

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

DRAFT

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Meteor Manufacturing Corporation Building
other names/site number Sponge-Aire Seat Company Building
name of related multiple property listing _____

2. Location

street & number 26 Glenwood Avenue ☐ not for publication
city or town Buffalo ☐ vicinity
state New York code NY county Erie code 029 zip code 14209-1702

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

 entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register

 determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register

 other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

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

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	District
<input type="checkbox"/>	Site
<input type="checkbox"/>	Structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	Object

7

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	buildings
	sites
	structures
	objects
	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY/manufacturing facility

COMMERCE/business

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

NO STYLE

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: BRICK

roof: SYNTHETICS/Rubber

other: _____

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Narrative Description

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

Summary Paragraph

The Meteor Manufacturing Corporation Building is a one-story steel-frame and blonde brick structure located at 26 Glenwood Avenue in the Cold Spring neighborhood of Buffalo, New York. Though the building hosted multiple occupants over its life, Meteor Manufacturing Corporation was the historically significant occupant with the longest tenure, and therefore it has been named accordingly. The building is located approximately two and a half miles north of the city center just off Main Street, nestled in the heart of what was historically known as Automobile Row. This modest industrial building was constructed in 1923 and features a seven-bay by three bay rectangular footprint measuring ninety feet by fifty feet. It is located on the north side of Glenwood Avenue near the corner of Main Street and is set back eighty feet from the street facing south. The building has a flat roof, and the original daylight factory style steel windows are intact on all four elevations.

Narrative Description

The south-facing facade is seven bays wide and features an off-center entrance with a non-historic flat metal door set within a larger infilled bay. The remainder of the facade contains two garage bays with overhead doors divided by bays of large multilight daylight factory steel windows. The east and west side elevations each have three large daylight factory style steel windows, but the west elevation is slightly differentiated with a flat metal door at the north end for an additional means of egress. At the rear elevation, there are six bays of windows of varying sizes. Although the windows are intact and visible on the interior, the eastern half of the rear elevation is obscured by a later concrete block building that is not associated with this property. The building has a flat roof with a slight pitch at the center toward the rear to an interior drain. The roof is wrapped by a brick parapet with tile coping. Short brick chimneys for mechanical equipment ventilation are located along the rear north side of the roof.

The interior is a single, large open volume with large steel beams defining each of the four interior bays, running from north to south and resting on brick pilasters; there are no columns to interrupt the open space. The floor is concrete slab on grade, the walls are painted brick, and the open ceiling is composed of wood joists between the steel beams. The interior contains evidence of its use as a manufacturing facility, such as pulleys and other small remnants along the beams indicating they were used to move and hoist large equipment in addition to supporting the building. Although manufacturing equipment is no longer present, former mounting locations of machinery can still be discerned in the form of countersunk bolt anchors where machinery was once anchored to the floor.

The building has been impacted by neglect but has good integrity. Original fabric is present throughout and both the interior and exterior are immediately recognizable as a 1920s industrial space. The exposed structure and open plan without interruption by columns or partitions is characteristic of manufacturing facilities of this era. The building maintains the historic fenestration, with original multilight steel windows on all

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elevations providing abundant natural light for working and blonde brick exterior to provide an attractive presence from the street. Few changes have been made to the building since its construction, primarily the removal of two large skylights that were historically present in the second and third bays.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY

Period of Significance

circa 1935-1958

Significant Dates

circa 1935, 1945

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Eli Goldstein (architect)

George W. Butler (builder)

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance encompasses the years in which the building was associated with two notable manufacturing start-ups that later went on to find larger success and bigger facilities, the Sponge-Aire Seat Company (occupied 1935-41) and the Meteor Manufacturing Corporation (1945-1958).

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Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

N/A

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

(Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Meteor Manufacturing Corporation Building is significant under Criterion A for Industry as a small early twentieth-century industrial building that served as an incubator for two notable fledgling companies before they moved to larger facilities as they matured. While more elaborate adjacent buildings flanking Main Street in what was then Buffalo's famous Automobile Row marketed the modernity of their car stock, simple and functional buildings like this one served maintenance, production, and invention. The building was designed by local Jewish architect Eli Goldstein for Jewish real estate developer Max Katz and completed in 1923. Initially used as an auto painting and servicing station for high-end Cadillacs and Lincolns, the property hosted a series of local businesses that supported the lucrative auto manufacturing, sales, and servicing network along Main Street. However, the most notable occupants were the Sponge-Aire Seat Company and the Meteor Manufacturing Corporation. Sponge-Aire made auto seats and canvas products, while Meteor Manufacturing produced small hand tools for maintaining vehicles and aircraft, as well as automobile products such as patented tire and tube patches, brake pistons, windshield sprayers, vulcanizing machines, and other gadgets. Both manufacturers had national reach and held government contracts while occupying the building. These companies had wide-ranging success, which necessitated subsequent relocations to larger facilities elsewhere in Buffalo, but it was within the modest space of 26 Glenwood Avenue that their businesses began. Small industrial buildings like this that historically offered affordable spaces for developing entrepreneurial enterprises have generally been overlooked and are growing increasingly rare.

Narrative Statement of Significance

The Cold Spring Neighborhood

Due to demographic changes in historically Jewish neighborhoods in downtown Buffalo, the neighborhood between Main Street and Humboldt Parkway developed into a thriving Jewish community after 1918.¹ The neighborhoods that comprised this large area were primarily Cold Spring and Hamlin Park, which was farther to the north. Frank Severance, an early Buffalo historian, wrote the following about the Cold Spring neighborhood in 1922, the same year in which plans were filed for the construction of the building:

A feature of Buffalo, perhaps common to other cities, but certainly much in evidence here, is the development of neighborhood business districts. They are to be found, scattered throughout the residence streets, from South Buffalo to North Buffalo and to the outermost bounds of Black Rock. Usually, they begin with a corner grocery, a mere neighborhood convenience, at an intersection of streetcar lines on busy thoroughfares. Then follows the usual development: a drug store, chiefly for the sale of cigars and soft drinks; then another similar shop on an opposite corner, for the sake of competition; followed by all the sorts of shops that cater to the needs of people. Next is opened a "movie" theatre, amusement resorts, a branch post office; and if these things flourish, and a real business need is demonstrated, all the other features of an American

¹ Selig Adler and Thomas E. Connolly, *From Ararat to Suburbia*. (Jewish Publication Society of America, 1960) 256-257, 307-308, 320, 324.

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"Main Street" soon appear, with banks and hotels and a business life of its own, practically independent from the "down town" section of the city to which it belongs.

