

1902 Niagara Street • Buffalo, NY • 14207



Celebrating Our History and Community!



Scajaquada Historic Trail



Black Rock / Grant Amherst

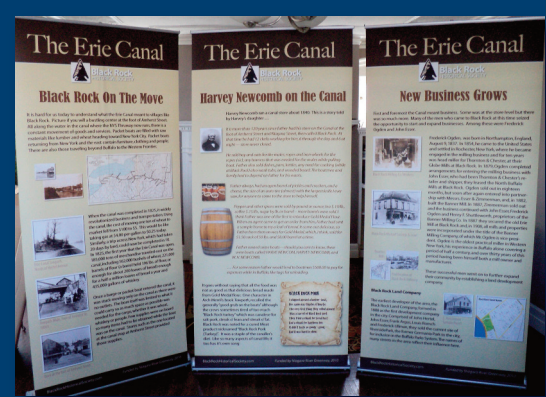
The Scajaquada Heritage Trail has been developed to help us celebrate the past and promote the community's historic significance as a destination for art, architecture, music and eclectic dining. As a community whose roots come from the expansion of the Village of Black Rock at a time of industrial growth at the turn of the century, the Grant Amherst neighborhood, home of the Scajaquada Heritage Trail owes much to the development of the Belt Line Rail System.

The railway known as the Belt Line had a tremendous impact on the growth of industrial, commercial and residential development throughout adjacent areas of Buffalo, but perhaps had the greatest influence on the development of the Grant Amherst neighborhood. The Belt Line formed the area's northern boundary just north of Chandler Street, before it bent southward cutting across Tonawanda Street on its way south to Buffalo.

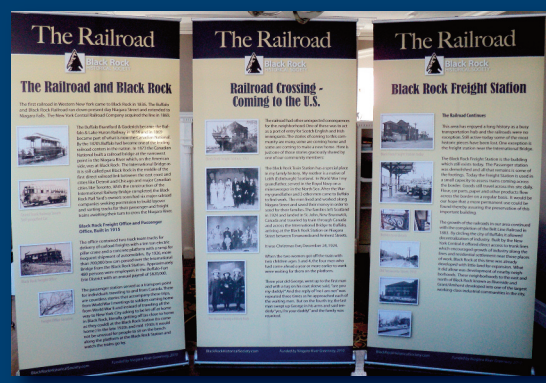
Proximity to the Belt Line and the easy access it provided to markets in Buffalo and in cities across the country encouraged the growth of a variety of large-scale industrial and manufacturing plants along the line. In the Grant-Amherst neighborhood, Buffalo Cooperative Stove, McKinnon Dash, Acme Steel, Hard Manufacturing and Standard Plaster were among the earliest industrial works which located in the area following the completion of the Belt Line. The work available in these factories attracted a wave of Polish immigrants to the area just east of the original Village of Black Rock now called Grant Amherst. As in so many communities of the times the social hall and the church formed the center of community life. It is appropriate that our walk will take you passed both.

Traveling Exhibits

Our 20 Exhibits Travel to Libraries and Community Events



The Erie Canal



The Railroad

Other exhibits include Market Square, War of 1812 and the Black Rock Lock.

If you would like one of our exhibits displayed at your event, contact Doreen DeBoth at 716-510-4007.

Black Rock Historical Society's Mission

The BLACK ROCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S mission is to preserve, interpret and make available significant historical materials to the public about the history of the communities of Black Rock, Grant-Amherst, Riverside and West Hertel in the City of Buffalo, New York. Collections are used for research, education, publication, exhibition, and other programs, and to instill a deeper appreciation of the important role that the residents of these communities have played in its relationship to local, national and world history.

Accomplishments

- Exhibit panels featuring Market Square, War of 1812, Growth of Railroads, the Erie Canal and the Black Rock Lock
- Black Rock Trail Brochures for walking or biking
- Black Rock Heritage Mural at Tonawanda & Amherst Streets
- 19 Historic Markers and interpretive Signage
- War of 1812 Speaker Series at The Buffalo History Museum
- War of 1812 commemorations: Flames Across Niagara, Stars Along Scajaquada and Commemorating the Battle of Scajaquada Creek Bridge

Sponsored by the Greenway Commission for the enrichment of Buffalo's residents and visitors.

