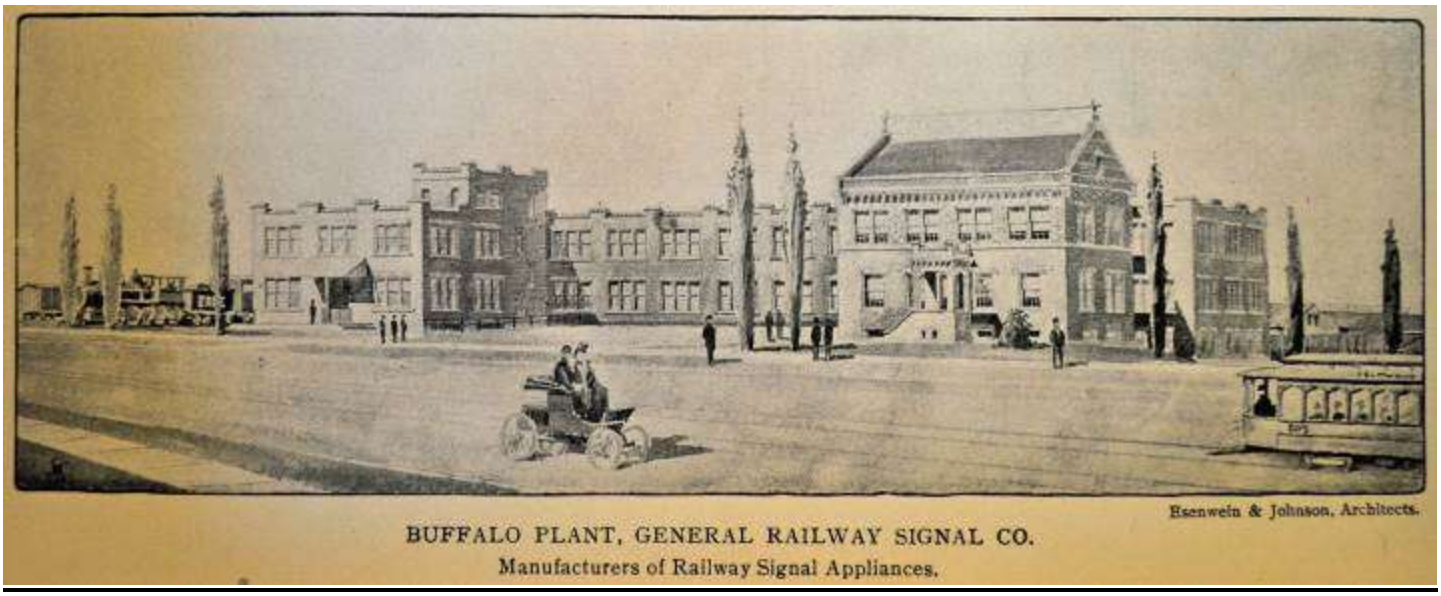


Figure 3: c.1902 Rendering

The former Taylor Signal Company/General Railway Signal Company building is a well preserved example of early twentieth-century factory architecture in Buffalo, New York, that is eligible for the National Register under criterion C in the area of architecture as a largely intact example of an early twentieth-century industrial building. The Taylor Signal Company/General Railway Signal Company building was built on the brick-pier system of factory construction and represents a transitional phase in American factory architecture between the older multi-storied brick mill tradition established in the 1820s and the concrete-framed daylight factory type that was developed between 1902 and 1906. Additionally, the building has special significance from having been designed by the locally well-known architectural firm of Esenwein & Johnson. The office, which designed other factories, planned important buildings of various types in Buffalo, several of which are listed on the National Register. The building is additionally eligible under criterion A in the area of industry and transportation for its association with the Taylor Signal and General Railway Signal Companies, who garnered success in the early mass production of electric railway signals. The period of significance dates from 1901, when construction began under the name of the Taylor Signal Company, to 1907, when the General Railway Signal Company, the name under which the company operated after a 1904 merger, moved operations from Buffalo to its plant in Rochester, New York.

The Architecture of the Taylor Signal Company/General Railway Signal Company: A Brick Pier Factory-

Esenwein & Johnson designed the buildings of the Taylor SIgnal Company/General Railway Signal Company to be built using the brick pier method of construction that was common for such structures in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The factory as a building type came into being in the United Sates in the early 1800s as the Industrial Revolution transformed manufacturing from a cottage industry to a corporate undertaking. Textile mill buildings in New England pioneered the form in the 1820s. (The textile mills erected at Lowell, Massachusetts, and now part of the Lowell National Historic Park [NHL listed 1978] are prime examples.) Typically, these early buildings were multistoried brick structures with load bearing walls and internal heavy timber frames supporting the wooden floors. Their exteriors featured rows of large double hung sash windows, for bringing light into the interior work space was a major concern of mill owners. In their method of construction and materials, these structures had their origin in both earlier domestic architecture and in warehouse buildings found along the waterfronts of many Northern European port cities. American textile mill construction, writes Reyner Banham, the pioneering historian of Buffalo's industrial architecture, was "one of the most successful . . . vernacular building types in recent history."[1]

Utilitarian considerations drove the development of factory architecture throughout the nineteenth century, a process Banham called "rigorous rationalization."[2] Primary among builders' concerns was the need to provide a spacious, light filled, fire-safe work environment. Walls were kept as thin as safety would permit so that as much light as possible from the windows would enter the interior. By the early twentieth century, the new materials of steel and concrete allowed builders to achieve the so-called "daylight" factory that was the modern day descendent of the earlier brick mill buildings (just as the concrete grain elevator was the offspring of Joseph Dart's timber elevator). Along the trajectory of this development, however, was an intermediate stage that was reached in the late nineteenth century. "Even before regular mill construction was finally replaced by concrete-frame construction," writes Banham, "the search for wider windows forced modifications of the external walls of the regular mill that drove the structural performance of brick and masonry to their limits." The Taylor SIgnal Company/General Railway Signal Company building represents these "last limits" of brick factory construction.