There are in Buffalo many such neighborhood ganglia of business or pleasure, some of them rivaling or exceeding the business district of well-established country towns. One of the notable centers of this sort in this city is at Utica and Main streets. There one finds a development of comparatively recent growth; yet in the past few years it has taken on a citified appearance, with handsome banks, hotels, theaters and shops in great diversity. The indications are that further growth and substantial business development in the neighborhood are at hand. Such being the case, it is timely to record the beginnings of history in that particular part of our city embracing the old Cold Spring and neighboring districts.²

The Cold Spring neighborhood is named for a natural spring that was once visible at the southeast corner of Main and Ferry Streets, two blocks north of the subject property. Although once a prominent feature in the early nineteenth century, the spring was later pushed into an underground basin and is hidden from view in the present day.

In the early nineteenth century, the Cold Spring neighborhood was sparsely populated with some simple dwellings of log construction. A prominent resident in the area at this time was William Hodge who in 1810 had acquired sixty acres of land at Main and Utica Streets. The land was largely comprised of an apple orchid planted by the previous landowner, but a year later, Hodge had constructed one of, if not the first, brick dwellings at the southwest corner of Main and West Utica Streets, which served as both his home and an inn. As the century continued, the city population swelled and these early utilitarian buildings in the Cold Spring neighborhood were replaced by the present residences and commercial buildings:

Urban migration to the Cold Spring area was aided by several factors. One was the establishment in 1869 of the Buffalo park and parkway system that on land formerly on the outskirts of the city encouraged the growth and development of middle-class residential neighborhoods...The construction of the Belt Line Railroad in 1883 and improved public transportation, generally, accelerated this trend. The major transit depot and repair shops constructed in the 1880s at Main and Michigan surely had particularly important consequence for the neighborhood. By World War I, the Cold Spring neighborhood had evolved physically from a woodland wilderness to pleasant farmland and into a representative middle-class urban residential neighborhood.³

Automobile Row

Buffalo's Main Street, including the portion running through Cold Spring, emerged as a regional center for America's rapidly growing automobile industry during the first decades of the 1900s. At the turn of the twentieth century, Buffalo was a city of tremendous wealth and sat at the nexus of several important transportation routes. These factors made the city an ideal location for America's car companies to set up dealerships and sell luxury automobiles.

² Frank Severance, ed., "The William Hodge Papers," Publications of the Buffalo Historical Society, 26 (1922), 191.

³ Francis Kowsky and Martin Wachadlo, "Cold Spring / North Masten Park Neighborhood," August 2010, 31.

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By 1912, Buffalo manufactured nearly one third of all automobiles and parts in New York State and had a larger automotive industry than New York City.⁴ Roughly 100,000 people were employed in auto-related businesses, making car manufacturing one of the city's major industries. By 1920, Main Street was colloquially known as 'Automobile Row' and lined with dealerships representing every major car company in America. The success of Automobile Row in Buffalo was also supported by customers coming from Canada, eastern Ohio, and western Pennsylvania with manufacturers from the Midwest sending their cars to take advantage of the regional market.⁵

Automobile Row was well situated on Main Street, which was nearby to several, large car factories such as the Ford Motor Co. and Pierce Arrow. The plants employed thousands of people across the city and the Buffalo Automobile Dealers' Association attracted over 50,000 people every year, with the bulk of the city's dealers conducting their business on Main Street. This trend mirrored other automobile districts developing in the same era such as Oklahoma City's Automobile Alley (NR 1999) and Chicago's Motor Row (NR 2002). Like Main Street, these other automobile districts were located on wide, well paved streets that were conducive for test drives.

In addition to dealerships, this length of Main Street was populated by dozens of supportive businesses, including parts and frame manufacturing, car tool manufacturing, auto painting, repairs, aftermarket supplies, service stations, and garages. Located in the heart of Automobile Row, the Meteor Manufacturing Corp. Building at 26 Glenwood Avenue was one of several buildings that sometimes supported the industry.

Max Katz, Real Estate Investor / Developer

Max Katz was born in Odessa, Russia in 1885 and came to Buffalo in 1902 when he was seventeen years old. He worked as a jewelry salesman, eventually opening his own store in the Broadway Fillmore neighborhood. After finding success in the jewelry business, he moved into real estate investment in the early 1920s. Katz came to own many prominent buildings in Buffalo, including the Lafayette Theater, several properties on Delaware Avenue, the Medical Arts Building, and the Loew's Theater and Office building in Rochester.⁶

Although Katz's obituary noted that his real estate investment and development activities started in the 1920s, it appears he was purchasing and developing property as early as 1915. Many of the properties associated with Katz were located near downtown and in the Broadway Fillmore area, but few of them are extant. One of the most prominent buildings that he owned (but did not build) that remains is the cast-iron facade Glenn Building in downtown.⁷

Katz's life mirrored that of other upwardly mobile Jews in Buffalo, starting off in the lower east side in more traditional businesses associated with the Jewish community at the time. He found great financial success in the real estate investment and development world and purchased a large brick home overlooking Delaware Park at 120 Rumsey Road in 1923.⁸ In his later years, he would eventually settle with his wife, Mollie Melzer,

⁴ Claire L. Ross, *Packard Motor Car Showroom and Storage Facility*, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, January 31, 2006, Section 8, 4.

⁵ "Silver Jubilee Auto Show for Buffalo Soon," *Buffalo Courier-Express*, January 2, 1927, 2.

⁶ Obituary, "Max Katz, 86, Dies; Property Developer", *Buffalo Evening News*, October 11, 1971, 16.

⁷ "Great Volume of Realty Sales, the Season's Symbol," *Buffalo Courier*, March 2, 1921, 2.

⁸ "Gurney & Overturf, Inc. Sell More Than \$300,000 of Highest Grade Residential Property," *Buffalo Courier*, May

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at the prestigious Park Lane Apartments, which to this day is still associated with a high status of living in Buffalo.⁹

He was a director of the Title & Mortgage Corporation from 1923 to 1929 and was deeply involved in the Jewish community. Katz served as a director of the Rosa Coplon Jewish Home and Infirmary in addition to being an officer on the Board of Directors of the United Jewish Federation of Buffalo. Given his experience in real estate development, he also served for over forty years as a building and repairs consultant for Camp Lakeland, which served underprivileged children.

Additionally, he was a fifty-year member of Temple Beth Zion and served as Vice President in 1927.¹⁰ Katz was also active in fraternal organizations as a member of the Perseverance Lodge No. 948, F&AM, the Buffalo Consistory, and the Ismailia Temple of the Ancient Arabic Order Noble Mystic Shrine.

