

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic The New York State Building, Pan-American Exposition, 1901.

and/or common The Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society

2. Location

street & number 25 Nottingham Court

___ not for publication

city, town Buffalo ___ vicinity of

state New York code 14216 county Erie code 029

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
___ district	___ public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	___ agriculture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial	___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational	___ private residence
___ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	___ entertainment	___ religious
___ object	___ in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
		___ no	___ military	___ other:

4. Owner of Property

The Honorable James D. Griffin, Mayor, City of Buffalo, City Hall, Buffalo, NY 14202

street & number The Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, 25 Nottingham Court,
Buffalo, NY 14216

city, town ___ vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the County Clerk

street & number 25 Delaware Avenue

city, town Buffalo state NY 14202

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title National Register of Historic Sites has this property been determined eligible? yes ___ no

date 1979 federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society

city, town 25 Nottingham Court Buffalo state NY

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

In 1900 plans for a New York State building were opened to competitive design, R.W. Gibson, president of the Architectural league of New York selected the plans of George Cary, founder of the Beaux Arts Institute of Design. Cary planed a structure faced and corniced in white Vermont marble to emulate the Parthenon in Athens, and he meant it to be distinguished by the "solidity and force" of the Doric style. Before Cary made additions in 1927, the building was rectangular, 130' x 80 x 50. In 1927 construction began on the East and West wings that measure 55" x 36', and now house the library and auditorium. Cary's design of the additions was compatible with the original structure, he was concerned that the aesthetic unity be maintained. A formal dedication was held in May of 1929. The ten free-standing columns which frame the Southern facade are cut to the same proportion (length to height) as the columns at the Parthenon. Above them, the tympanum contains a highly stylized classical rendering of figures which represent Philosophy, Industry, Art, Husbandry, History, Science, Mars the god of War, Religion, and Law. The pedestal is 61 x 17 feet, and flanks a 40 foot wide monumental stairway the center of which is one inch higher than the sides. Optically undetectable, this slight bulge nevertheless adds to the imposing impression of the facade. The structure is so positioned on a natural semicircular decline that ends in the North Bay of Delaware Lake that, on still days, the whole structure can be seen reflected. In 1929 sculptural plaques were added to the exterior of the building. Executed by Edmond Amateis these groups commemorate significant episodes in the history of the Niagara Frontier: e.g. the surveying of Western New York, the sorcery trial of the Seneca sachem Red Jacket, the opening of the Erie Canal, the underground railroad, Commodore Perry's victory on Lake Erie, Millard Fillmore addressing the Buffalo Historical Society. These groups measure, in stone, the popular attention to history in Western New York.

The Northern Facade is particularly noteworthy. Six three-quarter columns stand at either side of the bronze doors. J.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below				
prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	community planning	landscape architecture	religion	
1400-1499	archeology-historic	conservation	law	science	
1500-1599	agriculture	economics	literature	sculpture	
1600-1699	architecture	education	military	social	
1700-1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian	
1800-1899	commerce	exploration-settlement	philosophy	theater	
1900-	communications	industry	politics government	transportation	
		invention		other (specify)	

Specific dates

Builder Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Classical white marble building on the North Bay of Delaware Lake in Buffalo is architecturally and historically significant for four main reasons. First, it is the only surviving structure from the enormously popular Pan-American Exposition of 1901, which hoped to encourage North and South American economic ties after the Spanish-American War.(1) Its architecture is a symbol in stone of the brash interventionist democracy of America at the turn of the century. Second, in the public memory the Pan-Am building also serves to memorialize the fair's most important visitor, President William McKinley, and the dramatic and violent events that followed his assassination.(2) In the most public of American assassinations, on the day McKinley was shot by an anarchist nearby in an Exposition hall (now demolished) over 100,000 people were in attendance. Third, the Pan-American Building is a major unaltered example of the work of the beaux arts architect George Cary, who also designed the additions in 1927-29, maintaining the aesthetic unity of the building. Finally, since 1902 the white-marble ediface has housed the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, which has ensured its preservation and upkeep. The buiding has also served as the central repository for artifacts and manuscripts significant to local history, and of national events that touched closely on that history.(4) Among its many collections, the Buffalo and Eri County Historical Society holds an outstanding store of Pan-American memorabilia.