The Taylor Signal; Company/General Railway Company building was constructed according to the brick-pier system of construction. In this system, explained Banham, the solid wall was "replaced by a system of separate brick columns, connected by thinner membranes of brickwork containing windows that went almost from pier to pier. In this way the weight of the brickwork that had to be supported by the arch or beam that spanned each opening could be reduced to the minimum required for decent weather proofing, but the stability of the wall as a whole was guaranteed by the thickness of the piers."[3] The openings could be spanned by a variety of means. On the Taylor Signal Company/General Railway Signal Company building, the architects

[1] Peter Reyner Banham, *A Concrete Atlantis: U.S. Industrial Building and European Modern Architecture, 1900-1925*. Cambridge, MA (The MIT Press),
1986), 41.
[2] Ibid
[3] Ibid., 43-44.

used steel beams. At ground level, where the building was especially susceptible to damage from the impact of heavy metal-rimmed cart wheels and by injury resulting from other delivery activities, a rusticated stone foundation protects this part of the structure. The more delicate brickwork above the basement level was, therefore, generally out of range of the coming-and-goings of vehicles and railroad cars. And even though the Taylor Signal Company/General railway Signal Company building was designed by sophisticated architects, its facades are bare and unadorned, bluntly expressive solely of structure, materials, and function. Not a curve is to be seen on the exterior, except for the low segmental arches above the upper floor windows of the office building. Banham called all such early twentieth-century structures models of "puritanically stern, rectangular discipline." For this reason, they impressed many avant-garde European architects who saw in them an alternative to the prevalent architectural historicism. These utilitarian structures became the inspiration for a functional, modern design esthetic.

The fact that the Taylor Signal Company/General Railway Signal Company building rose only two or three floors was another feature common to the interior layout of many brick pier factories. (Older textile mills were often taller.) Latter day manufacturers favored spreading operations out whenever possible because they found that moving materials and equipment internally horizontally was more efficient than moving them vertically. Inside, all floors of the factory complex consisted of open work space. This "universal" space, which early modern architects such as Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe, came to admire in industrial buildings, is supported on slender steel posts and beams. The floors of this semi- fireproof building are of concrete. Students at the Bauhaus in Dessau, Germany, which Gropius designed in 1925, would have felt at home in these once brightly lit, virtually barrier-free interiors. One can imagine that if August Esenwein had ever had the opportunity to show his younger compatriot Mies through this factory, he would surely have heard the pioneer modernist proclaim, "weniger ist mehr."

Although steel was used to reinforce the brick piers, heavy timbers framing were still employed for interior columns, beams and secondary joists that supported the floors, ceilings and the flat roof. (The latter made possible by new materials and methods.) Heavy timbers, observed Banham, "charred or burned slowly and often retained their structural strength long enough for the building to be emptied of goods and workers, naked steel construction would begin to twist, distort and pull the building to pieces even before it melted."[4]

Daylight factories, which were developed between 1902 and 1906, would dispense with wood interiors in favor of metal and concrete supports and floors. The system is most closely identified locally with Ernest J. Ransome, who assisted with the construction of the Berkeley Apartments (1894-1897; NR listed 1987) in Buffalo, reputed to be one of the earliest examples of the use of reinforced concrete technology in the construction of a large-scaled multi-storied building in the United States. The Buffalo construction firm of R. J. Reidpath and Son, which built between 1910 and 1919 concrete-frame buildings for Larkin Soap Company (NR listed 2010), also pioneered the daylight factory.

[4] Ibid., 46.

The location of the factory near railroads also played a role in the plant's operation. The Belt Line Railroad, a creation of the New York Central Railroad, opened in 1883, forming a fifteen-mile rail beltway around Buffalo. (The line is presently part of CSX.) The line provided a ring road around the northern suburbs of Buffalo for passenger and freight trains. The Belt Line Railroad attracted industries to new inland sites in the suburbs. Before this time, most manufacturing in Buffalo was located near the Lake Erie waterfront. The Erie Railroad also had constructed a line around North Buffalo. In the area just west of the Taylor Signal Company/General Railway Company site it paralleled the Belt Line Railroad before veering northward. (In Figure 11 a train is represented passing along this rail line in the background. Today this former rail line is known as the old Erie Railroad Corridor.[5]) The Erie Railroad also had a siding along the southern flank of the Taylor Signal Company/General Railway Company factory. (This spur line, which is shown in use in Figure 10 [in which an Erie locomotive can be seen alongside the factory] and Figure 11, no longer exists.) The site of the Taylor Signal Company/General Railway Signal Company also enjoyed favorable vehicular access from Elmwood Avenue, a major city thoroughfare that had recently been extended to Buffalo's northern border. The Belt Line Railroad and a trolley line on Elwood Avenue provided the large labor for convenient access to the location.

