NPS Form 10-900
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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

865

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name General Electric Tower

other names/site number Niagara-Mohawk Building

2. Location

street & number 535 Washington Street ☐ not for publication

city or town Buffalo ☐ vicinity

state New York code NY county Erie code 029 zip code 14202

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Ruth A Pierpont DSHPO — 7/25/08

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

[✓] entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.

☐ removed from the National Register.

☐ other, (explain:) _____

for Edson H. Beall — 9.12.08

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

General Electric Tower
Name of Property

Buffalo, New York
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- [X] building(s)
- [ ] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	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.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/Business

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/Business

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Beaux Arts

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Stone, Terra Cotta , Steel

roof

other

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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Narrative Description

The General Electric Tower, also known as the Niagara Mohawk Building, is sited on a triangular lot at the intersection of Washington, Genesee and Huron Streets in downtown Buffalo. The building consists of a central octagonal tower of fourteen stories with two seven-story wings radiating from the south side of the tower along Genesee and Huron Streets. The structure is steel framing with reinforced concrete with all exposed surfaces on the Washington, Genesee and Huron streets facades clad in glazed white terracotta with applied classical detailing of the same material.

Exterior

The octagonal tower consists of fourteen floors grouped in three horizontal sections. The first, consisting of floors one through three, is surmounted by a belt course that continues into the flanking wings. The first floor of the tower features storefront-style display windows on all sides except in the west bay that contains the current entrance doors to the building. The northwest bay of the octagon contains a projecting entry surround that culminates in a balcony at the third floor. This projecting bay contained the original entry doors that were moved to the west bay in 1930. The second floor windows of the tower are in groups of four topped by a segmental arch, except in the west bay where there are five windows, two smaller on either end of three larger windows. The third floor windows of the tower bays are in groups of three, with the center window larger than the flanking windows, except in the west bay that contains four equal sized windows. The central window facing at the third floor northwest balcony contains doors to the exterior. Terracotta hoods with foliated swags top each of the second floor window bays, excepting for the west bay that has this feature at the third floor level. Additional foliated terracotta swags and clusters decorate the original projecting entry surround. The first floor storefront windows in the tower are separated from the second floor windows by decorative metal panels forming the spandrels below the upper windows.

The fourth through thirteenth floors of the tower show aluminum one over one double hung windows in groups of four. Terracotta mullions that form continuous vertical strips running to the base of the fourteenth floor separate the individual windows in each bay. Beneath each window is metal detailing similar to that below the tower base windows. The corners of the tower bays consist of flat, vertical terra cotta piers which are topped by foliated detailing and rounded piers that form the points of the balcony above the fourteenth floor. The fourteenth floor surfaces are highly detailed, each bay resting on a projecting flat hood with recessed voussoirs above the thirteenth floor. A foliated swag is centered on each hood. The hoods, themselves, rest on brackets that project from the vertical terracotta mullions of the windows below. The fourteenth floor windows are in groups of five, each window deeply recessed and flanked by pilasters formed of foliated cluster topped by

☐ See continuation sheet

rectangular blocks with projecting flat edges. The pilasters support a parapet with a raised segmental arched section.

A three stage cupola tops the tower, with each level stepping back in size. The first two levels are enclosed, while the third is open. Each level of the octagonal cupola shows the points of the octagon finished with round pilasters topped by foliated capitols supporting a squared-off cornice featuring a dental molding and decorative medallions. The metal windows in the first two levels contain patterns that match the decorative panels beneath the windows in levels four through thirteen of the tower. The arches above the windows are treated similarly to those above the thirteenth floor with recessed voussoirs and foliated swags. Each level of the cupola opens on a terrace that holds the floodlights that illuminate the top of the tower.

The final level of the cupola is surfaced in fiberglass panels, which have replaced the original terra cotta units and is topped by a roof formed by bands radiating up from the points of the cornice that meet at a foliated wreath. This is topped by a metal sphere (resting on metal brackets) from which projects antennae. The sections between the radiating bands are filled with clear transparent material.

The Wings

Seven-story wings radiating from the tower along Genesee and Huron Streets form the remainder of the building. The first four floors of the Huron Street wing were built with the tower in 1912. The first four floors of the Genesee Street wing were added by E. B. Green in 1926 and floors five through seven of both wings were added by the same architect in 1927. The wings are clad in white terra cotta on the street facades and painted brick at the rear. The classical detailing of the tower is carried into the wings, although there is more detail present in the original Huron wing than that in the Genesee wing. Both wings show double hung aluminum windows (two over two in the Genesee wing and one over one in the Huron wing) in groups of three, with those on the Huron Street side featuring decorative spandrels mimicking those in the tower. The windows occur in five bays on Genesee Street and six on Huron. Projecting, flat terracotta piers separate the bays. The tower belt course (above the third floor) continues into the wings and a second belt course occurs above the sixth floor. Flat terracotta hoods top the windows below each belt course as well as those below the projecting layered cornice above the seventh floor. A flat roof covers each wing. Glazed transoms, some of which have been altered or removed, top the storefront windows at street level. The Genesee Street wing abuts directly to the tower, while the Huron Street wing connects through a three-story hyphen that extends from the tower and is finished with one less window than the corresponding tower bay.

The Interior

The Entry Lobby and Mezzanine

During the original construction phase, the entry lobby and mezzanine of the Electric Tower were designed in the classical style and functioned as both a public office building lobby and retail space. This function continues until the present, though the entry lobby and mezzanine have been altered through several periods of construction. The original finishes of the classical period were largely removed in 1930, when these public spaces were reconfigured and given an Art Deco redecoration. Although some of the details from this 1930 remodeling have been retained, much of the Art Deco redecoration disappeared in subsequent modernizations to the lobby and mezzanine after the period of significance. In 2004, the Iskalo Development Corporation purchased the General Electric Tower and renovated the lobby and mezzanine level, using harmonious designs form the Art Deco period of significance. Their choice was influenced heavily by the Art Deco fabric that had remained intact behind various drop ceilings and false walls. The current design most closely reflects the 1930 period of significance in its use of the Art Deco treatments and retains the usage of public office building lobby and accompanying retail space.

The current entry at Washington Street opens into a small, elongated hexagonal space serving as an enclosed vestibule. Wall surfaces are of black structural glass and the doors, grilles and recessed lighted display cases are trimmed in stainless steel. A mosaic of the Niagara Mohawk symbol, including an outline map of New York State, is centered in the terrazzo floor, while the decorative plaster ceiling reflects the circular symbol with radiating chevrons. A matching deep plaster cornice leads from the top of the glass surface to the ceiling.

