

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of PropertyHistoric name: National Biscuit Company Complex

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. LocationStreet & number: 251-255 North Pearl Street & 75 Livingston AvenueCity or town: Albany State: NY County: Albany

Not For Publication: _____ Vicinity: _____

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

 X A B C D_____
Signature of certifying official/Title:**Date**_____
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

National Biscuit Company Complex
Name of Property

DRAFT

Albany County, NY
County and State

Site

☒

Structure

☐

Object

☐

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

Noncontributing

2

buildings

1

sites

structures

objects

3

0

Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/
manufacturing facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE
COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant

National Biscuit Company Complex
Name of Property

DRAFT

Albany County, NY
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH & 20TH CENTURY REVIVAL

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: STONE, BRICK

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and non-contributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The National Biscuit Company Complex is situated at the northeast corner of North Pearl Street and Livingston Avenue in the city of Albany, New York. The steeply sloping site is bounded by public sidewalks along North Pearl Street to the west and Livingston Avenue to the south, residential lots to the east, and the former St. Vincent Orphan Asylum property to the north. The complex is tightly composed and consists of two buildings and the ruins of a third on what are now two lots totaling approximately 0.4 acres. The bakery, 251-255 North Pearl Street, is a two-story-and-basement brick building that fronts on North Pearl and extends along Livingston. The adjacent two-story brick building to its east at 75 Livingston Avenue was used as the company's offices. Behind these two buildings are the ruins of the company's stables, walls of red brick with stone foundations. A boiler-room addition to 75 Livingston Avenue, constructed in the narrow space between the east wall of the North Pearl Street building and the west walls of the Livingston Avenue building and stables, filled in the site and once connected the three buildings on their interiors.

Narrative Description

DRAFT

National Biscuit Company Complex

Albany County, NY

Name of Property

County and State

251-255 North Pearl Street

The primary building of the complex, the National Biscuit Company's bakery at 251-255 North Pearl Street, is a two-story-and-basement industrial building constructed of red brick on a stone foundation with a flat roof. It was constructed in 1888 by E.J. Larrabee and Company, a prominent local baker that would be merged with other firms to form first the New York Biscuit Company and later the National Biscuit Company. It replaced the company's former facilities that were destroyed by fire the previous year. The existing building was originally one-story-and-basement and had a second story added, likely in 1900, based on Sanborn maps and newspaper reports at the time. It fills its square lot, except for a narrow alley to its north, which is protected by a chain-link fence and gate and has poured-concrete steps and walkway descending to the west.

Exterior

Although the eight-bay façade (west elevation) has had some later alterations, the building has been recently rehabilitated and now looks essentially as it did after the National Biscuit Company modified it in 1921, according to building permit drawings from that year. It is largely unornamented except for a frieze dividing the façade horizontally and a band of corbelling that forms the cornice. Sheltered by a deep wood- and steel-frame awning, covered with corrugated metal that extends the width of the façade, the first story has been painted and partially covered with plywood panels along the upper portion of the wall. The first (northernmost) bay is a vehicular entrance with paneled garage door, a post-1921 change from what had been a smaller window opening that matched others on the façade. In the five middle bays, tall openings that extend to the sidewalk are now boarded over and/or infilled with non-original windows or aluminum and glass commercial doors. In 1921, these openings were filled with multi-light wire-glass windows topped with eight-light transoms. An additional door opening has been added to the sixth bay. The two southernmost bays feature the remains of a tripartite cast-iron storefront: on the left is an aluminum and glass commercial door in a reduced opening, the middle section is infilled with brick, and, on the right, the former office entrance is now a window in a reduced opening. The bottoms of the storefront's cast-iron columns are exposed and more elements may exist behind the plywood panels. The façade's second story has eight bays of window openings that are boarded over, with only the upper sash of one of the nine-over-nine windows is exposed in the fifth bay.

The secondary, seven-bay south elevation on Livingston Avenue is consistent in appearance to the façade and continues the brick frieze and cornice. On this elevation, however, the stone foundation with bricked-in basement windows is exposed as the grade descends steeply from North Pearl west to Broadway and down toward the Hudson River. The first story has boarded-over window openings in all but the first (westernmost) bay. The second story has boarded-over window openings in all bays. The one-story machinery penthouse is visible on this elevation.

On the east and north elevations, the flat brick walls lack the frieze and cornice seen on the façade and secondary elevation. On the east elevation, the second story, with boarded window

National Biscuit Company Complex

DRAFT

Albany County, NY

Name of Property

County and State

openings, is visible above the adjacent building at 75 Livingston Avenue. The northernmost bays are also exposed behind the stable ruins, with a concrete-block filled basement door opening, infilled window openings, and a boarded-over second-story egress door. On the north elevation, the second story has five bays of boarded window openings and, as seen on the south elevation, the stone foundation is exposed as the grade slopes down to the east.

Interior

The interior of 251-255 North Pearl is predominantly open in plan and industrial in character, with exposed brick and stone walls, timber post-and-beam framing, and wood floors. The south end of the first floor, however, houses offices and toilet rooms and is finished with plywood paneled stud-wall partitions, furred-out exterior walls, suspended acoustic tile ceilings, carpeting, and a variety of hollow-core and wood doors. Tongue-and-groove partitions are extant in some spaces. The northernmost bays of the basement and first floor display fireproof construction, dating to the 1921 alterations, including cast-iron columns and beams, arched brick ceilings, and poured concrete floors. The basement is divided into two large spaces by a thick brick wall running west to east, which had been the front wall of the company's massive ovens. Although the ovens were removed in 1921, the doors are extant on the north side of this wall. Some elements of the company's chute system are also extant in the basement. The second floor is entirely open in plan, with a raised platform along the south wall and a ladder to access the machinery in the penthouse. Located in the core of the building, the sole stairwell in tongue-and-groove enclosures has straight runs from the basement to the first floor and from the first to the second floor. A single freight elevator, also in the core, serves all three levels as well.