The Taylor Signal Company/General Railway Signal Company: Corporate History-

"The purpose for which the company is formed is the manufacture of an electric interlocking device which is designed to do away with the danger of collision where two railroad tracks cross at grade," stated a newspaper account of the formation of the Taylor Signal Company in Buffalo in 1900.[6] At the time, passenger trains were required to come to a complete stop when reaching an at grade crossing unequipped with a safety device. As a result of this inconvenience, trains were often delayed in meeting their schedules. The device which the new company would manufacture alleviated this problem in the following way:

> When a train is approaching on the main track of a railroad, an operator at the crossing or intersection of the tracks throws a lever connected with the interlocking system. That lever starts an electric motor which sets a signal on the main track giving the engineer the right of way. It also acts as a danger signal on the cross track and throws out a derailing switch. Should the engineer on the cross track disregard the danger signal and go ahead his train would be brought to a standstill by the derailing switch.[7]

The integration of an electric motor to control the signal, rather than a mechanical or pneumatic device (which other safety signals employed) was unique to the Taylor system. The electric signal was the invention of John D. Taylor (1861-1913), a telegraph operator and self-educated man, in Chillicothe, Ohio. In 1889, seeing the potential of his invention to greatly improve rail travel, his friends and neighbors helped him establish a small business in his carpenter shop in Chillecothe to make his device. The venture limped along for a few years until Alvah W. Hall, maker of another signal device, bought out Taylor with the view to greatly expanding operations at a new site in Chicago. A chance meeting with George D. Morgan, president of a real estate and

[5] "Railroad Renaissance: An Urbane North Buffalo Community," *Buffalo Rising*, April 19, 2012, online at http://www.buffalorising.com/2012/04/railroad-renaissance-an-urbane-north-buffalo-community.html
[6] "New Factory Coming Here," *Enquirer* (Buffalo), May 3, 1900.
[7] Ibid.

venture capital business in Buffalo, caused Hall to change his plans. When Morgan told him that he could readily assemble a group of investors in Buffalo to support his scheme, Hall agreed to his proposal. On May 1, 1900, the new company was formed with its first factory and headquarters at Carroll and Wells Street in Buffalo. (A branch office was opened in Chicago's nationally famous Monadnock Building.) Initially, the Buffalo factory employed about 150 workers and staff. The company installed its first signal in 1901 at Eau Claire, Wisconsin. The sole all-electric signaling system in existence at the time, the Taylor signal quickly proved itself to be extremely safe and efficient. Orders soon came in from around the country as well as from abroad. Taylor was to be remembered by the railroad industry as "the man whose monument is the electric interlocking system."[8]

Under the able direction of its chief executive officer, Wilmer W. Salmon, who had come from Chicago to guide the corporation, the Taylor Signal Company soon became a national supplier of railway signal equipment. In the fall of 1901, when the company had been in business for less than eighteen months, a local newspaper announced that it had "decided to double its capacity and build a new plant in this city."[9] The site chosen was on Elmwood Avenue adjacent to the Belt Line Railroad. Plans by Esenwein & Johnson had already been prepared when the notice appeared in the press. The new facility would be two stories high and 250 feet long. A 50-by-70-foot administration building was also contemplated fronting on Elmwood Avenue. Moreover, banking on continued success, the company was prepared to double its factory capacity within a year. This it did. “Among the big manufactories recently completed in Buffalo is the Taylor SIgnal Company building at Elmwood Avenue and the Belt Line. More than 250 men are employed," reads a caption to a photograph of the plant published by the *Courier* on August 25, 1903.

In 1904, W. W. Salmon negotiated an agreement whereby the Taylor Signal Company of Buffalo and the Pneumatic Signal Company of Rochester, New York, were merged to form the General Railway Signal Company. The Pneumatic Signal Company, which was one of Rochester's largest industries, was the leading manufacturer of non-electrified railway signals. "Its products," touted the Buffalo *Courier*, "which were known for reliability and neatness are unsurpassed, have been adopted by many of the leading railroads of the country."[10] The new firm, known henceforth as the General Railway Signal Company would now incorporate electrical components to its signals. (Because of the merger, the factory that is the subject of this nomination will be known as the Taylor Signal Company/General Railway Signal Company building.)

The new General Railway Signal Company soon proceeded to greatly enlarge its Buffalo facility. This work was also entrusted to Esenwein & Johnson. In 1905 Esenwein & Johnson designed a three-story addition on the west side of the facility that created an enclosed light court in the center of the complex; they also designed the company office building facing Elmwood Avenue. These additions were completed by mid-1906.

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[8] *A Centennial History of Alstom Signaling Inc (formerly General Railway Signal Company), 1904-2004.* (Rochester, NY: By the company, 2004), 12.
[9] "New Plant Planned," *Commercial* (Buffalo), November 7, 1901.
[10] "Taylor SIgnal Company/General Railway Signal Company of Buffalo and Pneumatic Company of Rochester to Join Interests," *Courier* (Buffalo), April 9, 1904.