* * *

The New York State Building of the 1901 Pan-American Exposition, now known popularly as the Pan-American building, is the only extant structure from that important event which was organized to celebrate North and South American cooperation. The building owes its construction to the conjunction of national and international events in the lucky resolution of a local political impasse. The Erie County Legislature allocated \$25,000 to erect a building to house the collections of the

9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see continuation sheet page 9-1.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Buffalo Northwest

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

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Verbal boundary description and justification

This nomination is limited to the structure and a foot of land around its perimeter (see site map).

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dr. George Rollie Adams, former Executive Director; Dr. Thomas E. Leary, Director of Research and Interpretation; and Dr. Scott Eberle, Research Historian

organization The Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society date January 13, 1986

street & number 25 Nottingham Court telephone 716-873-9644

city or town Buffalo state NY 14216

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title date

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Woodley Gosling (who designed the doors in Trinity Church in New York City) was recruited to design an entranceway. Ralph Hinton Perry, the famous young sculptor of the "Fountain of Neptune" at the Library of Congress, executed his design. Henry Bonnard Bronze Co. cast the twelve-foot high, two ton doors. Classical reclining nude female figures Art and Science preside above in the transom. Clio, the muse of History, holds a lamp, stands on the left door and pulls back a veil from her eyes. The curious figure on the right representing Ethnology, holds a skull. Both north and south doors open onto the largest room in the building, the State Court, that is open to the roof. Black marble staircases lead upward 18 feet to the exhibit areas, which are designed so that visitors need not retrace their steps. Thirty south-facing windows and doors help illuminate the State Court and the exhibit space. Thirty eight other windows and doors open on work areas. A large carved maple fireplace is in the west wing.(1)

Today the Pan-American Building is the home of the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society. As such it is the venue for various activities that popularize the history and material culture of the Niagara Frontier. Permanent exhibits in the galleries display artifacts that span subjects from pre-historic Indian societies, to the history of automobile manufacturing in Buffalo. An exhibit on the Pan-American Exposition is scheduled to open in 1987. Manuscript and photographic collections document lives of both ordinary and famous Buffalonians. Maps, census and insurance records, and political documents are sources for scholars interested in urban history, economic history, and city planning. Architectural historians have utilized the extensive collection of blueprints, and white prints, as well as business records of companies which were headquartered in architecturally significant buildings in the Buffalo area. The building is also the focus of amateur and professional interest in history. The Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society sponsors chapters interested in the social and professional history of medicine,

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military history, genealogical research, and architectural history. An educational program is an important resource for Erie County schools. Concerts are held in the rotunda, or State Court. In the summer the marble staircase often serves as the backdrop for wedding pictures.

Note

1. The building has often been the subject of local attention. Newspaper accounts can be found in scrapbooks in the archives. The Publications of the Buffalo Historical Society have often noted the architectural history and significance of the building, e.g. Frank H. Severance, "The New Home of the Buffalo Historical Society," vol. V, (1902), pp. 388 ff.; George Cary, "The Building Described," *ibid.*, pp. 398-404; Daniel M. Lockwood, vol. VI, (1903), appendix B, "Dedication of the Building," Frank Severance, "The Historical Building as Enlarged," vol. 30, (1930), pp. 27-37. George Cary's original pencil on tissue drawings are in boxes and cannisters, no. C65-8.23 and ff., more whiteprints appear in the James, Meadows and Howard Collection, the original legislative Report of the Board of general managers of the Exhibit of the state of New York at the Pan-American Exposition, J.B. Lyon Co., Albany, 1902, illuminates the planning of the building.

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Buffalo Historical Society. The Board of Managers of the Society favored a site across Delaware Park Lake where the Albright-Knox Art Gallery now stands. Of twelve park commissioners six agreed on the Concourse, but the other six, who were reluctant to alter Frederick Law Olmsted's design by devoting park land to the project, disapproved.(3) The deadlock was broken in 1898 when an Erie County assemblyman named Henry W. Hill proposed that since the United States was engaged in a war with Spain, Congress should be petitioned to postpone the Pan-American Exposition, (then slated to begin in 1899), for two years. The Exposition, which would consist almost entirely of elaborate, but temporary structures, would be constructed in part on park land. Hill's plan hoped to marshal New York State funds to erect a permanent building to represent the State at the Pan-American Exposition. Afterward the Buffalo Historical Society would take control of the building. In the enthusiasm for the Pan-American Exposition, the public pressure not to use park lands eased. Three hundred fifty acres of Delaware Park and adjoining property were earmarked for the project.