75 Livingston Avenue

The second building in the complex, the National Biscuit Company's former offices at 75 Livingston Avenue, is a two-story flat-roofed building constructed of brick on a stone foundation. Likely constructed following the 1887 fire to replace an earlier frame structure, the building appears on the 1889 Sanborn map as a two-sided, three-story, flat-roofed brick building, independent from the bakery and from the stables. It appears to have been radically altered in the early 1920s, according to changes evident in historic photographs and Sanborn maps. In a 1916 photograph, the original three-story structure, first seen on the 1889 Sanborn, is evident adjacent to the lower structure that was the entrance to the bakery's stables. In a photograph dated to the 1920s, however, it looks much as it does today, with two-stories, a flat-roof and a uniform appearance across the entire façade uniting the building and the stables entrance. These changes are also recorded on the 1934 Sanborn. This time period makes sense, given that the National Biscuit Company purchased the Livingston building in 1920 and given the extensive alterations it made to the North Pearl building and the construction of the boiler room addition in the first half of the 1920s.

Exterior

As it exists today, the façade comprises four sections that step down as the grade descends along Livingston: the 1924 boiler-room addition adjacent to the North Pearl building, a four-bay

National Biscuit Company Complex

DRAFT

Albany County, NY

Name of Property

County and State

section, a one-bay section, and the entrance to the former stables. It is unified by consistent brick coursing, a brick cornice that extends the full width of this elevation (similar to that on the North Pearl building), and stone headers and sills, all of which have been painted. The westernmost boiler-room section is one story at the sidewalk then steps up to two matching the rest of the building. It has a louvered vent at the first story but no other openings. The next section has three window openings and a side door opening with transom at the first story and three window openings at the second. The third section has a large first-story opening filled with a storefront configuration of door and windows that is sheltered by an aluminum awning; the second story has a single, wide window opening. The stables entrance has a large vehicular opening with roll-down garage door at the first story and three second-story window openings above. Windows are non-original 1/1 units and doors are non-original flat slab.

Interior

Like its exterior, the interior of the Livingston building has been extensively altered. Stripped of plaster and other finishes, the first floor has exposed brick walls, timber post and beam and ceiling structure, and wood floors. The main space has an opening on the west to the boiler room addition – where former openings to the North Pearl building are evident but infilled with brick and concrete block – and an opening on the east to the narrow room in the adjacent section of the building. There is no opening to the stables entrance, but there are door openings to the north out to the courtyard created by the stable ruins. A straight-run stair provides access to the second floor, where a landing is flanked by two separate spaces. The second floor is more finished, with furred out exterior walls for the most part, gypsum-wallboard covered ceilings and stud-wall partitions, and refinished wood floors. The space on the west has another opening to the boiler room addition, where windows and former openings to the North Pearl building are seen. In the west space, a large opening has been made in the west wall expanding it into the upper level of the stables entrance. Some areas of brick have been left exposed here. The interior of the boiler room addition is also now open to the elements. It has exposed brick walls and concrete ceiling and floor and holes where boiler equipment had been.

Stable Ruins

Now included as part of 75 Livingston tax parcel, the east and north elevations are the extant walls of the National Biscuit Company's stables that remain as ruins. The east elevation, with masonry almost entirely painted over with a mural, is two stories with exposed foundation on the south end and steps down to one story and basement on the north end. The south section has a single opening with slab door at basement level, two window openings with six-over-six sash at the first story, and three window openings with one-over-one sash at the second. The rear (north) section has a several infilled or boarded over window openings of various sizes and locations. The north elevation, which steps up from one story to two, is unpainted red brick with bricked-in former window openings. The boiler-room addition, extending slightly past the plane of this elevation, has wide door openings at the first story and second stories that have retained the double-leaf fire doors.

National Biscuit Company Complex

DRAFT

Albany County, NY

Name of Property

County and State

Through the vehicular opening on Livingston, a ramp leads down from street level to the "interior" basement level of the former stable. No longer covered by a roof, this courtyard is enclosed on four sides by the exposed brick and stone-foundation walls. Some areas have been parged or covered with corrugated metal siding. Window openings on the exterior walls have all been either infilled or boarded over, while those in the wall between the stables and the boiler room remain open. A pair of structural posts and one bay of ceiling framing are all that remain of the interior structure. A brick display platform has been added to the entrance ramp space and a pressure-treated open shed constructed in the northeast corner of the courtyard. Pressure-treated stairs provide access between the poured-concrete courtyard floor and the Livingston building and its boiler room addition. All former openings to the North Pearl building from the stable ruins have been infilled.

National Biscuit Company Complex
Name of Property

DRAFT

Albany County, NY
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

National Biscuit Company Complex
Name of Property

DRAFT

Albany County, NY
County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY

Period of Significance

1888-1959

Significant Dates

1888: construction at North Pearl site

1889: New York Biscuit Company formed

1898: National Biscuit Company formed

1920: Livingston building purchased

1924: Boiler room addition constructed

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

National Biscuit Company Complex
Name of Property

DRAFT

Albany County, NY
County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The National Biscuit Company Complex is significant under Criterion A in the area of industry for its association with the baking industry, one of Albany's most important late nineteenth century businesses, and with a prominent local baking company that was instrumental in the merger of hundreds of bakers into an important national baking company. Constructed in the late 1880s, the National Biscuit Company Complex comprises two buildings and the ruins of a third that are associated with the National Biscuit Company's presence and operations in the city of Albany. Additionally, it relates to the early baking industry in the city and to the prominent local baking company (E.J. Larrabee and Company) that was instrumental in the late-19th century mergers of the country's leading bakers that resulted in the formation of that internationally renowned corporation. The complex retains integrity of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and feeling and, thus, continues to convey its association with the baking industry.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The National Biscuit Company Complex comprises three buildings – one of which is ruins – associated with the company's development, presence, and operations in the city of Albany:

- The primary building, the bakery at 251-255 North Pearl Street, was constructed in 1888 by E.J. Larrabee and Company, a prominent baking firm that established itself in Albany, sold its goods across the country, and was involved in the late-19th century corporate mergers that resulted in the New York Biscuit Company and, ultimately, the National Biscuit Company, later renamed Nabisco. The National Biscuit Company acquired the building in the 1889 merger and added the second story in 1900.
- Adjacent to the east, 75 Livingston Avenue was originally constructed at approximately the same time as the North Pearl building. The National Biscuit Company purchased it in 1920 for office space, radically altered its appearance in the early 1920s, and constructed a boiler-room addition in 1924 that connected internally the bakery, office building, and stables.
- The ruins of the company's stables are located behind the bakery and office building. Only the exterior walls are extant. The New York Biscuit Company constructed this building, on property that had previously been owned by E.J. Larrabee and Company, by 1892 prior to

National Biscuit Company Complex
Name of Property

DRAFT

Albany County, NY
County and State

the formation of the National Biscuit Company, which acquired the stables along with the bakery in the merger.