In April 1921, Katz purchased property at 1443 and 1445 Main Street in this burgeoning Jewish neighborhood. He proceeded to demolish the existing dwellings and built a new, two-story brick building designed by Eli Goldstein. A permit was filed for the construction of the new building, now known as 1439-43 Main Street, in August 1922 for stores and offices at a cost of \$25,000.¹¹ Just a few months later in October, he filed for a permit to “erect an automobile service station at the rear of No. 1443 Main Street”, which is the nominated property.¹²

Eli Goldstein, Architect

Just as he did for 1439-43 Main Street, Max Katz hired local Jewish architect, Eli Goldstein to design 26 Glenwood Avenue. Goldstein was a prolific architect for Buffalo’s Jewish community, designing homes, apartments, shops, garages, banks, several theaters, and a synagogue; however, few of his works remain. Extant buildings attributed to Goldstein are largely residential and most of his commercial works have been demolished or significantly altered, with the exception of 26 Glenwood.

Eli Goldstein was born in Buffalo on March 26, 1886, to Louis Goldstein and Rose Feldman. He attended Central High School and graduated from Cornell University in 1911.¹³ His earliest documented architectural work in Buffalo was in 1913 for remodeling the Brith Sholen Synagogue.¹⁴ The synagogue was located at the corner of William and Pine Streets in the heart of the Jewish sector at that time, but the building is no longer extant.

From 1920 to 1922, Goldstein had a regular column in the Buffalo Jewish Review, called “Talks on Building Construction,” in which he focused on explaining different architectural styles and their origins. Additionally, photos of buildings he designed were prominently featured in the Buffalo Jewish Review throughout those years.¹⁵

23, 1923, 2.

⁹“Buffalo Couple Wed 50 Years Ago Today,” *Buffalo Courier-Express*, February 2, 1958, Page 2-C.

¹⁰“80th Birthday of Temple Beth El to be Celebrated by Buffalo Jews,” *Buffalo Times*, May 8, 1927.

¹¹“Building Permits,” *Buffalo Evening News*, August 29, 1922, 20.

¹²“Building Permits,” *Buffalo Commercial*, October 26, 1922.

¹³Lee F. Heacock, *The Buffalo Artists’ Register*, Volume 1, 1926, 315.

¹⁴“Mayor Fuhrmann Chief Speaker at Sholen Synagogue,” *Buffalo Courier*, September, 13, 1913, 6.

¹⁵“Talks on Building Construction,” *Buffalo Jewish Review*, December 1, 1920 through September 9, 1922.

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Like Max Katz, Goldstein was active in several organizations, including Perseverance Lodge, F&AM as a 32nd Degree Mason, where Katz was also a member. Additionally, he was a member at the Wilmont Town & Country Club, the Greater Buffalo Advertising Club, and worshipped at Temple Beth Zion.

Goldstein appears to have been a sole practitioner and maintained his architectural practice at 1 Allen Street for over thirty years. He died in 1945 at the age of 58 and his obituary noted that, “for many years he was one of the foremost storefront designers in Western New York.”¹⁶ Goldstein did have some level of association with another prolific Jewish Buffalo architect, Louis Greenstein, who is probably best known for designing the City of Buffalo flag. The pair were set to design a Jewish hospital together in 1927, which ultimately was not built.¹⁷ Both Goldstein and Greenstein were associated separately with Max Katz, but they had a mutual connection with Katz, who served on the building committee for the hospital.¹⁸ Katz also hired Greenstein as the architect for the Medical Arts Building on the corner of North and North Pearl Streets, which he built in 1925. Given that in this era of Jewish history the community was essentially forced to be insular due to prejudice, the overlap of social and professional activities between Eli Goldstein and Max Katz is likely how the two came to work together.

The Meteor Manufacturing Corporation Building – 26 Glenwood Avenue

A permit was filed for the construction of 26 Glenwood Avenue in the fall of 1922 and it was completed by the following spring. The one-story brick and steel frame building appears to have been a speculative venture for Katz’s real estate development activities as it contained a series of different tenants in its early years.

The earliest map that shows the building occurs in 1925, where it is labeled as 1441½ Main Street, representing an association with 1439-43 Main Street (fig. 1).¹⁹ The two-story building on Main Street was erected the prior year by Katz and was also designed by Eli Goldstein, but there is no physical connection between the two buildings. A narrow alleyway separates the two buildings, which was never used for automobile access to either building, but rather a means for additional egress from them both. Beyond that, there doesn’t appear to be any direct association for shared use/tenants in the early years of their use. Later, during the period of significance, however, the building on Main Street (today unfortunately unrecognizable in relationship to its historical appearance) served as offices and retail space for the companies that would use 26 Glenwood for manufacturing.

Contractor George W. Butler constructed the building at 26 Glenwood, and later worked with Katz again, serving as his builder for the Medical Arts Building. The direct connection between Butler and Katz is unknown, but similar to Eli Goldstein, Butler also advertised in the Buffalo Jewish Review. The firm had offices in Ellicott Square in downtown Buffalo and built a number of other projects, including the Monroe Motor Car Company (NR 2022) a few blocks to the north and Main Street and Lafayette Avenue. Structural steel was provided by August Feine & Sons, which originally was in the business of structural and ornamental steel, but ultimately got into the ship building business during WWII. Owing to the proximity of Automobile Row, the first tenant was John MacMillan who used it as an auto paint and repair shop, specifically focusing on

¹⁶“E.W. Goldstein, Architect, Dies,” *Buffalo Courier-Express*, January 22, 1945.

¹⁷“Plans are Presented for Jewish Hospital,” *Buffalo Evening News*, February 27, 1928.

¹⁸“Early Summer Will See Work on New Sanitarium,” *Buffalo-Courier Express*, March 27, 1927, 2.

¹⁹Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Buffalo 1916-1940, Volume 1A, 1925, Sheet 79.

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high-end Cadillacs and Lincolns. MacMillian was a frequent advertiser in the Buffalo Jewish Review and didn't stay long in the building before moving.

Harry Harrinton purchased the building from Max Katz by 1924 and then acquired 1439-43 Main Street from him the following year. Harrinton hired Eli Goldstein to design a large brick and tile public garage addition to 26 Glenwood (fig. 8). A permit was filed, and full plans were developed, but it was never built.²⁰ Goldstein, Katz, and Harrinton all knew each other socially as well, appearing together in various news articles, largely for their civic engagement within the larger Jewish community of Buffalo at the time.

In the following years from 1924 to 1929, the building had a variety of different automotive related uses including other auto repair and paint companies such as Crystal Auto Painting, Glenwood Auto Painting, and Smith Auto Metal Co.²¹ From 1929 to 1933, the building was primarily utilized as a sales and service garage by the Moon & Diana Auto Service Agency, who also shared tenancy with other business that rapidly came and left, such as Connor Collision.²²

The first truly innovative tenant of the building arrived via expansion from the building at 1439-43 Main. Ernest F. Becher, whose business Becher Tire & Rubber Company dealt in wholesale auto tires and batteries initially, moved his premises to the Main Street building in 1928.²³ In 1932, while occupying that building, Becher was granted a basic patent on a new type of sponge rubber automotive seat, which he dubbed the Sponge-Aire, and which proved especially popular for trucks:

This new seat is constructed of two layers of high quality sponge rubber, held tightly by special cement and protected by durable, comfortable fabric covering. The upper layer is extremely soft and porous. It fits the bodily contour to perfection and absorbs all motor and chassis vibration, as well as wheel wobble. The lower, denser layer prevents jarring even with the severest jolt of the truck.

