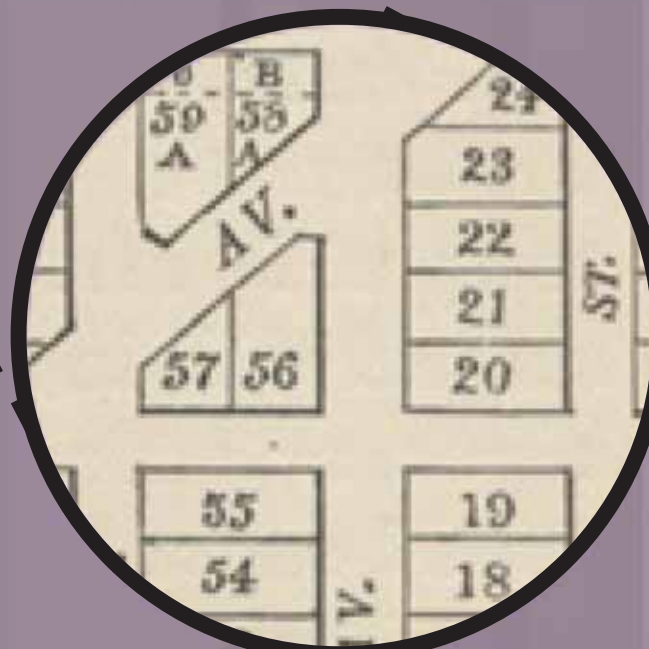
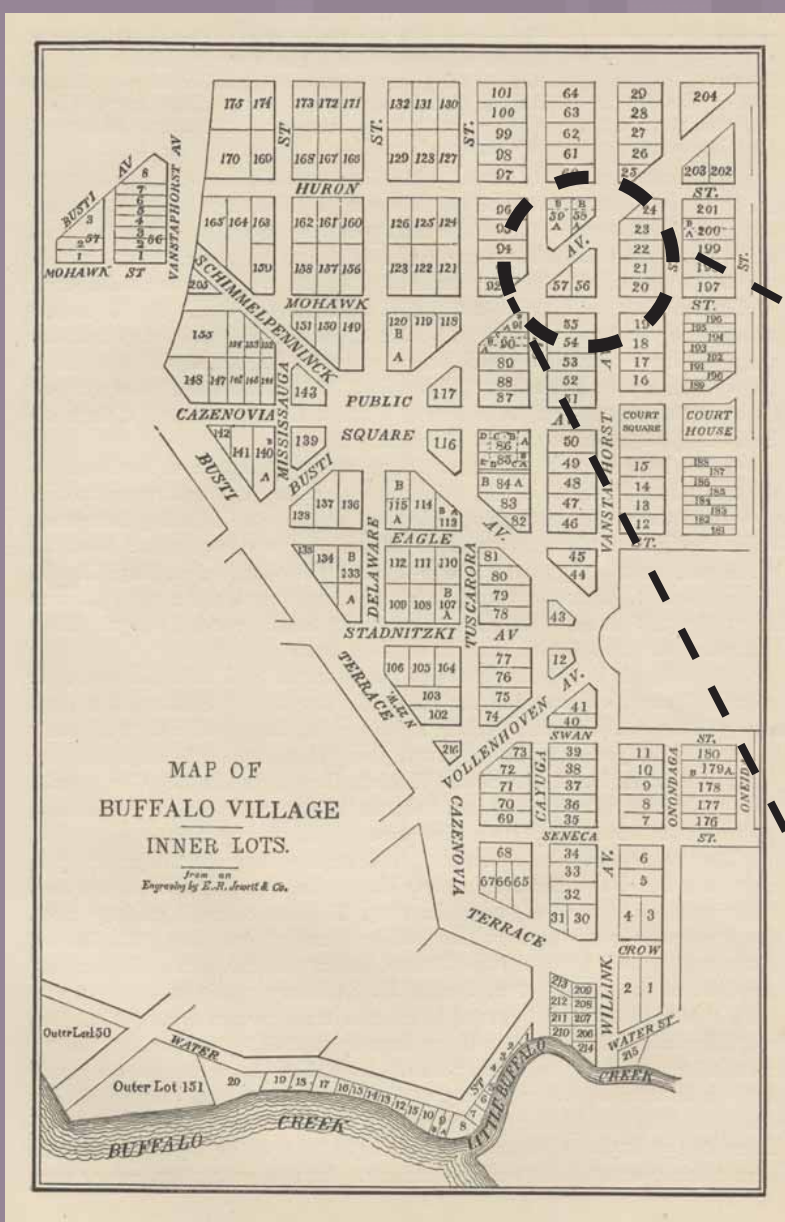