The period of significance encompasses the entire historic period related to the history of the National Biscuit Company on the site, from 1888, when the first building was constructed, to 1959, when the company moved its bakery to another site.

Historical Background

When the Erie Canal was completed in 1825, the 360-mile, man-made waterway linked Lake Erie and the Hudson River and established a smooth trade route between inland agricultural production and the commercial port of New York City. Located at the canal's easternmost point where it flowed into the Hudson River, the city of Albany enjoyed access to raw materials – such as wheat – coming from points west and to easy means of transport for the goods its manufacturers produced to markets both inland and to the south.¹

Anticipating the canal's completion, the city constructed a massive pier, dry dock and storage complex that stretched 4,300 feet from the inlet to the canal – at approximately Colonie Street in north Albany – to the base of Madison Avenue. Within two decades, the city's rail lines were rerouted from State Street to rail yards in this same vicinity before heading west. With proximity to rail lines, the riverfront, and the canal terminus, the formerly residential north end boomed from the mid-19th century onward and became the hub of a wide variety of commercial activity, including a new local baking firm that would eventually become part of the famed National Biscuit Company.²

E.J. Larrabee and Company

E.J. Larrabee and Company started as Belcher and Larrabee (a.k.a the Albany Aerated Bread Company) in 1861 by Edward J. Larrabee and Charles S. Belcher, who came to Albany from New York City where they had previously been working in the dry goods field.³ The firm likely started out, as many bakers did, producing "hardtack," a sturdy and long-keeping cracker made inexpensively from just flour and water, which was in nearly unlimited demand for troop rations during the Civil War. They quickly established themselves, however, as the sole U.S. manufacturer and distributor of a product called "aerated bread" that had recently been patented in England. There, it had been introduced as a response to Victorian-era concerns about the sanitary production of bread. John Daughlish, a medical doctor in London, invented a

¹ Duncan E. Hay, "North Albany: Factories, Foundries and the Big Dog," in *Albany Architecture: A Guide to the City*, ed. Diana S. Waite (Albany: Mount Ida Press, 1993), 245-247. Albany Institute of History and Art, "Building the Erie Canal," accessed 10/4/2017 at <http://albanyinstitute.org/building-the-erie-canal.html>.

² National Register of Historic Places, Broadway-Livingston Avenue Historic District, Albany, Albany County, NY, #87002300.

³ Obituary of Edward J. Larrabee, *Albany Evening Times*, 5/21/1891. Obituary of Charles S. Belcher, *Albany Evening Times*, date unknown, 1871.

National Biscuit Company Complex

DRAFT

Albany County, NY

Name of Property

County and State

process and machinery for leavening dough with carbon dioxide rather than yeast, thus eliminating the requirement of manual kneading. His machine also allowed steps to be automated, thereby reducing production time and labor costs. Because no hands touched the raw dough, the resulting product was believed to be cleaner and healthier than other breads.⁴ Belcher and Larrabee acquired Daughlish's machinery for their Albany facility and advertised widely their aerated bread's purity, palatability, and nutritional superiority to traditional yeasted bread.

Soon after, in 1865, Belcher and Larrabee imported the patented machinery for manufacturing a different product – English-style biscuits, a hard, sweet cracker that had become popular to American tastes but, until then, had only been available imported from abroad. The demand for a sweet biscuit marked a shift from a staple to a luxury good.⁵ Positioning itself as the only domestic baker of this type of item, the company successfully competed with foreign bakers and continued to increase its output and expand the variety of goods it offered.⁶ So much so that, in 1866, the company moved its operations into larger quarters, purchasing the former St. Joseph's Church at North Pearl Street and Livingston Avenue after the congregation moved to its newly constructed church on Ten Broeck Street. The company's new site was located several blocks west of the Erie Canal inlet at the shore of the Hudson River and the mass of rail yards on the other side of Broadway. Repurposing the church as a baking factory, the firm adapted the building to its needs and outfitted it with two vast ovens and state-of-the-art equipment that automated the processes of mixing, kneading, rolling, and cutting and allowed for continuous production. They advertised that the facility was "the most extensive baking establishment outside the city of New York" and that, in addition to breads and cakes, they were making "crackers of an extra quality."⁷

Once settled into its new location, the company continued to grow in Albany and beyond. When Belcher died in 1871, the firm renamed itself E.J. Larrabee and Company. The following year, as business flourished, the company acquired land immediately east of its bakery – behind what is now 75 Livingston Avenue – and constructed a second building with four additional ovens.⁸ (Looking beyond Albany, it also opened a sales office in New York City in 1875.⁹) In 1881, the company further developed its Albany operations, purchasing a lot immediately north of its bakery on North Pearl Street – south of the St. Vincent Orphan Asylum – and enlarging its

⁴ Benjamin Ward Richardson, *On the Healthy Manufacture of Bread: A Memoir on the System of Dr. Daughlish* (London: Bailliere, Tindall, and Cox, 1884). Digitized at <http://books.google.com>.

⁵ Thomas S. Ollive, "Some Reminiscences of a Lifetime Spent in the Baking Business," *Bakers Review* 33, no. 1 (April 1916): 101-103. William G. Panschar, *Baking in America* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1956), 54. Both digitized at <http://books.google.com>.

⁶ "Albany Is Credited with Six 'Famous Firsts' in New Book," *Albany Evening News*, 9/22/1933. Chauncey Mitchell Depew, ed., *1795-1895: 100 Years of American Commerce* (New York: D.O. Haynes and Company, 1895), 2:447-448. Digitized at <http://books.google.com>.

⁷ Advertisements in *Albany Morning Express*, 5/22/1867, 7/31/1867, and 8/2/1867.

⁸ Jonathan Tenney, ed., *Bi-Centennial History of Albany: History of the County of Albany, NY from 1609 to 1886* (New York: W.W. Munsell and Company, 1886), 563. Digitized at <http://books.google.com>.