The merger that had taken place in June 1904 had been intended to consolidate operations at the expanded Buffalo plant. However, just months after the new additions were completed in 1906 the General Railway Signal Company decided to close its Buffalo factory and move all operations to Rochester where the city had given land and raised money for a new factory on West Ave. (The company, presently known as Alstom Signaling Incorporated, continues to make railway safety equipment in Rochester.) The move was completed in 1907. Thus, the period of significance for the property being nominated is 1901-1907. "It was a body blow to Buffalo to lose a manufacturing plant like that the General Railway Signal Company, employing in Buffalo nearly 800 men," lamented the *Buffalo Express*. The action surrounding the move "should be an interesting object lesson to our city," admonished Samuel Clemens's old paper. In the age before publically financed industrial development agencies, Rochester, "with its well-known public enterprise," noted the *Express*, "was not slow in taking advantage of the opportunity offered, for within 24 hours of presentation the businessmen of that city, without distinction to business interests, raised $250,000 for bonds and gave the five acres of land to bring the industry to Rochester." The response had been universal, observed the *Express*, for "without distinction, department stores, grocers, bankers, wholesale and retail interests subscribed liberally to the securities, for by so doing they were helping their own town to secure a new plant." Tipping its hat to the Buffalo's Upstate rival, the *Express* acknowledged "that's the Rochester way of doing things and the wisdom of it is shown in its remarkable growth and the prosperity of its local interests."[11]

Starting in 1907 and continuing for several decades, the former General Railway Signal Company plant served several industrial concerns simultaneously. The Century Telephone Construction Company, which had recently suffered the loss to fire of its factory elsewhere in Buffalo, purchased the former Taylor Signal Company/General Railway Signal Company property and used it to make telephone switchboards and related equipment. This firm was soon joined by the General Drop Forge Company, which moved into the forge shop, a freestanding brick building at the rear of the complex (no longer extant). In 1914, the Lippard-Stewart Motor Car Company occupied part of the plant. An excellent view of the plant published in that year is labeled to appear that the entire plant is part of the auto company. The following year, the Curtiss Aereoplane Company made aircraft engines in a part of the plant. Beginning in 1920 and extending into the 1950s, the General Drop Forge Company began to make significant additions to their plant at the rear of the property, nearly all built in metal. These buildings, now on separate parcels of property, fall outside the period of significance. One of them is partially visible in the background of Figure 3. Another, a one-story concrete block unit with a metal and glass superstructure, abuts the western end of the south wing of the nominated building and has an internal connection to the original building. This 1950's work shop (the ground level of which is painted pink in Figure 3), which is on a parcel of property separate from that of the nominated building, is considered a non-contributing addition. Eventually, by the mid twentieth century most of the historic structure was converted to storage facilities, and, in most recent years, was home to a large furniture store. The plant remained, however, remarkably unchanged through subsequent periods of ownership (the only major alteration being the blocking-up of the windows), thus presenting a rare surviving example of an early twentieth-century industrial complex.

[11] "Recent Loss is Largely Offset," *Buffalo Express,* May 5, 1907.

Esenwein & Johnson, Architects-

Esenwein & Johnson was among the most significant architectural firms ever to practice in Buffalo. August C. Esenwein (1856-1926), a native of Esenwein-Virnsberg in southern Germany, trained in architecture and engineering at what is now the University of Stuttgart. Following his graduation in 1879 he worked for a time in an architectural office in Paris. In 1880 he immigrated to the United States taking a position as a draughtsman with a railroad company in Buffalo where there was a large German population. Two years later after winning the competition for the Buffalo Music Hall (destroyed by fire in 1885), he opened his own architectural office. Esenwein enjoyed a small but successful practice until 1897 when he formed a partnership with James A. Johnson (1865-1939). A native of the Syracuse area Johnson had trained in several prominent offices, including McKim, Mead & White and Richard Morris Hunt in New York, and Marling & Burdett in Buffalo. In the early 1890s he had entered into short-lived partnerships in Buffalo with Marling & Johnson and Boughton & Johnson. Esenwein & Johnson soon achieved great success with buildings for Buffalo's Pan-American Exposition of 1901, most notably the Temple of Music, where President William McKinley was assassinated. In addition to many houses and business blocks, the firm designed some of the most prominent buildings in Buffalo, including the General Electric Building (1912, NR listed 2008), Lafayette High School (1903; NR listed 1980), Masten Park High School (1913; the present City Honors High School), the Ward Pumping Station (1916), and the Buffalo Museum of Science (1926). The firm also developed one of the principal hotel design practices in the United States. Esenwein & Johnson drew plans for the Samuels (1910) in Jamestown, New York, the Utica (1910, 1925; NR listed 2001), in Utica, New York, the Niagara (1923; NR listed 2008) in Niagara Falls, New York, and major additions to the Lafayette Hotel (1913-1926, NR listed 2010) in Buffalo.

August Esenwein had designed numerous factories and additions in his pre-partnership years, the most notable survivor being a factory for the Kurtzman Piano Company (1891) at 526 Niagara Street in Buffalo. The Taylor Signal Company/General Railway Signal Company building was the earliest and perhaps most significant industrial design of Esenwein & Johnson. Other examples in this category in Buffalo include additions to the Pratt & Lambert varnish works (1903-1911; demolished) on Tonawanda Street; silk factories for the Guilford Manufacturing Company at 1270 Broadway (1905-1915, adjacent to the Belt Line Railroad; endangered)[12] and at 207 Guilford Street (1909-1919; endangered); and additions to the Sterling Engine Company (1907-1914) at 1250 Niagara Street. The firm also designed additions to several local breweries, which were numerous at the time.

By the 1920s Esenwein & Johnson had become principally specialists in hotel design. During the Great Depression, however, there was little call for this type of construction. and the firm struggled to survive. Although not a hotel, their twenty-story United Office Building of 1928-1929 in Niagara Falls, New York, (NR listed 2005) was probably the firm's last important commission. Having attracted few clients during the decade of the 1930s, Esenwein & Johnson dissolved their practice in 1942.

[12] Mike Puma, "(Potentially) Historic Tax Credit Ready: Duffy Silk Mill Co.," *Buffalo Rising*, December 14, 2012, online at http://www.buffalorising.com/2012/12/potentially-historic-tax-credit-ready-duffy-silk-mill-co.html.