Special thanks to:

- Mayor Byron W. Brown
- North District Council Member Joseph Golombek Jr.
- Buffalo Arts Commission
- Black Rock-Riverside Good Neighbors Planning Alliance
- Historic Preservation Committee
- Black Rock Historical Society
- Artists and Community Members
- Grant Amherst Business Association
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- ... all for their contributions to this work!

Photo Credits:

- Grant Amherst Business Association's Black Rock Historic Photo Project
- WNY Heritage Magazine
- Clinton Brown Company Architecture, pc
- All Current photos by: Doreen B. DeBoth (unless otherwise noted)

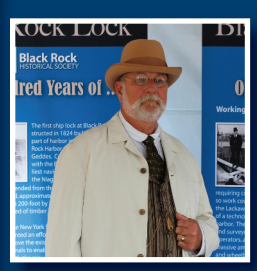


BRHS Events

Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the building of the Black Rock Lock at the US Army Corps of Engineers



Lieutenant Colonel Karl D. Jansen welcomes officials and visitors to the event.



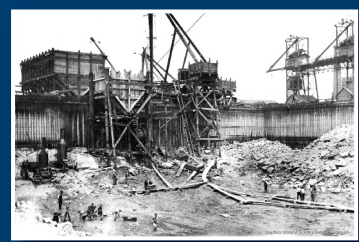
Col. Thomas W. Symons, Engineer in charge, as portrayed by Tom Schobert

August 17, 2014 marked the 100th anniversary of the opening of the Black Rock Lock. The Lock enabled large Great Lakes vessels to avoid the narrow, swift-moving Niagara River as they traveled to the industrial centers north of Buffalo.

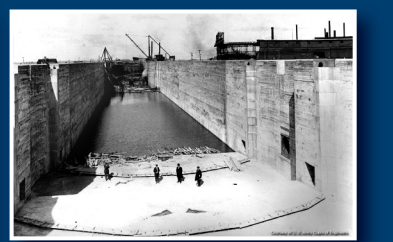


Park Ranger Tom Wenzel (center) leads a tour of the Lock.

A beautiful sunny day was perfect for the event with exhibits, a visit by the Fireboat E M Cotter and tours of the Lock.



Completed lock chamber, looking downstream. Workers are standing at the sill for the Upper Operating Miter Gate. Lock chamber filling and emptying culverts are located in the sides of the lock walls (1911).



"Flames Across Niagara" bonfire, December 2013.



Winners of the 1st annual "History in Your Neighborhood" essay contest, April 2014.



Friends at "Linens & Lace - A Celebration of Needlework" at the Buffalo Religious Arts Center, April 2014.



Reenactors watch the Battle of Scajaquada Creek Bridge, August 2014.



Scout troop members assemble to reenact the Battle of Scajaquada Creek Bridge.



Representation of flags at Battle reenactment: Native American, Canada, USA and Great Britain.

Donate & Preserve Your History

The Black Rock Historical Society has been acquiring a significant collection of artifacts, which are preserved for future generations to enjoy and learn about Black Rock, Riverside, West Hertel and Grant Amherst areas in the City of Buffalo, NY. Photographs, books, currency/coins, textiles, tools, furniture, religious and domestic items, local industrial or business memorabilia and historical documents are items that reflect the rich culture and heritage of the area. If you have something you would like to donate to our collection, a form can be printed from our website www.black-rockhistoricalsociety.com and mailed to our office. You will then be contacted by us and an appointment will be set up to bring your item/items to the museum. We gratefully appreciate and value any item that will add to the development and importance of our collection.



Volunteering

The Black Rock Historical Society (BRHS) is seeking volunteers to assist with various projects as Buffalo's newest museum located at 1902 Niagara Street, Buffalo, NY. As we build our museum we need your help. Your expertise, interest and/or love of history are good reasons to volunteer. Students, seniors and everyone in-between are welcome to volunteer in various areas of interest: office, education, outreach, maintenance, etc.

