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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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name Wollensak Optical Company Building
other names/site number Home Profit Hosiery Building
name of related multiple property listing N/A

Location

street & number 872 Hudson Ave

N/A	not for publication
N/A	vicinity

city or town Rochester
state New York code NY county Monroe code 055 zip code 14621

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 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Signature of certifying official/Title [Signature] Date 6/13/2015

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government DSHPD

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official _____ Date _____

Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register
- other (explain) _____

Signature of the Keeper [Signature] Date of Action 7/27/2015

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5. Classification

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

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

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

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

Current Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/factory

Vacant

7. Description

Architectural Classification
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

Materials
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

No style

foundation: concrete
 walls: brick, steel

 roof: asphalt
 other: _____

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Narrative Description

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

Summary Paragraph

The Wollensak Optical Company Building is a four-story factory building constructed in 1922. It sits on a corner lot at 872 Hudson Avenue in the northeast section of the City of Rochester, Monroe County, New York. The south and west sides are visible from the street and it abuts empty lots to the north and to the east. It measures five-bays across the façade by five-bays deep and is built of brick, steel and concrete. The primary material is light colored brick with details highlighted in stone and darker brick. Large openings for windows are between the brick piers on the north, south and west elevations, but the openings are currently covered with plywood. The west elevation features an original wood and glass entry and metal projecting canopy at the ground floor while a decorative brick cornice and parapet wraps most the top of the building. The east elevation lacks the decorative details of the other elevations, limited to plain recessed brick panels under the windows at the south end. On the interior, the building is largely an open floorplan in each story with many of the original factory finishes still intact (concrete and tile floors, wood supports and beams, some six-over-six sash). Additionally, the building retains an original decorative metal main stair with wood railings at the front of the building and a similar secondary stair at the back. The building has been vacant for several years and was shuttered to deter vandalism, but it is still highly intact despite some recent water damage. The building retains good integrity, especially in terms of its form/design and extant historic fabric. Much of the setting remains similar as when constructed, with the surroundings being a mix of residential, commercial, and light industrial buildings.

Narrative Description

Location & Setting

The Wollensak Optical Company Building is located at 872 Hudson Avenue in the City of Rochester, Monroe County, New York, and sits at the northeast corner of Hudson Avenue and Avenue D, approximately one-and-one-half miles east of the Genesee River, which divides the city into east and west sides. Both Avenue D and Hudson Avenue are primary local traffic arteries in this neighborhood, running east-west and north-south, respectively. The block just south of the nominated property along Hudson Avenue is lined on both sides with commercial buildings, which include some smaller, two-story, frame buildings from the early twentieth century, one large mid-

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century office building, and some modern, one-story buildings, together with a few parking lots. Apart from this block, however, the surrounding area in each direction is primarily residential in character and is composed of frame residences dating from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. The Wollensak Optical Company Building faces west onto Hudson Avenue and is built out to the lot line on each side, bordered by a wide empty lot to the north containing an asphalt-paved parking lot and a large grassy field to the rear.

The building was constructed ca. 1922 by the Home Profit Hosiery Company as a manufacturing plant for knitting machines and is a four-story factory that measures five-bays across the primary façade by five-bays deep and is brick, concrete and steel with an interior timber framed ceiling system. The Wollensak Optical Company occupied the building from 1925 to 1969.¹ Apart from the boarding of the original windows, the exterior of the building is intact to its original appearance and is in good condition. On the interior, the building had an open factory floorplan with a few enclosed spaces on each floor, all of which are intact, as are a majority of the original finishes. Some interior updates were made around mid-twentieth century that included new partition walls on each floor and the installation of new HVAC systems; however, the building remains largely unchanged and intact to its original appearance. The building is currently vacant and is in good condition on the exterior, while the interior is in fair condition as deferred roof maintenance has led to water infiltration.

EXTERIOR

Rectangular in form, the Wollensak Optical Company Building is symmetrically composed with similarly designed elevations on three sides (north, south and west elevations). It sits on a concrete base/foundation with short concrete piers below the main brick piers. The main feature of the building is the repeated use of large windows with stone sills at regular intervals that are separated by decorative brick piers and lower brick panels. A decorative brick parapet with stone coping wraps the north, south and west sides of the building and conceals a flat roof. The parapet itself is executed in beige brick and consists of three courses of corbelled brick, two bands of soldier-coursed brick, and a heavy stone coping at the top. The parapet contains dark brick square outlines over each pier with a dark diamond brick design in the center.

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Owing to its corner location, both the west-facing façade and the south-facing secondary elevation are highly visible and are clad in a striated beige brick accented by details in darker striated brick. The rear elevation is simpler in appearance, with less prominent windows, buff colored brick and decorative details limited to two brick piers on the north end, stone sills and recessed brick panels under the windows in three of the five bays. On the west, north and south elevations, the bays are framed at the sides by vertical piers expressed as full-height brick pilasters and, at each floor, feature a brick spandrel beneath each of the windows with a framed panel in the brick. On the west and south elevations, the pilasters are articulated with dark brick at the sides and a stylized capital of two-tone brick, as well as two-tone brick at the spandrel panels. At the north elevation, all brick is a plain buff color while repeating the same pattern/design as seen in the south elevation.

Each elevation of the building has five bays. Windows are mostly in groups of three double-hung windows. Currently, all window openings are covered with painted plywood for security purposes, and much of the original six-over-six sash remains in place behind the coverings. The rear (east) elevation lacks the decorative details seen in the rest of the building, being more utilitarian with tall brick stacks for ventilation and stairs. Metal duct work and downspouts are visible in this elevation. A brick panel is above each of the windows with a short, flat parapet with a camel-back clay tile coping. In each bay on this elevation, the pilasters rise through the parapet and roofline. At one point, the building was connected to an annex at the rear and so the remnant of a connecting passage is present at the first floor of the center bay. The two-story rear annex was demolished at an unknown date.

