# **National Register of Historic Places Inventory**—Nomination Form

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

#### 1. Name

historic						
and or commo	n Masten Nei	.ghborho	od Rows	Themati	c Resources	
2. Loc	cation					
street & numb	33-45 and per1335-45 Mi	49-61 E chigan	merson Avenue	Place; 1 & 75-81 N	7-21 Emerson 1 Noodlawn Avenu	Place 1e not for publication
city, town	Buffalo		V	icinity of		
state New	York	code	036	county	Erie	<b>code</b> 029
3. Cla	ssificati	on				
Category district building(s structure site object X theme		;	Accessib	cupied in progress	Present Use agriculture commercial educational entertainment government industrial military	museum park X_ private residence religious scientific transportation other:
4. Ow	ner of Pi	oper	ty			
name	various					
street & numb	er	alan <u>a</u>				
city, town			vi	icinity of	stat	e
5. Loc	ation of	Lega	l Des	criptio	n	

Erie County Clerk's Office courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.

25 Delaware Avenue street & number

**Buffalo** city, town

state New York

#### **Representation in Existing Surveys** 6. New Vork Statewide Inventors

titie	of Historic Resources		has this prop	ible? yes	X no		
date	June 1983			federal	X state	county _	local
deposi	tory for survey records	Division for	Historic	Preserva	tion		
city, to	wn Albany				state	New York	

OMB No. 1024-0018 Expires 10-31-87

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4 1986 received FEB MAR 19 1986 date entered

# 7. Description

Condition
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	excellent	
X	good	See.
	foir	100 Au

\_\_ deteriorated \_\_\_ unaltered \_\_ ruins \_\_\_ X\_ altered \_\_ unexposed

## Check one

\_X original site \_\_\_ moved date \_\_\_\_NA

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Masten Neighborhood Rows Thematic Resources consists of four concentrations of speculative multi-unit rental housing in Buffalo, Erie County, New York.

### I Definition of Theme

The resources identified as components of this theme are examples of a building type that represents a specific architectural response to the issue of designing standardized speculative urban housing during the late nineteenth century. Each component consists of one or more "rows," each constructed as a single building containing multiple rental units. The "rows" were designed to appear as groups of attached rowhouses and each rental unit functioned as a single-family residence, Although not separated by masonry party walls, individual units were defined by private entrances, front and rear porches and yard spaces. On the interior, each unit featured a layout characteristic of single-family houses, with living and dining areas on the first floor and bedrooms above. As originally constructed, the buildings varied in size, containing from two-nine units, with a single, multi-unit building often filling an entire block. Each building is comprised of two or more identical two-bay, two-story units incorporating a wealth of applied decorative ornament typical of picturesque, eclectic, late Victorian Era residential architecture. Surviving buildings feature decorative details characteristic of various popular late nineteenth century styles including the Italianate, Shingle, Stick and Colonial Revival styles. They are distinguished by their unified designs, quality craftsmanship and attention to detail on both the exterior and interior. This level of sophistication is highly unusual as applied to low-cost standardized housing; thus, these buildings, with their unusual form and variety of ornament, represent a distinctive approach to residential design in Buffalo.

## II Methodology

All four components of the theme are located in the north central section of the city of Buffalo known locally as the Masten neighborhood. Developed primarily between 1870 and 1910, this neighborhood is the only area in Buffalo where this building type was found in large concentrations. The nominated resources were identified and classified as part of a comprehensive citywide survey of historic resources undertaken by the Buffalo Landmark and Preservation Board under the guidance of the SHPO. No other surviving resources of this type were identified outside of the Masten Park Neighborhood. Historical research has established that there were originally 21 groups of these multi-unit buildings within the Masten neighborhood. Of the five that survive, four possess sufficient integrity of design, materials and workmanship to meet the National Register criteria and one has suffered an extensive loss of architectural integrity and is not included in the nomination.

