

Appendix A – Architectural, Historical, and Cultural Significance

Larkin Historic District

I. Introduction

The buildings, streets, and railroads associated with the Larkin Co. constitute a nationally significant cultural landscape. Their character, materials, craftsmanship, design, scale, mass, and relationship to each other and the surrounding city render them valuable to the city, state, and nation. They also stand as the embodiment of the vision, ideals, and drive of singular individuals whose influence is appreciated and felt to the present day: John D. Larkin, Darwin D. Martin, Elbert Hubbard, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Robert J. Reidpath. While built during the railroad era to accommodate a manufacturing and distribution company of national scope, many of the buildings have been successfully adapted to a new era and for other uses, such as offices, over the past 15 years.

The structures and sites included are:

- 726 Exchange St., Larkin R/S/T Building (1911-1912)
- 290 Larkin St., Larkin L/M Building (1904)
- 635 Seneca St., Larkin I Building, Larkin Power House (1902-1904)
- 680 Seneca St., site of Larkin A Building, Larkin Administration Building (1904-1906)
- 696 Seneca St., Larkin Men's Club, former Sacred Heart Church rectory (circa 1890)
- 701 Seneca St., Larkin B/C/D/Dx/E/F/G/H/J/K/N/O Buildings, Larkin Factory (1898-1913)
- 239 Van Rensselaer St., Larkin U Building, Duk-It Building (circa 1893)

II. Geographic & Site Significance

The Larkin Co. buildings are located in The Hydraulics neighborhood. Buffalo's first manufacturing district, and a nationally important industrial heritage site, the neighborhood was established in 1827 by Reuben Bostwick Heacock one mile east of downtown Buffalo. The larger Hydraulics neighborhood is bounded by Spring St., Fillmore Ave./Smith St., Eagle St., and the Niagara Section of the New York State Thruway, while the proposed historic district encompasses only Larkin Co. buildings and sites.

In 1828 Heacock completed the Hydraulic Canal, which provided waterpower to a half-dozen small industrial enterprises by 1832. The Attica & Buffalo Rail Road, the last link in a chain of seven railroads that connected Buffalo to Albany, was opened in 1843, and was in 1853 absorbed into the New York Central Railroad. This rail link, combined with rail connections to the coalfields of western Pennsylvania and the vast hinterland of Chicago, set the stage for large-scale industrial development in Buffalo and The Hydraulics.

The geography of the neighborhood at this "iron crossroads" allowed for the location and expansion at The Hydraulics of several major industrial enterprises, including, by 1905, the Larkin Co., F. N. Burt & Co., Keystone Warehouse Co., Sizer Steam Forge, American Radiator Co., Iroquois Door Co., Buffalo Lounge Co., and Anselm Hoefner Soap Works.

The Hydraulics gained a reputation as a hotbed for progressive business practices and a site for some of the latest ideas in architecture and engineering. Most famously, the Larkin Co., one of America's largest mail order firms, commissioned Frank Lloyd Wright in 1903 to design the Larkin Administration Building on Seneca St.. Infamously, the building was demolished in 1950.

After World War II and the construction of the New York State Thruway and the Interstate Highway system, The Hydraulics went into a decline that lasted 60 years. While many houses and small commercial and residential buildings were destroyed, the industrial heritage resources of The Hydraulics, in particular the former factory and warehouse buildings of the Larkin Co., are now a basis for economic development in the neighborhood.

III. Larkin Co., 1875-1962

The Larkin Co. was one of the great industrial concerns of the United States. At the company's peak around 1919, its factory complex occupied 65 acres of floor area and employed about 2,000 people in the

manufacture of hundreds of household products, sold by mail order to customers across North America. Its story, said the *Buffalo Courier* in 1904, is “of the giant oak grown from the smallest of seeds.”

J.D. Larkin, Manufacturer of Plain and Fancy Soaps, started in 1875 in a modest workshop at 198 Chicago St., where John D. Larkin produced a yellow laundry bar called “Sweet Home Soap.” The next year the company began construction on a three-story plant at 663 Seneca St. in The Hydraulics (where Larkin was first employed in the soap business as a clerk at the firm of Justus Weller, 960 Seneca St., in 1862).