On the façade, the original main entry is located in the center bay. It consists of a wide opening containing a pair of doors, framed in stone trim with flanking wood panel sidelights and a clear glass arched transom over the top. The doors each originally had a large glass centers but most of the glazing is missing and is boarded from behind. The original wood casing remains in place and incorporates slender colonettes framing the doors and separating them from the sidelights to either side. An original, segmentally-arched, pressed tin canopy is suspended from chains, sheltering the entry. The canopy has decorative pressed tin at the underside of the ceiling, as well as a decorative border of metal and glass lappets. At the second floor, the center bay contains a wide, tripartite, rounded window opening also framed in pale beige stone with a small keystone at the apex and a

¹The company was eventually purchased by the 3M Corporation and closed in 1972; however, a *Rochester Daily Record* item in 1969 indicated that the building at 872 Hudson Avenue was vacant.

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large panel just beneath it in matching stone. On this elevation, the bays at each end are slightly narrower, allowing for paired windows rather than groups of three as seen in the inner bays. All window openings have stone sills, decorative brick panels and piers, as seen in the south elevation.

INTERIOR

The interior is largely an open floor plan on each floor with space that could be partitioned when necessary. The interior of the building retains several historic finishes and features throughout, and the original floorplan is quite intact. Each floor has a largely open plan with regularly spaced, square wooden columns. Some mid-century partitions are at the center and original partitions form small rooms along the rear wall. The vertical circulation in the building consists of an original, open, main stair centered at the front (west) end of the building, a secondary stair in the northeast corner, and a freight elevator centered at the rear (east) end of the building.

Upon entering the building, the first-floor main entrance opens into a lobby wrapped by the central stair and open to the floors above. This is the most highly finished space in the building, with square terra cotta floor tiles and plaster walls dressed in a faux stone treatment. The staircase throughout has a cast-iron structure with cast-iron risers, marble treads, and an elegant, cast-iron railing with detailed, slender square newel posts and a polished wood handrail. The secondary stair located in the northeast corner of the building also has a cast-iron structure with marble treads and is identical to this stair except that it is smaller in size. For the rest of the first floor, a large loading dock area occupies the southeast corner adjacent to the freight elevator and along the rear wall, original bathrooms are located between the secondary stair and the freight elevator with a north-south access hallway.

In general, the first floor is open space. Some mid-century partitions are at the center, in the loading dock area, and enclose two small rooms at the southwest corner. The floors are a mix of concrete and terra cotta tile throughout and the perimeter walls are exposed or painted brick. Bull-nosed brick frames the windows at the perimeter walls. Projecting piers at the walls have rounded brick at the edges. In several locations, original paneled wood doors remain in place. Overhead, the ceilings feature deep wood beams supporting the wood floor deck above. At the southeast corner, the west wall of the enclosed loading bay has solid wood panels at the base and beadboard panels at the top,

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all framed in original, heavy, flat millwork. The mid-century partitions are similar and are composed of homasote panels and windows framed in painted millwork, with sheetrock in some locations.

The second, third, and fourth floors of the building are similar with each having an open floorplan with the stair at the center of the west wall, the secondary stair, bathrooms and freight elevator at the north end of the rear wall. Regularly spaced wood columns are throughout with a few non-original partitions of either sheet rock or homasote, creating a few large rooms. At these upper stories, the perimeter walls and the original partitions at the northeast corner are painted brick with original painted wood casings at the door and window openings. The floors are the original hardwood, although in poor condition due to water infiltration. Ceilings have a wood deck supported by timber beams. In a few bays, original beadboard is visible at the ceiling between the beams. The beams themselves are trimmed with crown molding, likely indicating the location of an office or other specialized space.

Mid-twentieth century partitions divide each floor into a few large rooms in a style and aesthetic representative of that era. Rooms are composed of panels of homasote or gypsum in varying sizes with large panels at the base, windows across the center in some places, and smaller panels across the top, all framed with slender, painted wood trim. A mid-twentieth century renovation of the building installed new ventilation systems throughout the building. Each floor currently has exposed ductwork at the ceiling that includes large, centrally located, saucer-like, polished aluminum air diffusers. At the third floor, some of the built-in machinery used by the Wollensak Optical Company remains in place and appears to consist of buffing equipment built into the partition walls and integrated into the building's updated ventilation and air handling system.

Even with a long period of vacancy, the nominated property retains integrity, featuring a large amount of extant historic fabric in the exterior and interior. Its original siting is close to the corner of Hudson Avenue and Avenue D at the edge of the wide paved sidewalks, allowing it to dominate the corner. As previously stated, a one-story annex was built on the north end, but it was not original to the building and has since been demolished.

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Industry

Architecture

Period of Significance

1922-1969

Significant Dates

1922, 1925, 1939, 1969

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Period of Significance (justification) The period of significance begins in 1922 with the construction of the nominated building for the Home Profit Hosiery Company and extends through its purchase and use by the Wollensak Optical Company. The end date (1969) generally reflects the fifty-year threshold for historic buildings and when the company vacated the building. The building was owned by Wollensak until the company ceased all operations in 1972.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary) N/A

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

Originally built for the Home Profit Hosiery Company, the nominated property is locally significant under Criterion A in industry for its long association with the Wollensak Optical Company, a major industry for Rochester that began in the late nineteenth century. After working at Bausch and Lomb (another optical industry in Rochester) for over fifteen years, Andrew A. Wollensak started the firm in 1899 after developing what was known as the prism shutter lens. This new industry reflected the tremendous industrial growth and diversification in the city at the turn-of-the-twentieth century, and by the 1920s, the company outgrew its original factory at on North Clinton Street. In 1925, the Wollensak Optical Company bought a building at 872 Hudson Avenue from a bankruptcy auction and moved all manufacturing to the site. After 1939, the building at 872 Hudson Avenue became the company's facility entirely devoted to lens manufacture. Wollensak lenses contributed to Rochester's legacy of industry and innovation and as the premier location for optical production in the United States. Company innovations resulted in its reputation as a leader in the motion picture and photography industries until it ceased operations in 1972. The Wollensak Optical Company directly contributed to Rochester's tremendous growth prior to World War II with the company becoming a major employer in Rochester.