# **National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form**

Masten Neighborhood Rows Thematic Resources, Buffalo, Continuation sheet Erie County, NY Item number



Page

Each of the four components of this nomination consists of one or more multi-unit buildings of identical design. The housing units that compose each component are located either adjacent to one another or in a L-shaped configuration on perpendicular streets. All of the components are located within a two-block by five-block area. Two of the components are located on the same street but are separated by vacant lots and modern construction, thus negating historic district potential. Boundaries for each component were drawn to encompass only the nominated buildings and their lots. There are no outbuildings. Individual components include either one or two buildings, all of which contribute to their significance. Together, the four components include a total of six contributing buildings.

#### III Neighborhood Context

Located in north central Buffalo, the Masten neighborhood is bounded roughly by Main Street to the west, Kensington Avenue to the north, the Erie-Lackawanna railroad tracks to the east and Best Street to the The 28 acre neighborhood is comprised primarily of turn-of-thesouth. century brick-and-frame single-family residences that have lost their architectural integrity through the use of modern sidings, the construction of additions or the loss of decorative detail. Manv properties have been demolished as part of various urban renewal programs or as a result of fires, leaving the neighborhood with many vacant lots and large expanses of open space. The streetscape on the south side of Emerson Place, which includes two components of this nomination, is the most intact historic streetscape in the area, even though it includes three vacant lots, a modern gas station and a single family residence. Other components are located amidst altered singlefamily residences, vacant lots and parking lots.

#### Description of Resources JV

Each of the four components of the nomination is similar in form, method of construction, materials, quality, use, plan, scale and setting; however, they vary somewhat in size and orientation and they display a wide variety of decorative details representing several of the picturesque late nineteenth century architectural styles.

Most of the buildings were designed with a linear arrangement of units along a single block. One is an L-shaped configuration, with units fronting on both streets. Each of the buildings is set back slightly a small lot or garden in front. Streets in this neighborhood with were originally tree-lined but many of the original plantings have been lost. Buildings range in size from two to nine units and individual units are each two bays in width and extend through the full height

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Masten Neighborhood Rows Thematic Resources, Buffalo, Continuation sheet Erie County, NY Item number 7 For NPS use only received date entered Page 3

and depth of each building.

All of the buildings are of frame construction and are sheathed with either clapboards or ornamental shingles. They are all either two or three stories in height and feature either flat roofs or mansard roofs with decorative slate shingles.

The principal facades of the buildings display a striking cohesiveness due to their uniform fenestration, continuous roofline and cornice, and the repetition of bays, porches and ornamentation in a regular pattern. Side and rear facades also feature similar patterns and decoration; although, in some cases, ornamentation in less elaborate, especially on rear facades.

The majority of the buildings retain their original floor plans and room configurations. The original interior arrangement of a typical first floor unit consists of, from front to rear: living room, dining room, kitchen, with the main staircase to the side. The second floor typically contains two or three bedrooms and a bath. In a few cases the half story above the second level has additional bedrooms. As originally built, each unit featured well-crafted interior decoration such as panelled woodwork, ornate stairways and built-in dining room and kitchen cupboards. The most elaborately embellished interiors (Woodlawn Avenue Row) feature decorative fireplace surrounds, panelled oak woodwork and window seats.

Each of the components displays the architectural details of one or more different architectural styles. The Woodlawn Avenue row exhibits incised ornament and applied wooden details typical of the Stick style. The Laurel and Michigan Avenues row features pedimented label moldings, paired brackets, and pilasters characteristic of the Italianate style. The row at #33-61 Emerson Place displays the decorative shingle sheathing and Eastlake style ornament typical of the Shingle style, while the row at #17-21 Emerson Place exhibits the classically inspired details characteristic of the Colonial Revival style of architecture.