From this space, one can proceed straight ahead to the former retail display area or to the left into the elevator lobby giving access to the tower offices. Remnants of the 1930 Art Deco redecoration have been restored and incorporated into the elevator lobby. A black glass dado is surmounted by green marble sheeting in parts of this space and polished beige marble tiles in others. The original floor was lost in a previous remodeling by Niagara Mohawk and the floor now is resurfaced with marble tiles that complement the color and design of the Art Deco floor in the adjacent vestibule. A deep plaster cornice of angular Art Deco detailing surrounds the space. Decorative paneled doors with stainless steel hardware and an Art Deco mail receptacle remain from the 1930 redecoration, while the elevator doors and surrounds are from a more recent reworking of this space. The original secondary stairway started as an open stair at this point, and became enclosed from the mezzanine level and above. The stairway is now closed off from the elevator lobby by glass doors for fire code compliance and, as before, remains enclosed to the top floor.

☐ See continuation sheet

Panels in the lobby were removed revealing the original Niagara Mohawk symbol (New York State Map) etched in black glass and repainted due to damage from the mastic that held the fiberboard panels. All of the wall surfaces and piers are of tan marble and some of the marble have been replaced with a lighter toned marble to differentiate from the original. The mezzanine balcony has been reopened as an octagonal space above the center of the lobby. The piers rise to capitals from the Art Deco period with a combination of geometric and curved edging. The cornice in the room, approximately twelve feet from the floor, is made up of rows of vertical ribbing topped by deeply cut horizontal striping. Centered in the floor of this room is an octagonal inlay of black, green, red, tan and white marble. The former retail space was been enclosed into office space off the central hall, though the space remains open on the interior, and can still function as an open retail space.

The mezzanine level, built originally as a balcony open to the first floor was enclosed in later years. The balcony has been reopened as an octagonal opening surrounded by a metal decorative rail between the columns that continue up from the first floor. The windows in the tower area are within the segmented arches above the first floor storefront windows on the exterior. Fiberboard covering was removed to expose the original wood surrounds and window seats. The remainder of this floor is finished as enclosed tenant office space, except for a unique all glass conference room that extends unobtrusively out into the balcony area.

The Second through Thirteenth Floors

The second through thirteenth floors have served as office space since the tower's original construction. Each floor opens into small elevator lobbies with varying levels of finish, that lead to open tenant spaces consisting of structural columns, suspended ceiling systems and non-load bearing walls forming office enclosures. The use of these floors has changed under the tenancy of Niagara Mohawk and its renters throughout the buildings history, which is consentient with the intended function. Since 2005, some of these floors have been stripped of their non-historic finishes, revealing the brick wall surfaces along the perimeter. The developer has created new office spaces for tenants that showcase the buildings construction methods and uses pleasing contemporary materials to suit the needs of the twenty-first century office.

A rectangular light court begins at the fifth floor and is covered by a glass skylight at the top of the seventh floor. The well is surrounded by windows at all three levels and at the fifth floor level, glass doors lead to an interior terrace. The interior floor plans of the wings on floors three through six are large open spaces that were finished by tenants over the history of the building. They remain open today. The seventh floor contains the original executive offices and features dark walnut trim and doors on enclosed offices. Centered in this space and opening onto the light court is an executive conference room with a high level of finish. Walls and doors are dark stained quartered oak with deep moldings and rails in the paneling and doors. Hardware is solid

☐ See continuation sheet

brass with highly decorative locksets. A carved white marble mantel is flanked by rounded arched recessed bookcases. A decorative plaster ceiling in the Adam style is lighted by indirect lighting directed from a deep wood cornice. A small white ceramic tile bathroom with original pedestal sink and urinal as well as original tiled wall and floor surfaces is directly accessed from the conference room.

The wings terminate at the seventh floor, leaving the octagonal tower in which office space is provided on the remaining floors. The relatively small (2700 square feet) tower floors provide panoramic views and excellent natural light to the office spaces in them. The thirteenth floor contains a second conference room finished to a relatively high level. This elliptically shaped room has full height walnut finished paneling, curved cabinetry and doors and a carved wood mantel over a marble faced fireplace. A deep plaster cornice follows the elliptical shape of the room.

The Fourteenth Floor and Cupola

The fourteenth floor is the last full floor of the tower. The elevators terminate at the floor below and the elevator machine room is on this floor. The remainder of the floor is divided into spaces for a former photography lab and includes sinks and tables used for this purpose. The exterior walls of this floor are lined with a continuous row of single pane windows that differ from the groups of four double hung windows on the lower floors. The original use of this floor was a men's lounge and steam room.

The spaces above the fourteenth floor are in the cupola and lantern of the tower. The "fifteenth" floor space is reached by a broad, open stairway from the floor below and appears to have been built as a lecture hall or auditorium. Banks of semicircular poured concrete risers step up facing a poured concrete stage. The presence of several steam radiators would indicate that the room was used year round at sometime. The eight tall windows that fill the wall space on each side of the octagon contain metal grillwork forming eighteen lights per window in a roman pattern matching that of the spandrel decoration below the windows on lower levels of the building. A door leads to a terrace that surrounds this auditorium level and holds floodlights for illumination of the exterior of the lantern. A winding iron staircase leads from auditorium room to the open spaces in the diminishing sized upper areas of the lantern. This stair and a ladder give access to the very top of the building.

☐ See continuation sheet

General Electric Tower
Name of Property

Buffalo, New York
County and State

8 Statement of Significance

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

- [X] **A** Property 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.
- [X] **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.

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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
Commerce
Industry

Period of Significance
1912-1930

Significant Dates
1912, 1924, 1926-1927, 1930

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Esenwein and Johnson (1912)
E.B. Green & Sons (1924-1927)

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data

- [x] State Historic Preservation Office
- [ ] Other State agency
- [ ] Federal agency
- [ ] Local government
- [ ] University
- [ ] Other

Name of repository:

_____

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

Statement of Significance

The General Electric Tower is architecturally significant under Criterion C as an outstanding example of a Beaux Art office tower located in downtown Buffalo, NY. Its commanding proportions are inspired by the Pharos Lighthouse in Alexandria, once one of the Seven Wonders of the World, and the Electric Tower, the centerpiece of the Buffalo's 1901 Pan-American Exposition. Additionally it is significant under Criterion A representing the power development in western New York and the companies that were formed in the late-nineteenth century that would ultimately be responsible for providing electrical power across New York State.