The Place to Shop

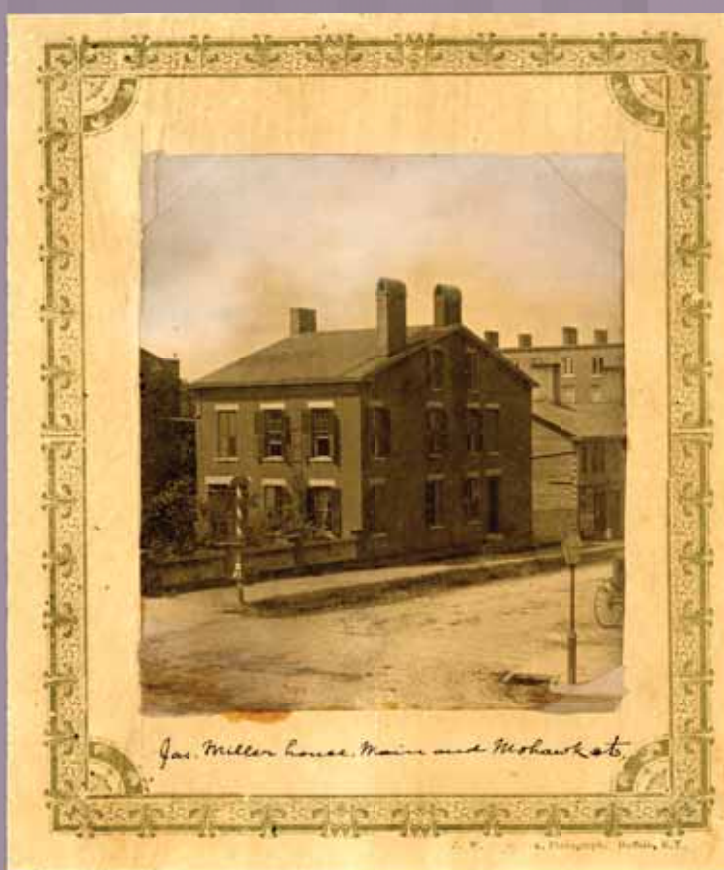
History of Buffalo and Erie County Vol. II, p. 31, H. Perry Smith



Beginning

Lot 56, now site of The Belesario, and Ricotta & Visco Law Firm, was divided into five parcels by the Holland Land Company and sold between 1816 and 1818. One lot was purchased by Gilman Folsom, the first butcher in Buffalo and owner of other village lots. Seth Grosvenor, a merchant who was active in defending Buffalo in the War of 1812 and in rebuilding after the fire, invested in another parcel. Although he moved away in 1815, Grosvenor remembered Buffalo and bequeathed funds to build and endow a public library. The Seth Grosvenor Book and Material Endowment Fund still assists the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library today.