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"Inspection Trip," *Buffalo Commercial*, April 21, 1904.

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"Merger of Signal Companies is now Fully in Effect," *Buffalo Express*, June 23, 1904.

"Machinists on Strike," *Buffalo Express*, January 19, 1901.

"More Houses are Needed at Once," *Illustrated Buffalo Express*, April 21, 1907.

"More Power Coming," *Buffalo Express*, May 13, 1901.

"New Corporations," *The New York Times*, May 4, 1900.

"New Plant Planned," Buffalo Commercial, *November 7, 1901*.

"Recent Loss is largely Offset," *Buffalo Express*, May 5, 1907.

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"Slugged by Strikers," *Buffalo Express*, May 22, 1901.

"Taylor Signal Company of Buffalo and Pneumatic Company of Rochester," *Buffalo Courier*, April 9, 1904.

"W. W. Salmon Retained as Head," *Buffalo Courier*, June 10, 1904.

"Wilmer W. Salmon," *Buffalo News*, June 15, 1904.

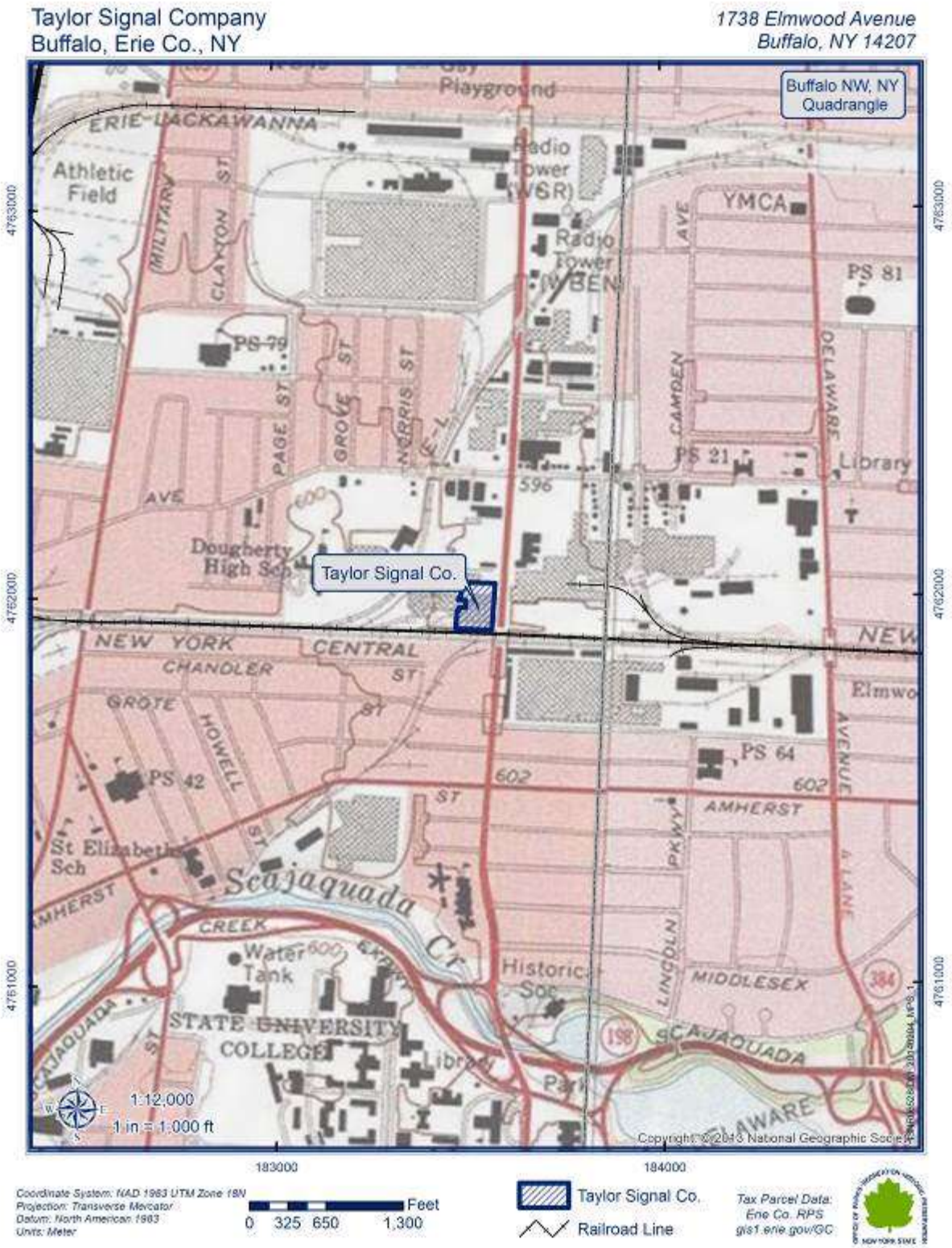
"Will Consolidate," *Buffalo Commercial*, April 9, 1904.

Verbal Boundary Description

The former Taylor Signal Company/ General Railway Signal Company facility is located on the west side of Elmwood Avenue in North Buffalo, at the northwest corner of Elmwood Avenue and a CSX railroad corridor, the former New York Central Belt Line. The boundary is indicated on the attached map with scale.

Boundary Justification

The boundary was drawn to include the extant land and building associated with the Taylor Signal and General Railway Signal Company during their 1901 to 1907 period of significance.