By 1878, the company produced nine different soap products, ranging from “Boraxine” soap powder, to a variety of laundry soaps, “Jet” harness soap, “Oatmeal” toilet soap, and Glycerine. In the same year, the firm was incorporated as J.D. Larkin & Co., with John D. Larkin as President and his brother-in-law, Elbert Hubbard, as Secretary and Treasurer. Darwin D. Martin, who soon would climb the corporate ladder and become secretary himself, was hired to sell (“sling”) soap door-to-door at 13 years of age.

In 1885 Elbert Hubbard devised a business model, the “Larkin Idea,” that fueled the company’s explosive stage of growth. Hubbard’s idea was to “save all cost which adds no value” by cutting out the “middlemen” of wholesalers and retailers, and selling soap and other household products via mail order directly to consumers (“from factory to family”).

What made this business model successful? First, the railroads created new efficiencies in shipment which, with reduced postal rates, made mail order economical, fast, and far-reaching. Second, was Darwin Martin’s card ledger system, eschewing the standard chronological sales ledger with index cards of each customer. Third, there existed an untapped market of rural households with limited access to stores that could be effectively served by mail order. This market was cultivated by Larkin’s offer of valuable “premiums,” or gifts, to customers who purchased goods in bulk, and the organization of cooperative buying clubs called “Larkin Clubs of 10.”

In 1885 the J.D. Larkin & Co. was located in a five-story factory containing 45,000 square feet of space, a figure which expanded exponentially over the next 30 years. In 1897, John D. Larkin established a policy that all existing buildings, and every future expansion, would be made fireproof and sunlit to ensure “cheerful and healthful” environments for plant workers. Between 1898 and 1913—the time in which all extant Larkin factory buildings were constructed—the company’s biggest building boom took place.

Darwin D. Martin, by 1906 a Larkin executive, wrote of the “triumph” of the Larkin Idea in the company’s tour pamphlet:

This plan of marketing a manufacturer’s product is not the fruit of a flash of individual intellect. The Larkin Idea stands for, is the name of, a unique plan of business that has been a gradual and intensely interesting development, extending over a third of a century. There is no presumption in assuming that the story of the Larkin Co. will be of interest to the public; for it is the story of success by honest endeavor—of American pioneer enterprise directed in new and untried channels—a theme of interest to every student of economy, to every business man, and to each of the millions of Larkin patrons, who have simultaneously benefited by and assisted in the wonderful development of the Larkin methods. It has a lesson of especial interest for every youth who is misled into believing that success is due to luck, time, place, “a good start,” or superior talents. It is not intended as a story of an easy path to wealth and ease; for there is none. This is history, and histories deal with facts. But, between the lines, it tells of the victory of rightly directed energy and of patient labor long continued; qualities at the command of all who are willing to pay the price of success.

By 1908, the Larkin Co. claimed to occupy the largest fireproof factory in the world, a “modern marvel,” as the *Buffalo Express* stated, where a “trainload of soap could be made in a single kettle.” The Administration Building, completed in 1906, and designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, was its crowning glory. By 1913 the firm offered a 160-page catalogue containing 600 products, and over 1,700 other articles offered as premiums. In 1919 the Larkin Co. logged its highest ever annual sales, more than \$31 million, and John D. Larkin gave a personal tour of the plant to King Albert and Queen Elisabeth of Belgium.

After 1919, the company experienced declining sales, due in no small measure to the introduction of the Ford Model T, which allowed formerly isolated rural customers to drive to town and shop in person for household products. Unlike Montgomery Ward and Sears & Roebuck, the Larkin Co. focused almost exclusively on its mail order-based strategy. John D. Larkin died in 1925, after which Darwin D. Martin and

other key executives retired as the business became more tightly controlled by Larkin family members. When the Depression hit after 1929, it was too late for reinvention. The company's 1939 sales revenue represented a 93% drop from its peak in 1919.