The Wollensak Optical Company Building is also significant under Criterion C in architecture as an intact example of early twentieth century industrial design that used available building technology, such as economical fireproof construction with ready-made materials of concrete, steel, brick and tile. The building conveyed the company's identity as a seemingly successful business with a formal entrance and decorative cornice. The interior revealed its utilitarian nature with a structural system that allowed for an efficient flow of operations with open floorplates to accommodate machinery and large windows for ample natural light and ventilation for workers.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Industrial Progress and the Development of Rochester

Construction of the nominated building coincided with massive growth and urbanization of the city of Rochester around the turn-of-the-twentieth century. Industrial progress, unprecedented private investment, and tremendous population growth defined Rochester during the early decades of the twentieth century, a period sometimes referred to as the city's "Golden Age."² The combination of private enterprise and a readily

² Joseph W. Barnes, "The City's Golden Age," *Rochester History* 35, no. 2 (1973): 1.

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available labor force drove an unprecedented wave of industrial urbanization, complete with the construction of new factories and warehouses in previously undeveloped neighborhoods. Previous to this growth, industry in Rochester was confined to the central city, but as roads reached the outskirts of the city, influential companies took advantage of available lands to relocate and extend industry to the outer limits of Rochester.

Prior to the advent of the city's industrial awakening at the turn-of-the-twentieth century, advances in transportation systems and transformations in the economic landscape reshaped the city many times over. When it began in the early years of the nineteenth century, Rochester was as a market town at the mouth of the Genesee River that emerged as a full-fledged city in a matter of decades.³ The completion of the Erie Canal and the assurance of steady commercial activity made Rochester a dominant marketplace along the canal, and the city soon emerged as a primary location for the milling of flour from farms throughout the Genesee region of Western New York.⁴ Grain from the surrounding regions was shipped along the Genesee River for processing at one of the many mills located in close proximity to the city's "Four Corners" at the intersection of West Main and State Streets in the middle of what would eventually become the city's central business district. The presence of these mills led to associated secondary industries devoted to the manufacture of flour-based products.⁵ Rochester officially became a city in 1834, and by the end of the 1830s, the city was dubbed "the Flour City."⁶

Rochester retained its predominance throughout the nineteenth century, although a market catastrophe occurred around the middle of the century that shifted its economic emphasis. Several years of too much rainfall and rampant pests, such as the wheat weevil, gave rise to a massive grain shortage in the Genesee River Valley during the 1850s and a shift in agriculture.⁷ The shortage of wheat for milling redirected business prospects in the city towards new industries that included the rise of commercial nurseries, rechristening Rochester as "the Flower City."⁸ The stability offered by these successful business ventures attributed to the city's growth, and in 1874, tracts of land annexed from adjacent townships doubled the acreage of the city limits.⁹ The future site of the nominated building and its surrounding neighborhood became part of Rochester around 1874, after part of Hudson Avenue was annexed from the Town of Irondequoit.¹⁰

³ Blake McKelvey, "The Economic Stages in the Growth of Rochester," *Rochester History* 3, no. 4 (1941): 4-8.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁰ F.W. Beers, "Town of Irondequoit," *Atlas of Monroe County, New York* (New York: F.W. Beers Co., 1872), 34.

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Other new industries included clothing manufacturers, that located on the “outskirts,” recognizing the benefits of operating in modernized factory buildings in areas free from congestion.¹¹ The Louis Holtz & Sons Clothing Company located at 850 Hudson Avenue and another major employer, the Michelsen Furniture Company (NR listed 2012), relocated in 1914 from Water Street to a location further west on Avenue D. This factory building exhibited the latest in American industrial design, adopting the most up-to-date in factory technologies. The relocation of several companies transformed Rochester from a landscape that was once a compact center surrounded by undeveloped lots into a series of industrial, commercial, and residential neighborhood rings, centered around a dense nucleus of urban activity.

As businesses grew, so did the population. Between 1900 and 1930, Rochester experienced a steady boom in population largely fueled by a constant rate of immigration from foreign countries and surrounding rural areas, expanding the number of residents from 162,000 in 1900 to 325,000 by 1930.¹² European Immigrants often settled in areas defined by a shared cultural and ethnic heritage, some of them forming in the neighborhoods to the north of the central business district. Polish immigrants were the first to settle in the neighborhood along Hudson Avenue, two miles north of the Four Corners. Meanwhile, most of the city’s German-Jewish immigrant community settled on and around Joseph Street, just west of Hudson Avenue.¹³

In the first part of the twentieth century a tremendous wave of construction throughout the city occurred, related to the boom of industrial interest and the influx of population. The result was an increasingly dense city center and rapidly developing radial neighborhoods. In 1922 alone, the city authorized the construction of nearly 4,500 buildings, totaling investments of \$15,239,000.¹⁴ A 1926 zoning map of the City of Rochester indicated that much of the industrial outgrowth occurred to the north and to the west of the city center, often concentrated along the many railways that crossed through the neighborhoods.¹⁵ This map also depicted the character of Hudson Avenue as having buildings on either side of the street that accommodated a mix of commercial and industrial activities, while residences lined the peripheral streets.¹⁶ As these residential zones in north Rochester filled, Hudson Avenue assumed significance as a main thoroughfare in the area.

Manufacturing located away from the crowded city center, due in large part due to coal replacing hydropower, eliminating the need to cluster factories around the Genesee Falls and the riverfront.¹⁷ As the factories moved

¹¹ McKelvey, “The Economic Stages in the Growth of Rochester,” 20.

¹² Barnes, “The City’s Golden Age,” 2.

