

HISTORY AT OUR FEET

(1982 to 2006)

A CENSUS OF BRONZE SIDEWALK MARKERS IN BUFFALO

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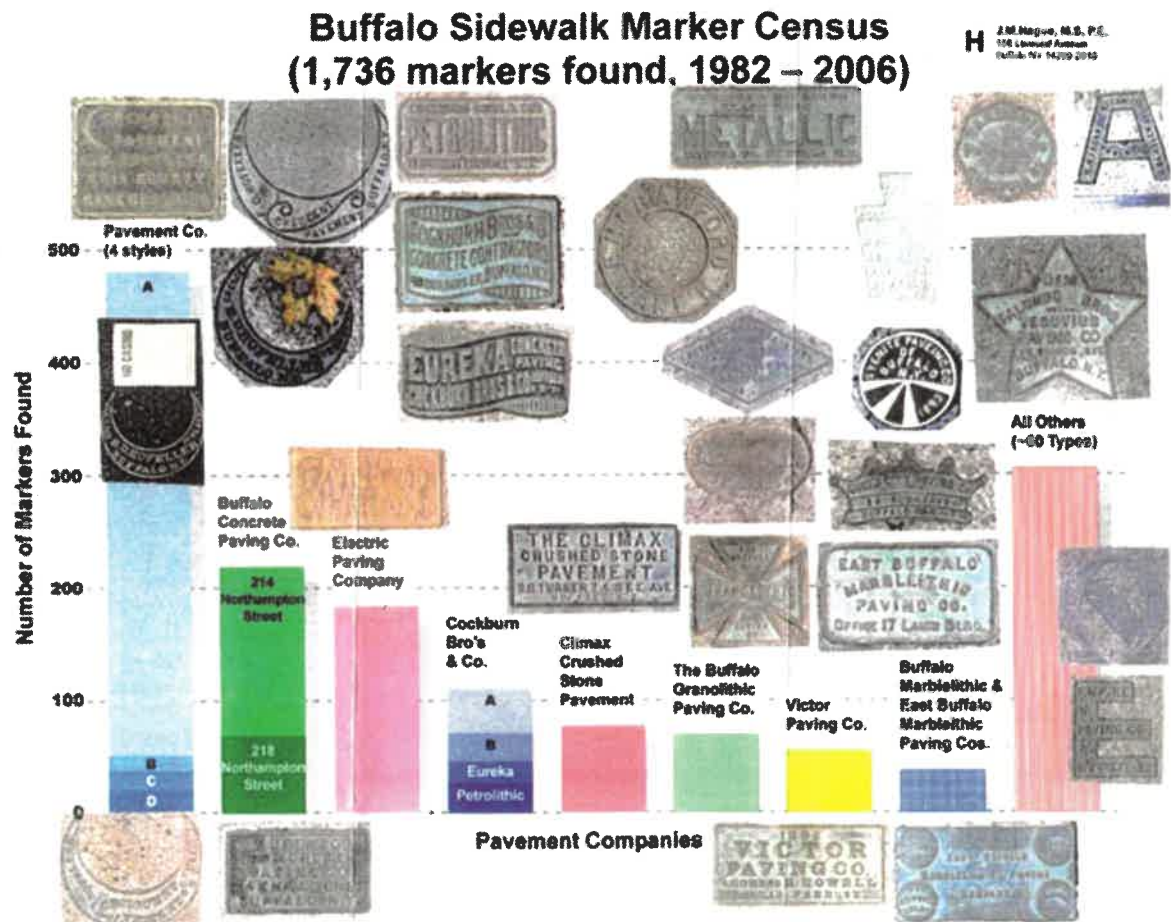
Preservationists and architectural historians are usually concerned with the distinctive buildings that surround us in Buffalo, but another part of our infrastructure that dates to the late 1800s is the sidewalks, usually Portland cement.

Following the invention of Portland cement, concrete masons laid sidewalks in older sections of Buffalo – generally from the present-Kensington Expressway area on the eastside to the Niagara River on the west, and from William

Street, Walden Avenue and the downtown area on the south to northern limits including Fordham Drive (built on the 1901 Pan-American Exposition site) and Forest and Kensington avenues. The customary identification practice of masons from 1890 to the 1920s was to implant oxidation-resistant bronze marker plates in the concrete. Dating is based on years shown on a few of the marker types, research into Buffalo City Directories between 1895 and 1925 or discussions with descendants of E. D.

Hofeller, founder of Crescent Pavement (who traveled from Texas to see the Crescent markers). Use of bronze plates was discontinued during the World War I era, with contractor identification either eliminated or provided by stamped impressions in the unset concrete.

After moving to Linwood Avenue in 1980, I noticed the markers and started cataloguing and photographing them. I also met Paul Rooney, who was doing the same (with sketches rather than



photos) in his neighborhood, and we shared information. During many surveys on foot or by bicycle, we discovered many more types of markers; 1,736 markers of 70 types by 37 contractors recorded to date. These are catalogued by types and street addresses in a Lotus 1-2-3 spreadsheet. Further text and 78 photos or drawings are available online at *Buffalo Sidewalk Marker Census* (<http://preserve.bfn.org/buvsidewalk/index.html>).

The most common marker types, shown in the stacked bar graph, were found throughout the city and include about 500 total of four types of Crescent Pavement Co., 220 Buffalo Concrete Paving (214 or 218 Northampton St.), 190 Electric Paving, and 110 Cockburn Bro's & Co. (four types: small "A", large "B", Eureka and Petrolithic). Climax Crushed Stone Pavement, Granolithic, Victor and Buffalo or East Buffalo Marblelithic also exceeded a 20 count, leaving more than 300 markers divided among the remaining 40 types (many shown on the *Buffalo Sidewalk Marker Census* Web site).

Many of these markers have now been lost due to sidewalk replacement or theft over the 26 years of the census. 📷



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