The two-year delay allowed for considerable care in the planning for this building, and for a considerably larger sum to be invested. A parcel of land on the North Bay of Delaware Park lake was examined by the Board of Architects of the Exposition, and construction was approved by a panel which had been appointed by the young Governor of New York, Theodore Roosevelt. Through the efforts of Henry Hill, the New York State Legislature added \$100,000 to the fund to construct an "absolutely fireproof" building. Roosevelt signed the appropriation in March of 1900. The initial outlay was \$175,000, and the eventual investment was approximately 500,000 uninflated dollars.

The organizers of the fair frankly acknowledged their hope that the Pan-American Exposition would further commercial contacts between Anglo and Latin America.(5) The Pan-American

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Exposition took on special significance because during the planning of the Exposition the United States fought a war with Spain, on the territory of a Latin American neighbor, which established American superiority over European interests in the region. Most of the buildings at the exposition which were designed in an elaborate "Spanish Renaissance" style as a hopeful symbol of a rejuvenated Latin America. At first it is a curiosity that George Cary, the architect of the New York State building, chose an equally symbolic (but different) architecture that emulated the design of the golden age of Athenian imperial democracy. Explaining this requires a brief detour in political history.

Teddy Roosevelt, a man of expansive temperament, was also decidedly an expansionist in his foreign policy views. Because he so well represented and shaped the aggressive quality of American democracy in turn-of-the-century America he is often regarded as a symbol for the age. In retrospect he seems the perfect figure to have opened a fair devoted to inter-American commercial opportunity. It is not surprising that the fair at Buffalo also reflected the exuberant American spirit, flush from the recent victory over the declining Spanish empire. Slightly north of the New York State building, for example, the U.S. Government buildings stood 250 feet high, topped by a 20 foot classical winged Victory. The giant aerial fireworks display in September 1901 spelled out a pyrotechnic welcome to President McKinley "Chief of our Nation and our Empire."(6)

It is in this context that the architectural symbolism of the New York State building must not be overlooked. The Pan-American building is a "period piece" in the fullest sense, because it self-consciously embodies the ideals of a historical era. Concerns for continuity would have demanded that the New York State building also follow the Spanish Renaissance style. But the clean, classical lines of the Pan-American building, are reminiscent not of the architecture of the recent European past, but of classical Greece. Before and during the

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Spanish-American War, Spain was denounced as an old played-out power, a decadent foreign potentate with no appropriate role in the new world. At the turn of this century, the Greeks were admired for being both democratic, and imperialist. These cultural preferences of the turn of the century are literally carved in stone at the New York State Building.(7)

In the broader realm of cultural history, the well preserved building stands as the tangible symbol of the American fascination with national and international expositions.(8) The Pan-American Exposition was the culmination of a string of grand nineteenth-century fairs that attracted millions of Americans, and reassured them of how far as a nation they had come. Earlier, the Industrial Exposition at Buffalo in 1869, the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia in 1876, The Columbia Exposition at Chicago in 1893, The Cotton States Exposition at Atlanta in 1895, and the Paris Exposition in 1900 (the sole relic of which is the Eiffel Tower) all had been showcases of technology and commerce. President McKinley, whose determination to attend the Pan-American Exposition proved fateful, regarded fairs as a "record of the world's advancements," and the "timekeepers of progress." Interest in the fair was enormous. One of every ten Americans, more than eight million people, passed the exposition gates in the Summer of 1901. There to be educated and delighted, each night they marveled at the technological achievement of the Electric Tower. Daily, they were intrigued by the demonstrations of national crafts and dances, stirred by the music of John Philip Sousa and thrilled by the thunder of the Royal Mexican Artillery.(9)

The New York State Building is situated at what was the Elmwood Avenue entrance to the Pan-American Exposition, and was the first sight of the greater portion of Exhibition visitors. It was intended as a reception hall for visiting dignitaries, and the press. A suite was constructed for the Governor's use. Not just dignitaries came to the fair in the Summer of 1901 of course, nearly 120,000 people took the time to sign the guest

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registry in the lobby of the New York State building. The new president, William McKinley and his vice-president, Theodore Roosevelt, were among the visitors.(10) Organizers urged visitors to feel themselves to be part of the proceedings. The "Short Sermon for Sightseers" reminded fair-goers "when you get inside the gates you are part of the show."(11)

The millions who had attended the fair felt themselves to be part of another drama, but a tragic one that ended the Pan-American Exposition. More than 100,000 people were gathered to hear the President at the Temple of Music, September 6, 1901, but instead of listening to his speech, hushed crowds watched in horror as the "electrical ambulance" wound through the grounds conveying the wounded President to the improvised and ill-equipped hospital. Rioting ensued when the assassin, an anarchist named Leon Czolgosz, was also rushed across the esplanade. When McKinley died, riot again broke out, Cleopatra's needle was hauled down, lights were smashed, a cafe destroyed.(12) Teddy Roosevelt, "that damned cowboy" as McKinley's friend Mark Hanna called him, was sworn in as President. Czolgosz was quickly tried, found guilty, and executed a bare forty five days after the assassination.