¹³ Kathleen Urbanic, “Seeking Prosperity: A Brief History of Rochester’s Polish American Community,” *Rochester History* 57, no. 1 (1995): 4-5; Christine L. Ridarsky and Neil Scheier, “Congregation Ahavas Achim Anshi Austria,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, September, 2015, 10.

¹⁴ Barnes, “The City’s Golden Age,” 24.

¹⁵ Griffith Morgan Hopkins, “Zoning Map of the City of Rochester,” (Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins Co., 1926).

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Saralinda Hooker, “George J. Michelsen Furniture Factory,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, March 7, 2012, 8.2.

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outward, so did the residential neighborhoods, made possible by improvements such as the streetcar network that eventually reached Hudson Avenue. The streetcar system formed the backbone of the city's mass transit infrastructure, enabling quick and easy travel from one part of the city to the next. Laborers no longer needed to live within walking distance of their place of work. Improvements in roads and an increase in automobile ownership attracted industrialists to areas that were previously used for farmland or were undeveloped real estate holdings.¹⁸ The automobile introduced the convenience of commuting from the second-tier neighborhoods of the city. As automobiles became more affordable, garages on the residential properties around factories indicated the rise in private automobile ownership.¹⁹

872 Hudson Avenue

In 1922, Harold B. Watson of Buffalo, Almer J. Todkill of Barker, and David Tice of Lockport, incorporated the Home Profit Hosiery Company in order "to engage in the sale of woolen goods."²⁰ Apparently attracted by the industrial diversity of Rochester, they chose to build a factory and office in the north side of the city at 872 Hudson Avenue for the manufacture and distribution of the hosiery knitting machinery. The company marketed the concept of home production to housewives looking to supplement their household income by leasing the machines to knit socks and stockings at home and then sell the products back to the company. The company advertised through large print advertisements, which included endorsements from those who used the machines. The advertisements extolled the virtues as a lucrative investment for women without working outside the home. Machines came with materials and an instruction manual, illustrating the ease of operation for the average user.²¹

After two years in business, the Home Profit Hosiery Company announced its bankruptcy in July 1924 with assets totaling \$117,338 against liabilities amounting to \$611,507. The reason for the company's failure was undisclosed, but a news article stated that several women had difficulty meeting the terms for leasing or covering the cost of the knitting machines. The article stated that the company's bankruptcy effected roughly 7,000 women, referred to as creditors, many of them facing adverse financial conditions. What was also clear was that the company had difficulty paying the women for products, wages for workers in the factory, and faced a shortage of yarn and supplies.²²

¹⁸ New York State Railways, "A Guide to Parks, Beaches, Amusement Resorts, Hotels, Bus Lines, Trolley lines, Subway, Theatres, Golf Courses, etc." (Rochester, N.Y.: The Passenger Dept., New York State Railways, c. 1920), 9; Hooker, "George J. Michelsen Furniture Factory," March 7, 2012, 8.2.

¹⁹ McKelvey, "A History of City Planning in Rochester," *Rochester History* 6, no. 4 (1944): 15.

²⁰ "Yesterday's Business Transactions: Certificate of Incorporation," *Rochester Daily Record*, January 11, 1922, 2.

²¹ "Where Was I to Get the Money?" *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 1922; "Demonstration," *Jamestown Evening Journal*, April 16, 1924.

²² "7,000 Creditors Suffer in Collapse of Hosiery Firm," *Syracuse Journal*, July 29, 1924, 2.

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The following March, the building at 872 Hudson Avenue was sold at a public auction that took place on the premises. According to the announcement, the building's advantages were being:

...72 x 89 feet, is four stories high, fireproof, built of brick and steel and only built a short time; there is about 25,000 square feet of floor space, sprinkling system all through building, elevator and up-to-date heating plant; an ideal building for manufacturing purposes and is in a very desirable location and where values are constantly on the increase: investors, we believe the future of this building and it [sic] location has a wonderful earning power on the investment or speculation purposes, we know of none any better as there is no question but what this building will be sold for what it is worth, and if you are looking for an up-to-date manufacturing plant we believe that this is the one that you should purchase as it is already surrounded by many large manufacturing firms...²³

At the auction, the Wollensak Optical Company was the successful bidder. As an established optical firm, the company outgrew its current facility and the move-in condition of the building made it an excellent acquisition for its new factory and headquarters. The building offered the company the floor space required to accommodate the equipment necessary for the manufacture of camera and telescope lenses, as well as the proper light and ventilation for its workforce. For the next fourteen years, the Wollensak Optical Company used the building at 872 Hudson Avenue as its company headquarters, as well as for manufacturing, research and development. In 1939, the company bought a former clothing factory at 850 Hudson Avenue and split the operations between the two locations on Hudson Avenue, moving the general offices, research and development, engineering, and assembly to the new location. The factory at 872 Hudson Avenue was kept for the sole purpose of lens manufacture, making it one of the four largest factories for the grinding of lenses in the United States.²⁴ The company remained on Hudson Avenue until it closed in 1972.

Founded in 1899, the Wollensak Optical Company was an outgrowth of the larger optical industry that began in Rochester in the mid-nineteenth century when German immigration to the city began to have an integral impact on the economic landscape of the city. By 1855, German immigration accounted for a major portion of the total population of the city.²⁵ While many of the early German settlers in the city found work in existing companies, a number of enterprising Germans took advantage of skills they learned in Germany to start their own companies in the second half of the nineteenth century that included shoe repair, horticulture, cabinet making, carpentry, masonry, and lens grinding.²⁶

²³ "Real Estate Sale," *Buffalo Courier*, March 10, 1925, 17.

²⁴ "Wollensak Grew from Precision Camera Shutter," *Rochester Daily Record*, October 29, 1955.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ McKelvey, "Germans of Rochester," 7-9.