The Business of Electricity in Western New York

The first known effort to harness the power potential of Niagara Falls occurred in 1759, when Daniel Joncaire constructed a small canal above the falls to power his saw mill. In 1805, Augustus and Peter Porter purchased Joncaire's canal and all of the American Falls from New York State in order to use the existing canal for hydraulic power for their gristmill and tannery. The Niagara Falls Hydraulic Power and Manufacturing Company, formed in 1853, was responsible for constructing the canals that eventually brought electrical power to western New York. Jacob Schoellkopf, a prosperous businessman, purchased the company in 1877 to power his local businesses. He is credited with expanding on the preliminary efforts to utilize Niagara's hydraulic power and generate hydroelectric power on a commercial scale. In 1882, the City of Niagara Falls was illuminated by a small hydroelectric generation station on the nearby falls. By this time, a second, more powerfully connected company had entered the playing field. The Niagara Falls Power Company was established by New York City financier Edward Dean Adams. Adams, backed by investors whose names included John Jacob Astor, William K. Vanderbilt and J.P. Morgan, among others, headed the Niagara Falls Power Project, which was set up to find new and improved ways of using Niagara's potential to produce power.

In 1893, an international commission led by mathematical physicist and engineer Lord Kelvin was established to address the issue of Niagara Falls' energy transmission. The commission was formed to select the method in which energy transmission would be effectively distributed from the falls, a decision that would ultimately lead to enormous profits for the winning technology. At that time, two methods were sparking a heated debate in Niagara and Buffalo. Kelvin supported inventor Thomas Edison's method of Direct Current (DC), while American entrepreneur and Edison rival George Westinghouse favored Serbian inventor and former Edison protégé, Nikola Tesla's method of Alternating Current (AC). The controversy surrounding this process became known as the "War of the Currents." DC power required numerous stations since the transmission is effective only within one or two miles of the station. AC power on the other hand, can be "stepped up" as it is transmitted and thus was able to be sent over distances far greater than Edison's favored DC. Still, DC was the standard in the late-nineteenth century and Tesla and Westinghouse struggled to prove that AC was the more

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efficient method. In response, Edison went on a tireless smear campaign to win the bid and persuade the public that AC had lethal capabilities, going so far as to electrocute small animals and a man-killing Coney Island elephant, and convincing Dr. Harold P. Brown, the credited inventor of the electric chair, to use AC for the first capital punishment by electricity in the United States. The results were nothing short of gruesome. Westinghouse later commented, "They would have done better using an axe." The "war" saw its decisive battle at the World's Columbian Exhibition of 1893 in Chicago. Westinghouse made the low bid and was given the opportunity to light the fair, which he did with Tesla's AC technology. The success of Tesla and Westinghouse's AC generators in the lighting of the Exposition helped convince Lord Kelvin and the commission to award the contract to Westinghouse. From then on, AC became the standard method of transferring electricity in the nation.

The Edward Dean Adams Power Plant was constructed for the Niagara Falls Power Company in 1895 by architects McKim, Mead & White in Niagara Falls (NR 1975). The company subsequently helped form the Cataract Construction Company, which was one of the main companies responsible for laying the transmission lines to the nearby industrial city of Buffalo. Additionally the company constructed all of the necessary facilities and equipment for conducting and distributing electricity throughout the city. As the building of the plant progressed under direction of Tesla, the investors were not convinced that the end product would function in the manner hoped. This was not a concern of Tesla's. The switch was officially thrown on November 16, 1896 and power was sent to Buffalo, some 20 miles away. By the time electricity arrived in the city, the Buffalo General Electric Company had already been established from several other companies. The company was responsible for the distribution of electrical power generated at the Adams Plant to the growing industries and population of Buffalo.

In 1895, the city of Buffalo announced that it would host an international exposition along the Niagara River by 1899, though construction would not begin until 1899. The goal of the exposition was to recognize the independence and growth of the nations of Western Hemisphere and to celebrate the achievements that had been made throughout the nineteenth century. Buffalo at the time was the seventh largest city in the United States and its progress in electric use made it the ideal location to showcase the technical advances to be expected in the twentieth century. The grounds were selected just north of Delaware Park (NR 1982) and Forrest Lawn Cemetery (NR 1990). A multitude of highly designed, though temporary buildings, statues, and landscaping were designed by a board of architects from some of New York and Massachusetts most prominent firms. The Pan-American Board of Architects were the deciding body of the layout and design of the exposition. The Niagara Falls Power Company, Buffalo General Electric Company, Thomas Edison's Edison Electric Light Company, and George Westinghouse's Electric and Manufacturing Company all made significant contributions to the event and erected elaborate displays to demonstrate their numerous electric ingenuities.

[X] See continuation sheet

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

The centerpiece of the exposition was the Electric Tower, built to showcase the events main feature of electrical technology. Designed by John Galen Howard, of the New York City firm of Howard, Cauldwell, and Morgan, the tower reached over 350 feet and featured a central elevator that took visitors to an observation deck overlooking the expansive exposition. Light emitted from the tower in every direction and the importance of Niagara Falls was reinforced by it distinctive classic and Renaissance design, including a base that included representations of the Niagara River and Falls that represented the water sources of electricity. The Electric Tower represented the theme of the exposition, and its design was meant to signify the success of man over the elements and the beginning of a new era in the United States. Unfortunately, the intended significance was overshadowed by another event. On September 6th, President McKinley was assassinated in the exposition's Temple of Music. The promise of the event had turned into the site of national tragedy. Shortly after the exposition closed, the temporary buildings were demolished and the grounds developed into residential neighborhoods. Today, the only major remaining structure from the exposition is the New York State Building. (NR 1980: Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society)

In the period of the Pan-American Exposition, electricity replaced mechanical power throughout Western New York, allowing for the expansion of industries, including the operation of Buffalo's Grain Elevators (NR 2003). Management of producing the energy of Niagara Falls was still handled by Schoellkopf's Niagara Falls Hydraulic Power and Manufacturing Company and Adams' Niagara Falls Power Company. In 1918, the two companies merged into the Niagara Falls Power Company under the management of the Schoellkopf family and its associates. The distribution of electricity across western New York State continued to be handled by the Buffalo General Electric Company, which later absorbed the Cataract Power and Conduit Company. By 1927, the Buffalo General Electric Company was the largest of the distribution entities in Buffalo and throughout the western region, serving a population of over 600,000 people. Power companies across New York State were brought together under the Niagara Hudson Power Company in 1929. Consolidation of the various power supply companies in the state continued, forming three operating subsidiaries in the 1930's that covered the regions of New York State. After World War II, centralization was emphasized and in the 1950's the three subsidiaries, the Buffalo Niagara Electric Corporation, the Central New York Power Corporation, and the New York Power and Light Corporation, formed the Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation. In 2002, Niagara Mohawk was purchased by the United Kingdom based utilities company National Grid, which manages the electricity production, distribution, and transmission of power in the majority of the northeast of the United States.