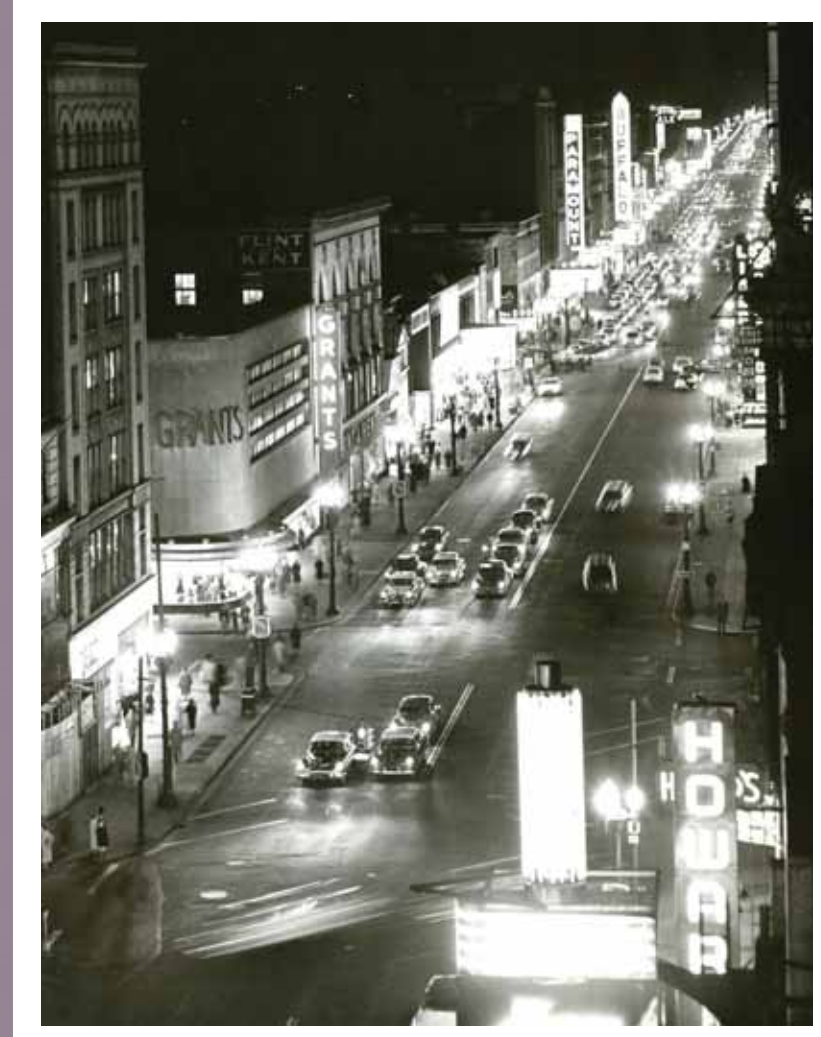
Lot 55, at the southwest corner of Mohawk was developed by James "Quaker" Miller, a grocer who built the Miller Block building in 1822 and purchased the lot from the Holland Land Company in 1824.



James Miller home, built 1822, incorporated in Miller Block 1867, fully demolished 1906. Courtesy Buffalo History Museum

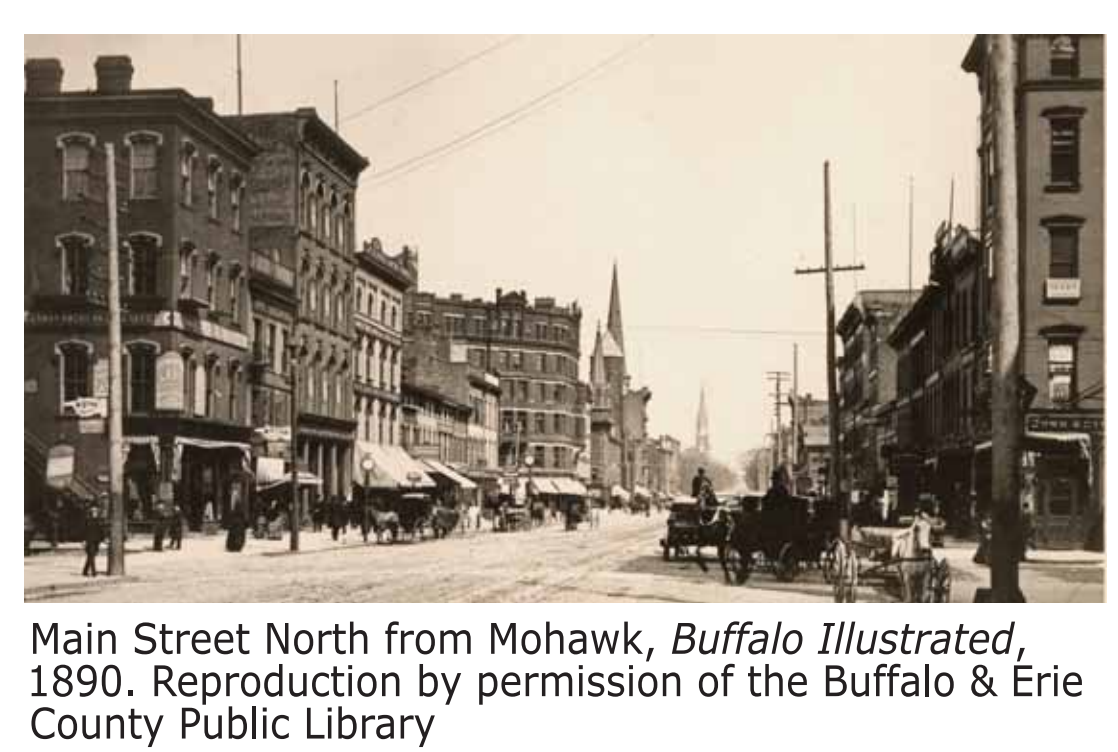
left photo: Traffic near W.T. Grants at Huron Street (1949-1955). Courtesy of Buffalo History Museum