The wooden facade trim on all of the buildings is marked by a high level of craftsmanship and attention to detail. The cornices range in decorative effect from the highly ornamental hexagonal-panelled frieze and paired brackets with drop pendants on the Laurel and Michigan Avenues row to the precisely executed classical cornice with boxed frieze and egg and dart molding of the #17-21 Emerson Place row. The fenestration decoration also varies on each row. The dormers on the mansard roof of the Woodlawn Avenue row are the most decorative with intricately carved floral-patterned gable panels, exposed bracing, and wrought-iron cresting. The first and second story windows on the same row exhibit lattice-work panels with end consoles above and

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Masten Neighborhood Rows Thematic Resources, Buffalo, Continuation sheet Erie County, NY Item number 7 For MPS use only received date entered Page 4

molded apron panels below. The other highly ornamental window treatment is found on the Laurel and Michigan Avenues row and consists of pilasters and molded apron panels framing two-story bay windows and pedimented label moldings surrounding single windows. The Emerson Place buildings have simple, classical window treatments.

Each of the components features distinctive entrance surrounds which are also well-crafted and highly detailed. The paired entrances on the Laurel and Michigan Avenues row have pedimented label moldings and transoms. The entrance surrounds on #33-61 Emerson Place feature Eastlake style detailing while the surrounds on #17-21 Emerson Place are classically detailed with fluted pilasters, three-quarter sidelights, and denticulated cornices. Although most retain their original panelled front doors, the stoops and porches on all of the rows have been altered during the mid-twentieth century. In most cases, wooden steps and entrance porches have been replaced by concrete steps with modern wrought-iron railings. The row at #17-21 Emerson Place and the Laurel and Michigan Avenues row retain their original two-story shed-roofed rear porches.

The original floor plan and room configuration remains in all of the rows except the Laurel and Michigan Avenues row which has been divided in half by floor to provide more housing units. Although some original interior details are missing in each of the rows, most feature wellcrafted interiors with panelled woodwork, ornate stairways, and built-in dining room and kitchen cupboards. The Woodlawn Avenue row features the most elaborate interiors with decorative fireplace surrounds, panelled oak woodwork, and window seats.

Due to their sound construction and high quality of workmanship, these buildings retain a great deal of their original architectural integrity. Some, however, are currently vacant and in a state of disrepair. The Woodlawn Avenue row has recently been restored and the other components are scheduled to be restored in the near future. As the only four intact surviving groups of this type of multi-unit housing, these rows depict and represent a unique collection of turn-of-the-century speculative urban architecture in the city of Buffalo. The attached Inventory forms have more detailed information and boundary descriptions of each component.

# 8. Significance

Period prehistoric 1400–1499 1500–1599 1600–1699 1700–1799 X 1800–1899 X 1900–	Areas of Significance—C archeology-prehistoric archeology-historic agriculture X architecture art commerce communications		science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater
Specific dates	c.1880-1900	Builder/Architect unknown;	

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Masten Neighborhood Rows Thematic Resources consist of four concentrations of speculative multi-unit rental housing in Buffalo that represent a distinctive architectural response to the issue of designing standardized urban housing in the late nineteenth century. Built from c.1880 to 1900, the components at #17-21 and #33-61 Emerson Place, #75-81 Woodlawn Avenue, and #1335-1345 Laurel and Michigan Avenues are the only intact groups of this type of housing remaining in the Masten neighborhood, the sole area in Buffalo where they were built in any concentration. These buildings are architecturally significant as representative examples of late nineteenth century speculative urban architecture which incorporate, with some sophistication, the popular architectural tastes of the period into a standard, mass-produced rowhouse form. Exhibiting a variety of late nineteenth and early twentieth century picturesque, eclectic architectural styles, the rows are distinguished by their high quality of craftsmanship, abundance of architectural detail, and picturesque form and massing, all of which belie their construction as a commercial housing venture. Built by land associations and developers for rent by working-class tenants, the rows represent a successful blend of architectural variety and style with a low-cost, mass-produced, standardized housing form. The four components included in the Masten Neighborhood Rows Thematic Resources are the only remaining examples of their type and illustrate an important aspect in the city of Buffalo's late nineteenth and early twentieth century residential growth and development.