[X] See continuation sheet

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

The General Electric Tower

The General Electric Tower at Genesee, Washington and Huron Streets was previously the site of the home of Major Andre Andrew, the 2nd mayor of the City of Buffalo. Andrew, a major property holder in the city, died in 1834 of cholera. Later the Gruener Hotel and Gardens occupied the location and in a 1901 *Buffalo Evening News* article, advertised $1 rooms for Pan-American Exposition visitors. The hotel building was torn down in the spring of 1909. The new owners, the Buffalo General Electric Company, planned to build a new office tower to house its home offices and the offices of its sister company, the Cataract Power and Conduit Company. The building would house additional rental spaces and a ground-level showroom for the sale of electric appliances and decorative lighting.

A building permit was granted to the Buffalo Electric Company on July 26, 1911 for the construction of a steel, brick, and terracotta building. The architectural firm of Esenwein and Johnson was chosen to design an interpretation of the Electric Tower that was showcased at the Pan-American Exposition. The architects had previously designed the Temple of Music at the Exposition, the building where President McKinley had been shot some ten years prior. Esenwein, who had done his architectural training in Europe, and Johnson, who had come to Buffalo from the office of McKim, Mead, and White, where he specialized in ornament, chose the Beaux Art style of architecture for the new tower. The classical style, which has its roots in the Parisian school, the Ecole des Beaux Arts, emphasized the use of symmetry, hierarchy of space, and the use of pictorial details that distinguishes it from its neoclassical counterparts. Disciples of the Beaux Art style studied the great buildings of antiquity and incorporated their designs into modern expressions using the technology of the day. The architects were additionally inspired by the Pharos Lighthouse in Alexandria, once one of the Seven Wonders of the World and lost in the thirteenth century. The combination of a tower of antiquity and the association with the Electric Tower made for a fine expression of the Beaux Art taste and synergized the two buildings into a modern architectural expression. The use of fine cut and polished stone and marble in the construction of buildings in the Beaux Art style added considerably to the cost. Esenwein and Johnson opted to use glazed white terracotta, which reduced the overall cost. The glazed material enhanced the style by providing reflective surfaces that were further highlighted by electric floodlights designed by Buffalo General Electric lighting engineer W. D'Arcy Ryan.

In 1912, the General Electric Tower consisted of an octagonal tower of fourteen stories plus cupola and a four story wing projecting on the Huron Street side of the tower. Both the tower and wing exhibited belt courses, decorative spandrels, grouped windows with molded window hoods and deep cornices. The tower was further articulated with foliated swags and clusters, pilasters and radiating brackets at the upper levels. The eye was further brought to the top by the three level cupola or lantern on which all of these forms were lavished, culminating in a large metal sphere topped by antennae. The street level entry was originally through a two-

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story entrance surround facing Genesee Street and ground level windows in the tower and wing were of the storefront variety, topped by transoms of glass and decorative metal matching the design of the spandrels. These windows allowed for the display of the new electrical appliances promoted by the company. On the interior, the most prominent space was the two-story, centrally located appliance department. A principal open staircase rose to the balcony at the far end of the display area. The walls, columns, and floors were surfaced in polished marble and the balcony's decorative rail repeated the pattern seen on the exterior spandrels and the window grills in the cupola. When it opened in 1912, the first four floors were occupied by the electric company and its associates, with floors five through thirteen serving as tenant office space and a fourteenth floor men's lounge with steam room. A still intact octagonal lecture hall space was designed on the entire first floor of the cupola above the lounge.

The General Electric Tower was expanded twice, both times by the noted architectural firm of E.B. Green Sons. E. B. Green, for whom the firm was named, was perhaps Buffalo's most prominent architect, with one hundred and sixty of his buildings still standing in the city and several on the National Register, including the recently listed Garret Club (NR 2006). The first expansion occurred in 1924, when a four-story wing was added to the Genesee Street side of the tower. Although it matched the Huron wing in size, shape, and style, the Genesee Street wing was not as heavily detailed. On the interior, the main staircase was removed to create a balcony. In 1926, both wings were enlarged by the addition of three additional floors bringing them to seven stories in height. At that time, a light well reaching from floors five trough seven was installed.

In 1930, shortly after the Buffalo Electric Company was consolidated into the larger Niagara Hudson Power Company, the tower was altered again, giving the building an Art Deco treatment around the newly shaped front entrance and the interior lobbies. The entry was moved from the Genesee Street bay of the tower to the Washington Street bay and the Washington Street storefront window was moved to the former entry surround on Genesee Street. At that time the new entry bay was surfaced with black structural glass and stainless steel along with white "Niagara Hudson" lettering. On the interior, the balcony was removed and a full mezzanine floor created, reducing the first floor display area to one-story. The elevator lobby, newly created entry vestibule, and interior walls also received a treatment employing black structural glass and stainless steel trim. Highly decorated plaster moldings and ceiling medallions accentuated the Deco theme that was carried into the central display area, being applied to permanent surfaces (columns and walls) and to the display cases. The Deco treatment however was not carried above the first two floors.

After the period of significance, there were several attempts to update the interior, including dropped ceilings and dry walling. In 1992 a major rehabilitation of the exterior surfaces took place under the architectural firm of Kideney Laping Jaeger Associates. All of the terracotta surfaces were rehabilitated and replaced where necessary and some artificial materials were substituted, especially in the weather-vulnerable

areas of the cupola. At that time, the Art Deco changes on the entry were removed and replaced with a design closer to the original Beaux Art style. The Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation announced plans to sell the building in 2003 and it was purchased by Iskalo Development Corporation in 2004. The building has been rehabilitated by Iskalo, which returned the entry vestibule back to its 1930 appearance and exposed much of the original detailing that had been covered over in the late-twentieth century renovations. The interior renovations have been executed with respect to both the Beaux Art and Art Deco styles of architecture and their detailing.

Summary

The General Electric Tower continues to serve as a beacon in the skyline of Buffalo, NY. Lit up daily, the tower is a reminder of the city's once great dominance in the business of power in New York State. It has served as the headquarters for the management of electricity in western New York through the Buffalo General Electric Company and later served as a central arm for the Niagara Mohawk Company, which would cover the power supply for the majority of the state. The tower has been thoughtfully restored to pay respect to its exterior Beaux Art design and its 1930 Art Deco interior renovation, while continuing to serve the downtown business community. The preservation of the tower signifies a return to architects Esenwein and Johnson's original design concept of looking to the past to design for the future.

[X] See continuation sheet

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

Bibliography

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☐ See continuation sheet

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- Randall, John D., Buffalo and Western New York Architecture, Buffalo, 1976.
- Randall, John D., et al. Buffalo Architecture: A Guide, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1981.
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General Electric Tower
Name of Property

Buffalo, New York
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Under 1 Acre

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17	673690	4750430	3			
2				4			

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Tom Yots, Consultant & Daniel McEneny, Historic Preservation Specialist

organization New York State Historic Preservation Office date

street & number Peebles Island State Park, Box 189 telephone 518-237-8643 x 3261

city or town Waterford state New York zip code 12188

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items
(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

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

name Iskalo Development Corp.

street & number 5166 Main Street telephone 716.633.2096

city or town Williamsville state NY zip code 14221

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

Boundary Justification & Verbal Description

The nominated property is by Genesee St. to the North, E. Huron to the South, Washington St. to the West, & Ellicott St. to the East, consuming the entire block. The boundary of the property has remained the same from the period of significance to the present.