bottom photo: Jennifer Washburn and Alan Shaw in crowd of shoppers, 2/17/1974, by Bob Bukaty. SUNY Buffalo State Archives & Special Collections, Courier Express Collection

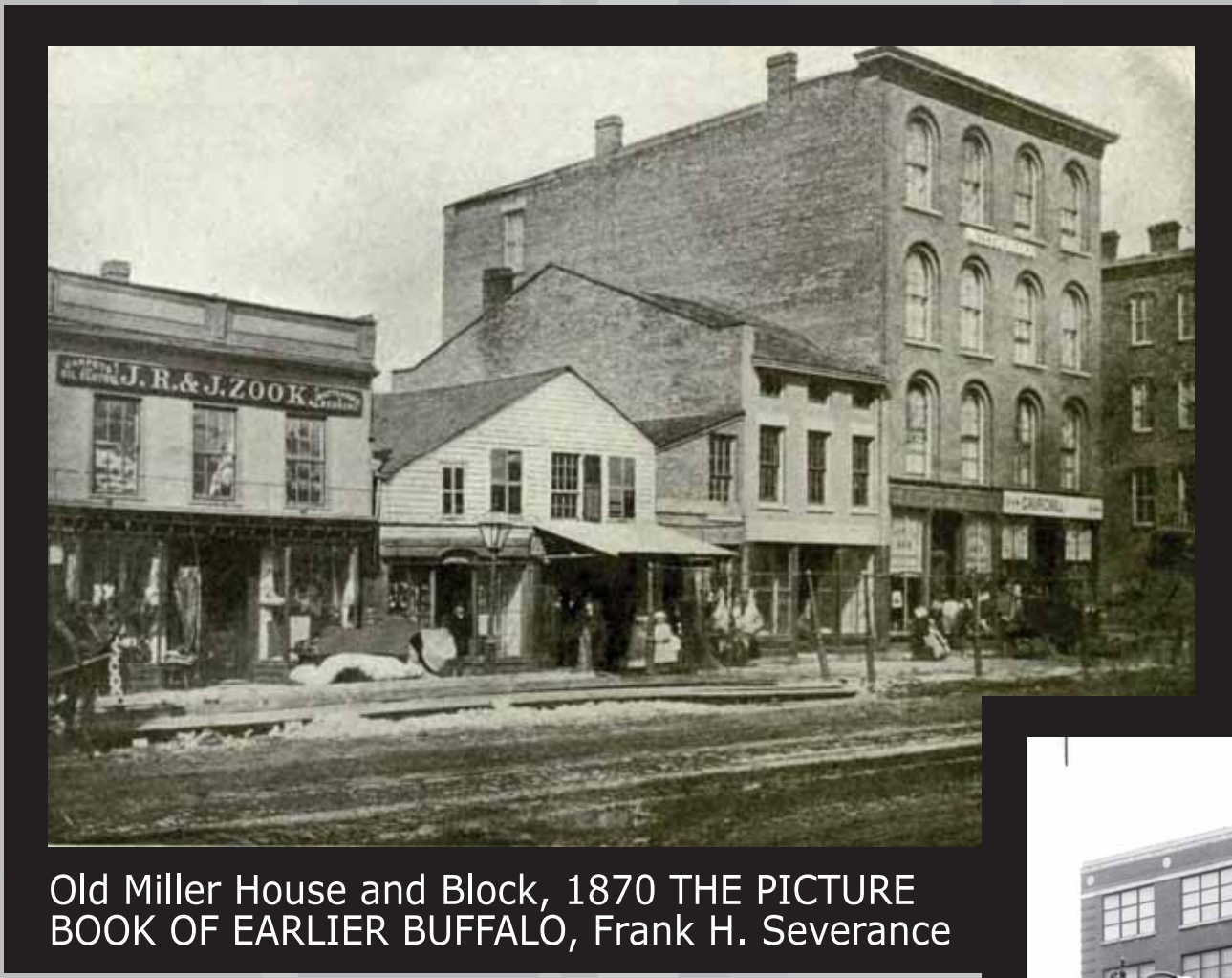


Main Street is the Market Place

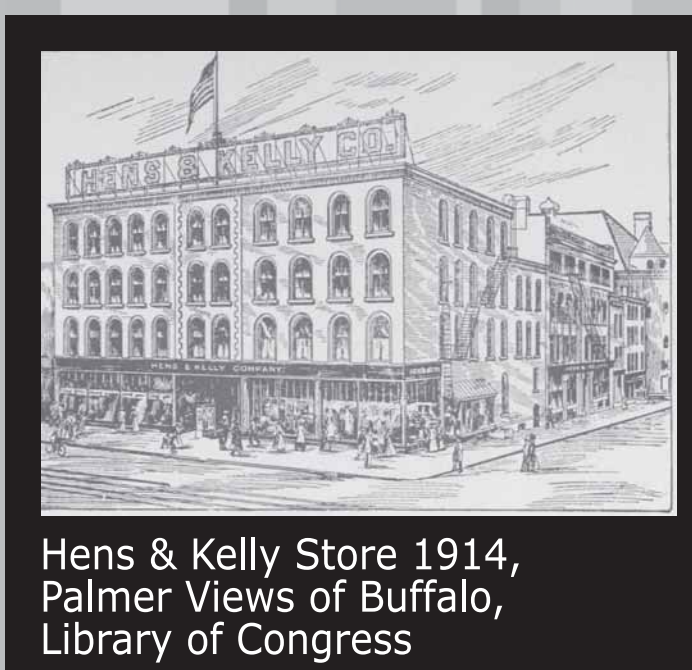
From the 1830s, these blocks of Main Street were bustling with commercial and retail activity. Starting with small dry goods stores sharing storefront space, the blocks became home to Buffalo's department, chain, and specialty stores, filling the sidewalks with crowds from Buffalo and the region. This continued into the 1970s when suburban growth and national retail trends made it harder for Buffalo's hometown retailers to remain relevant. This difficult period coincided with Metro Rail construction and closing Main Street to automobile traffic, resulting in many vacant buildings. Vacant retail stores began to find new life as commercial office space and then became the start of a new residential neighborhood.



Main Street North from Mohawk, *Buffalo Illustrated*, 1890. Reproduction by permission of the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library



Old Miller House and Block, 1870 THE PICTURE BOOK OF EARLIER BUFFALO, Frank H. Severance



Hens & Kelly Store 1914, Palmer Views of Buffalo, Library of Congress



10/15/1965 SUNY Buffalo State Archives & Special Collections, Courier Express Collection

Hens & Kelly

The store that would become Hens & Kelly Department Store started in 1887 at 446 Main Street. Owner Jeramiah Sheehan hired recent immigrant and Canisius College graduate Matthias J. Hens as a bookkeeper for a dry goods business. In 1892, Sheehan sold his shares to Hens, who brought in Patrick J. Kelly, also a recent immigrant. They established their business selling "ladies' and gents' furnishings" in one room of 488 Main, in the Miller Block.