For practical purposes, the assassination was also the death knell of the Exposition. Attendance fell off sharply. Congress underwrote some of the debt incurred by Exposition organizers. The New York State building itself passed into the more secure financial hands of the Buffalo Historical Society in February 1902, which accounts for its good condition today. Unlike the rest of the Exposition buildings which were torn down, funds were provided for the continued upkeep and enhancement of the Historical Society building.

Among these enhancements, the bronze doors, still used for public access to the building, are especially noteworthy.(13) The director of the Society, Andrew Langdon, hired J. Woodley Gosling (who designed the doors in Trinity Church in New York

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City) to design an entranceway. Ralph Hinton Perry, the famous young sculptor of the "Fountain of Neptune" at the Library of Congress, executed his design. The Henry Bonnard Bronze Co. cast the twelve-foot high, two ton doors.

The integrity of the design of the building did not suffer when two wings were added in the period 1927-29. Coherence was maintained because, happily, the original architect was still at work, though nearly thirty years had passed. George Cary, the Harvard and Paris-trained President of the American Institute of Architects, and the founder of the Beaux Arts Institute of Design in New York, added the sections that now house the library, archives, and the auditorium.

Currently the building is the venue for various activities that popularize the history and material culture of the Niagara Frontier. Permanent exhibits in the galleries display artifacts that span subjects from pre-historic Indian societies, to the history of automobile manufacturing in Buffalo. An exhibit on the Pan-American Exposition is scheduled to open in 1987. Manuscript and photographic collections document lives of both ordinary and famous Buffalonians. Maps, census and insurance records, and political documents are sources for scholars interested in urban history, economic history, and city planning. The building is also the focus of amateur and professional interest in history. The Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society sponsors chapters interested in the social and professional history of medicine, military history, genealogical research, and architectural history. An educational program is an important resource for Erie County schools. Concerts are held in the rotunda, or State Court. In the summer the marble staircase often serves as the backdrop for wedding pictures.

In many ways, both actual and symbolic, the building lends authenticity and depth to popular understanding of history.

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-Notes-

1. In 1921 the Secretary of the Buffalo Historical Society discussed the significance of this building. He began by saying that it would probably always be associated with the Pan-American Exposition. Assessing the present significance of the building must begin there too, see Frank H. Severance, The Book of the Museum, vol. XXV, Publications of the Buffalo Historical Society, (1921), p. 4.

2. See, e.g., the popular local history, Richard C. Brown, and Robert Watson, Buffalo: Lake City in Niagara Land, Windsor Publications, 1981, Chapter VII, "The Pan-American Exposition," pp. 132-141.

3. The Pan-Am building and the activities of the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society are discussed in *ibid.*, pp. 216 ff.

4. One of the best sources of information on the Pan-American building and its construction are the scrapbooks and other documents held by the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society in its library and archives.

5. Neil Harris, argues in "Museums, Merchandising, and the Popular Taste," Ian M.G. Quimby ed., Material Culture and the Study of American Life, W.W. Norton, & Co., New York, 1978, p. 143, that the "great expositions" Buffalo's Pan-American Exposition among them, were not fairs in the traditional sense of merchants encounters, they became oriented toward consumers, the exposition became a "giant advertising organ rather than a protected site used to seal commercial transactions."

6. Mark Goldman, High Hopes: The Rise and Decline of Buffalo

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New York, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1983
p. 8.

7. for the admiration that Victorians held for the Greek imperial age, see for example Richard Jenkyns, The Victorians and Ancient Greece, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1980, and Frank M. Turner, The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1981, especially Chapter 1."