The revolutionary riding comfort of a Sponge-Aire cushion resides in its remarkable ability to absorb shock. "Many people confuse the terms 'resiliency' and shock absorption," says Mr. Becher. "We see an example of the former when a solid rubber ball strikes the pavement and bounces back. The same is true of spring steel, the kind used in coil cushions."

"Sponge rubber is different. It is shock absorbing. Each of the millions of air cells composing sponge rubber is a miniature shock absorber that expels the air gradually under compression and sucks it back again slowly when the compression is released. This 'breathing' or vacuum action assures perfect absorption of road shock and chassis vibration. Catapulting of the driver, so common with ordinary cushions, is eliminated by Sponge-Aire."²⁴

The history of foam automotive seats is obscure, but there is every indication that Sponge-Aire was a true innovator in their introduction. The very year it was first produced, the Sponge-Aire cushions were already

²⁰Building Permits, Buffalo City Hall, Room 301.

²¹Buffalo City Directory, 1924 to 1928.

²²Buffalo City Directory, 1929 to 1933.

²³Buffalo City Directory, 1928.

²⁴"New Seating Device: Becher patents rubber seat that absorbs shocks," *Buffalo Courier Express*, February 7, 1932, Automotive Section, 1.

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employed in the truck fleets of Borden, Standard Oil, Shell, Texaco, General Ice Cream, and Standard Biscuit.²⁵ By late 1934 or 1935, about the same time that Becher dropped the tire and battery business to become president of the Sponge-Aire Seat Company full-time, the company was clearly in need for a larger production facility and expanded into 26 Glenwood Avenue.²⁶ Through the 1930s, Sponge-Aire continued to expand its automotive seat business and added padding for surgical environments to its repertoire as well, employing about thirty-five employees.²⁷ During World War II, the company switched to wartime production, specifically making “pipe berths” used for sitting, sleeping, and storage in ships and other vehicles that transported large numbers of troops and seats for M-7 tanks and other combat vehicles, in addition to other seat and canvas related items.²⁸ Sponge-Aire left the building in 1941, having outgrown the facility, and moved to the much larger 166 Chandler Street, which is no longer extant. The company was rebranded as Chandler Industries Inc. and merged with the Barcalo Manufacturing Company (NR 2020) in 1947, where Becher served as the Executive President.²⁹ Since the 1429-1443 Main Street building has been compromised beyond recognition and the 166 Chandler Street building is no longer extant, 26 Glenwood Avenue is the last intact building associated with the Sponge-Aire Seat Company.

Sponge-Aire was followed by Allan Engineering, which was founded in 1943 as a partnership between Edward Allan and George McLeod.³⁰ Prior to the partnership, Allan operated a service station at the corner nearby on Main Street and Glenwood Avenue. Not much is known about Allan Engineering, but they were replaced at 26 Glenwood Avenue in 1945 by the other significant industrial start-up, Meteor Manufacturing Corporation.

Meteor Manufacturing was formed that same year as a partnership between William Selikoff and William McBride. Seeing a gap in the market, McBride, the former production manager at Bell Aircraft, and Selikoff, coordinator of Bell’s wartime B-17 program, left the plane manufacturing business to produce “midget” ignition tools and wrenches, innovative products in high demand for servicing the small spaces in automobiles, planes, and other engine-driven machines. This was at a time when daily, regular maintenance of most automobiles was still required.

During WWII, Meteor Manufacturing supplied various branches of the US military with their midget wrenches as part of maintaining and repairing their fleet of vehicles. Many of their toolkits can still be found today, often inside canvas rolls used by the military (fig. 9). Meteor Manufacturing did not produce the canvas rolls, which were instead made by other manufacturers and consolidated to increase speed and efficiency for deployment in the field.

An advertisement placed in *The American Exporter* in 1947 clearly explained the benefit of their tools. It reads as follows, “Work on ignition systems, carburetors, radios, precision instruments and similar appliances where spaces are restricted can be done more easily and faster with the new thin-head wrenches just introduced by the Meteor Mfg. Co.”³¹

²⁵“Sponge-Aire Moves to Larger Offices,” *Buffalo Times*, May 22, 1932, 12. The move referred to seems to have been from one part of the Main Street building into the other part of it.

²⁶Buffalo City Directory, 1935.

²⁷ Becher v. Comm’r of Internal Revenue, Docket Nos. 36378–36381. 22 T.C. 932 (US Tax Court, July 15, 1954).

²⁸“5 Local Concerns Praised for Help in Building M-7’s,” *Buffalo Evening News*, April 20, 1943, 23.

²⁹“Barcalo Will Acquire Chandler Industries Inc.,” *Buffalo Evening News*, March 20, 1947, 30.

³⁰Buffalo City Directory, 1943 and 1945.

³¹*The American Exporter*, 1947, Volume 142, Page 210.

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These wrenches were a staple in both government agencies and private industry, which were regularly advertised in *Popular Mechanics* (figs.5, 6).³² As they grew, the product line expanded to include a wide range of auto parts and accessories. They also began to produce gumball machines and cheese slicers (fig. 11), which they sought to patent in 1949.³³ They later sought to patent their combined case and wrench set unit as well in 1952.³⁴

McBride and Selikoffs' gamble of leaving established careers at Bell Aircraft proved to be successful with their WWII government contracts and even beyond the war. Their success was highlighted in a 1948 article, where McBride remarked, "For a little concern, we seem to be quite versatile." The article went on to detail the scale and products of the company:

The company has 18 employees and its sales this year will total \$350,000. Here's what Meteor turns out: chewing gum machines (80,000 in the last 1½ years); 10,000 sets of small wrenches a month; sprayers used at service stations to clean windshields; patented tire and tube patches and vulcanizing machines; replacement brake pistons for automobiles and stamping work for Scott Aviation in Lancaster.³⁵

During the Meteor Manufacturing tenancy, there was an association between 26 Glenwood Avenue and 1439-43 Main Street sharing mutual occupants. Meteor Manufacturing rented one of the storefronts in the Main Street building for retail space for their goods produced in the building just behind it (fig. 10). While Meteor Manufacturing owned 26 Glenwood Avenue, they only rented space in 1439-43 Main Street. At the time it was completed, 1439-43 Main Street was an excellent example of Goldstein's storefront building architecture. A Carrera glass facade was added after it suffered a fire in 1937, but the storefront and fenestration were still true to Goldstein's design. Unfortunately, the building on Main Street has much compromised integrity today.