Hens & Kelly prospered with their strategy of selling "good merchandise at the lowest prices." As business expanded, another shop would be opened nearby on Main Street. In 1922, Hens & Kelly expanded the Miller Block Building to bring all six shops under one roof at a cost of \$1 million (\$13 million today), making a true department store.

Patrick Kelly never retired, working at his beloved store until his death in 1927. Mathias Hens also worked until he died in 1935, experiencing the exciting morning in 1928 when thieves used nitroglycerine to blow open the safe and make off with \$20,000. Between the 1950s and 1960s Hens & Kelly built seven suburban branches. Business slowed in the 1970s as Western New York's economy declined. All the Hens & Kelly stores closed in 1982, leaving the corner of Main and Mohawk empty after a century of bustling sales.

S.H. Knox 5 & 10 Cent Store

Seymour Horace Knox's interest in retail began when he became a sales clerk at age 17 in Michigan. In 1884 he moved to Pennsylvania to run a 5 & 10 Cent Store with cousin Frank Woolworth. The store was a success and was followed by others in New Jersey and Erie, PA. The cousins expanded to Buffalo in 1888, but parted ways two years later when Knox bought out Woolworth and launched S.H. Knox 5 & 10 Cent Store, headquartered in Buffalo. Following a fire, Knox built a new headquarters at 519 Main Street, this time with fireproof flooring. Branches were added in Detroit, Toledo, and a first Canadian location, Toronto. By 1912, Knox had 112 stores, and a reputation for fast customer service.

Knox developed interests in other businesses including Clawson & Wilson Company, a dry-goods wholesaler that invested in the Hens & Kelly store across the street. Knox helped Hens & Kelly increase profitability by dropping lower performing departments like grocery, and by focusing on mid-market, rather than lower end customers. By 1922, Clawson & Wilson's John L. Clawson, a director of the Marine Trust Company of Buffalo, helped to secure financing for the complete renovation of the Hens & Kelly Store, resulting in a modern six-story fireproof structure.

In 1912, Knox, cousin Woolworth, and other owners decided to merge to gain a 5 & 10 Cent Store monopoly. The name for the new chain was settled by coin toss. Knox lost, and F.W. Woolworth 5 & 10 Cent Store became a common name in 800 US cities and 50 in the UK. The F.W. Woolworth chain closed in 1997.



Courtesy of the Buffalo History Museum



Main Street North from Huron, detail, reproduced by permission of the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library



More Detail on S.H. Knox 5 & 10 Cent Store



More Details on W.T. Grants



Things That Aren't There Anymore - Buffalo 1950s, Clip, Francis Lucca, WNED TV



Louis L. Berger came to Buffalo with his brother-in-law to open a clothing store. With different objectives, they launched their own stores the next year. L.L. Berger (which became known as Berger's) opened at 500 Main Street in 1905 and focused on "wearing apparel of the finer type," aiming to "create ready to wear clothing for less than custom made." By 1917, the store fully occupied all five floors in their building.

Berger signed a 99 year lease on the recently available Victor Building. The new store opened to great fanfare on February 4, 1929, the Courier-Express calling it "a new temple of fashion." Berger's provided upscale clients with fashions they would otherwise have to travel to find in Paris or New York City. The store grew continually until 1957 when it filled five neighboring buildings. Berger's opened nine suburban stores between 1953 and 1999.

Berger's and local retail as a whole, declined in the 1970s and 80s. First, retail was affected by the economic downturn of the 1970s and 1980s that shrank the manufacturing base and the city's population. Then, the market had shifted to benefit national discount buying groups and large chains.

The size of the flagship store, once a source of pride for the company, became a burden on the bottom line. Metro Rail construction closed Main Street to car traffic and the Hyatt Hotel project closed Genesee Street, cutting the flagship store off from its two main arteries. Berger's succumbed to these pressures and closed the Main Street store on Mother's Day in 1991.