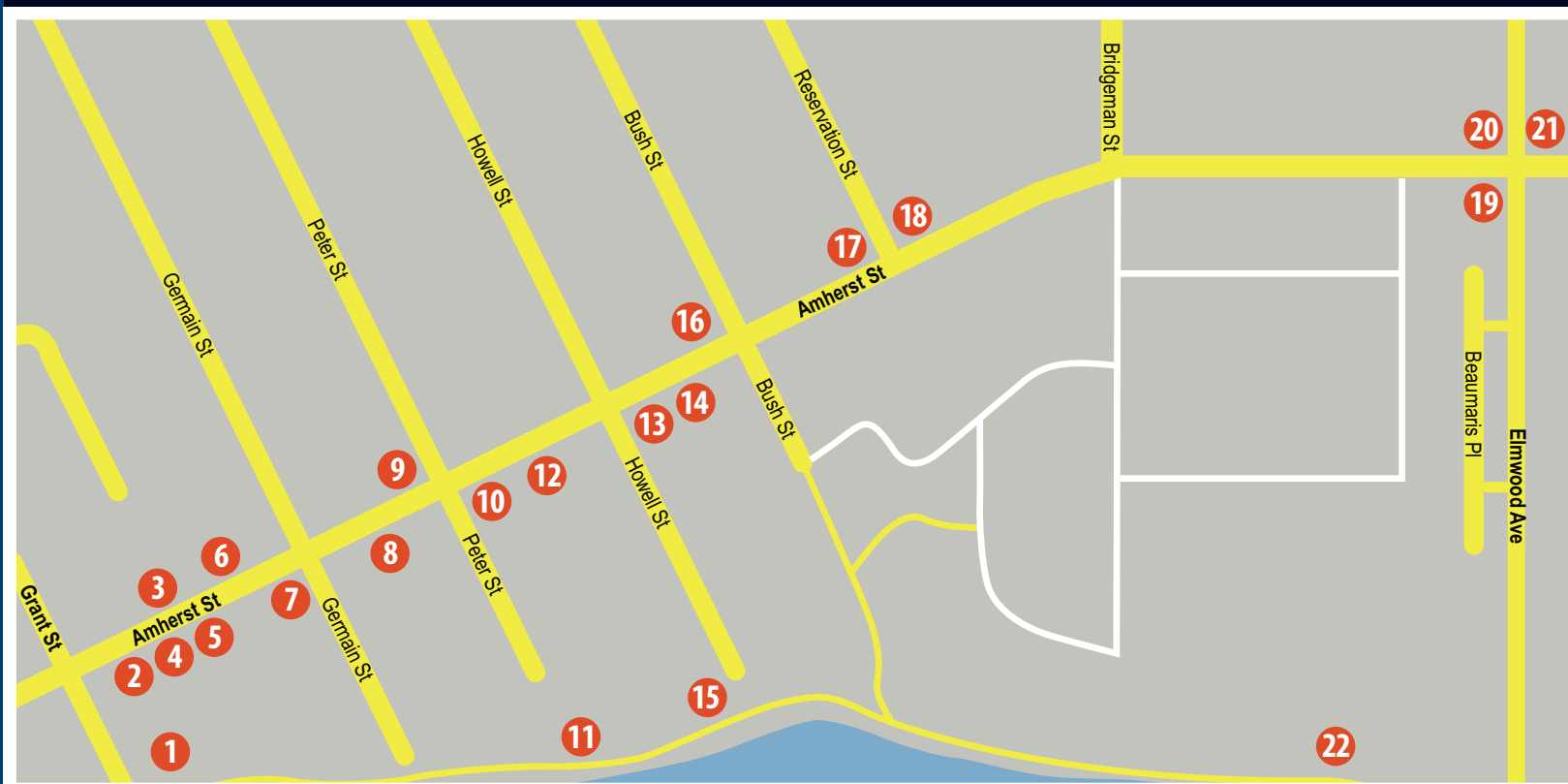
Volunteering can help you:

- Strengthen your community and raise awareness of its assets
- Learn or develop skills about preservation
- Teach your skills to others
- Gain work experience
- Do something unique and interesting to give back to the community
- Meet new people

To become a volunteer call Doreen DeBoth at 716-510-4007.



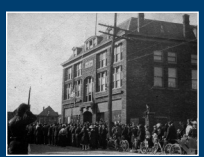
Scajaquada Historic Trail



1 927 Grant Street As the Polish community grew and strengthened in the Grant-Amherst neighborhood, they established the Polish Cadets Club of Buffalo in 1899 as a social organization to complement the life of Assumption parish. The goals of the club were to foster civic pride as well as promote the ideals of American citizenship to the immigrant community. This is one of four buildings in the area designed by prominent Polish architect Wladyslaw H. Zawadzki. In the parking lot to the left stood Bath House #3, one of four in the city that also included a library and a health center (demolished in the 1960s).