Taylor Signal Company
Buffalo, Erie Co., NY
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Buffalo, NY 14207
Buffalo NW, NY
Quadrangle
Taylor Signal Co.
ERIE-LACKAWANNA
Athletic Field
MILITARY
CLAYTON ST
Radio Tower (WSR)
Radio Tower (WBEN)
YMCA
PS 81
PS 79
PAGE ST
GROVE ST
NORRIS ST
CAMDEN
DELAWARE
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Tax Parcel Data:
Erie Co. RPS
gis1.erie.gov/GC

Taylor Signal Company
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1738 Elmwood Avenue
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∑ = 2.57 Acres
Elmwood Ave
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Grote St
Great Arrow Ave
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Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter
Feet
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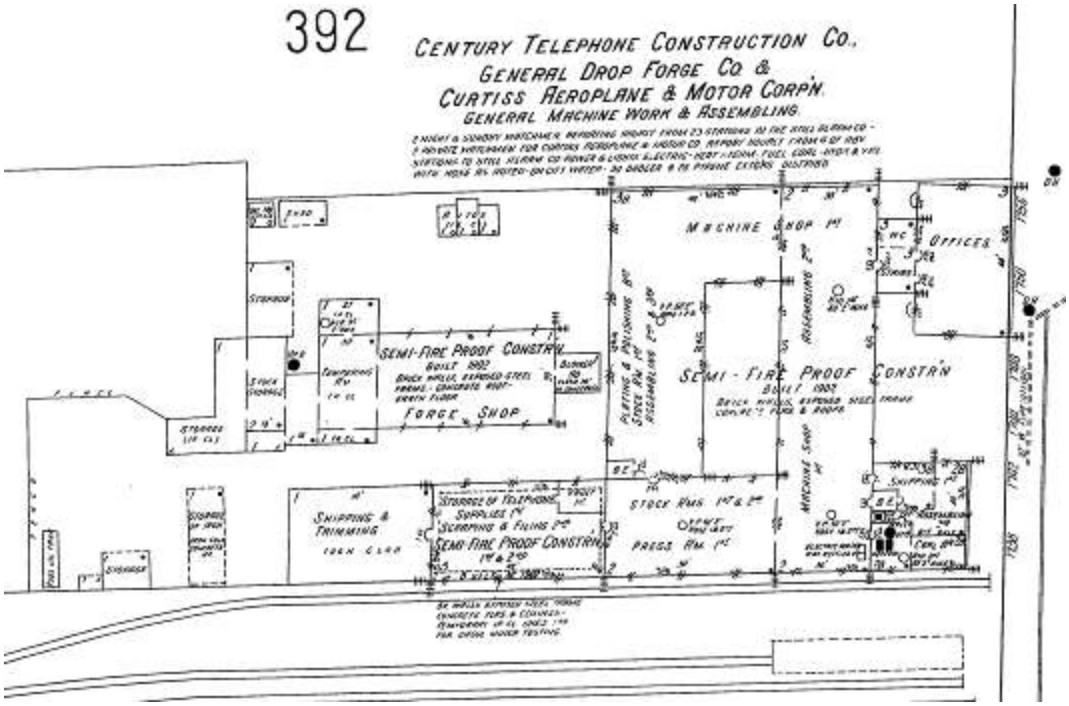
Taylor Signal Co.
Railroad Line
Tax Parcel Data:
Erie Co. RPS
gis1.erie.gov/GC

Additional Information

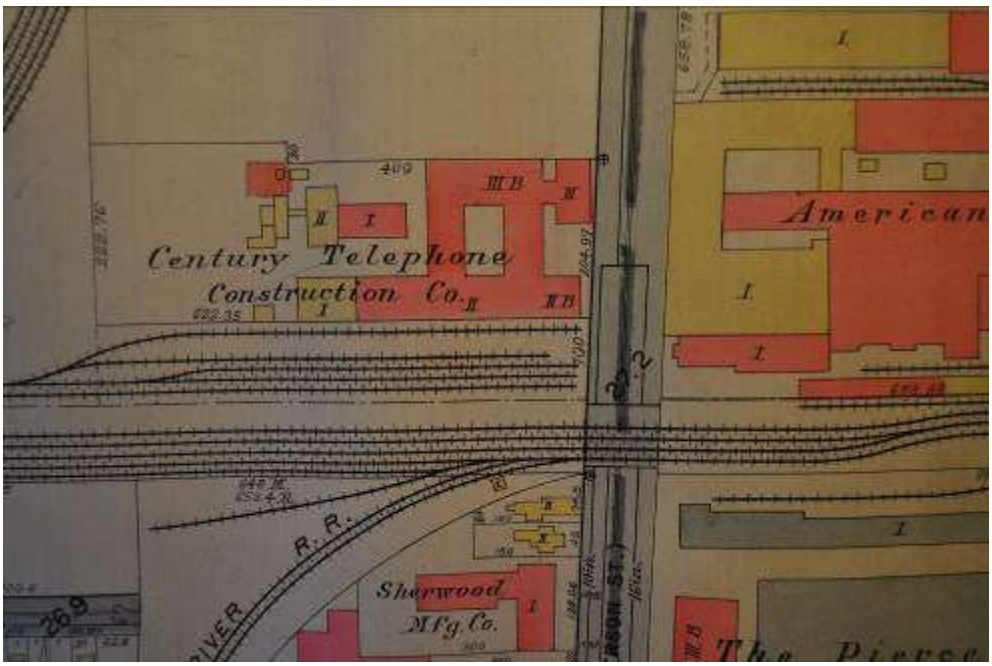
List of Photographs

All Photographs were taken by Martin Wachadlo in December 2012.