8. The Pan-American Exposition at Buffalo ranks with the late-19th century fairs at Chicago and Philadelphia as "particularly well attended," Harris, *ibid.*, p. 145. "Fair-going," he says, was a typical experience for the American at the turn of the century." The significance of world's fairs is discussed in Kenneth Luckhurst, The Story of Exhibitions, Studio Publications, New York, 1951, and John W. Reys, The Making of Urban America, Princeton University Press, 1965, esp. Chapter 18; and John F. Kasson, Civilizing the Machine: Technology and Republican Virtues in America, 1776-1900, Grossman Publishers, Viking Press, New York, 1976. Among the many local tributes to the building is Daniel N. Lockwood's, who said in "The Buffalo Historical Society and the State of New York," Publications of the Buffalo Historical Society, vol. VI, (1903), p. 611, "Grand and substantial in all its architectural lines and proportions, it will stand here for all time as a monument to [George Cary's] intelligence and fidelity, as well as a reminder of the wonderful, beautiful and instructive Pan-American Exposition of 1901."

9. Harris, *ibid.*, pp. 143-150, *passim*.

10. The signature books remain in the collection of the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society Archives.

11. Sophia A. Walker, "An Art Impression of the Exposition," Independent 53, 2746, (July 18, 1901), 1678.

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12. An account of these events can be found in Goldman, High Hopes, pp. 1-20.

13. Henry W. Hill, "Bronze Doors at the Historical Society," Manuscript collection, Buffalo Historical Society archives; Herman Sass, "The Bronze Doors," Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society Newsletter, (Jan.-Feb., 1982), pp. 1-3; and scrapbooks.

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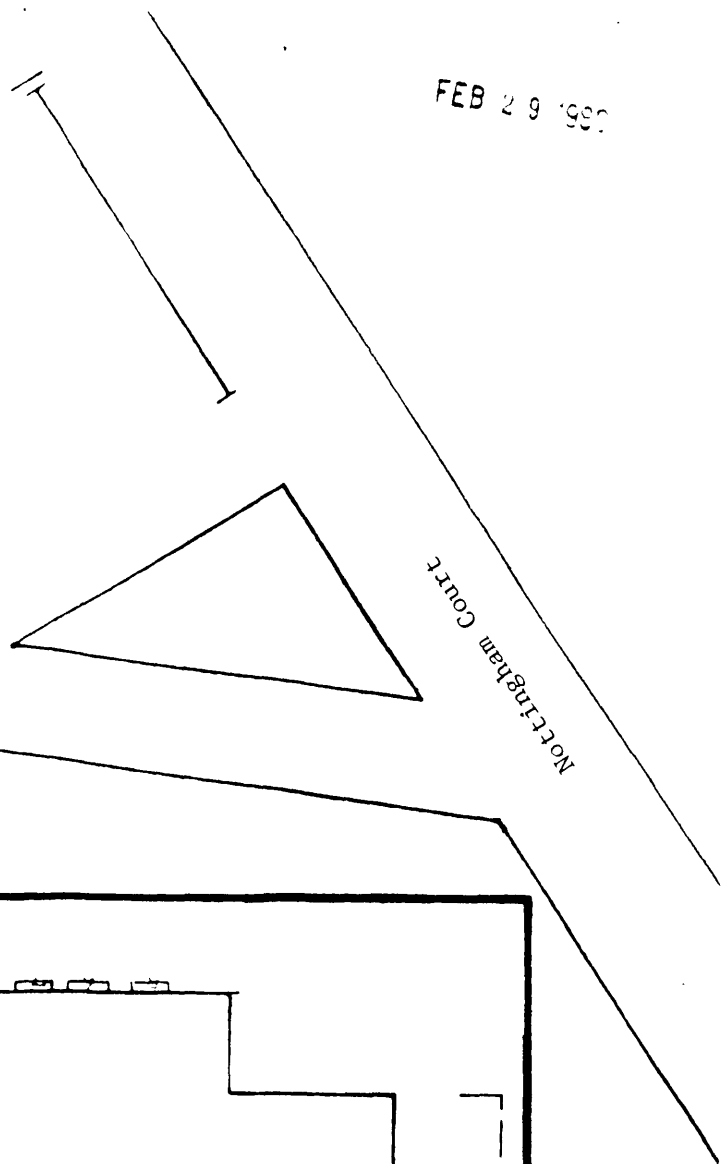
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Richard C. Brown, and Robert Watson, Buffalo: Lake City in Niagara Land, Windsor Publications, 1981; Mark Goldman, High Hopes: The Rise and Decline of Buffalo New York, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1983; Neil Harris, "Museums, Merchandising, and the Popular Taste," Ian M.G. Quimby ed., Material Culture and the Study of American Life, W.W. Norton, & Co., New York, 1978; John F. Kasson, Civilizing the Machine: Technology and Republican Virtues in America, 1776-1900, Grossman Publishers, Viking Press, New York, 1976; Kenneth Luckhurst, The Story of Exhibitions, Studio Publications, New York, 1951; John W. Reps, The Making of Urban America, Princeton University Press, 1965; Frank H. Severance, "The New Home of the Buffalo Historical Society," Publications, Buffalo Historical Society vol. V, (1902), pp. 388 ff.; George Cary, "The Building Described," ibid., pp. 398-404; Daniel M. Lockwood, ibid., vol. VI, (1903), appendix B, "Dedication of the Building," Frank Severance, "The Historical Building as Enlarged," vol. 30, (1930), pp. 27-37.