In 1958, Meteor Manufacturing moved its operations for an expansion to Emporium, Pennsylvania. They continued operating there until at least 1969 under the Emporium parent company and still maintained their own brand name as late as 1980 as a subsidiary of the parent company. The parent company was ultimately absorbed into a larger corporation and the Meteor Manufacturing brand disappeared.

After the relocation of Meteor Manufacturing, the building reverted to its original usage for auto servicing and sales. It was occupied by Button & Chisholm Inc. from 1959 to 1967, which was established in 1958 to service and sell foreign cars. It had a brief period of vacancy from 1968 to 1970 and was then used as Wally's Auto Service from 1971 to 1975.

Subsequent History

After 1975, the property experienced a short period of vacancy due to the decline of the local automotive industry and Buffalo more generally. Since 1979, the building has been used by Flexlume, a signage company,

³²Popular Mechanics, 1951.

³³Index of Patents, 1949

³⁴U.S. Patent Office, September 30, 1952, Page 1477.

³⁵"Several Local Plants Bidding on U.S. Government Orders," *Buffalo Evening News*, December 4, 1948, 6.

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as additional storage for their main production facility. No substantial changes were made to the building during Flexlume's tenancy, and the building has retained good integrity to the period of significance.

Unfortunately, the neighboring 1439-41 Main Street lost significant integrity in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Modifications were extensive including the removal of both storefronts, the pedimented entry up to the second-floor ballroom, the second-floor windows, and a complete gutting of the interior. The Carrera glass facade was removed and the brick beneath was covered over with dry-vit, resulting in a substantially altered facade. The extent of interior modifications are unknown, but modern finishes and suspended acoustic ceilings are visible from the storefronts and second floor windows.

Conclusion

The Meteor Manufacturing Corporation Building is one of a shrinking number of small industrial buildings that once made up the Main Street corridor known as Automobile Row. The purpose-built dealerships along Automobile Row were often of a higher architectural style, but the more utilitarian service and manufacturing buildings like the Meteor Manufacturing Corporation Building played an important role in a diverse landscape of invention and production. It is a rare survivor of this typology and has avoided demolition while much of the surrounding neighborhood has suffered from destruction and disinvestment. Its use as an incubator for parts, tools, and gadgets manufacturing was no less significant to the building's role within the automotive and other industries, both locally and beyond, especially as several of the fledgling manufacturers who occupied this space went on to national prominence.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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Kowsky, Francis and Martin Wachadlo. *Historic Resources Survey: Cold Spring / North Masten Park Neighborhood*. August 2010. <https://preservationbuffaloniagara.org/wpcontent/uploads/Cold-Spring-North-Masten-Park-Survey-Full-Survey.pdf>

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"Talks on Building Construction." *Buffalo Jewish Review*. December 1, 1920 through September 9, 1922.

The American Exporter 142 (1947): 210.

U.S. Patent Office. September 30, 1952. Page 1477

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

Meteor Manufacturing Corporation Building

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.24

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 42.912825	Longitude: -78.864644
2. Latitude:	Longitude:
3. Latitude:	Longitude:
4. Latitude:	Longitude:

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

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

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary is drawn to include the parcel currently associated with the 26 Glenwood Avenue address.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mark Paradowski [edited and expanded by Johnathan Farris, Ph.D., NYSHPO]

organization _____ date _____

street & number 250 Blaine Avenue telephone (716)909-1184

city or town Buffalo state NY zip code 14208

e-mail dobiegillis000@aol.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

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

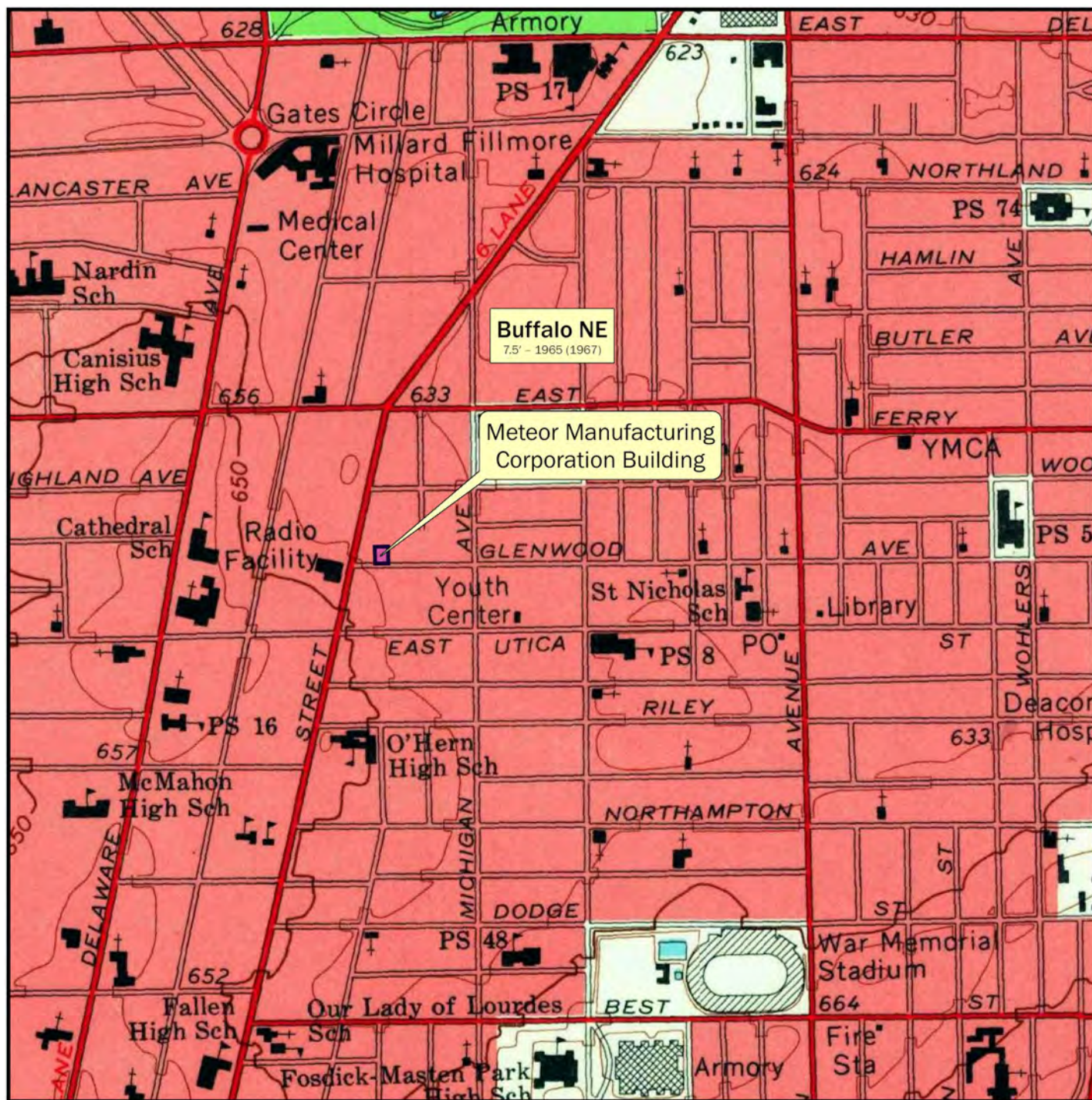
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