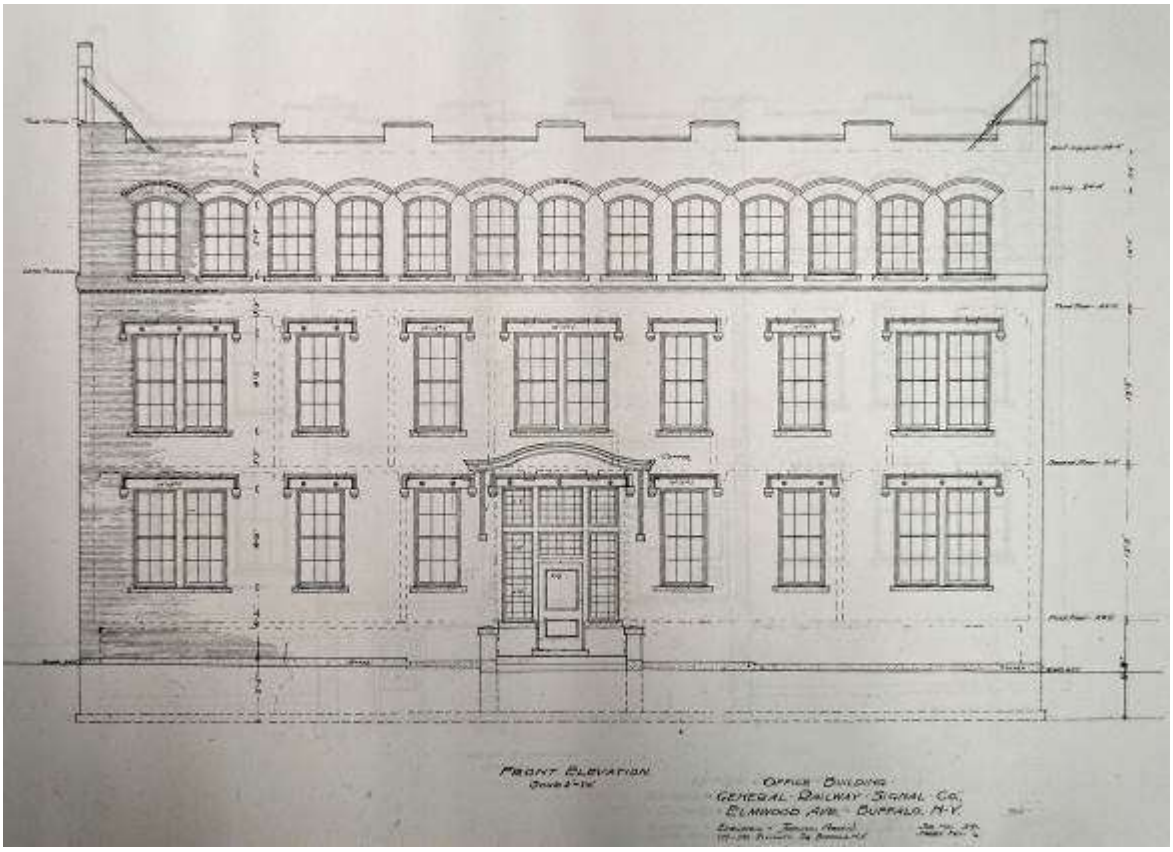
1. General view from the Southeast
2. General view from the northwest. The photograph shows the north and west elevations of the main factory block, the rear and north elevation of office building, and the hyphen connecting it to the factory block.
3. General view from the southwest. The view shows side of the building along the former Erie Railroad siding. Only the brick structures are part of the nominated property.
4. View in interior light court looking southeast.
5. Office Building
6. Office building and general view from the northeast.
7. Office building; detail showing window design.
8. Office building; entrance canopy
9. Brick and cobblestone roadway in front of east side of the factory buildings.
10. Interior of vestibule.
11. Office building, third floor interior.
12. Factory, second floor interior.
13. Pier and corbel detail, first floor
14. Steel work at ceiling, third floor
15. Fire doors, first floor.
16. Wood block floor, second floor.
17. Wood on concrete floor, third floor.
18. Portion of first Floor presently used as a machine shop