In 1797, Joseph Ellicott, the first agent of the Holland Land Company, began his survey of western New York. Ellicott laid out the city of Buffalo with eight streets radiating at equal angles from the designated hub of the city. During the War of 1812, the city served as a staging point for several largely unsuccessful American forays into Canada. The period from the end of the war in 1815 until the beginning of the canal period in 1825 saw considerable growth in the area as people were attracted by its rich, fertile soil. The village of Buffalo was incorporated in April 1816 and by 1820, the population had risen to over two thousand.

The major event in the early nineteenth century development of Buffalo was the construction of the Erie Canal. Started in Rome, New York in 1817, the canal was completed in 1823 with Buffalo as its western terminus. Its opening two years later inaugurated a period of great growth and development within the city. Population and trade expansion resulted from the area's favorable location as a transportation point

#### **Major Bibliographical References** 9.

See continuation sheet

Acreage of nominated property		See inve	entory forms	
Quadrangle name <u>Buffalo</u> , <u>NE</u> UTM References			*	le scale <u>1:24,000</u>
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See inventory forms				
List all states and counties for pr	operties over	lapping state or c	ounty boundaries	NA
state	code	county		code
state	code	county		code
<b>11. Form Prepar</b>	ed By	see continu	ation sheet	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·

ative New York State Office of Parks, date organization Recreation & Historic Preservation December 1985 Empire State Plaza street & number Agency Building #1 teiephone 518-474-0479

#### city or town Albany New York **State Historic Preservation Officer Certification** 12.

state

	national	state	<u>X</u>	local		
65), I hereby r	nted State Historic P nominate this prope ne criteria and proce	rty for inclusi	ion in the N	lational Register an	d,certify that it ha	t of 1966 (Public Law 89- as been evaluated
state Historic I	Preservation Officer	signature	ita		Shir	•
itle Deputy	Commissione	r for Hi	storic	Preservatio	on date	1/23/86
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2

Page

Continuation sheet Erie County, NY Item number 8

connecting the Atlantic Ocean and the Eastern Great Lakes. By 1830, Buffalo was the shipbuilding capital of the Great Lakes and possessed a population of over 8,000. Two years later when the city was incor**pora**ted, the population had topped 10,000. During the late 1830's and 1840's, shipping and trade increased at a phenomenal rate, assuring the steady economic growth of Buffalo.

As a major industrial and transportation center as well as being the "Gateway to the West," the city of Buffalo received a tremendous amount of immigrants during the mid-nineteenth century. Each of the successive ethnic groups that made their way to Buffalo settled first on the industrialized East Side, where jobs were plentiful and housing was cheap. Between 1845 and 1855, the city's population doubled, with foreigners counting for over sixty per cent. Nearly half of the immigrants were Germans, who settled along Genesee, Sycamore, and Michigan Streets on the East Side. Well-educated and highly skilled, the Germans built small, frame single-family houses and formed a tight-knit, well-developed community.

Between 1850 and 1880, the immigrant population grew with foreigners arriving to fill jobs in the cigar factories, breweries, construction trades, and textile mills. By the third quarter of the nineteenth century, the immigrant, particularly German, population had begun to move northward to Cold Springs and the Fruit Belt where they built more substantial homes typical of upwardly mobile first and second generation immigrants.

The Masten neighborhood began to be developed in the 1870's with the creation of the Buffalo Park and Parkway system which made the land, then on the outskirts of the city, more desirable and accessible to the town's rapidly growing German population. In 1883, the New York Central Railroad built the Belt Line Railroad, a freight and commuter line, in an effort to decentralize industrial development and to provide a better link between the factories and the city. The Belt Line circled the city and opened new areas to the north and east for residential and industrial development. During the mid-1880s, a concentrated building boom began in the Masten neighborhood. An 1884 atlas of the city of Buffalo shows a large concentration of vacant land in this area with scattered housing units, particularly north of East Utica Street, where most of the speculative rows were later built. Some of the development took place in advance of the International Industrial Fair held in Buffalo in 1888. The first major exhibition held in the city, the fair was a focus of civic pride and prompted much new construction. The site of the exposition was the Buffalo Driving Park in the Masten neighborhood, built in the early 1870s as an adjunct to the parkway. The Olympic Park Stadium, no longer extant, was built on the block north of the #75-81 Woodlawn Avenue row. Another