⁹ Joy Santlofer, *Food City: Four Centuries of Food Making in New York* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2017), 72.

National Biscuit Company Complex

DRAFT

Albany County, NY
County and State

Name of Property

facilities.¹⁰ By the mid-1880s, Larrabee had achieved great success and was recognized for the high quality of its products, receiving a medal and diploma at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia and the first gold medal for American-made biscuits at the 1878 Paris Exposition.¹¹ Local reports boasted that the company did the largest business of its kind in the country.¹²

Then, in November of 1887, fire destroyed Larrabee's Albany complex and damaged many of the surrounding buildings, including a frame structure at 75 Livingston that predated the extant brick building. Fires were not uncommon in bakeries, given their massive ovens and the flammability of flour dust. Newspapers reported that the former church building was left in ruins: fires continued to flare up throughout the following days; machinery had crashed through the floors into the basement; pieces of the eastern wall had come down; a portion of the northern wall had fallen onto a neighboring building; and part of the southern wall had collapsed into Livingston Avenue.¹³ Following the fire, amidst rumors that the firm would abandon Albany and relocate entirely to New York City, Larrabee temporarily moved its local operations to Cambridge, Massachusetts, until it could rebuild in Albany.¹⁴

By 1889, the company had completed its new large, brick, one-story-and-basement building on the northeast corner of North Pearl Street and Livingston Avenue. This became the primary building in the National Biscuit Company Complex in Albany. However, E.J. Larrabee and Company – *as a local, independent company* – did not return to Albany.¹⁵ As was the case in other industries, this was a time of turmoil for the country's local bakers as many invaded each other's markets to increase profits and reduce competitors, resulting in fierce "biscuit warfare" and regional consolidations to survive. In this context, the early success of Larrabee would keep Albany in the forefront of the national and international biscuit business for decades to come.

The New York Biscuit Company

In 1890, eight of the largest bakers in the northeast United States, including E.J. Larrabee and Company, merged to form the New York Biscuit Company, which took control of the biscuit trade in the east. Through this merger, Larrabee (maker of the first English-style hard, sweet biscuit) was joined with other well-established companies, which had built their reputations as producers of some the country's most popular biscuits: Holmes & Coutts (sugar wafers), Vanderveer & Holmes (animal crackers), John D. Gilmor (sweet crackers), Anger Brothers (zwieback), Hetfield & Duker (lemon snaps), Daniel Canty (butter crackers), and Brinckerhoff & Co. (soda crackers). Within a year, New York Biscuit Company acquired a total of 23 of the

¹⁰ Tenney, 563. Also Deed 330/499.

¹¹ Tenney, 563.

¹² "After the Fire," *Albany Morning Express*, 10/31/1887.

¹³ "After the Fire," *Albany Morning Express*, 10/31/1887. "The Bakery Fire," *Albany Evening Times*, 11/3/1887. Thomas G. Ford, ed., *History of Albany Fire Department: The Story of Fires and Firemen from 1664-1924* (Albany: J.R. Condon and Sons, 1924), 89.

¹⁴ "Workshop and Factory: E.J. Larrabee and Company," *Cambridge Tribune*, 3/24/1888.

¹⁵ The 1889 Sanborn insurance map shows a one-story-&-basement building on the corner lot, labeled "EJ Larrabee & Co Bakery," as "NOT IN USE" and, to the east (behind what is now 75 Livingston Avenue), "Ruins, part of wall standing."

National Biscuit Company Complex

DRAFT

Albany County, NY

Name of Property

County and State

most-celebrated American baking companies across ten states and controlled nearly 140 ovens.¹⁶

Although it established its headquarters and primary manufacturing plant in New York City, the New York Biscuit Company continued to operate branches throughout the northeast. At the time of the merger, Larrabee transferred ownership of its business and Albany property to the New York Biscuit Company.¹⁷ By 1892, the New York Biscuit Company moved into the North Pearl building and built the stables behind it with an entrance on Livingston Avenue.¹⁸ The new company even continued to produce some of Larrabee's popular items marketed with that local name. The New York Biscuit Company's arrival in the city was touted as the "revival of the biscuit industry in Albany ... [which] was one of the foremost of Albany's industrial establishments and enjoyed great reputation and prosperity."¹⁹

The National Biscuit Company

In the same year that the New York Biscuit Company formed, 1890, another major consolidation of baking companies was organized in Chicago. There, forty bakers across thirteen mid-western states came together as the American Biscuit and Manufacturing Company. For nearly a decade after these two mergers, the New York Biscuit Company and the American Biscuit and Manufacturing Company were locked in battle, cutting prices and invading each other's territories with new factories and distribution facilities.²⁰ Finally, in 1898, the two competitors called a truce and united as a single, powerful baking conglomerate – The National Biscuit Company.²¹ This merger brought together the New York Biscuit Company, the American Baking and Manufacturing Company, the United States Baking Company, and several smaller bakeries. At that time, the National Biscuit Company comprised 114 formerly independent bakers and controlled approximately 70 percent of the baking industry in the United States.²²

In the years following the merger, the National Biscuit Company focused its newly formed enterprise on developing a profitable, nationally identifiable brand that was more than a collection of scattered local bakeries. To that end, the company set out to develop a "new" product – in innovative packaging with a clever advertising campaign – that would be emblematic of the new company and assert the company's dominance in the national and worldwide market. The company chose the flaky soda cracker, which had universal appeal and was the most popular of all the company's varieties. It cut it into a novel octagonal shape and dubbed it the "Uneeda Biscuit," which would become what the company called "the

¹⁶ William Cahn, *Out of the Cracker Barrel: The Nabisco Story from Animal Crackers to Zuzu* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969), 42-43.

¹⁷ Deeds 415/452, 415/456, 415/462, 415/467.

¹⁸ Sanborn insurance maps, 1889 and 1892. The 1892 map also indicates that there were still ruins of ovens behind the stables, from the former Larrabee building.

¹⁹ "Revival of Biscuit Industry in Albany," *Albany Morning Express*, 12/1/1896.

²⁰ Cahn, 45-47.

²¹ Cahn, 47-59.

²² Andrew F. Smith, *Fast Food and Junk Food: An Encyclopedia of What We Love to Eat* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood/ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2012) 1:177.