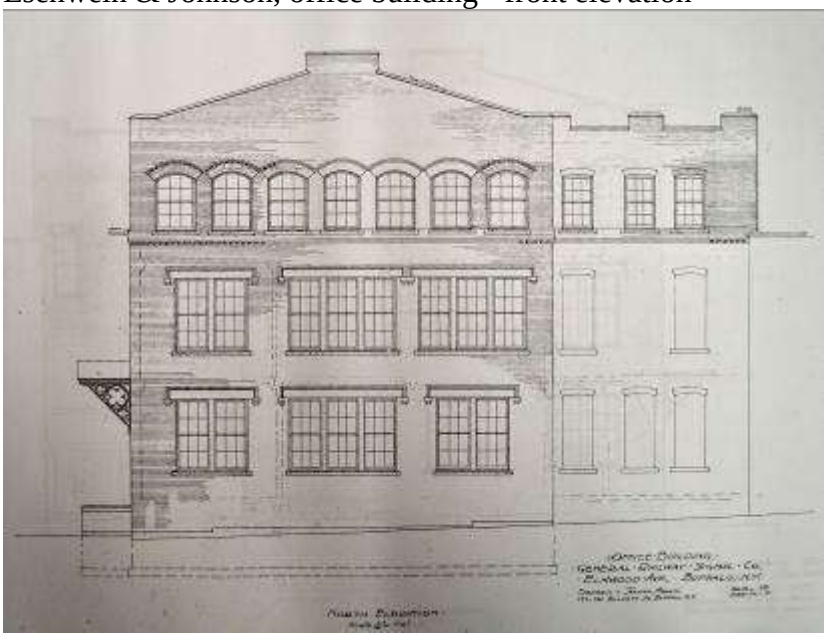
Sanborn map, 1916



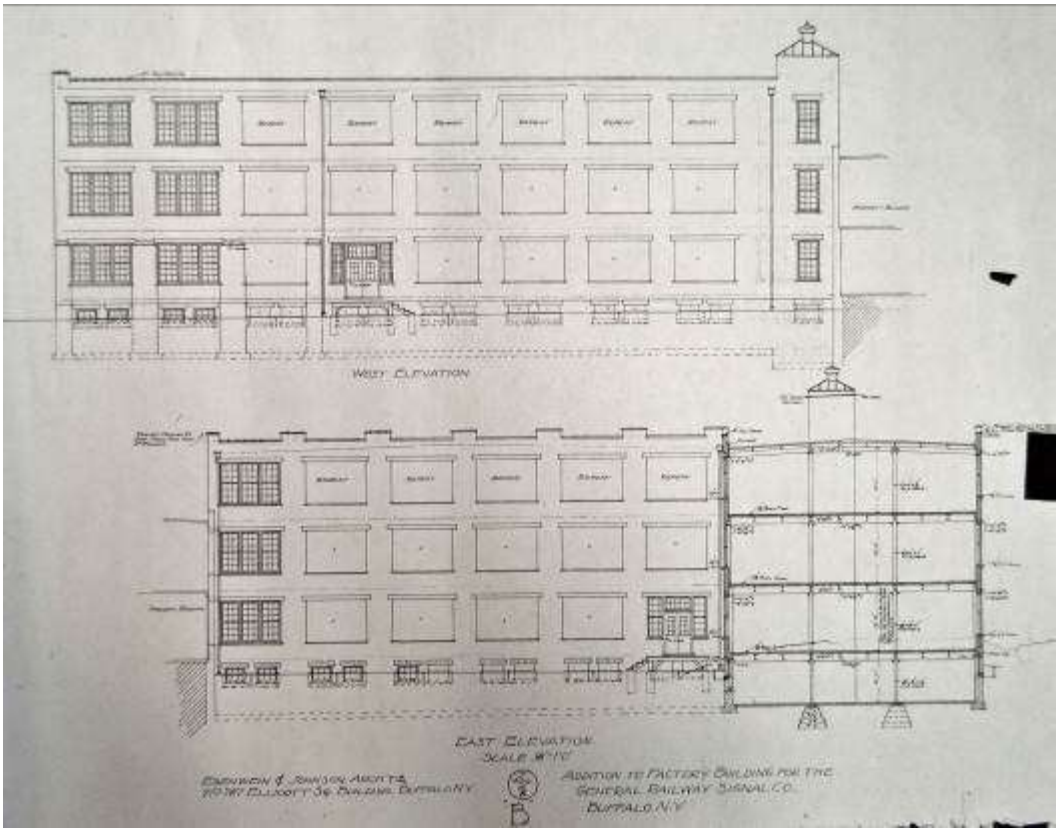
1915 *Atlas of the City of Buffalo* with nominated property outlined with heavy black dashes.



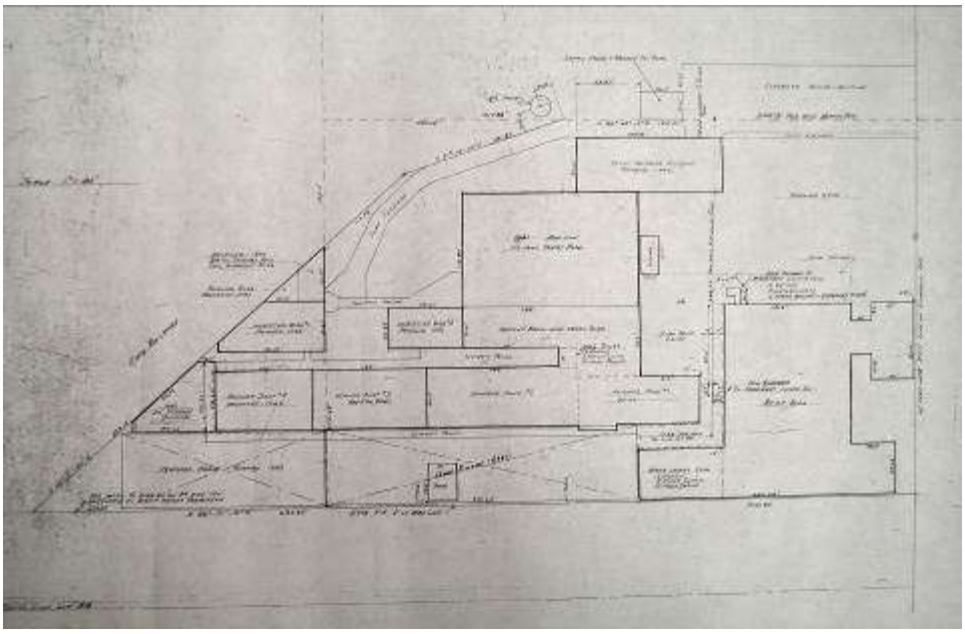
Esenwein & Johnson, office building - front elevation



Esenwein & Johnson, office building - north elevation



Esenwein & Johnson, 1906 addition- east elevation



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