The Larkin Co. discontinued its mail order business in 1940, and in 1941 accelerated the liquidation of company assets. Despite the disintegration of the business, the Larkin Co. paid its debts in full by 1943. The company reorganized as Larkin Co., Inc. in 1945 and resumed operations at a substantially smaller scale, contracting to a single floor of the 10-story Larkin Terminal Warehouse. The company continued to do a modest mail order business until 1962.

The Larkin Administration Building was sold as part of the liquidation in 1943, and ultimately demolished in 1950. The contents of the Larkin P Building was consumed by fire in 1954 and the building demolished in 1962. The rest of the Larkin plant, much of which has recently been repurposed for new uses, stands as of 2014.

IV. Architectural Descriptions & Significance

“If an engineer, meeting a special problem in a purely scientific way, produces a building of beauty, he has produced architecture.” - G.H. Edgell, 1928

The Larkin Co. complex is one of the finest collections of factory buildings from what architectural historian Reyner Banham called Buffalo's “Golden Age” of industrial architecture between 1895 and 1925. In spite of the loss of the Larkin Administration Building in 1950, the remaining industrial works of the Larkin Co. are a singularly important record of advances in industrial building design and construction from the late 19th to early 20th centuries.

The warehouse and factory buildings of the Larkin Co. include work by R.J. Reidpath & Son, a Buffalo engineering firm specializing in reinforced concrete buildings, whose résumé included buildings for Alling & Cory, the Buffalo Foundry & Machine Co., and the Houk Mfg. Co.; and Lockwood, Greene, & Co., a Boston engineering firm whose local work included the Buffalo Meter Co. and Pierce Arrow Motor Car Co. factories.

The industrial structures of the Larkin Co. span a transition from traditional brick-pier construction to the reinforced concrete framing of the daylight factory, which allowed for improved fireproofing, abundant access to natural light in the interior, and fast and efficient construction—hallmarks of modernity at a time in which architects, particularly from Europe, were searching for a new aesthetic.

The Larkin Co. complex is a significant example of turn-of-the-century American factory and warehouse construction, which Le Corbusier hailed as “the first fruits of the New Age.” The significance of such structures in the codification of the International Style, explored by Reyner Banham in *A Concrete Atlantis: U.S. Industrial Building and European Modern Architecture*, is difficult to overstate.

726 Exchange St.
Larkin Terminal Warehouse
R/S/T/Building
Architect: Lockwood, Greene, & Co.
Built: 1911-1912

The Larkin Terminal Warehouse, at 10 stories and more than 600,000 square feet in floor area, was built in under one year, impressively quick at a time when horses were still common on the construction site. The Boston team of Lockwood, Greene, & Co. and Aberthaw Construction Co. was hired for the project. It is one of the country's most impressive early examples of reinforced concrete construction.

The building is characterized by stacked stories, supported by exposed concrete columns. Large rectangles of glazing (originally steel sash, since replaced) filled the resulting grid. Precast concrete panels, located at each upper corner of the north and south facades, are emblazoned with the Larkin Co. logo.

The building is an example of the “simplest, plainest, and most straight-forward expression of reinforced concrete framed construction,” wrote Banham. “It is a totally self-assured design, as if architects had been designing in this mode for four centuries, instead of four years!”

The post-and-beam interior frame is also seen on the exterior; indeed, that is all there is to see on the exterior, which is a relentlessly regular grid of concrete uprights and horizontals at regular intervals, interrupted only by the narrower and differently fenestrated bays that correspond to the elevator stacks. These breaks may be all that save the facades from utter monotony when viewed in their entirety, but what lifts the design from the tolerable to the noble is the quality of the detailing of the expressed structure. In the conventional uses of the term, there is no “detailing” whatsoever at R/S/T, but everywhere one looks there is evidence of great care and ingenious thought in detailing with edges and corners, junctions and relationships of materials, and the proportioning of the whole.