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One of these immigrants was John Jacob Bausch who opened a shop in The Reynolds Arcade in Rochester selling eyeglasses.²⁷ Bausch eventually partnered with Henry Lomb, a cabinet maker, and after diversifying the inventory to include microscopes, camera lenses and shutters, the firm became Bausch and Lomb, one of the preeminent lens manufacturing companies in the world.²⁸ By 1889, the company had a substantial inventory along with a large number of skilled laborers, many from Germany, and by 1903, the company employed 1,200 workers.²⁹ Bausch and Lomb acted as an industrial incubator as several of the German employees who were skilled in lens manufacture and watchmaking, went on to found their own companies.³⁰

The Bausch and Lomb Optical Company shared the market in Rochester with another major producer of optical products, the Eastman Kodak Camera Company. George Eastman, a banker from Waterville, New York, began fashioning dry photography plates in the early 1880s after he learned the process during a trip to London. He patented his own plate-coating machine and left his job at the Rochester Savings Bank to develop several innovative camera products, the most notable being flexible film, and, in 1888, the first of many Kodak cameras. The success of the Kodak brand put the company in the forefront of the market for cameras and photography accessories. By 1901, Eastman's company was worth over twenty-five million dollars. Eastman purchased several smaller optical companies into Kodak, firmly placing Rochester at the center of the American optical industry. The Eastman Kodak Camera Company continued to be a leader in camera and optical equipment well into the twentieth century.³¹

Like Bausch and Lomb, Eastman Kodak became an industrial incubator, fostering a spirit of innovation in Rochester that contributed to the city's reputation as one of the top industrial cities in the country. Dozens of companies manufactured optical products in the early twentieth century; however, success eluded many of these smaller offshoot companies, leading to mergers with larger companies after periods of financial instability. One exception was the Wollensak Optical Company that helped secure Rochester's position as the center of optical production in the United States during the early decades of the twentieth century.³²

Andrew A. Wollensak, the founder and technological pioneer of the Wollensak Optical Company, owed much of his early success in the optics industry to his years as an assistant to Edward Bausch of the Bausch and Lomb Optical Company. Wollensak worked as a machinist in Germany before settling in Rochester in 1882. His early training gave him the experience necessary to develop the Iris Diaphragm Shutter when he worked at Bausch and Lomb. Wollensak recognized his talent for invention, and in 1899, decided to establish his own

²⁷ Rudolf Kingslake, "The Rochester Camera and Lens Companies," (Rochester: Photographic Historical Society, 1974)."

²⁸ McKelvey, "Germans of Rochester," 13.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Kingslake, "The Rochester Camera and Lens Companies."

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

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optics practice, partnering with Stephen Rauber of the Union Brewing Company as a financier until 1902, when Rauber withdrew his interest.³³ Wollensak's brother, John, joined after Rauber, renaming the firm the Wollensak Optical Company. In 1905, it acquired the Rochester Lens Company and the rights to the popular Vitax portrait lens, leading to its early success with a series of popular photographic lenses and shutters. Bolstered by the financial security of its early success, the Wollensak Optical Company relocated in 1913 from 444 Central Avenue to a factory at 1425 North Clinton Avenue. It occupied the building for over a decade, during which time it manufactured the Optimo shutter for the Eastman Kodak Company. During the remainder of its long history (1899-1972), the Wollensak Optical Company developed a variety of lens-based products, including movie and television cameras, projectors, binocular lenses, and microfilm equipment.³⁴

After several successful years, the Wollensak Company needed a larger facility and, in 1925, moved into the former Home Profit Hosiery Company at the corner of Hudson Avenue and Avenue D. Continued growth required more space, and, in 1939, the company acquired the former Holtz Clothing Company factory at 850 Hudson Avenue.³⁵ Between 1939 and 1953, the company added four major expansions to its facility at 850 Hudson Avenue, much of it needed for wartime production.³⁶ The need for more advanced optical technology, especially for the military, led the Wollensak Optical Company to develop the first high-speed camera lens manufactured in the United States and the synchronized flash along with numerous weapon sights and several telescopes and binoculars.³⁷

In the post-World War II era, the Wollensak continued to perform exceptionally well in the marketplace with products such as the Fastax high-speed camera that could capture 20,000 frames per second.³⁸ The height of its success was in the late 1940s when the company employed over 1,200 people, but a changing market, increased competition and labor problems pushed the company into a long period of slow decline. In 1953, Wollensak Optical Company became a subsidiary of the Revere Camera Company of Chicago, which sold Wollensak to the 3M Corporation in 1960.³⁹ Wollensak attempted to expand into the tape recording and cassette market, but ceased operations in 1972, putting 525 Rochester employees out of work.⁴⁰

Wollensak products still appear in the photography marketplace, and the lenses and other devices continue to attract the attention of collectors and photographers. The largest, most intact artifact from the company is the factory building at 872 Hudson Street. The building at 850 Hudson Avenue also exists, but it was highly altered

³³ Donovan A. Shilling, *Made in Rochester*, (Rochester: Self-published, 2015), 268.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ "Holtz Factory Is Acquired by Wollensak," *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, June 24, 1939.

³⁶ "40 Million Earmarked for Expansion." *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*. November 15, 1953.

³⁷ "Wollensak Grew from Precision Camera Shutter," *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, October 29, 1955.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Kingslake, *A History of the Photographic Lens*, 309.

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into a large-scale office building, losing much of its industrial character. Most of the production buildings associated with the 850 Hudson Avenue property were demolished for parking. Built for the Home Profit Hosiery Company, the building at 872 Hudson Avenue appears much the same as when the Wollensak Optical Company bought it in 1925. The building retains all the elements of American industrial design from that time, reflecting advances in building technology that served a growing number of companies during the early twentieth century period of urban growth and industrialization.