☐ See continuation sheet

NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Photos Page 1

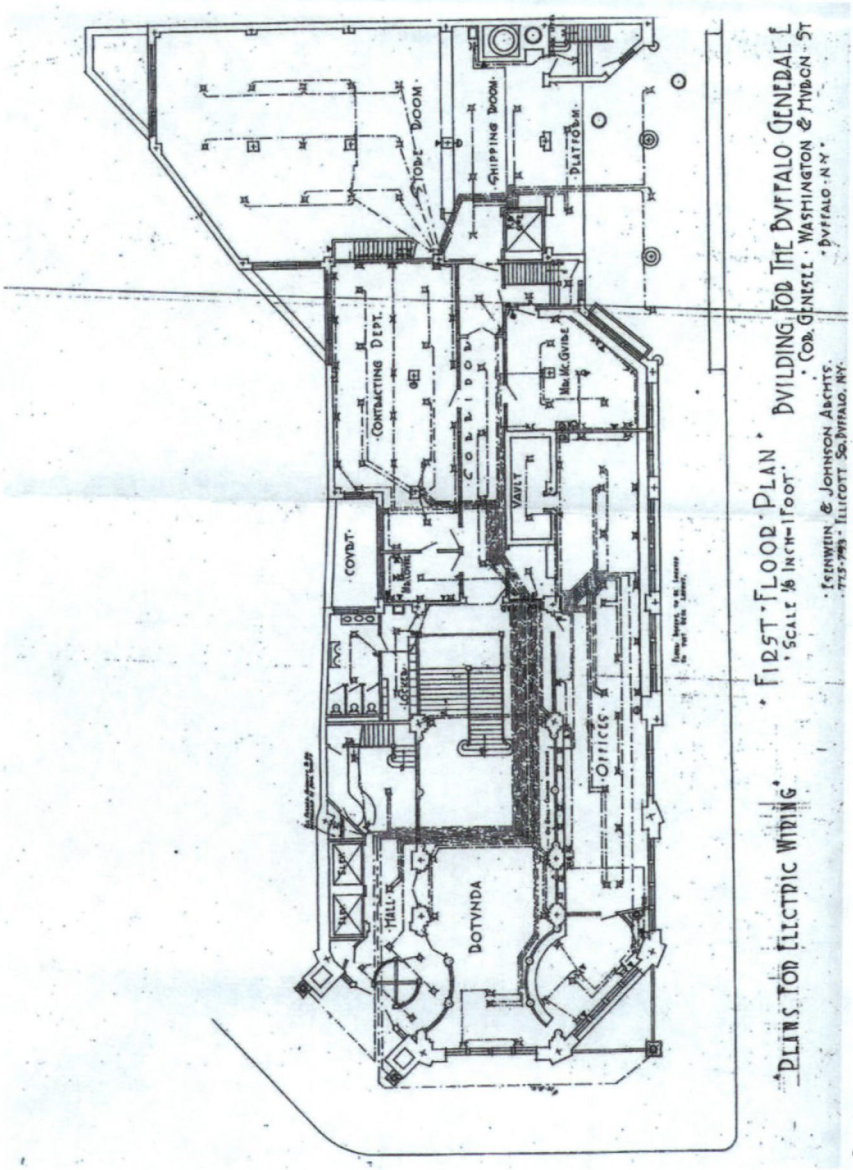
1. Tower Facing South
2. East Wing
3. Copula
4. Mezzanine Renovation 2007
5. Lobby Renovation 2007
6. Boardroom 7th Floor