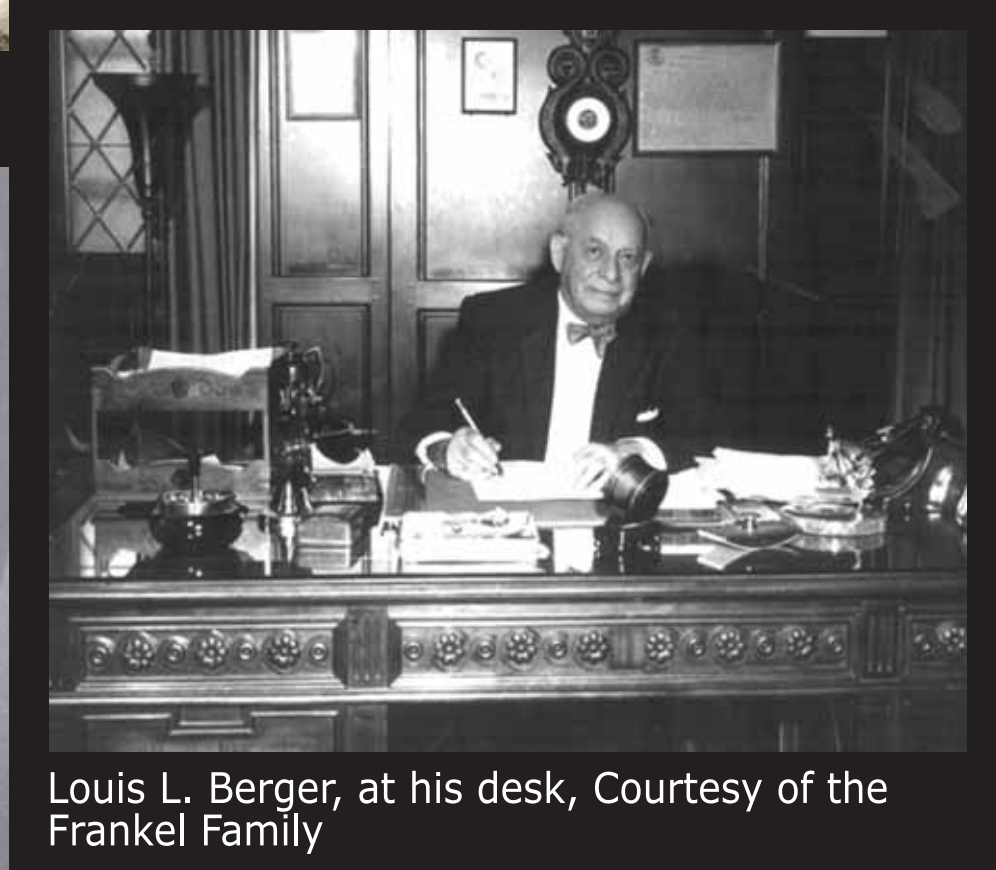
Courtesy of SUNY Buffalo State Archives & Special Collection, Courier Express Collection

The Belesario

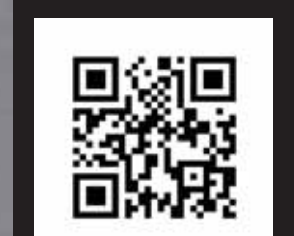
After the Berger's building sat vacant through most of the 1990s, the City named Ellicott Development as preferred developer. The building had suffered substantial deterioration. After five years and \$6 million in renovations, The Belesario became a pioneer downtown residential building, opening in April 2004 with 30 luxury apartments and first and second floor office space. More than 10 years later, the former Berger's store stands as a key piece of Main Street's resurgent 500 Block. And, with the return of automobile traffic to Main Street, The Belesario welcomed a new retail tenant to the storefront first utilized in 1905 by Louis L. Berger.