Early twentieth century factory buildings often incorporated exterior features seen in commercial block buildings. These features included masonry exteriors, large windows, classical detailing, decorative cornices, and flat roofs. One of the best-known firms to specialize in industrial design from this period was Lockwood, Greene and Company of Boston, Massachusetts.⁴¹ The company was founded in 1832, specializing in textile mill construction. Amos D. Lockwood took over the firm in 1858 and in 1882, Stephen Greene joined as partner. Greene graduated with a degree in engineering from Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, and brought his engineering skills to the company. Greene is credited with designing the first electrically powered textile mill, the Columbia Cotton Mills of Columbia, South Carolina (1893). Around 1900, the company branched out into general industrial building construction and an excellent example of its work included the Buffalo Meter Company in Buffalo, New York (NR listed 2010).

Wollensak's newly acquired building followed the trend of early twentieth century industrial design with its masonry exterior and large window openings. The building was a combination of concrete, brick and steel construction that supported large, open floor plans. Groupings of windows in twos and threes allowed in natural light and ventilation into the interior spaces. Construction and energy costs were more affordable due to a large percentage of the exterior devoted to windows. Only four stories in height, the building at 872 Hudson Avenue featured unbroken piers and recessed spandrels that emphasized the height of the building. The brick piers and spandrels concealed the steel structure within with restrained ornamentation. The building also featured a tripartite vertical organization in most of the openings and in the narrower bays, paired windows. The central bay anchored the lower portion with the door, and above it, a large decorative window. The middle bay consisted of two identical stacked floors below the top that was defined by the capitals, parapet and coping. Inside, the brick and steel walls allowed for a floor plan of unprecedented flexibility with a neutral grid of wood supports.

Unfortunately, a designer or builder has yet to be identified for creating a reminder of two of Rochester's industries, namely, the short-lived Home Profit Hosiery Company and the much more enduring Wollensak

⁴⁰ "14,909 Jobs Lost!" *Rochester Courier-Journal*, October 27, 1976.

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Optical Company. Building trends following its construction favored reinforced concrete with streamlined exteriors for factories and warehouses. Extant buildings like the Home Profit/Wollensak building stand as excellent examples of an earlier period of industrial design when construction incorporated improvements in structural technology for functional spaces, while decorative exterior features communicated the perceived success of the company it housed. Despite being vacant for several years, the Wollensak Optical Company Building continues to communicate these ideas commonly seen in Rochester's historic period of industrial growth and innovation.

⁴¹ Reyner Banham, *A Concrete Atlantis* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1989), 31.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other
Name of repository: Preservation Studios, Buffalo NY

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>18N</u> Zone	<u>288787</u> Easting	<u>4784195</u> Northing	3	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing
2	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing	4	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing

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

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

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary is the same as for the period of significance.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Joey Duggan, Kelsie Hoke M. Arch, Caitlin Moriarty Ph. D (edited by Virginia L. Bartos, Ph.D., NYS OPRHP)
organization Preservation Studios LLC date 6 June 2018
street & number 60 Hedley Place telephone 716-725-6410
city or town Buffalo state NY zip code 14208
e-mail N/A

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

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

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

Photographs:

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

Name of Property: Wollensak Optical Company Building

City or Vicinity: Rochester

County: Monroe State: New York

Photographer: Preservation Studios

Date Photographed: October 19, 2017

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

- 0001 of 0012: North and west elevations, view looking southwest from Hudson Avenue.
- 0002 of 0012: Detail view of Hudson Avenue entrance.
- 0003 of 0012: South and east elevations, view looking northeast from Avenue D.
- 0004 of 0012: 1st floor office, view toward southwest corner.
- 0005 of 0012: 1st floor factory space, view looking east.
- 0006 of 0012: 2nd floor factory space, view looking east from south side of building.
- 0007 of 0012: West end stair case, second floor section.
- 0008 of 0012: 2nd floor factory space looking northwest from east central end of building.
- 0009 of 0012: Southwest end of 3rd floor factory space looking northeast.
- 0010 of 0012: 3rd floor factory space looking toward northwest corner of building.
- 0011 of 0012: 4th floor factory space looking southwest from freight elevator (east end of building).
- 0012 of 0012: Southwest end of 4th floor factory space.

Property Owner:

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

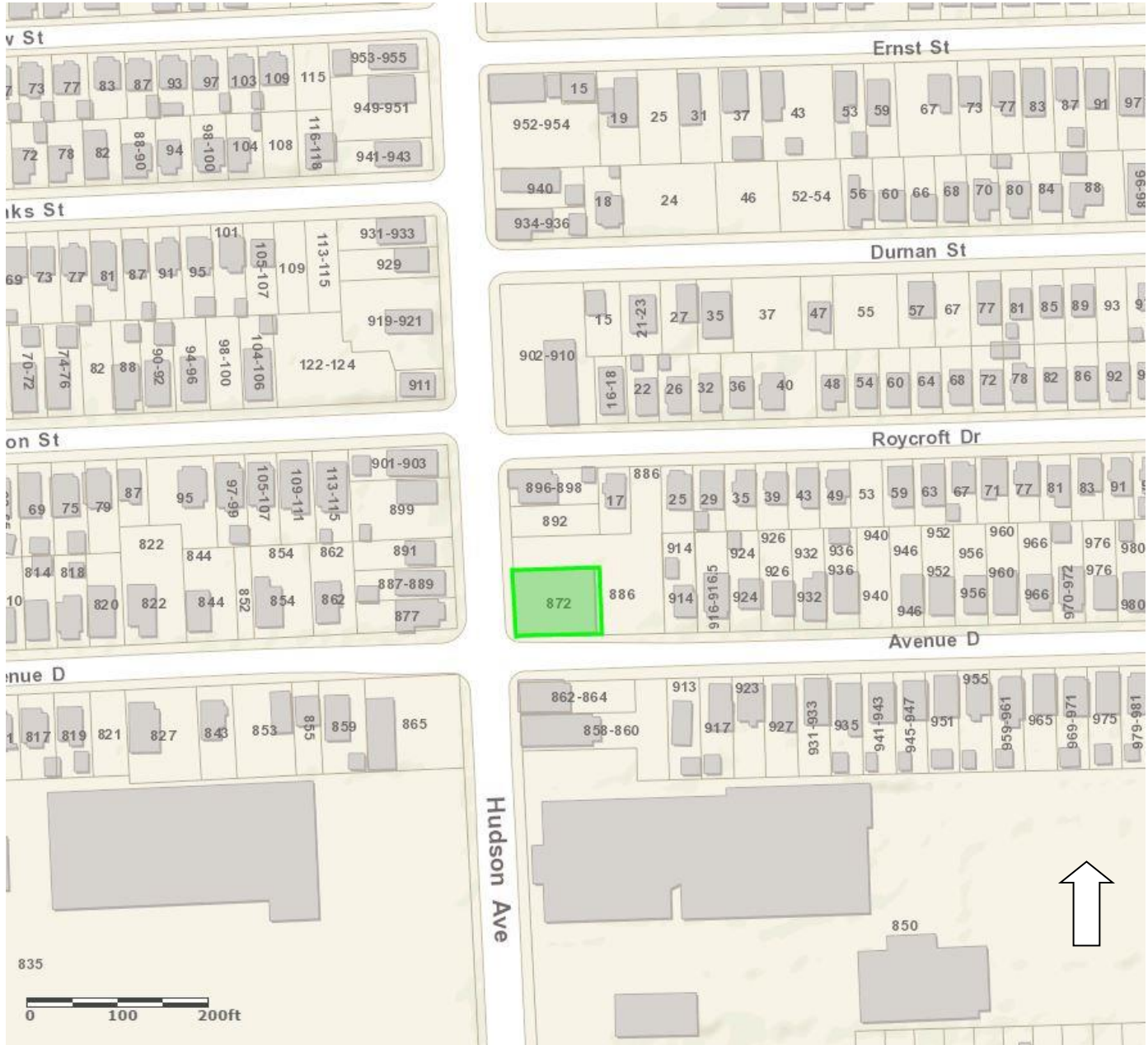
name N/A
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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