The building was—and as Banham noted, *had to be*—experimental, employing a unique form of concrete reinforcement, with preassembled steel lattices erected in two-story lifts to serve both as temporary scaffolding and reinforcement, when the concrete had been poured around it. The sand-and-stone gravel used in the reinforcing concrete was dredged from the Niagara River’s Strawberry Island—one reason that Strawberry Island is no longer shaped like a strawberry.

The warehouse was used primarily for storage of Larkin premiums, the ground floor devoted entirely to shipping and receiving platforms, with sufficient interior trackage for as many as 70 rail cars linked directly to tracks of the Erie Railroad.

In 1936, the radio tower—itsself a landmark visible miles away from the plant—was erected by WBEN on the Larkin Terminal Warehouse roof.

In 1967, longtime tenant Graphic Controls Inc.—which still claims to be the world’s leading manufacturer of recording charts—purchased the building from Larkin Warehouse Inc. Thirty years later, with the announcement that Graphic Controls would vacate the Larkin Terminal Warehouse, a prominent member of the Buffalo real estate community concluded, “Maybe the best thing to do is tear it down.”

In 2002, the Larkin Development Company purchased the emptied colossus for \$1 million, announcing ambitious plans to convert the structure to modern office space, a project completed to much acclaim and full tenancy.

290 Larkin St.

L/M Building

Architect: R.J. Reidpath & Son

Built: 1904

The L/M Building was built in 1904 as the Larkin Co.’s raw materials warehouse, a seven-story structure of carefully-detailed, brick-arched construction, the idiom of those parts of the Larkin complex which were of brick-and-steel mill construction.

The building contained the fat and oil refineries in which raw materials were stored and prepared, to be later converted into soap. These structures were 140’ by 200’ in area and seven stories in height. Much of the material arrived in tank cars and was pumped by compressed air into suitable containers. Materials were transferred via tunnels beneath Larkin St. to the main factory at 701 Seneca St.

The L/M Building, wrote Banham, “exhibits still the Reidpaths’ strong, simple, and craftsman-detailed brickwork at its best, a brickwork of almost Roman gravity and unaffected muscularity with soldier-arches spanning between pilasters over the windows.”

Several bays appear to have featured larger door openings for hauling goods into the building through the use of large roof-mounted hoists, which are partially extant.

After the sale of the property during the Larkin Co.’s liquidation, it was operated as the Wilson Warehouse, connected to the tracks of the New York Central. In 2001, it became the home of Uncle Sam’s Army Navy Outfitters, reputedly the largest such store in North America.

635 Seneca St.

Larkin Power House/Building I

Architect: R.J. Reidpath & Son
 Built: 1902-1904

“From an architectural standpoint, there is nothing unlovely in the cylindrical rise of a chimney, towering 100 to 200 feet above the plant. Indeed, the stately shaft of a concrete or masonry chimney visible from afar is a monument to power development.” - Power Plant Engineering, 1953

The Larkin Power House, designed by R.J. Reidpath & Son, was originally two stories, built in 1902, with an expansion to four stories in 1904. The structure is an archetype of the early 20th century powerhouse of fireproof construction, originally with expansive windows with operable sash, plus a monitor roof over a mezzanine-encircled interior volume of impressive dimensions.

Like other powerhouses, it is a two-part facility with separate rooms for boilers and engines, the division of space keeping coal dust away from the machinery and gauges in the engine room. A third area, for coal storage, was located at the rear of the powerhouse, adjacent to the tracks of the New York Central.

The smokestack of the Power House punctuates the building and the entire Larkin works. The Larkin Co. boasted in 1903 that the “red-brick chimney will be in plain view of every passenger train entering the city.” Tourists dubbed it the “*Washing-ton Monument*,” a reference to the Larkin Co.’s role in soapmaking.