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Masten Neighborhood Rows Thematic Resources, Buffalo, Continuation sheet Erie County, NY Item number 8



Page <sup>3</sup>

development in the neighborhood which created a demand for housing was the location of the city's major transit depot and car repair barns on Main and Michigan Streets. In 1888, the system changed from horse powered to electric powered trolleys with most of the major transit routes beginning and terminating at the Masten location . By 1890, the barns employed 2,500 workers and by 1915, the area was a fully developed residential neighborhood.

The residential development of the Masten neighborhood was controlled and fostered to a great extent by organizations known as "land associations," composed of developers, real estate dealers, and contractors. The first association was formed in 1870 specifically to develop land on the East Side. The land associations bought large tracts of land, subdivided them into small building lots, and sold them on the installment plan, thus enabling every workingman to buy his own property. The land associations also tended to be "building associations," constructing large numbers of houses and selling them on the installment plan. By 1888, there were seventy land companies in Buffalo with most of them developing the Masten neighborhood.

The primary developers of the Masten neighborhood rows were Benjamin B. Rice and his family. The little information that is known about Rice was gleaned from surviving building permits and Buffalo city directories. In 1872, Rice was a "land dealer" living in Detroit with an office in Buffalo managed by Warren Granger. By 1875, Rice and his family had moved to Buffalo and resided at #960 Delaware Avenue directly opposite Warren Granger's home. The Grangers were among the most prosperous and prominent families in the city at the time. In the 1860s, prior to his partnership with Rice, Granger had advertised himself as a "land dealer" with an office at #308 Main Street. The 1876 city directory lists Gerritt S. Rice and Samuel A. Rice, presumably sons of Benjamin, as builders and land agents in Granger's office on Main Street. In the 1879 city directory, Benjamin B. Rice is described as a "produce and commercial merchant" with a residence at #78 Glenwood Avenue. Since members of the Granger family also dealt in foodstuffs and grain, it is surmised that when Rice's land business failed, he sought to emulate the Granger's success in speculation. The following year (1880) Rice changed his residence to #48 Glenwood and listed his occupation as a "commercial merchant" dealing in bread, family supplies, and coal. His son Samuel, the former carpenter, is listed as a baker. By 1882, when the building boom started in the neighborhood, Rice had apparently returned to the land business for he is classified as a "real estate broker." Directories from 1882 until 1900 list Rice and his sons, along with other members of his family, as builders, real estate agents, and land developers. By 1893, the family was in partnership in the

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Masten Neighborhood Rows Thematic Resources, Buffalo, Continuation sheet Erie County, NY Item number 8



Rice-Blake Lumber Company which had lumber yards at the Ohio Basin of the Buffalo River. The Rice family was able to tend to all aspects of residential development since family members held a variety of jobs in the construction business. Benjamin B. Rice died c.1895 but his heirs and family continued in the real estate business until the early twentieth century. Although the Rice family obtained permits for the construction of many rows in the Masten neighborhood, they apparently never found it necessary to employ architects for none is listed on any of the building permits. The Rice family laid out Emerson Place c.1891 and in 1893, Benjamin B. Rice built the row at #33-61. In 1900, George C. Rice built the row at #17-21 Emerson Place. Numerous other building permits for rows in the area were issued to various members of the Rice family from c.1882 to c.1910 but none of the other buildings survive.