National Biscuit Company Complex

DRAFT

Albany County, NY
County and State

Name of Property

best-known trademark *in the world*.” In addition, to ensure the quality and freshness of its signature product, the company invented the “In-Er Seal,” an elegantly simple technique for folding together a cardboard carton blank with a waxed paper liner in such a way that the resulting package protected the product from breakage, moisture, and other damage. To ensure uniformity among its various plants, the company upgraded equipment and established consistent formulae and methods of production for the Uneeda Biscuit and for its other goods.

²³ The attendant marketing campaign made the Uneeda Biscuit name and the company’s new (now iconic) logo ubiquitous. More than 120 million packages of Uneeda Biscuits were sold in the first year.²⁴

As a result of its early strategies, the National Biscuit Company grew rapidly, dominating the mass-produced biscuit (i.e., crackers and cookies) market in the United States with annual sales averaging \$40 million in its first few years, and was one of the largest employers in the nation with tens of thousands of workers across its locations. In the decades following the Uneeda Biscuit launch, the National Biscuit Company introduced scores of now classic items, including the Oreo in 1912 and the Ritz Cracker in 1934. It also continued to acquire other companies, including those that produced Triscuit Wafers, Shredded Wheat Cereal, and Milk-Bone Pet Products, among other goods. By the late 1950s, annual sales passed \$400 million.²⁵

The company was officially renamed Nabisco in 1971 and became R.J.R. Nabisco after a 1985 sale to R.J. Reynolds. Fifteen years later, Philip Morris Companies purchased R.J.R. Nabisco and merged it with its Kraft Foods subsidiary, which has since become part of Mondelez International. The company revolutionized not only the baking business – but also corporate development and marketing methods more generally – at the turn of the century. Its continued development of new products, as well as take-overs of other companies in future decades, made it one of the largest and most successful corporations in the world.

The National Biscuit Company’s Albany facility also grew during the early decades of the 20th century. In 1900, the company made improvements, including interior modifications and installation of new equipment, to its North Pearl Street bakery. This same year, it also constructed an addition that would “give that corporation the necessary room required by the increase of business at their Albany branch.”²⁶ The project reportedly took far longer than expected and, notably, was delayed when “part of the top floor toppled over.” Based on newspaper reports and changes seen on Sanborn maps, this addition was likely the second story to the North Pearl building.²⁷

²³ Cahn, chapters 6-8. Crackers had previously been sold out of open barrels at grocery stores. If a customer were unlucky enough to get ones from the “bottom of the barrel” they would be broken, soggy and mouse-eaten.
²⁴ Smith, 1:177.

²⁵ Cahn, 156. Chicago Historical Society, “National Biscuit Co.” in Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago.
<http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/2786.html>

²⁶ “North End,” *Albany Times Union*, 6/8/1900.

²⁷ “Doings in North End,” *Albany Evening Journal*, 7/26/1900. Also, the Sanborn insurance map updated through 1888 shows a one-story-and-basement building on the lot, while the Sanborn updated through 1908 shows it as a two-story-and-basement building.

National Biscuit Company Complex

DRAFT

Albany County, NY

Name of Property

County and State

The second stage of expansion came two decades later, starting in 1920 when the company purchased 75 Livingston Avenue, a three-story former saloon building immediately to the east of its North Pearl Street bakery. Within a few years, the company radically altered the Livingston building, reducing it from three to two stories and creating a uniform appearance across the entire façade, uniting that building and the entrance to the stables located behind it. The exterior appearance of 75 Livingston remains essentially in this form today. The company also made extensive changes to its North Pearl building. In 1921, in-house architect for the National Biscuit Company, A.G. Zimmerman, designed alterations that included: façade alterations; removal of the basement ovens; structural modifications and a new penthouse to support new ovens and equipment; fireproofing modifications in part of the building; and changes to the interior layout. It was reported at the time that the company was abandoning production of crackers at the plant and converting it into a bread bakery.²⁸ The building today appears to date largely to this time. Several years later, in 1924, the company constructed a boiler-room addition between the North Pearl and Livingston buildings and introduced openings between those buildings – as well as between the Livingston building and the stables – thus connecting internally all three buildings in the complex.

By in the mid 1940s, the National Biscuit Company made hundreds of different products and operated sixty manufacturing plants across the country, but much of the company's equipment was considered outdated and its production methods inefficient. At the time, the company continued to use reel ovens, Ferris wheel-like baking equipment, in multi-story buildings typically located in dense urban locations. Band ovens were the trend in modern baking at the time, however. They produced baked goods more efficiently on long conveyor belts but required large amounts of horizontal space to house and run. Over the next decade, the company embarked on a multimillion-dollar reconstruction plan to modernize its operations and made the decision "to declare the old factories obsolete, buy land outside the city ... and build a new type of bakery."²⁹

As part of this reconstruction program, the company sold its bakery complex at North Pearl and Livingston in Albany in 1959 and opened a new facility outside the city on Fuller Road in Colonie, touted as "the newest and best equipped company bread making facility."³⁰ The National Biscuit Company property in Albany was owned by Albany Refrigeration for the next two decades and remained as a complex until the city seized the North Pearl building in 1981. Since then, the North Pearl building and the Livingston building (with the stables) have had separate owners. An indication of the currently changing neighborhood, Capital Repertory Theater is now set to make the North Pearl building its new home and the Albany Distilling Company has converted the Livingston building into its tasting room and store, with a courtyard bar and event space within the ruins of the former National Biscuit Company stables.

²⁸ "Notes from the Cracker Field," *The Cracker Baker* 9, no. 9 (September, 1920): 28.

²⁹ Cahn, 256-280.

³⁰ Cahn, 295.

National Biscuit Company Complex
Name of Property

DRAFT

Albany County, NY
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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National Biscuit Company Complex
Name of Property

DRAFT

Albany County, NY
County and State

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☒ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

National Biscuit Company Complex
Name of Property

DRAFT

Albany County, NY
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Approx. 0.4 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Boundaries correspond to Parcels 65.83-2-25 (251-255 North Pearl Street) and 65.83-2-24 (75 Livingston Avenue) on the current tax map for the City of Albany.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries are those associated with the National Biscuit Company's Albany complex during the period of significance.