With 50,000 tourists visiting the plant every year, the Power House was a highlight of the Larkin tour schedule and its 1906 tour pamphlet, *Home of the Larkin Idea*, which offers this description:

The Larkin Power-House is equipped to furnish 10,000 horse-power. The stack is the highest in Buffalo, being 275 feet above bed-rock. The power by which the Larkin Factories are run is applied electrically, enough current being generated in the Power House to furnish light for a city of 25,000 inhabitants. There are 20 safety boilers of 500 horse-power each, and 125 tons of coal are consumed every twenty-four hours. So complete are the mechanical devices that the work of handling this immense quantity of coal and the cinders resulting from its consumption, is done by two men. One operates the great crane that lifts the coal from the pit into which it is dumped from the coal-cars and conveys it to a bin at the rear of the Power-House. From the bin the coal passes automatically into a trolley-car that runs to the different furnaces. This car’s capacity is 2 1/2 tons. The furnaces are stoked automatically and as the coal is consumed, the cinders drop into a car that runs to the cinder pit. When the pit becomes full, it is emptied by the electric crane. A little steam engine attached to each furnace keeps the grate-bars gently rocking. This movement feeds coal into the fire from a magazine above the furnaces and dumps the cinders into cars in the basement. The scoop picks up a ton of coal at a time and makes the trip in a minute. Sixty tons of coal can be delivered into the Power-House every hour.

Even after the introduction of alternating current electricity after 1896, it was common for industrial facilities to furnish their own steam-generated electric power, in Buffalo and elsewhere. Works powerhouses produced half the country’s electricity prior to World War I. Today, the Power House is home to the natural gas boiler which supplies heat to the adjoining 701 Seneca St., via tunnels beneath Larkin St.

680 Seneca St.

Site of the Larkin Administration Building/Building A
 Architect: Frank Lloyd Wright, with R.J. Reidpath & Son (consulting engineers) and Richard Bock (sculpture artist)
 Built: 1904-1906

This address is the site of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Larkin Administration Building, demolished in 1950, with the exception of a red-brick pier and reinforced concrete core from the western section of the Administration Building’s encircling wall, near Swan St. and the tracks of the New York Central. Sub-surface artifacts likely also remain.

Darwin D. Martin, the secretary of the Larkin Co., was responsible in 1903 for convincing John D. Larkin to hire Wright to design the factory's office building, thereby securing arguably Buffalo's most famous architectural commission.

"At the risk of appearing to have been made intoxicated by my contact with Frank Lloyd Wright," Martin wrote to Larkin in 1903, "I do not hesitate to say at the outset of this, my report and interview of him, which lasted all day Mar. 18th, and of my visit to his houses on Mar. 14th, 15th and 18th, that I believe we have all greatly underestimated our man. This because of his youth, the newness of our acquaintanceship and its limitations and also because of the adverse things we have heard about Wright, which are due to his radical departure from conventional lines."

The Administration Building housed the Larkin Co.'s executives, department heads, and 1,800 clerks. Skylit, fireproof, and air-purified, the structure was expressive of the Larkin Co.'s progressive corporate culture. On the building's exterior was inscribed the motto: "Honest labor needs no master, simple justice needs no slaves."

In his autobiography, Wright called the Administration Building "a genuine expression of power directly applied to purpose" that represented an "affirmation of the new Order of this Machine Age."

The Larkin Co. sold the Administration Building in 1943 to L. B. Smith of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Smith, hoping to realize a tax evasion scheme, kept the building vacant until the City took title to the building through tax foreclosure in 1945. after which it became the City's biggest real estate problem, as chronicled by the *Buffalo Evening News* in 1947:

Disposal of the city's "white elephant," the Larkin Company's old Administration Building at 680 Seneca St., remains the real estate puzzle, with no possibility of solution in sight. The five-story brick structure, once the most modern office building in the country, gradually is approaching a state in which it will be entirely useless. Every double paned window is shattered. The tall iron gate which graced the entrance has toppled from rusted hinges. The iron fence topping a low brick wall around the structure went into a wartime scrap collection. The Larkin Building, a headache to the city since it was acquired in tax foreclosure proceedings June 15, 1945, cost \$4,000,000 to build and was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, a nationally famous architect. Offers to purchase it for around \$25,000, far less than its assessed valuation of \$239,000, including land, have been turned down. A national advertising campaign that cost \$6,000 brought inquiries but no offers. The state rejected a suggestion that the building be converted for emergency housing and the county took no action on a proposal to make it headquarters of the Welfare Department.

