ARCHITECTURAL GUIDE TO THE FRUIT BELT

1. Gothic Revival
   Macedonia Baptist Church
   235 East North Street
   Built: 1932
   Architects: Franklyn J. & William A. Kidd

2. High Victorian Gothic
   Promise Land Baptist Church
   215 High Street
   Built: 1883

3. American Foursquare
   351 & 355 High Street
   Built: (both) 1910

4. Italianate
   238 Carlton Street
   Built: 1876

5. Worker's Cottage
   161 Orange Street
   Built: 1880

6. Second Empire
   Sisters of St. Joseph Convent at St. Boniface Church (original)
   Locust Street Arts (today)
   138 Locust Street
   Built: 1888
   Repurposed: 1990

7. Classical Revival
   St. Boniface Parish House (original)
   Teen Challenge Center (today)
   124 Locust Street
   Built: 1892
   Repurposed: 1995

8. Art Deco
   Marva J. Daniel Futures Preparatory School (P.S. #37)
   295 Carlton Street
   Built: 1934
   Architect: Daniel G. McNeil

9. Neo-Expressionism
   St. John's Baptist Church
   184 Goodell Street
   Built: 1966
   Architect: Wallace V. Mall

10. American Vernacular
    34 Peach Street
    Built: 1990

11. Minimal Traditional
    83 Locust Street
    Built: 1950

Neighborhood Architecture
- Worker's Cottage
- American Foursquare
- American Vernacular
- Various

*Additional styles represented in the Fruitbelt include: Gothic Revival, Victorian/Late Gothic Revival, Italianate, French Second Empire, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Dutch Colonial Revival, Classical Revival, Art Deco, Post WWII Modern Eclectic, Minimal Traditional

District Boundaries

Potential Individual Eligibility for the National Register

Worker's Cottage (1850-1910)
Gothic Revival (1840-1880)
High Victorian Gothic (1880-1890)
Italianate (1840-1885)
Second Empire (1855-1885)
American Foursquare (1910-1920)
Classical Revival (1895-1950)
Art Deco (1925-1940)
Neo-Expressionism (1945-1976)
Minimal Traditional (1935-1950)
American Vernacular (1930-Present)
FRUIT BELT

Neighborhood History

Fruit Belt history is Buffalo history, and as such, is American history. From the beginnings of the native Six Nations civilization, to European exploration and settlement, and including black African heritage presence from the early days of Buffalo to now, the Fruit Belt encompasses through its people and architecture the American story. With its 1835 grid layout and street names that remain relatively unchanged, spanning three centuries, the Fruit Belt and its people have a history to celebrate and a future to nurture. Fruit Belt history illustrates American ethnic, racial, and religious history through its changing settlement. Its social history documents much of what is exceptional as well as shameful in American history and life. The people of the Fruit Belt persist; and what binds the Fruit Belt and those with roots on the evocative street names of fruits, flowers, and trees, is that it is a place of community, built through work, play, learning, love, worship, commerce, and resistance.

Generally, the social history of the Fruit Belt is told of two groups; the German immigrants with rural roots who were encouraged during the 1820s to settle in, and farm, what became the Fruit Belt, and the black Americans who came due to urban renewal displacement or escape from the Jim Crow South. Whereas the German story is an optimistic story of immigration integral to American mythology, the African American story is the rarely acknowledged truth of America’s shameful racism. To glorify the 200 year presence of German heritage in the Fruit Belt at the expense of seventy plus years of African American community building in the face of injustice, is dismissive of the painful aspects of the American story and the horrors of African American resistance and success. The story includes systematic and systemic racism demonstrated through redlining, loan denials, mortgage discrimination, restrictive covenants, block busting, and urban removal masked as “Urban Renewal.” Essential to the Fruit Belt story is the 1951 Plan for the City of Buffalo which led to the demolition of the Ellicott District, leaving 1,900 mainly African American families homeless. While the nearby Fruit Belt experiencing White Flight experienced White Flight encouraged by federally subsidized building of suburbs and loan practices that favored whites, the Fruit Belt was a natural place for displaced families of the Ellicott District to make home. The population of blacks in the Fruit Belt grew from 400 in 1950 to 4,284 in 1960. By 1970 the primarily black population was 9,125. Currently, Fruit Belt population is given as approximately 2,670 persons, of whom 83 percent are African American.

From 1945-1977, City permit cards show razing of 39% of building stock to create the Kensington Expressway, expand Buffalo General and Roswell Park Cancer Institute, and “improve” the community. Demolitions showed somewhat but not completely through the 1980s to the early 2000s when residents demanded that a moratorium on demolitions in the Fruit Belt be enacted.

Both the Germans and the African Americans built strong institutions dedicated to communal support and preserving cultural heritage in the 200 year history of the Fruit Belt. Many of the German institutions were absorbed and transformed to meet the specific needs of African Americans. Examples are the churches built by the Germans, the Neighborhood House, Locust Street Art, Fruit Belt Homeowners and Tenant Council, all of which remain active and have been joined by new organizations such as the Fruit Belt-McCarley Gardens Housing Task Force and the Fruit Belt Community Land Trust. Despite the community’s best organizational and political efforts, policies and practices remain a constant challenge to community stability. But the Fruit Belt residents persist in retaining their homes and maintaining their community.

Through a Preservation League of New York Preserve New York grant, and the support of the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, a Fruit Belt Intensive Level Survey conducted in 2018 highlights the importance of this community, its history, the people, and the distinctive building stock which stands as a beacon of excellence and style. The Survey was conducted by Preservation Studios, and overseen by Preservation Buffalo Niagara. The report should be used to find ways to harness the power of historic preservation as a community building tool. More detailed history can be found in the Intensive Level Survey, which can be downloaded at www.preservationbuffalonigeria.org/fruitbeltsurvey or viewed in print at the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library Grosvenor Room.

This brochure invites you to learn more about the Fruit Belt by giving you a glimpse of your remarkable history. The neighborhood is precious and deserves treatment befitting its special role in the American story.