National Biscuit Company Complex
Name of Property

DRAFT

Albany County, NY
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Patricia Connolly Altman (edited by James Carter, NYSHPO)

organization: PACA Preservation LLC

street & number: P.O. Box 677

city or town: Kinderhook state: NY zip code: 12106

e-mail: paltman@paca-preservation.com

telephone: 518-821-2575

date: 10/25/2017

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

National Biscuit Company Complex
Name of Property

DRAFT

Albany County, NY
County and State

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: National Biscuit Company Complex
City or Vicinity: Albany
County: Albany County State: NY
Photographer: Patricia Connolly Altman, PACA Preservation, LLC
Date Photographed: 6/2017 & 9/2017

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 0001 Exterior: View of complex, looking northeast (9/2017)
- 0002 Exterior: View of complex, looking northwest (9/2017)
- 0003 Exterior: View of bakery façade, looking east (9/2017)
- 0004 Exterior: View of bakery building, south elevation, looking north (9/2017)
- 0005 Interior: View of bakery building, 1st floor, looking east (6/2019)
- 0006 Interior: View of bakery building, 1st floor, looking northeast (6/2019)
- 0007 Interior: View of bakery building, 1st floor, looking northwest (6/2019)
- 0008 Interior: View of bakery building, 1st floor, looking northeast (6/2019)
- 0009 Interior: View of bakery building, 2nd floor, looking southeast (6/2019)
- 0010 Interior: View of bakery building, 2nd floor, looking southwest (6/2019)

National Biscuit Company Complex
Name of Property

Albany County, NY
County and State

- 0011 Interior: View of bakery building, basement, looking northwest (6/2019)
- 0012 Interior: Detail of bakery building, oven door in basement, looking east (6/2019)
- 0013 Exterior: View of office building, south elevation, looking north (9/2017)
- 0014 Exterior: View of office building, east elevation, looking northwest (9/2017)
- 0015 Interior: View of office building, 1st floor, looking south (9/2017)
- 0016 Interior: View of office building, 1st floor, looking south (9/2017)
- 0017 Interior: View of office building, 2nd floor, looking northeast (9/2017)
- 0018 Exterior: View of boiler room addition, looking west (9/2017)
- 0019 Exterior: View of stable ruins, looking northwest (9/2017)
- 0020 Exterior: View of stable ruins, looking south east (9/2017)

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

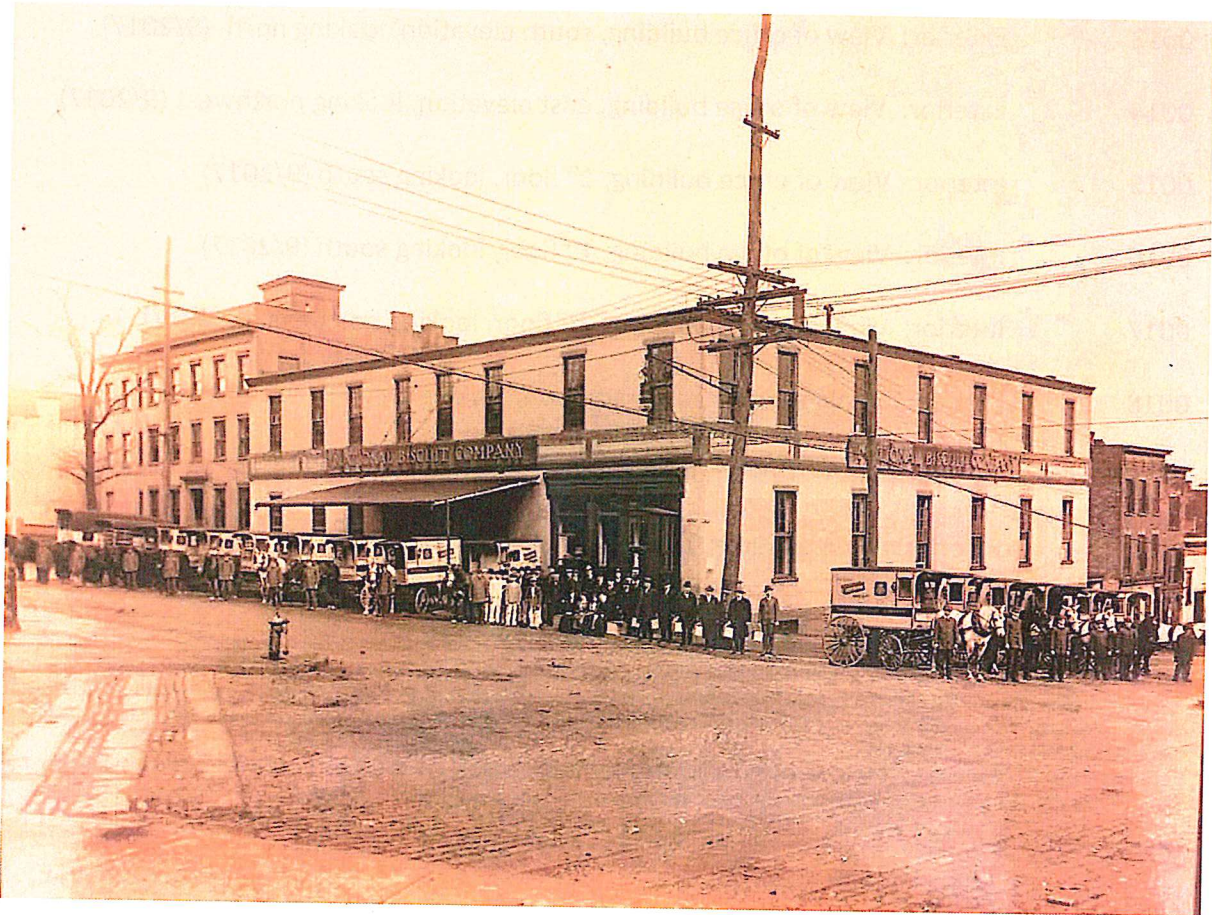
- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

National Biscuit Company Complex
Name of Property

DRAFT

Albany County, NY
County and State



National Biscuit Company Complex, 1921
Bakery building with 75 Livingston building visible behind it
Source: Albany Institute of History and Art

National Biscuit Company Complex
Name of Property

DRAFT

Albany County, NY
County and State



National Biscuit Company Complex, 1930s
Bakery building with a little of 75 Livingston building visible behind it
Source: <https://flickr.com/photos/albanygroup/>