395 Grant St.



Polish Cadets Dedication 1913
Submitted by Richard Dombrowski

2 395 Amherst Street Hook and Ladder No.12 Firehouse began serving the Grant/Amherst community in 1912 and the building still remains at its original location despite firehouse consolidation. The Flemish Renaissance style firehouse was designed by City architect Howard L. Beck. This firehouse first employed firehorses until the invention of the steam engine.



395 Amherst St.



Hook & Ladder No.12 1913
Submitted by Dan Lotito

3 396 Amherst Street is a two story commercial building with a metal cornice and a modified storefront that was once topped with a pediment. Built in 1906 and operated by Jacob Strzep, Black Rock Importing was the wholesale liquor dealer in the area and included a sample room. Women however had to use the side entrance (note sign on the right side of the building).



396 Amherst St.

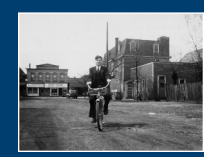


Black Rock Importing c.1920s
Submitted by Dan Lotito

4 Lot between 395 & 399 Amherst Street Noteworthy is the NYS Ditch that was built most likely for flood relief. It ran from Scajaquada Creek, under present day 398, 399, 402 and the parking lot between 395 and 399 Amherst St., northward to join Cornelius Creek somewhere near present-day Hertel and Military, until its exit into the Niagara River at the foot of Ontario St. at the present Black Rock Canal Park. Filled in c.1900 with stones and dirt, the water table still remains.

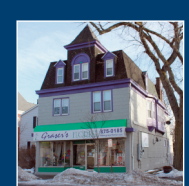


NYS Ditch underground



NYS Ditch 1940s
Submitted by Richard Dombrowski

5 399 Amherst Street is a c. 1910 2 1/2 story roof frame with modest Queen Anne styling, also designed by Wladyslaw H. Zawadzki. The large central tower has a flared hip roof, paired windows and decorative wooden arch, flanked by smaller gable dormers. Side features paneled oriel windows. Similar characteristics can also be seen across the street at 408 Amherst St. also by Zawadzki.



399 Amherst St.



Auto Parts & Hardware 1950s
Submitted by Geraldine Lowry

6 404-06 Amherst Street Downtown Black Rock was a great place to shop. The S. A. Osuch's Department Store opened in November, 1935 and was the first store in the area to use credit cards. The upper portion of the building remains intact while the glass windows below have been covered. While some businesses along Amherst St. remain, the ones that have changed owners are examples of the kind of businesses that once occupied the buildings.

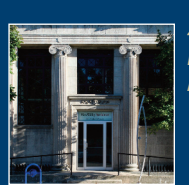


404-406 Amherst St.

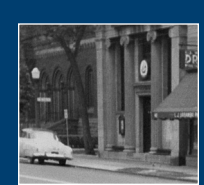


S. A. Osuch Department Store Opening Nov. 1935
Submitted by Edward Osuch

7 415 Amherst Street A former People's Bank of Buffalo branch was located here featuring temple-front Neoclassical revival styling. Three bays are divided by large engaged Ionic columns with simple corner plasters which support a substantial entablature and shaped parapet featuring a unique shaped cartouche at the center parapet. Well known Polish artist Josef Slawinski lived here in the early 1960's on the second floor while working on the exquisite five scraffito murals and seven liturgical symbols for the apse of Assumption Church next door.



415 Amherst St.
Photo by Max Willig

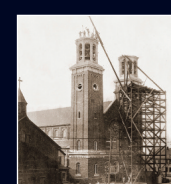


People's Bank (detail) c.1951
Submitted by Richard Kubiniec

8 435 Amherst Street As the Polish community grew more prominent in the Grant-Amherst area in the late nineteenth-century, they established a new congregation. Forming the Assumption Parish, the new congregation constructed their first modest church building between 1888 and 1889. This new church quickly became a prominent center for life in the neighborhood, and in the years from 1888 to 1891, 800 baptisms and 136 weddings were performed. Eventually the prosperous congregation constructed the present twin-towered Romanesque Revival church designed by architect Karl Schmill that acted as a beacon, attracting many Polish families to settle in the area; in 1900 the neighborhood contained about 1,000 Polish residents, but by 1915 this number had increased to over 5,000. The Church of Assumption campus includes the spectacular Romanesque Revival church building as well as the Our Lady of Black Rock School and rectory. The convent originally stood on the site to the left rear of the church, but was moved to Germain St. to make way for the new school.