In 1949 the Common Council defeated a proposal by Councilman Joe Dudzick to convert Administration Building to a recreation center. The City sold the building for \$5,000 to the Western Trading Corp., a real estate holding company, on the condition that it be demolished. The demolition permit was granted on January 23, 1950.

Banham called the Administration Building the "most distinguished work of industrial architecture the world has seen up to that time, or has seen since." The fence pier, and likely subsurface ruins, are all that remain of Wright's masterwork.

696 Seneca St.

Larkin Men's Club, Sacred Heart Church Rectory

Architect: Unknown

Date: Circa 1890

696 Seneca St., built as a rectory, is the only remaining building from the original Hydraulics campus of Sacred Heart Church, a German-language Catholic parish established in 1875. It is brick and two-and-one-half stories. Built circa 1890, the rectory was repurposed by the Larkin Co. in 1915 as the Larkin Men's Club, a social hall for male employees of the plant. After the Larkin Co.'s liquidation, the building served variously as a tavern and/or rooming house until being purchased by the Larkin Development Group in 2011.

701 Seneca St.

Larkin Factory, Larkin B/C/D/Dx/E/F/G/H/J/K/N/O Buildings

Architect: R.J. Reidpath (except for Building C, designed in-house by the Larkin Co.)

Built: 1898-1913

“I envy the architects of purposeful industrial buildings. They have the opportunity to work out real buildings simultaneously, without self-consciousness. Of such buildings we have admirable examples in this country.” - Frank Lloyd Wright, 1931

The main factory of the Larkin Co., consisting of 12 buildings constructed sequentially over 15 years, is where the hundreds of Larkin products—soap, perfumes, coffee, chocolate, pasta, etc.—were manufactured. The buildings range from six to eight stories, and occupy in total about 1.2 million square feet of floor area.

Aside from the 1913 reconstruction of Building C, the structures’ facades are designed in the regular Reidpath idiom of brick-and-steel mill construction, the brick now hidden under the concrete stucco of a 1962 modernization. Wrote Banham of the complex:

The vast floors exhibit perspectives of forests of columns as far as the eye can see, in places for almost six hundred feet. Unlike the Power House with its handsome airy double-height mezzanined boiler-rooms, 701 Seneca has no high spaces, except for the sensational Piranesian vistas at the western end, where six seven-story-high, 25-foot-diameter soap kettles were pulled out and replaced by vehicular ramps before World War II. This enormous industrial block was also, of course, the “context” in which Wright’s work for the Larkin Company was seen. As the foreign visitor (and they started to arrive about 1908) came over the Seneca Street railroad bridge he would see the Administration Building low on the left, and the great brick cliff of 701 Seneca towering above it on the right and, what is more, apparently surrounding it, since the facade kinked to follow the line of the street, and effectively closed the vista.

Building C stands out “against the grain of all the previous brick-pier construction by the Reidpaths on the 701 Seneca site,” wrote Banham. “The openings to the outside were glazed clear across from column to column and from the underside of the floor slab above down to a sill that topped a low brick spandrel wall just high enough to carry a hot water radiator. The environmental transformation wrought by this innovation could be seen at 701 Seneca as nowhere else in the world, because the fully glazed concrete insert of Building C was entirely surrounded by works in the former tradition—with windows tunneled through a massive brick wall—and one could walk through directly from the old into the new or vice versa.”

Building C’s three bays of reinforced concrete, designed in-house by Larkin Co. engineers and contractors, not only give a “vivid demonstration of the gain in window area derived from the switch to framed construction,” according to Banham. “However secure the former tradition, with its habits of adaptive pragmatism and its inherited vocabulary of architectural forms, may have appeared at the very beginning of the present century, it was to be overthrown by a genuine revolution in material and concepts between 1902 and 1906. The nature of that revolution and the profundity of its consequences are epitomized within the vast bulk of 701 Seneca.”