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1:12,000

0 500 1000 ft



Meteor Manufacturing Corporation Building



New York State
Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation

Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 17N

Mapped 07/03/2025 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO

Meteor Manufacturing Corporation Building

Name of Property

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1:1,200

0 50 100 ft



Nomination Boundary (0.24 ac)



New York State
Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation

Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 17N

New York State Orthoimagery Year: 2023

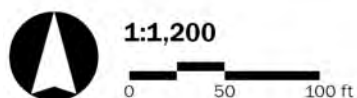
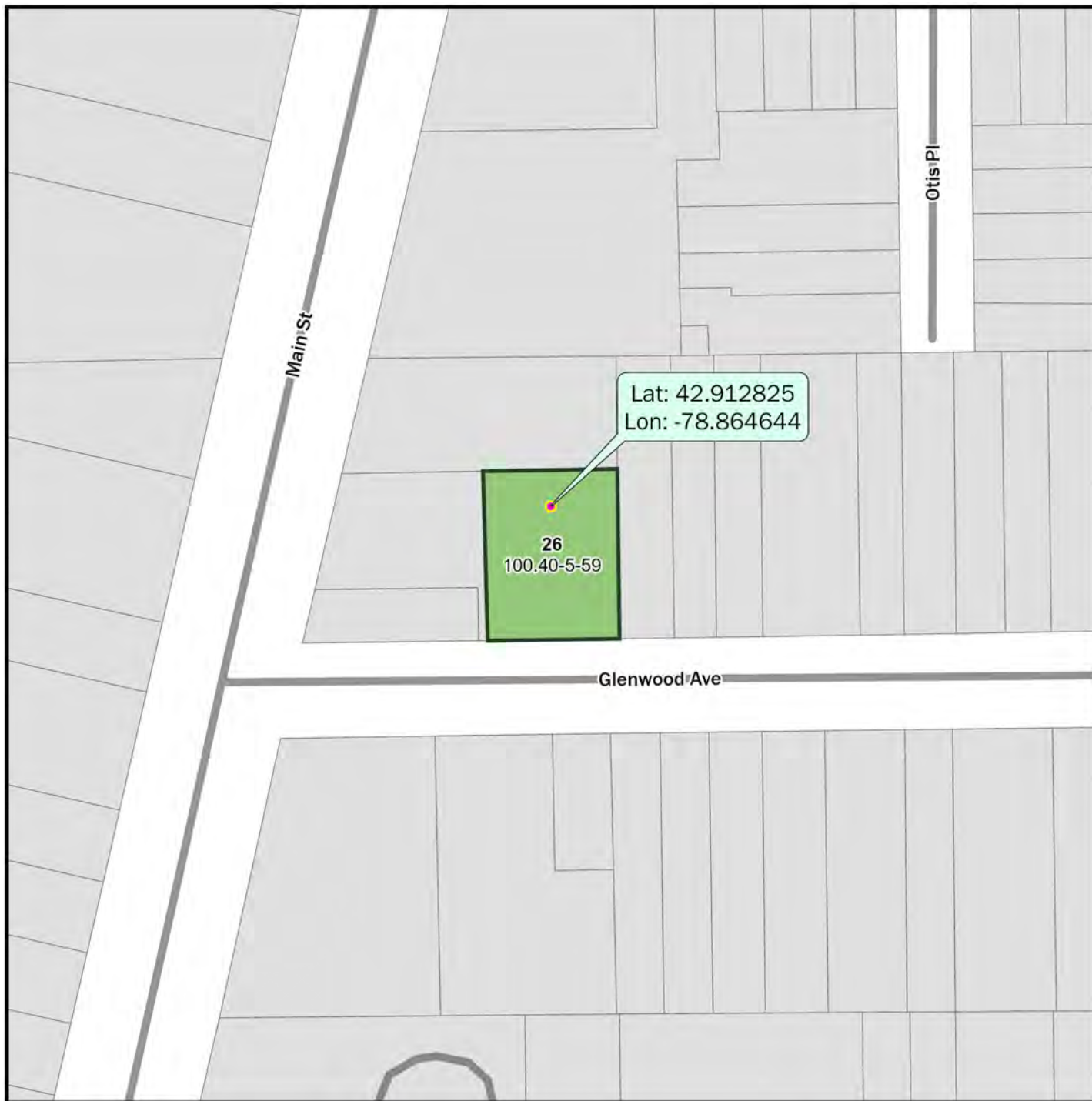
Mapped 07/03/2025 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO

Meteor Manufacturing Corporation Building

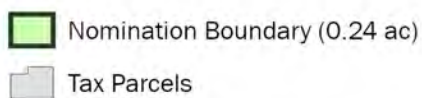
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Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 17N