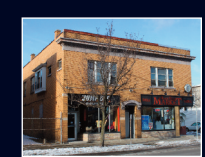


435 Amherst St.
Photo courtesy of Clinton Brown Architecture

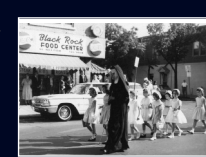


Assumption Steeple construction c.1914
Submitted by Diane Kuszynski

9 440 Amherst Street features two yellow brick storefronts with a central entrance to the upper floor with mosaic tile floor and wood paneling. It was an original A&P Supermarket in the 1930s until 1942, part of the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company chain, then later became The Black Rock Food Center, another family business run by the Zajacs from 1946 until 1986.

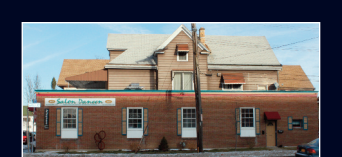


440 Amherst St.



Black Rock Food Center 1964
Submitted by Mary Ann Barone

10 447 Amherst Street has operated as a funeral home from 1929 to 2010 and was one of three during the 40's and 50's within a two block area of Amherst Street that catered to the large influx of Polish immigrants. Dombrowski/Orlowski operated here, while Jachimiak and Kolano Funeral Homes were between Grant and Germain Sts. This turn of the century building now houses a salon and the 1950s addition an art gallery.



447 Amherst St.



Dombrowski Funeral Home c.1920
Submitted by Doreen DeBoth

11 Foot of Peter Street Black Rock was a booming industrial area where railroads transported goods and materials for production. This is the site of a railroad bridge that crossed the creek at the foot of Peter Street behind Assumption Church but caught fire in 1960s. Over the past 15 years there has been ongoing discussion about building a pedestrian bridge to create synergy between Buffalo State College and the Grant-Amherst corridor that would benefit both entities.



Trestle Bridge over Scajaquada Creel c.1940s
Submitted by Helen Osiadlo

12 463 Amherst Shunke Furniture was one of two major furniture stores (Kubala's was located west of Grant St.) that also sold large appliances. This commercial building has a decorative terracotta façade and terracotta coping on the roof with glass block replacement windows.



463 Amherst St.
Photo courtesy of Clinton Brown Architecture

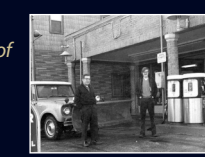


Shunke Furniture 1933
Submitted by Eugenia Schunke Platek

13 481 Amherst Street As was typical with many business owners along Amherst St., many resided with their family upstairs like this full service Mobil Gas Station at the southeast corner of Amherst St. and Howell. Opening in 1947, the building was designed by Karl Schmill, the architect of Assumption Church and School. Schmill even incorporated certain design features into the façade of the gas station that were used on the Church such as columns and bases.

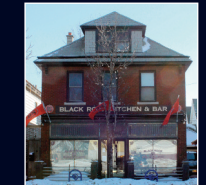


481 Amherst St.
Photo courtesy of Clinton Brown Architecture

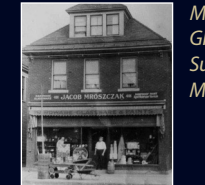


Peszko's Gas Station c.1970s
Submitted by Mark Peszko

14 491 Amherst Street is a 2-story brick Craftsman influenced building with a largely intact storefront and original leaded transom. It once was home to Jacob Mroszczak Hardware Glassware & Paints. A full service hardware store with everything from a to z, it featured hundreds of wooden drawers filled with nails, washers and screws and a wooden floor.



491 Amherst St.



Mroszczak Hardware Glassware & Paints 1920
Submitted by Mary Lou Wyrobek

15 1-7 Howell Street Another factory that opened as a result of the Belt Line was the American Buffalo Robe Company, located in a building which still stands in its original location at 1 Howell Street in the Scajaquada Local Historic District. Founded at the site in the late 1890s, the company initially produced American Bison-hide lap blankets to be used in carriages and coaches during the cold Buffalo winters. By the early twentieth-century, the company began making lap blankets for use in automobiles, which lacked the interior heating of today's automobiles.



1-7 Foot of Howell St.