Courtesy of Ellicott Development



Louis L. Berger, at his desk, Courtesy of the Frankel Family



More Detail on Berger's

Background Photo - Walk to curb shoppers, 11/20/1974. Courtesy of SUNY Buffalo State Archives & Special Collection, Courier Express Collection

- 1800
- 1804 - Joseph Ellicott lays out streets of Buffalo.
- 1810
- 1813 - British attack and burn Buffalo.
- 1816-18 - Lots on W Main between Mohawk and Genesee sold.
- 1820
- 1822 - Buffalo dredges harbor, secures Erie Canal Western Terminus. James Miller builds his home at the SW corner of Main and Mohawk.
- 1825 - Erie Canal opens, bringing growth and development.
- 1830
- 1830-40 - The 500 Block is a residential neighborhood of frame and brick buildings, most with commercial uses on the first floor.
- 1840
- 1850 - 496 Main is built; the German Young Men's Association is an early tenant.
- 1860
- 1870
- 1880
- 1890
- 1892 - Mathias J. Hens and Patrick J. Kelly buy into a dry goods business at the SW corner of Main and Mohawk.
- 1895 - Seymour H. Knox builds a 5 & 10 Cent Shop headquarters at 519 Main St, part of a multi-state chain.
- 1900
- 1905 - Louis L. Berger opens a ladies' fine clothing store at 500 Main Street.
- 1909 - 525-527 Main Street was remodeled to become Buffalo's earliest motion picture theater.
- 1910
- 1912 - Seymour H. Knox and Woolworth cousins merge businesses to create a monopoly of 5 & 10 Cent stores.
- 1917 - Berger's occupies five floors of 500 Main Street.
- 1920
- 1922 - Hens & Kelly expansion at SW corner of Main and Mohawk. -W.T. Grants opens at 546 Main.
- 1920-25 - Nedlany Building SE corner of Mohawk and Main demolished and rebuilt with steel frame. Longtime home of Mayflower Luncheonette.
- 1928 - Thieves use nitroglycerin to break into Hens & Kelly's vault.
- 1928-29 - Berger's purchases a 99 year lease at 514-518 Main.
- 1930
- 1939 - F.W. Woolworth opens store lunch counters, the precursor to the mall food court.
- 1940
- 1950 - Hens & Kelly open their first suburban store.
- 1955 - Berger's, led by Pres. Maxon Berger, expands into rest of block.
- 1960
- 1967 - Louis L. Berger dies; Louis Jr and Gordon Rashman take over Berger's
- 1970
- 1970's - Hens & Kelly sales began to decline.
- 1976 - WT Grants chain goes out of business.
- 1978 - Hens & Kelly chain sold to Twin Fair Inc.
- 1980 - City program removes screen walls and bill boards fronting on 500 Block buildings.
- 1982 - Hens & Kelly chain goes out of business. Metro Rail construction closes Main Street to automobile traffic.
- 1985 - Metro Rail Service begins.
- 1986 - Pedestrian Transit Mall opens.
- 1990
- 1991 - Berger's declares bankruptcy. Buffalo Place facade program assists 500 Block buildings
- 1997 - F.W. Woolworths chain closes.
- 1999 - Ellicott Development renovates Berger's department store into the Belesario Apartments.
- 2000
- 2004 - Vacant McDonald's Town House/ Mayflower Luncheonette renovated by Steve Carmina and Chris Wood for their Architectural, Civil Engineering and Interior Design firm Carmina Wood Morris, DPC.
- 2007 - Designation of Main-Genesee Historic District.
- 2010
- 2010-11 - Buffalo Place 500 Block New York Main Street Program. -Waldorf Lunch building at 5 E. Huron Street restored by Iskalo Development. -501 Main renovated as residential on upper floors with commercial storefront. -523 Main and 500 Washington become Main Washington Exchange.
- 2011 - 515 Main is renovated for commercial tenants.
- 2013 - 496 Main renovated by Ricotta & Visco Law Firm.
- 2014 - 5 E. Genesee and 537 Main are renovated for use as upper floor private residences and first floor restaurants.
- 2015 - 535 Main and 5 - 7 E. Genesee renovated for first floor restaurants and upper floor apartments. Opening of Main Street to Traffic - Fountain Plaza/500 Block. Retail returns to Belesario (former Berger's).