National Biscuit Company Complex
Name of Property

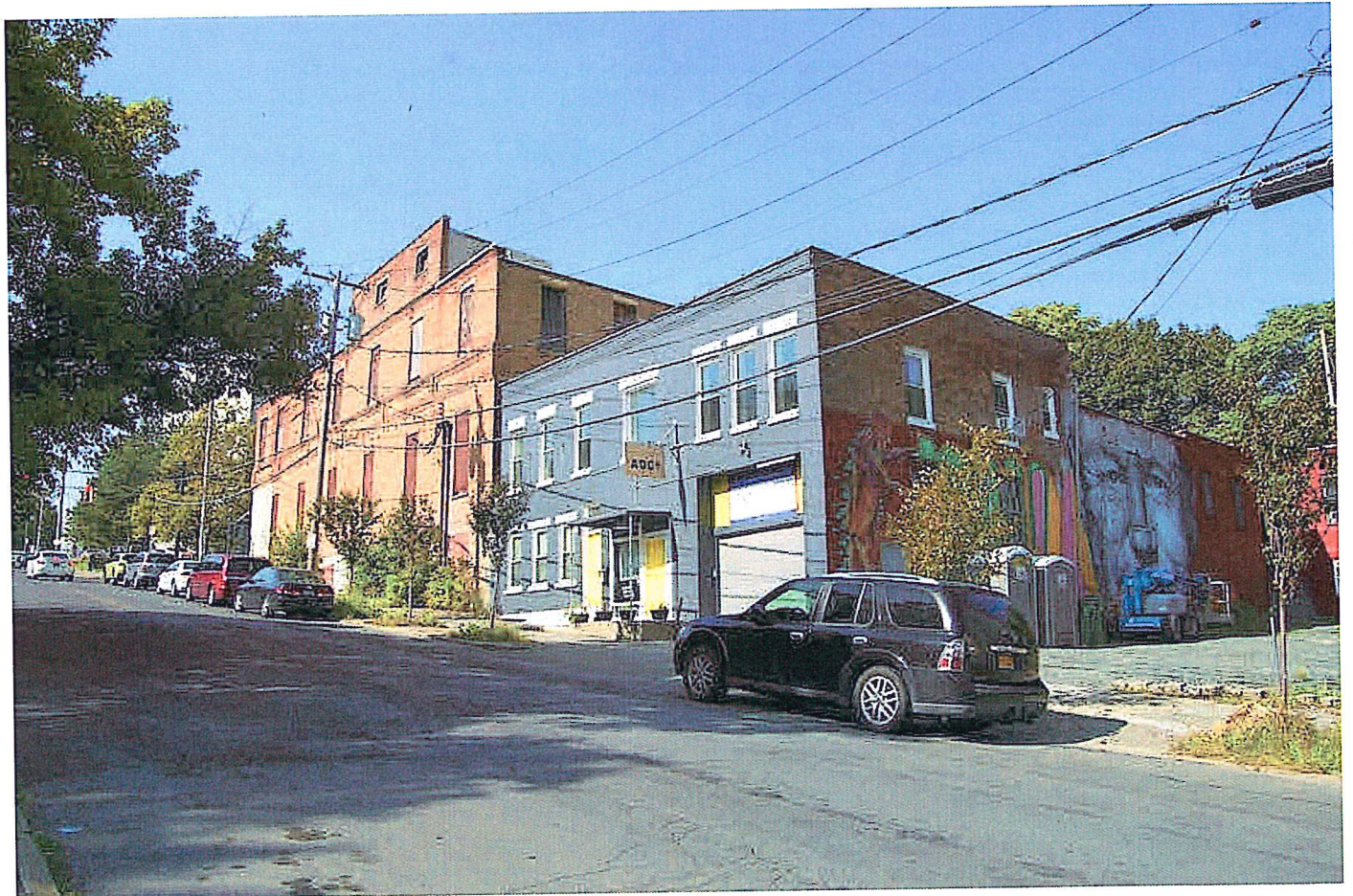
DRAFT

Albany County, NY
County and State



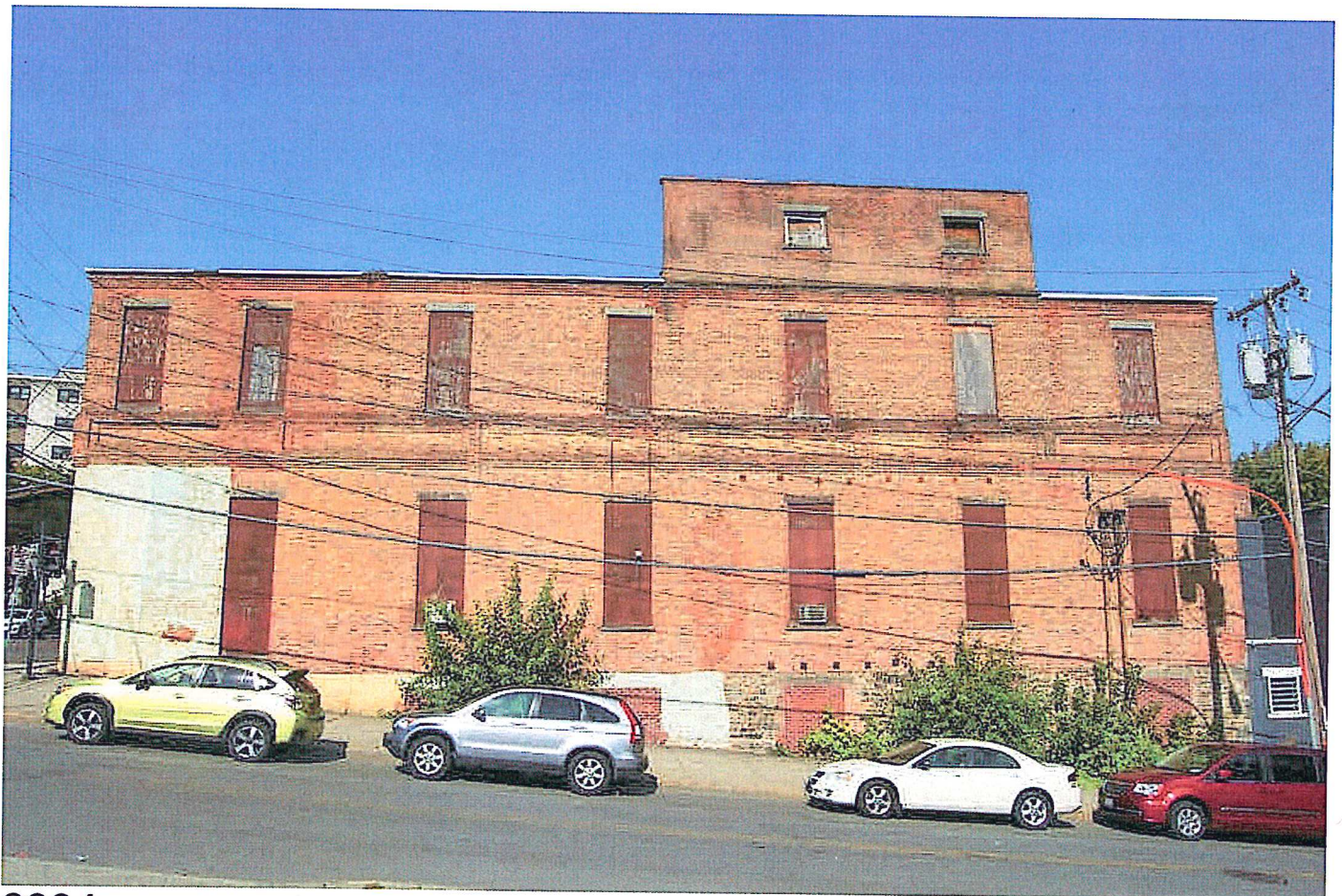
Corner Broadway & Livingston Avenue looking NW toward North Pearl Street, 1920s
National Biscuit Company Complex visible at left edge of photograph
Bakery is left of telephone pole, 75 Livingston is right of telephone pole
Source: Albany Public Library