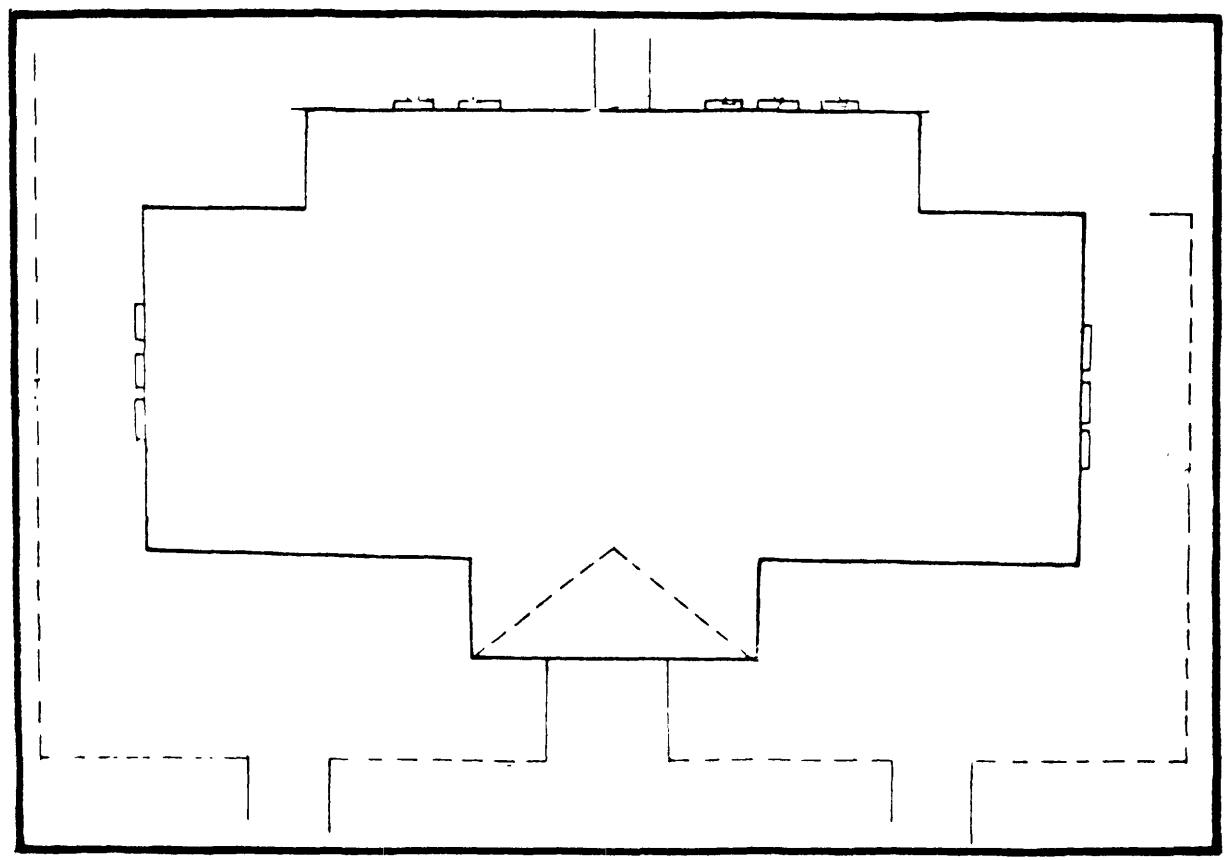
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Erie County

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Site map not to scale



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Mirror Lake