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

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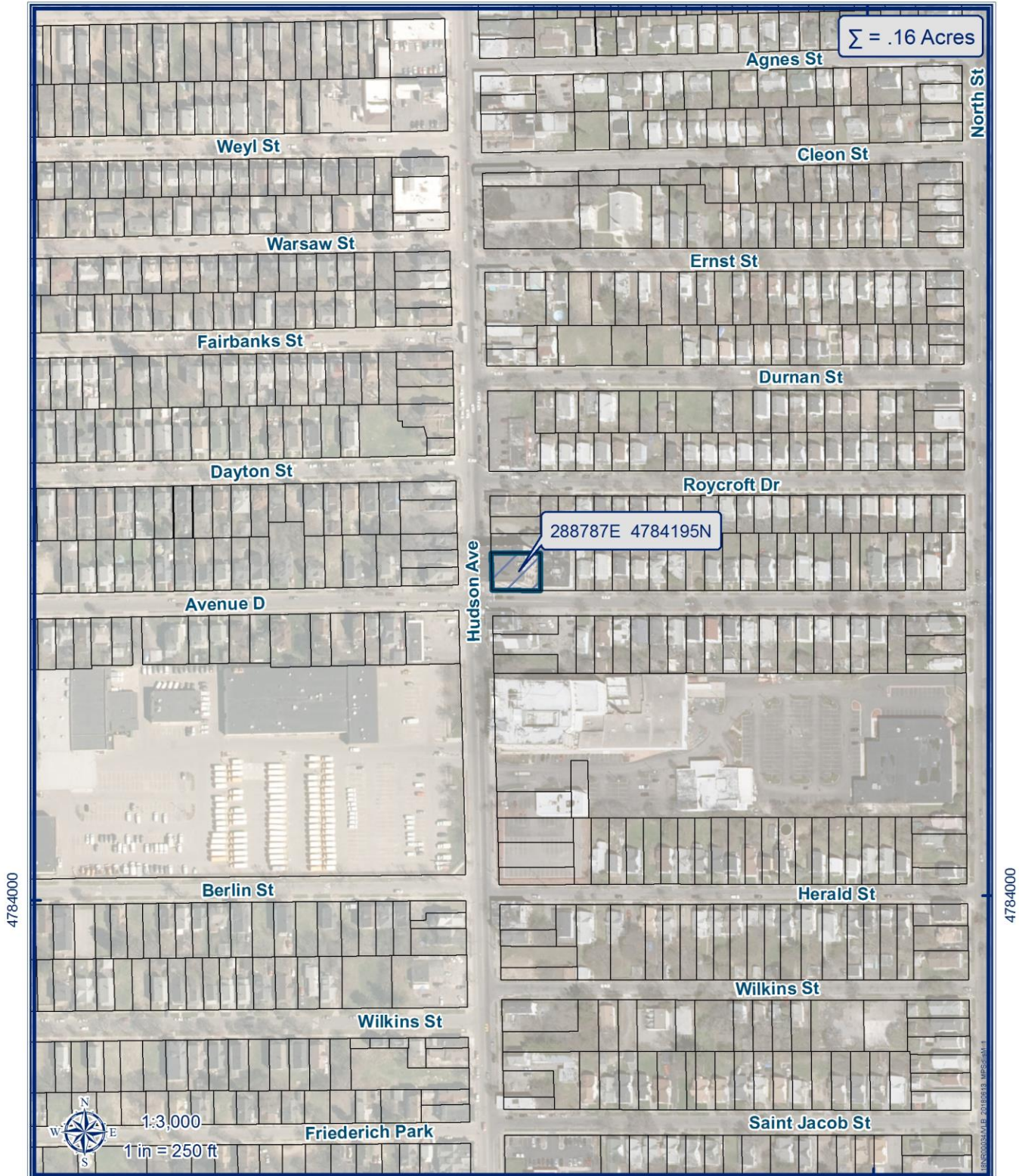


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Name of Property

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Wollensak Optical Company Building
City of Rochester, Monroe Co., NY