☐ See continuation sheet

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

Maps and Plans

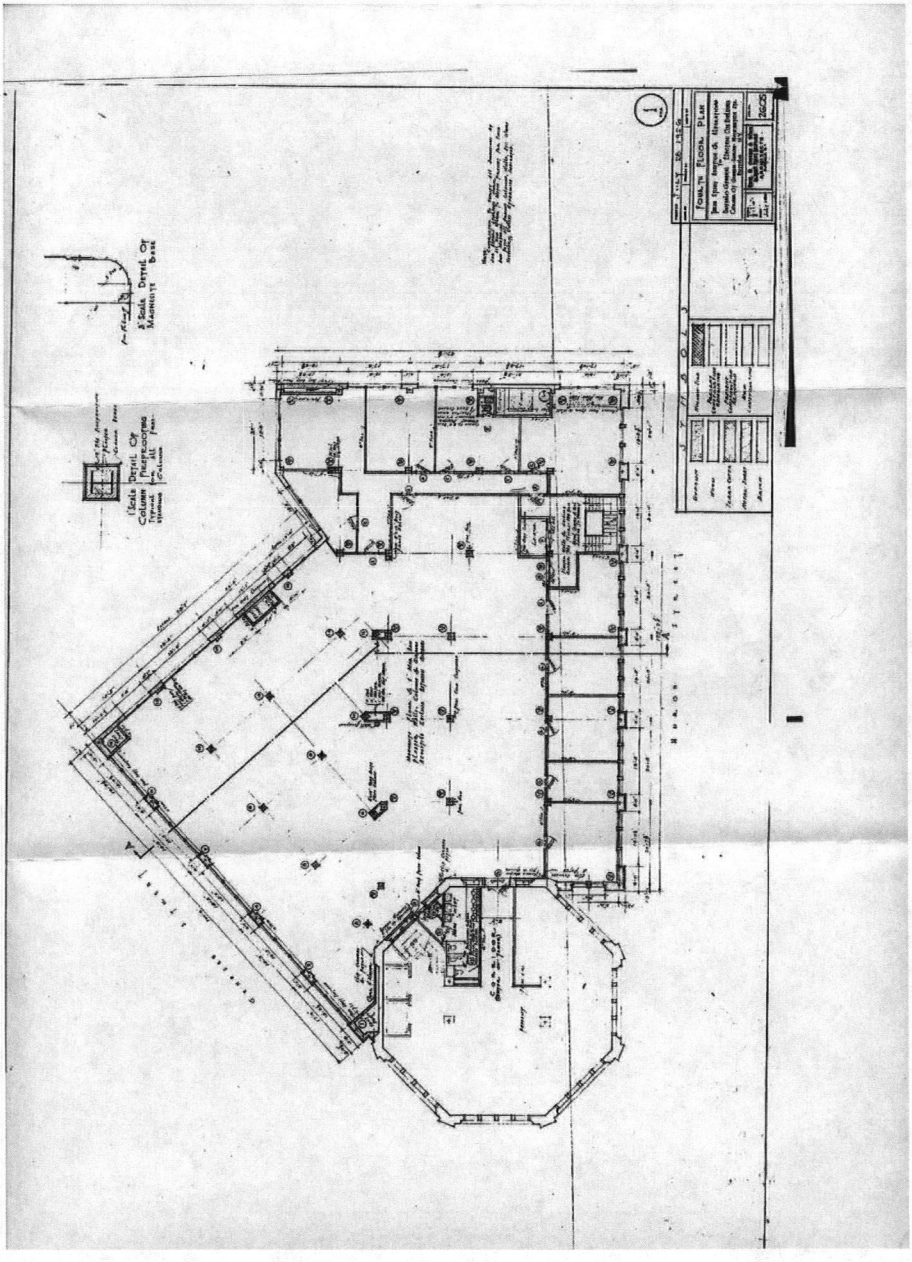


1912 Plan

☐ See continuation sheet

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

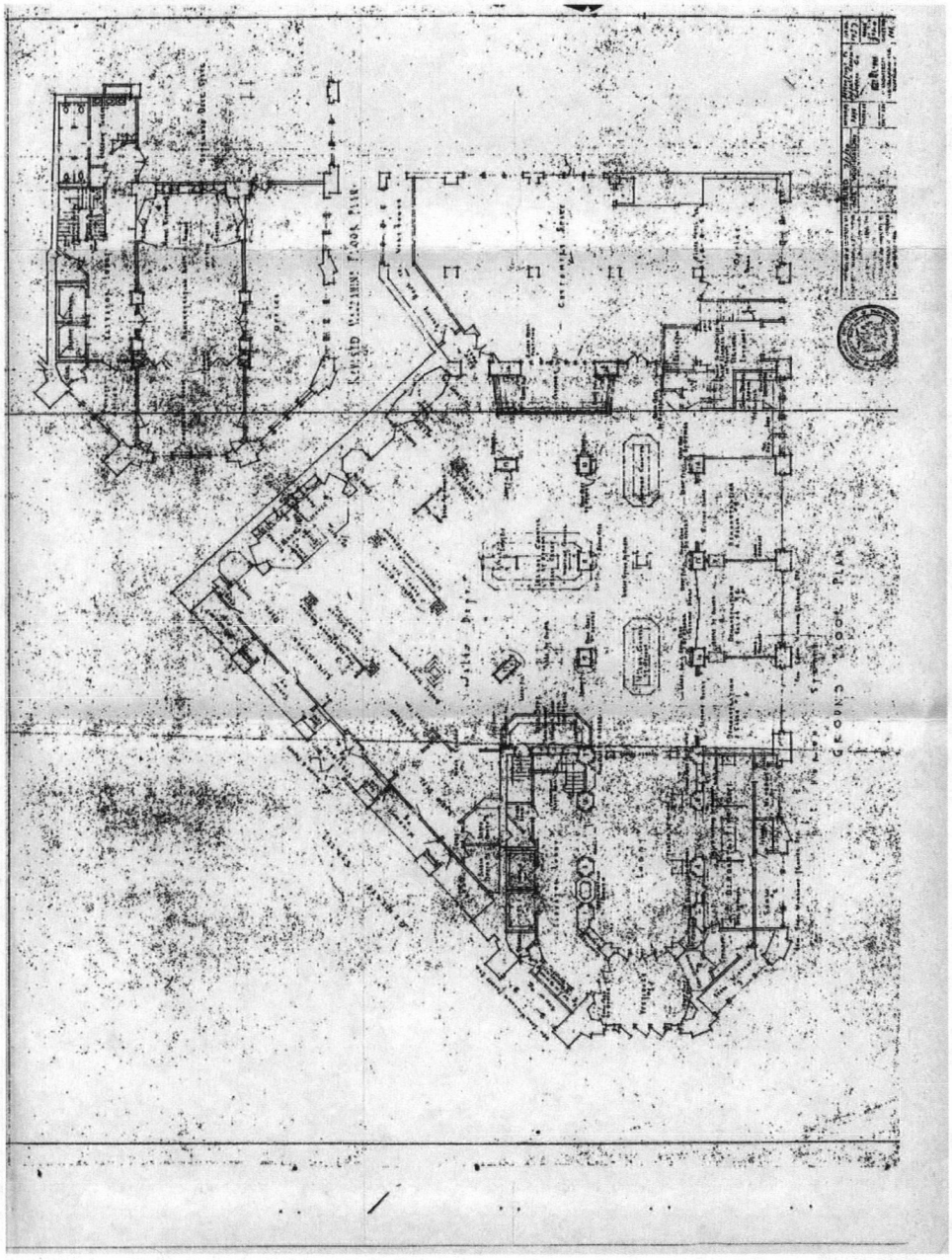


1926 Plan

☐ See continuation sheet

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

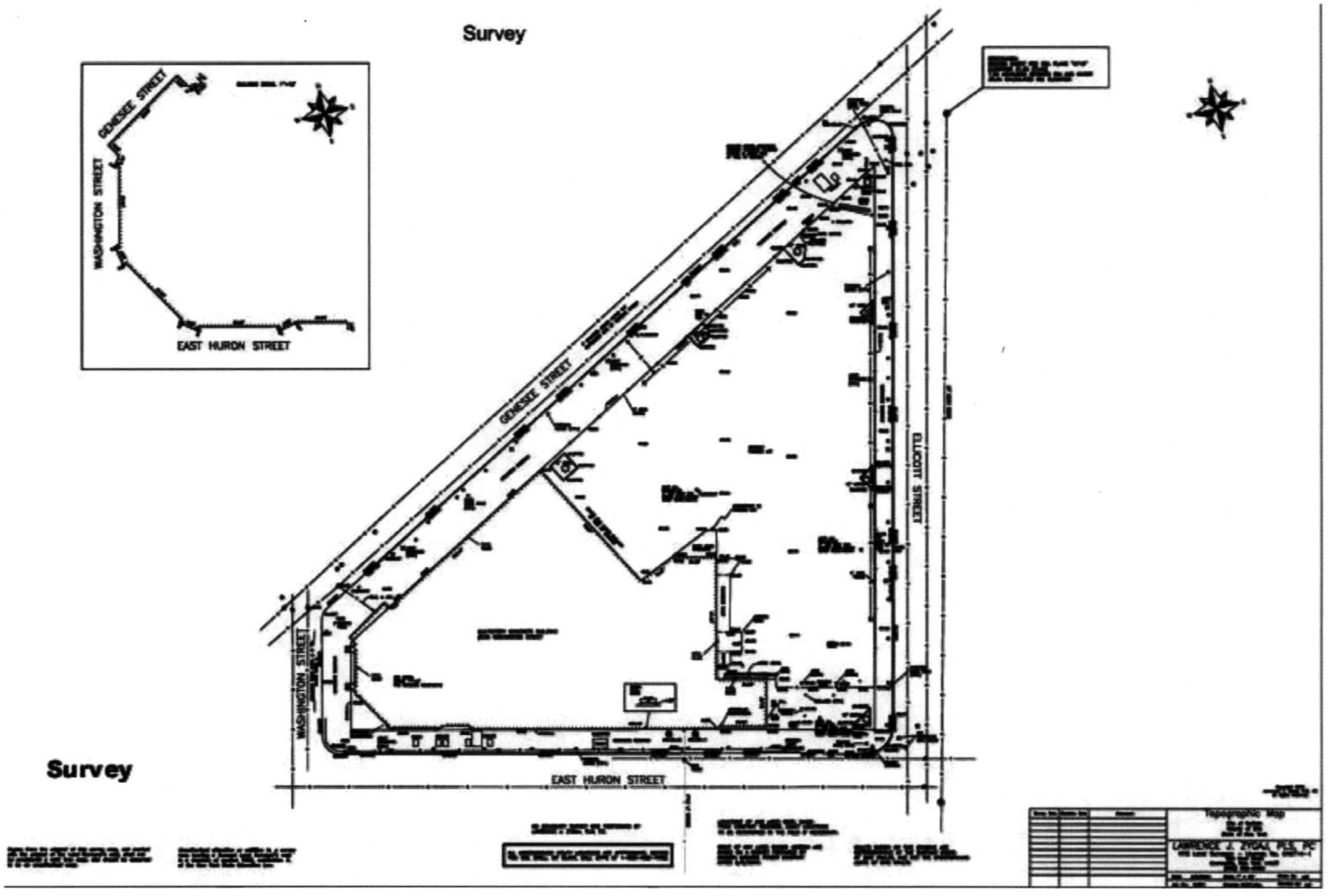


1930 Plan

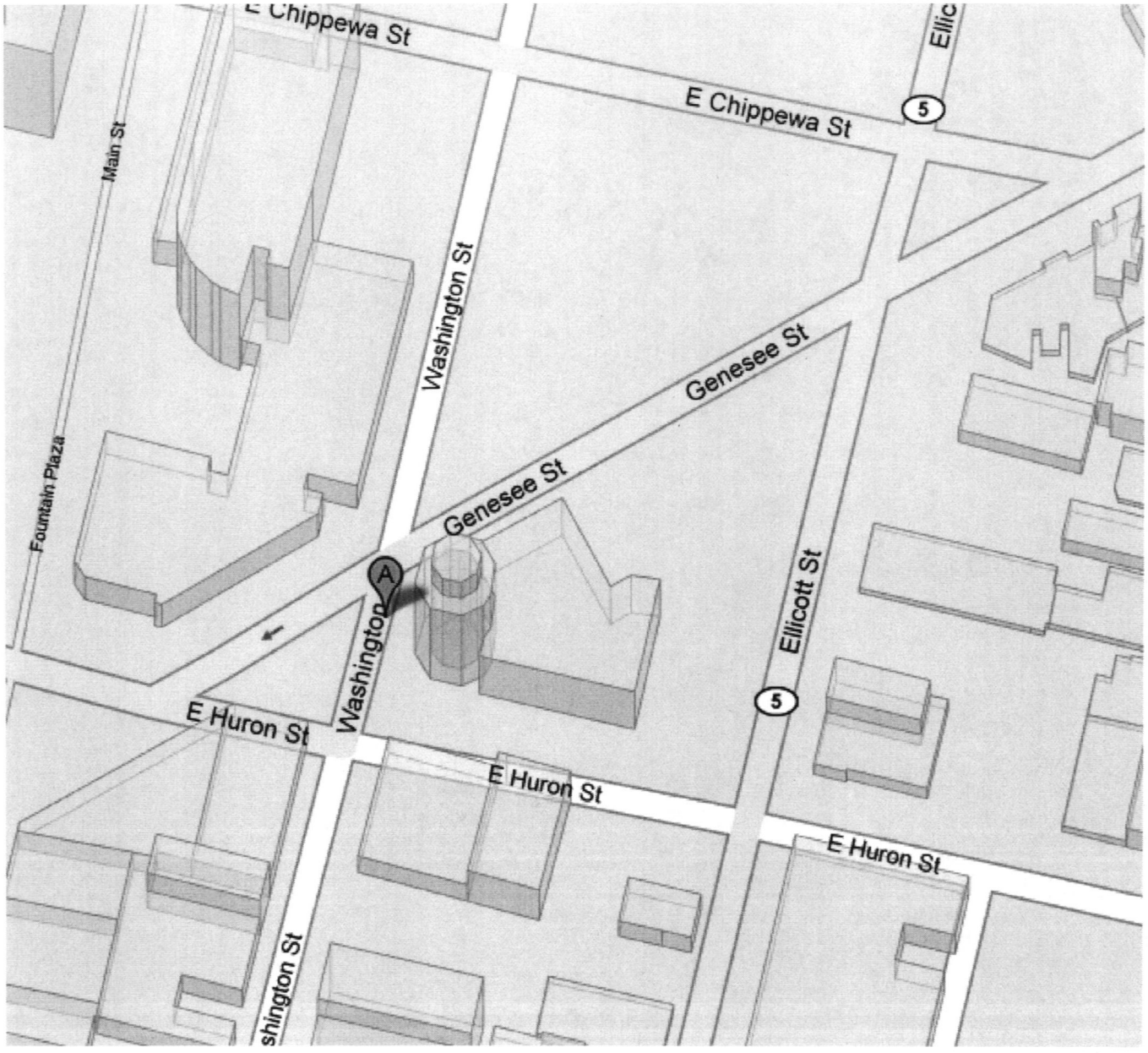
☐ See continuation sheet

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____



☐ See continuation sheet



535 Washington Ave
General Electric Tower

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: General Electric Tower

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW YORK, Erie

DATE RECEIVED: 7/30/08 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 8/14/08
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 8/29/08 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/12/08
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 08000865

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL:	N	DATA PROBLEM:	N	LANDSCAPE:	N	LESS THAN 50 YEARS:	N
OTHER:	N	PDIL:	N	PERIOD:	N	PROGRAM UNAPPROVED:	N
REQUEST:	N	SAMPLE:	N	SLR DRAFT:	N	NATIONAL:	N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

_✓_ ACCEPT ___ RETURN ___ REJECT 9.12.08 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA_____