Erie County Parcel Year: 2024



**New York State
Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation**

Mapped 07/03/2025 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO

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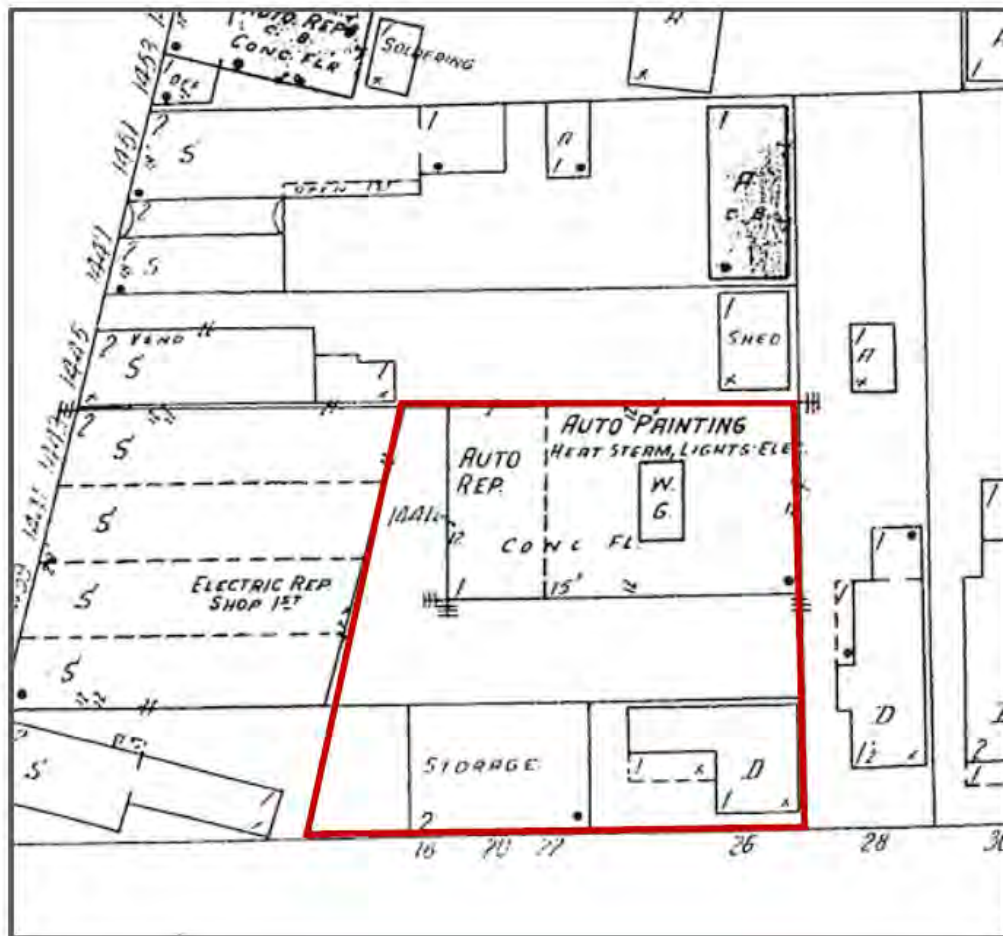


Figure 1. 1925 Sanborn map of the Meteor Manufacturing Corporation Building.

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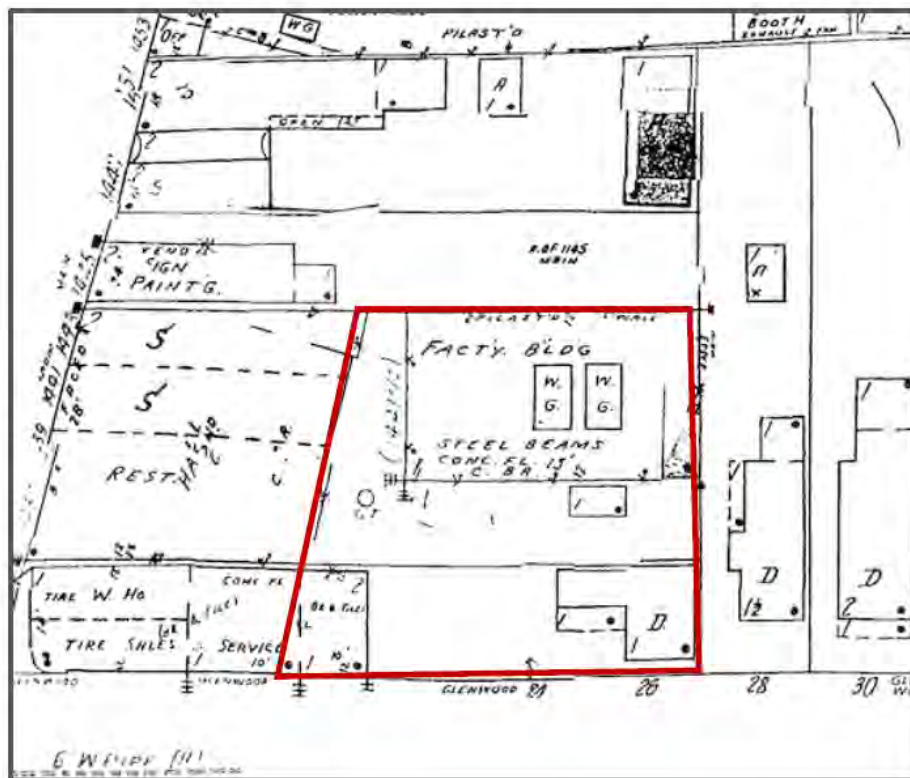


Figure 2. 1951 Sanborn map of the Meteor Manufacturing Corporation Building.

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Figure 3. Advertisement for Sponge-Aire truck cushions, *The Commercial Car Journal*, V. 51, March-August 1936, 145.



Figure 4. Meteor Manufacturing Corporation at the Industrial Progress Expo in the Masten Armory in 1948.

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11 pc. SOCKET WRENCH SET !

WITH REVERSIBLE RATCHET AND EXTENSION

● The only $\frac{1}{4}$ " square drive Socket Set with a 4" reversible ratchet handle. Has strength of larger sets. For carburetors, distributors, radios, TV sets etc. Made of highly polished chrome plated alloy steel, heat treated for super strength. Sockets accurately broached. Small diameter extension for hard-to-get-at places. Spring loaded ball on ratchet drive and extension. At your dealer or order direct from factory. Unconditionally guaranteed.

Reversible Ratchet 4" Extension
 $\frac{7}{16}$ " Socket $\frac{1}{2}$ " Socket $\frac{1}{2}$ " Socket
 $\frac{7}{16}$ " Socket $\frac{7}{16}$ " Socket $\frac{1}{2}$ " Socket
 $\frac{7}{16}$ " Socket $\frac{7}{16}$ " Socket
 In Pocket Size Plastic Kit, 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

ONLY \$4

METEOR MFG. CORP. 1441 MAIN ST. BUFFALO 9, N. Y.
 Enclosed is check _____, money order _____ for \$4.00
 Send Meteor Socket Wrench Set to:
 Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____

Figure 5. 1951 *Popular Mechanics* magazine advertisement for Meteor Manufacturing products.

NEW HIGH QUALITY - NEW LOW PRICES!

MIDGET COMBINATION 9 pc. WRENCH SET

● For Carburetor, Timers, Generators, Radios, TV Sets, Electrical Equipment and all Home Handy Work.

● Combination wrenches with open end angled at 15° for better efficiency, box end has 12 point opening. Broached to accurate tolerance in graduated sizes for quick sure fit. Heads plated to high lustre, handles panelled for firm grip. In strong, tough chrome molybdenum alloy steel, heat treated and hardened. Unconditionally guaranteed. At your dealer or order direct from factory.