872 Hudson Avenue
Rochester, NY 14621



289000

Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter



Wollensak
Optical
Company
Building



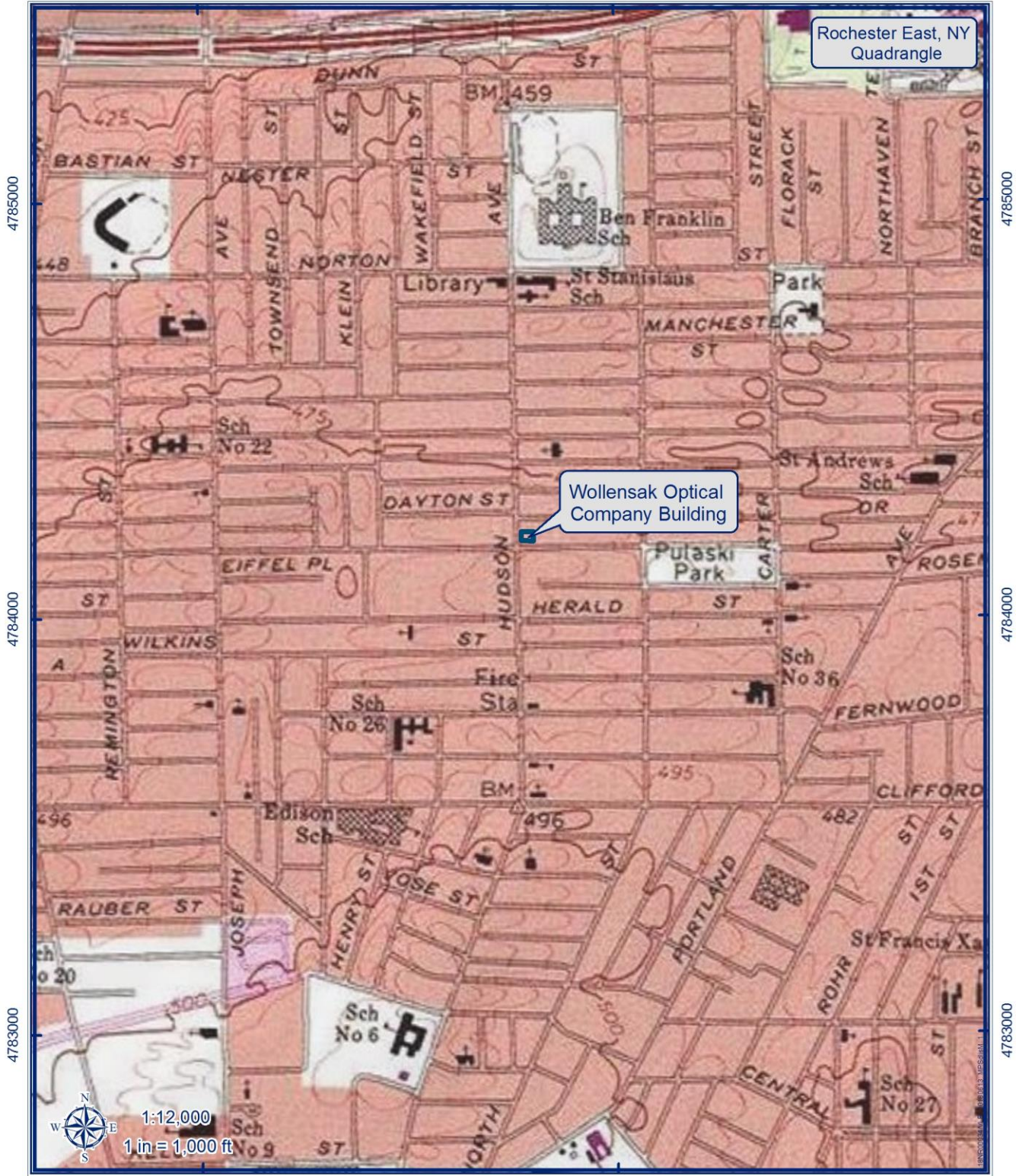
Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

Wollensak Optical Company Building
Name of Property

Monroe County, New York
County and State

Wollensak Optical Company Building
City of Rochester, Monroe Co., NY

872 Hudson Avenue
Rochester, NY 14621



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter



Wollensak
Optical
Company
Building



Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation





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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 6/19/2018 Date of Pending List: 7/9/2018 Date of 16th Day: 7/24/2018 Date of 45th Day: 8/3/2018 Date of Weekly List: 7/27/2018

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept Return Reject 7/27/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary
Comments:

Recommendation/
Criteria

Reviewer Alexis Abernathy Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2236 Date _____

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



**Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation**

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

ROSE HARVEY
Commissioner

15 June 2018



Alexis Abernathy
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places

Mail Stop 7228

1849 C Street NW
Washington DC 20240

Re: National Register Nominations

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to submit the following ten nominations, all on disc, to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register:

Amagansett U.S. Life-Saving and Coast Guard Station, Suffolk County (U.S. Government Lifeboat Stations, Houses of Refuge, and pre-1950 U.S. Coast Guard Lifeboat Stations)

St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Church Complex, Erie County [note: no longer owned or used as a religious institution]

Fuller Shirt Company Factory, Ulster County
Immanuel Union Church, Richmond County
Buffalo Public School #57 (PS57), Erie County
Buffalo Public School #44 (PS 44), Erie County
Pine Hollow Cemetery, Nassau County
Wollensack Optical Company, Monroe Company
Faith Missionary Baptist Church, Erie County

Wardenclyffe Laboratory, Suffolk [note, while Wardenclyffe is technically a district, there is only one owner, who supports the nomination; please see the file of supporting documentation, which contains more than 9,500 expressions of support for this nomination]

Please feel free to call me at 518.268.2165 if you have any questions.

Sincerely:

Kathleen LaFrank
National Register Coordinator
New York State Historic Preservation Office