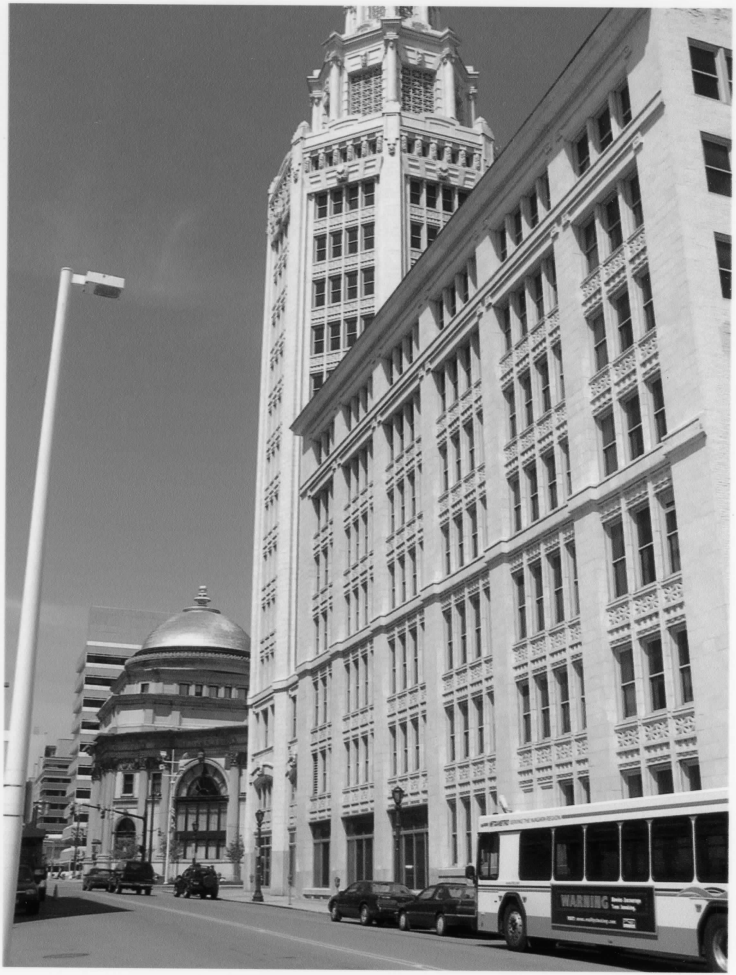
REVIEWER_____ DISCIPLINE_____

TELEPHONE_____ DATE_____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

General Electric
Tower - NY
Buffalo, Erie Co.
Photo 1


WARNING

General Electric
Tower - NY
Buffalo, Erie Co.
Photo 2

General Eletric
tower - NY
Buffalo Erie Co
Photo 3

General Electric Tower

NY
Buffalo, Erie Co.

Photo 4

General Electric Tower
NY
Buffalo, Erie Co.
Photo 5

General Electric Tower
NY
Buffalo Erie Co
Photo Co

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

BUFFALO NE QUADRANGLE
NEW YORK—ERIE CO.
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)
NE/4 BUFFALO 15' QUADRANGLE

5270 III SW (TONAWANDA WEST)

5270 II SW (CLARENCE CENTER)

78°52'30" 43°00' 674 000m E. 675 676 50' NIAGARA FALLS 18 MI. NORTH TONAWANDA 4 MI. 5270 III SE (TONAWANDA EAST) 679 47'30" MILLERSPORT 7 MI. 450 000 FEET 683 78°45' 43°00'

1 090 000 FEET

2.8 MI. TO INTERSTATE 190

4761 000m N.

5 MI. TO N.Y. 5

57'30"

1 060 000 FEET

1.2 MI. TO N.Y. 266

5269 IV NW (BUFFALO NW)

1.6 MI. TO INTERSTATE 190

1.7 MI. TO U.S. 62
8 MI. TO INTERSTATE 290

INTERCHANGE 49 (N.Y. 78) 2.6 MI.
INTERCHANGE 48 (N.Y. 98) 30 MI.

5269 I NW (LANCASTER)

BOWMANSVILLE 3.3 MI.
BATAVIA 30 MI.

LANCASTER 4 MI.

4750000m N.

42°52'30" 78°52'30" 674 9 MI. TO U.S. 20 EAST AURORA 15 MI. 675 430 000 FEET 50' LACKAWANNA 6 MI. HAMBURG 11 MI. (BUFFALO SE) 5269 IV SE 679 680 47'30" 1.7 MI. TO INTERCHANGE 54 682 000m E. 42°52'30" 78°45'

(BUFFALO SE) 5269 IV SE

(ORCHARD PARK) 5269 I SW

INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY WASHINGTON D C —1967

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
in cooperation with New York Department of Public Works

Control by USGS, USC&GS, USCE, and U.S. Lake Survey

Planimetry compiled by U.S. Corps of Engineers from aerial photographs taken 1942. Topography by planetable surveys 1948. Revised 1965

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on New York coordinate system, west zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 17, shown in blue

Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown

MN GN 8° 142 MILS 1°29' 26 MILS

UTM GRID AND 1965 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

SCALE 1:24 000

1 0 1 MILE
1000 0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000 7000 FEET
1 5 0 1 KILOMETER

CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty — Light-duty
Medium-duty — Unimproved dirt
Interstate Route — U.S. Route — State Route

NEW YORK
QUADRANGLE LOCATION

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20242
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

BUFFALO NE, N.Y.
NE/4 BUFFALO 15' QUADRANGLE
N4252.5—W7845/7.5

1965

AMS 5269 IV NE—SERIES V821

General Electric Tower
Buffalo, NY
Erie Co.
Buffalo NE Quad
Zone 17
4750430
673690

4750430
N
673690
W

Buffalo NE

OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION, HISTORIC PRESERVATION
NEW YORK STATE

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau • Peebles Island, PO Box 189, Waterford, New York 12188-0189
518-237-8643
www.nysparks.com

July 29, 2008

Ms. Alexis Abernathy
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1201 Eye St. NW
8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005

Re: Transmittal of National Register Nominations

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to transmit four new National Register nominations to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register as follows:

Wing-Northrup House, Fort Edward, Washington Co., NY

USS Croaker, Buffalo, Erie Co., NY

St. John's Lutheran Church, Beekman Corners, Schoharie Co., NY

General Electric Tower, Buffalo, Erie Co., NY

Big Duck Ranch, Flanders, Suffolk Co., NY (with your help, the Duck was recently listed in the restored location-we are now asking that the original farm including the Duck be considered)

Thank you for your assistance in processing these proposals. Please feel free to call on me at 518-237-8643 ext. 3258 if any questions arise.

Sincerely,

Mark L. Peckham
National Register
Program Coordinator

enclosures