239 Van Rensselaer St.

D. Ullman Sons, Larkin U Building, Duk-It Building

Architect: Unknown

Built: Circa 1893

The Larkin U Building, built in 1893, has been a recycling operation, a factory building for the Larkin Co., the home of Duk-It stationary manufacturer and beanbag ashtray inventor McDonald Products, and a factory for automotive parts manufacturer Par Foam Products.

It was originally constructed for D. Ullman Sons, an industrial salvage and recycling firm, owned and operated by one of Buffalo's prominent Jewish families. The firm relocated to the Van Rensselaer St. structure from its original location at the northwest corner of Oak and Broadway.

Around 1911, the Larkin Co. purchased the building, rechristening it the Larkin U. The mail order company utilized the structure for various industrial purposes, including, for a time, its metal packaging operations, and built a bowling alley in its basement, connected by underground tunnel to the factories at 701 Seneca St.

McDonald Products, Inc. occupied the structure in 1946, and in 1981 it was taken over by Par Foam Products, maker of engineered foam products.

The Larkin U Building is a classic brick loft structure constructed in the Romanesque Revival style. At three stories, the structure is a combination of brick masonry, cast iron columns, and wood plank floors.

In 2011, the Larkin Development Group renovated the structure for offices for First Niagara Bank. During the renovation, in which red paint was stripped from the brick facade, ghost signs were revealed on the building's south facade: one for D. Ullman Sons, and another for McDonald Products, with its signature "duck" logo.

V. Conclusion

Per Section 337.15 (Criteria for Designation) of the Buffalo City Code, the Preservation Board determines that the properties at the addresses listed above meet multiple criteria for designation as a Local Landmark District:

1. The Larkin Co. complex has surpassing national value, character, and interest as a late 19th century and early 20th century cultural landscape comprising the industrial plant of one of the largest mail-order corporations in America. It was built on the first rail line to connect Buffalo with the Hudson River, and typifies the railroad-era industrial complex. It provides, according to architectural historian Reyner Banham, "a kind of monumental history of American industrial architecture on either side of the changeover from regular mill construction to concrete."
3. The buildings and sites exemplify the historic, aesthetic, architectural, and economic heritage of Buffalo and the nation. The massive brick-pier industrial lofts, daylight factory, and the extended limestone foundations in a railroad-era landscape have significant educational and cultural value.
4. The buildings and sites are identified with national and local figures, such as John D. Larkin, Frank Lloyd Wright, Robert J. Reidpath, Elbert Hubbard, and Darwin D. Martin.
5. The buildings and sites embody distinguishing characteristics of brick-pier and reinforced concrete construction in industrial applications, rendering it valuable for the study of its period, type, method of construction, and use of local materials.
6. The site contains the subsurface remnants of master architect Frank Lloyd Wright's world-famous Larkin Administration Building, as well as a pier and core of its enclosing wall. The L&M Building, the Power House, and 701 Seneca St. constitute the largest collection of work by engineering firm R.J. Reidpath & Son.
7. The buildings and sites embody "a genuine revolution in material and concepts between 1902 and 1906" (Banham). The Larkin Complex was built over a short period during which the transition from brick pier construction to reinforced concrete in factory design took place. The detailing of the stone foundations, brick piers and walls, and exposed reinforced concrete framing is exceptional.
9. The buildings loom large on the Buffalo landscape, by virtue of their size, bulk, and relationship to each other and the surrounding city. Its Power House, with tall chimney (once 275 feet tall), signified entry into downtown Buffalo for generations of rail passengers, while eastbound travelers on Seneca Street could orient and place themselves by means of the landmark Power House. Travelers on the New York State Thruway,

which runs parallel to the main axis of the Larkin Complex, can see and readily identify the entire complex from the south.

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