Mills of the American Buffalo Robe Co. c.1897

16. 500 Amherst Street Abergó & Baroni provided "electric launches" at the Pan American Exposition. These launches were used by visitors to travel along the perimeter of the Pan-American Exposition. One notable figure who used these launches was Thomas Edison, American inventor, who toured the exposition's canal system taking photographs. The Grant/Amherst Neighborhood also had a small hotel owned by Carl Volker at 572 Amherst Street, which could accommodate 50 patrons who rented for \$2 per day. Other businesses in the area certainly profited from the close proximity of the Pan-American Exposition.



500 Amherst St.



Abergó & Baroni Electric Launches at the Pan-American Exposition (Leary et al., 94)

17 Reservation Street at Amherst After the Devil's Hole Massacre (1763) that was fought between the British and 300 Seneca warriors at the Niagara Gorge, the Seneca ceded a strip of land - the Mile Strip Reservation - along both banks of the Niagara River, one mile in width to the British. Later in the early 1800s the Seneca ceded two square tracts of the Mile Strip Reservation to Horatio Jones and Jasper Parrish. The 640 acre Parrish tract bordered Scajaquada Creek and the future Reservation Street would mark the border of the Mile Strip.



Amherst and Reservation Streets

18 540 Amherst Street is an example of the many vintage taverns in this heavily industrialized area that helped fuel the many bars from Military to Elmwood. There were approximately 25 bars from Niagara St. to Elmwood including the two bowling alleys. This storefront has a central door and glass block while the interior features a 1940s retro bar with red leather bumpers and cove molded ceilings.

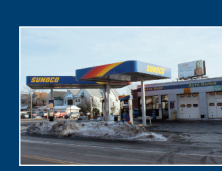


540 Amherst St.

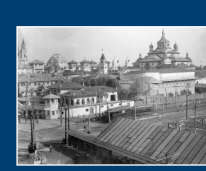


Submitted by Greg Rohall c.1970s

19 Elmwood & Amherst (southwest corner) is the site of the Pan American trolley car turn-around that was directly across from the West Amherst Gate. Held from May 1 to November 2, 1901, trolley lines extended along three sides of the grounds, and for five cents one could ride to the fair from any point in the city.

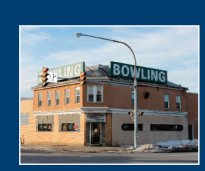


Amherst & Elmwood SW Corner

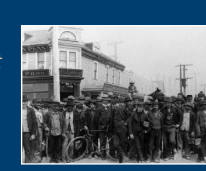


1901 Pan American Exposition trolley at Amherst & Elmwood

20 Elmwood & Amherst (northwest corner) Volker's was once the Hotel Alcazar during the Pan American Exposition (The Elmwood Hotel in historic photo), one of many hotels that prospered in the Grant/Amherst area. The Alcazar had 500 rooms that were rented for \$1 & up per day. During construction of the Exposition, the Amherst & Elmwood corner was also the location of a construction worker's strike that opposed the hiring of non-local workers. The business has been operating as a bowling alley for the past fifty years.



Northwest Corner Amherst & Elmwood



1900 Pan Am workers on strike 1900
Submitted by Frances Voelker

21 Elmwood & Amherst Looking East A map of the Pan-American Exposition Grounds shows one of several gates providing access to the exposition was the "West Amherst Gate" and was immediately adjacent to the Midway, a high priority for visitors. The close proximity of this gate to the Grant/Amherst Neighborhood was helpful in bringing commercial growth to the area. This gate was accessible by electric car or bicycle, as "bicycle checking" was a service listed at the gate. Amherst St. was absorbed into the Exposition between Elmwood and Delaware and renamed "the Mall" with flower beds lining the street and closed to traffic until April, 1902.



Amherst & Elmwood looking east

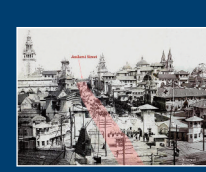


Photo courtesy of WNY Heritage Magazine

22 McKinley High School along Scajaquada Creek "Vision of Olmsted" mural along the south walls of McKinley High School along Scajaquada Creek is reminiscent of the hidden treasures found in this community. The 265' mural is a history of the parks designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, incorporating various native plants, birds and animals. The mural was designed by Augustina Droze and painted with help from Buffalo State and McKinley students and completed in 2011.



"Vision of Olmsted" Mural

Mural detail