$\frac{1}{8}$ " x $\frac{7}{32}$ " $\frac{7}{32}$ " x $\frac{1}{8}$ " $\frac{1}{8}$ " x $\frac{1}{4}$ "
 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x $\frac{9}{32}$ " $\frac{9}{32}$ " x $\frac{5}{16}$ " $\frac{5}{16}$ " x $\frac{11}{32}$ "
 $\frac{11}{32}$ " x $\frac{3}{8}$ " $\frac{3}{8}$ " x $\frac{7}{16}$ "

Snapped in Pocket Size Plastic Kit 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ ".

ONLY \$1.50

METEOR MFG. CORP. 1441 MAIN ST. BUFFALO 9, N. Y.
 Enclosed is check _____, money order _____ for \$1.50
 Send Meteor Midget Wrench Set to:
 Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____

Figure 6. 1951 *Popular Mechanics* magazine advertisement for Meteor Manufacturing products.

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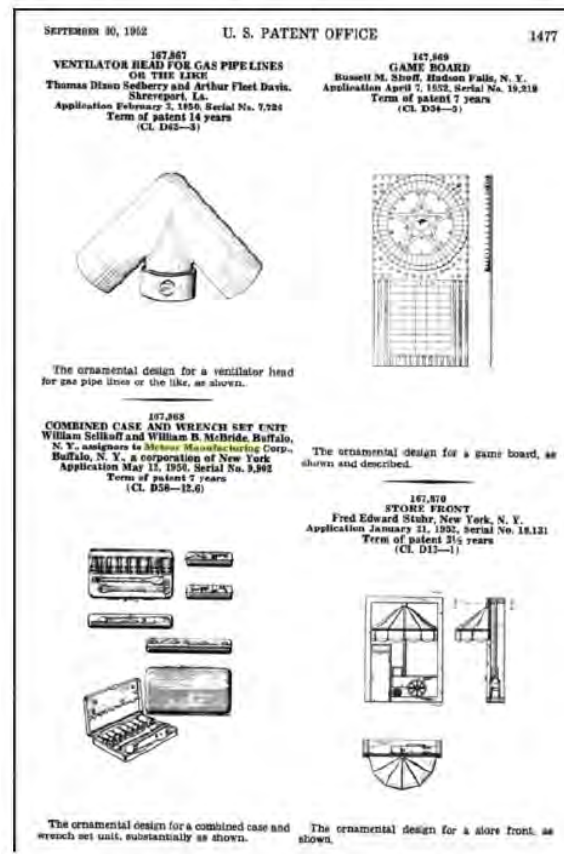


Figure 7. 1952 U.S. Patent Office filing for Meteor Manufacturing tools.

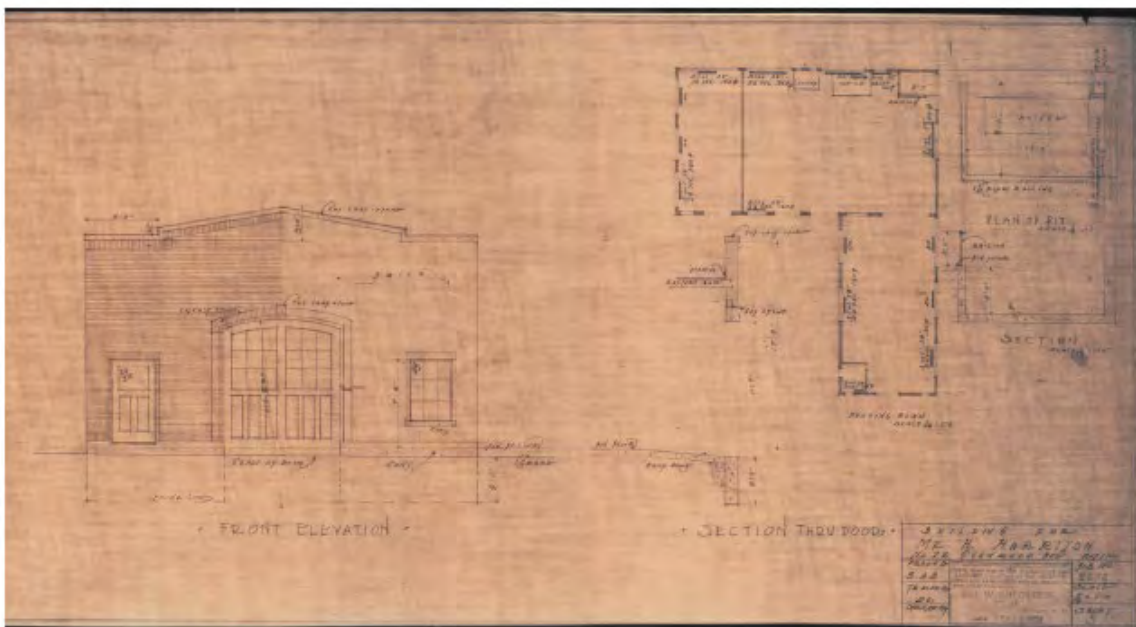


Figure 8. 1924 drawings for the unbuilt addition. Designed by Eli Goldstein for the second owner of the building, Harry Harrinton.

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Figure 9. Example of Meteor Manufacturing tools in a canvas roll for US Military use



Figure 10. Circa 1950 photo of 1439-45 Main Street, showing the Meteor Manufacturing retail storefront and previous appearance with Carrera glass façade

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'Meteor' Cheese Slicer

Meteor Mfg. Corp., 24 Glenwood Ave., Buffalo, N. Y., is offering a cheese slicer packed in an individual box with a clear view acetate cover. Slicer has a plaskon plastic handle, an anodized hard aluminum frame and high tensile strength music-wire cutting edge. Hand



grip is made in red or yellow. Packed one doz. assorted color handles, per case, 12 cases per carton. Each weighs 4 oz., per doz. 3 lbs., per gross, 36 lbs.

Fig 11. 'Meteor' Cheese Slicer in *Hardware Age*, Vol. 161, No. 2, January 15, 1948, 225.

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Photographs:

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

Name of Property: Meteor Manufacturing Corporation Building

City or Vicinity: Buffalo

County: Erie

State: New York

Photographer: Mark Paradowski

Date Photographed: 6/2025

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 1 of 15. | Facade viewed from the southwest. |
| 2 of 15. | Facade viewed from the south. |
| 3 of 15. | Facade viewed from the southeast. |
| 4 of 15. | East elevation. |
| 5 of 15. | Southwest corner, showing west elevation. |
| 6 of 15. | West elevation. |
| 7 of 15. | North elevation. |
| 8 of 15. | Interior looking west. |
| 9 of 15. | Interior, east end looking south. |
| 10 of 15. | Interior, looking southwest. |
| 11 of 15. | Interior, looking northwest. |
| 12 of 15. | Interior, southwest corner looking southwest. |
| 13 of 15. | Interior, looking north. |
| 14 of 15. | Interior, looking southeast. |
| 15 of 15. | Interior, looking east. |

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

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