The Masten Neighborhood Rows are a rare and unusual collection of late nineteenth century speculative urban architecture in Buffalo. As a type of housing, conventional rowhouses became extremely popular in the large industrialized cities of the east during the mid-nineteenth century as large immigrant populations in search of employment crowded into already extensively developed cities. Rowhouses provided the answer to a market demand for inexpensive, mass-produced standardized housing on little available land. However, unlike most large urban industrial cities, Buffalo did not experience extensive rowhouse construction due to an abundance of land and a strong local predilection for detached single-family dwellings. The only rowhouses that had been built in Buffalo dated from the mid-nineteenth century and were of masonry construction. The availability of vast new areas of land in the 1870s and the subsequent growth and success of the land associations continued to foster the trend for individually owned, single-family homes. However, between 1880 and 1910, twenty-one groups of attached frame housing units, with the appearance of rowhouses, were constructed in the Masten neighborhood. It appears from title searches and their limited number that these rows were meant as a speculative venture and were built primarily to rent to the large German working-class population.

Architecturally, these rows are distinguished by their high quality design and abundance of applied architecture detail, both of which belie their construction as a commercial housing venture. In contrast to the typical tenement buildings of the period, these rows gave the appearance of owner occupied single-family residences, an illusion perhaps intended to make them more attractive to the working-class rental population. The combination of standardized construction with high decorative facades in these buildings reflects the late nineteenth century demand for inexpensive yet stylish housing, and the layout

# National Register of Historic Places

Inventory-Nomination Form Masten Neighborhood Rows Thematic Resources, Buffalo, Erie County, NY Item number



and organization of individual living units within the rows reflects the strong local predilection for single-family dwellings.

Each of the four components was designed to exhibit forms and decoration characteristic of different popular late nineteenth century picturesque architectural styles. The repetition of these forms and details over a large multi-unit building creates a pleasing rhythm and expresses a unified design.

Built c.1880, the row at #<u>1335-1345 Laurel and Michigan Avenues</u> is the oldest surviving row and possibly one of the first to be built in the neighborhood. Because it was constructed before building permits were required, the builder in not known. The row is the only surviving example of the popular "L-shaped" or "corner lot" plan which once marked the corners of many of the neighborhood blocks and exhibits ornate Italianate style detailing, including pedimented label moldings, paired brackets, and pilasters.

Built in 1893 by the Rice family, the large row at  $\frac{#33-61 \text{ Emerson}}{Place}$  combines features from both the Colonial Revival and Shingle styles of architecture. Composed of two adjacent seven-unit buildings, the row provides a strong visual statement with its undulating twentyeight bay facade featuring two-story rounded bay windows. The four-unit row at  $\frac{#75-81 \text{ Woodlawn Avenue}}{1000 \text{ Moodlawn Avenue}}$  was built in 1898 by Louis F. Lautenslager and is distinguished by its abundant, intricately carved Stick style ornament. The quality of craftsmanship and attention to architectural detail that marks all of the Masten Neighborhood rows is particularly evident on the Woodlawn Avenue row. Possibly one of the last rows built in the neighborhood is that at  $\frac{#17-21 \text{ Emerson Place}}{1000 \text{ By the Rice family, this row displays Colonial}}$ Revival style detailing with a Second Empire style roofline.

The shift to the suburbs in the 1940s and 1950s and the urban renewal programs of the 1960s and 1970s resulted in the demolition of the majority of the multi-unit rows in the Masten neighborhood. The components of the Masten Neighborhood Rows Thematic Resources are the last remaining intact buildings of this type in Buffalo. In addition to being historically linked to the late nineteenth century growth and development of the city, these rows represent a rare and unusual type of architecturally distinctive speculative urban architecture.

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Masten Neighborhood Rows Thematic Resources, Buffalo, Continuation sheet Erie County, NY Item number 9

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NPS Form 10-900-a (3-82)

OMB No. 1024-0018 Expires 10-31-87

## **United States Department of the Interior** National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Masten Neighborhood Rows Thematic Resources, Buffalo, Continuation sheet Erie County, NY Item number 11

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Research and documentation provided by:

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Page

2

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**United States Department of the Interior** National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

OMB No. 1024-0018 Expires 10-31-87



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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

17-21 Emerson Place Row (Masten Neighborhood Rows TR)

REMOVAL APPROVED

Keeper Sulon Byen 5/20/88