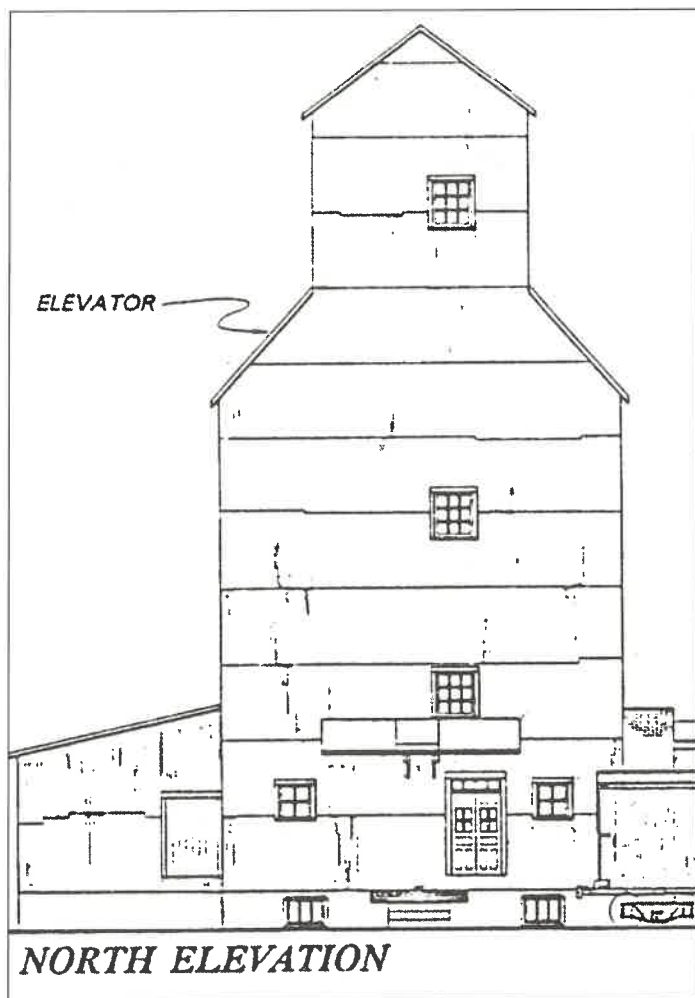


Last Look?

THE WOLLENBERG ELEVATOR

139 Koons Avenue, Buffalo NY

By Henry Baxter, Lorraine Pierro and John H. Conlin



North Elevation of elevator (detail)
CHRIS PAYNE & DANA LOCKETT, HAER PROJECT, 1990

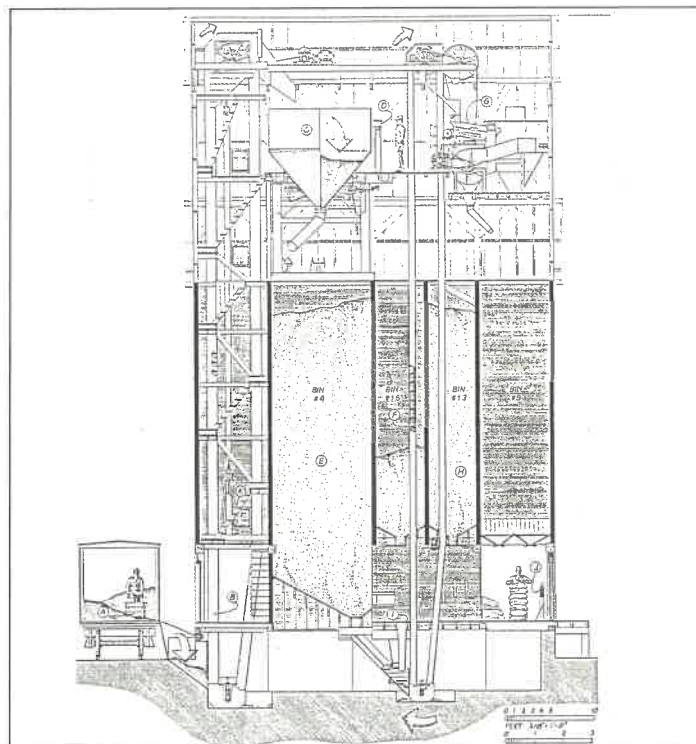
Buffalo was the birthplace of the grain elevator in 1842. By the turn of the 19th century, the city's waterfront was lined with giant, wooden grain elevators. They were distinctively shaped, functionally designed buildings used for the storage and transfer of grain. Eventually, modern concrete elevators replaced the wooden structures.

The Wollenberg was the last example of a wooden elevator in Buffalo. It was destroyed by arson in the Fall of 2006. It was not on the waterfront, but was located inland on the railroad tracks between Broadway and Walden Avenue. The Wollenberg was, however, built using materials from the old Kellogg A Elevator on the Buffalo River at the Coatsworth Slip. Built in 1912, Wollenberg employed the same structural system and

components as the larger, older, wooden elevators. Fortunately, these features were carefully documented in 1990 by a Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) project. In 2003, the building was named to the National Register of Historic Places.

The Wollenberg was a capsule of grain elevator history, possessing both the structural elements and the functional components of earlier wooden elevators. It also had a basic, distinctive sculptural form. The idea of moving the abandoned, city-owned building to the waterfront, as an educational exhibit, was advanced by The Industrial Heritage Committee, the non-profit organization that had sponsored the HAER project. A feasibility study for such relocation, funded by the Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation, was performed in 2002.

Although the fire and demolition have terminated the relocation opportunity, another potential remains. There is the possibility of using the HAER drawings and documentation to erect a full-size outline of the structure in steel on the waterfront. It would be a prominent and educational piece of public sculpture celebrating the history of the early grain elevators. Easier said than done – but worth doing?



Section, showing the functional components, view from west
CHRIS PAYNE & CRAIG STRONG, HAER PROJECT, 1990



Ruins of the Wollenberg Elevator, view from the northwest JOHN H. CONLIN PHOTO, OCTOBER 2006

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