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New York State and National Registers of Historic Places

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

The following criteria are used to evaluate properties for listing on the National and State Registers of Historic Places. The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association and

Criterion A: that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or

Criterion B: that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or

Criterion C: that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

Criterion D: that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Ordinarily cemeteries, birthplaces, or graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, properties primarily commemorative in nature, and properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years shall not be considered eligible for the State and National Registers. However, such properties will qualify if they are integral parts of districts that do meet the criteria or if they fall within the following categories:

- A. a religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance; or
- B. a building or structure removed from its original location but which is significant primarily for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event; or
- C. a birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance if there is no other appropriate site or building directly associated with his productive life; or
- D. a cemetery that derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events; or
- E. a reconstructed building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived; or
- F. a property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own historical significance; or
- G. a property achieving significance within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional importance.

New York State Historic Preservation Office • nysparks.com/shpo



Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

New York State and National Registers of Historic Places

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are the State and National Registers of Historic Places? The State and National Registers are the official lists of properties significant in history, architecture, engineering, landscape design, archeology, and culture. Properties may be significant in local, state and/or national contexts. More than 120,000 properties in New York have received this prestigious recognition.

What qualifies a property for listing on the registers? The registers recognize all aspects of New York's diverse history and culture. Eligible properties must represent a significant historic theme (e.g., architecture, agriculture, industry, transportation) and they must be intact enough to illustrate their association with that theme. Properties must usually be more than 50 years of age to be considered for listing.

What are the benefits of being listed on the registers? The State and National Registers are a recognized and visible component of public and private planning. The registers promote heritage tourism, economic development and appreciation of historic resources. Benefits include:

- Official recognition that a property is significant to the nation, the state, or the local community.
- Eligibility to apply for the state homeowner tax credit and/or the state and federal commercial historic rehabilitation tax credits.
- Eligibility (not-for-profit organizations and municipalities only) to apply for New York State historic preservation grants. Other grants, also requiring listing, may be available through other public and private sources.
- Properties that meet the criteria for registers listing receive a measure of protection from state and federal undertakings regardless of their listing status. State and federal agencies must consult with the SHPO to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects to listed or eligible properties.

Will State and National Registers listing restrict the use of a property? If you are not using federal or state funds to complete your project (e.g. a grant or tax credit, CD funds, a Main Street Grant) and you do not require a state or federal permit to undertake it (e.g. DEC permit), you are free to remodel, alter, paint, manage, subdivide, sell, or even demolish a National or State Register listed property (as long as you comply with local zoning). If state or federal funds are used or if a state or federal permit is required, proposed alterations may be reviewed by SHPO staff if the property is either listed or determined eligible for listing.

What kinds of properties can be included in the registers? Buildings and structures such as residences, churches, commercial buildings and bridges; sites such as cemeteries, landscapes and archaeological sites; districts, including groups of buildings, structures or sites that are significant as a whole, such as farmsteads, residential neighborhoods, industrial complexes and cultural landscapes; and objects, such as fountains and monuments.

What is a historic district? A historic district is a group of buildings, structures, and sites that are significant for their historical and physical relationships to each other. Properties in districts are not usually significant individually but gain meaning from their proximity and association with each other. A district may include any number of properties.

What is the process for listing a property on the registers? To begin, an application must be submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for evaluation. If the property is determined eligible for listing, the nomination sponsor is responsible for providing documentation that describes the property's setting and physical characteristics, documents its history, conveys its significance in terms of its historic context, and demonstrates how it meets the register criteria. The New York State Board for Historic Preservation reviews completed nominations. If the board recommends the nomination, the New York State Historic Preservation Officer (Commissioner of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation) lists the property on the State Register and forwards it to the National Park Service for review and listing on the National Register.

New York State Historic Preservation Office • nysparks.com/shpo



**Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation**

New York State and National Registers of Historic Places

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can an owner object to having his or her property listed on the registers? Yes. Private property owners may object to National Register listing. If the property has one owner, that owner's objection will prevent the listing. If the property has multiple owners, the majority of the owners must object in order to prevent listing. For properties with multiple owners, such as districts, objections only count toward the listing of the district as a whole. No one owner can exempt himself or herself from listing in a district by means of an objection. Although the State Register does not recognize owner objections, it is the policy of the SHPO to avoid listings with significant objections and to work with nomination sponsors and communities to provide information and education about the registers program.

How long does it take to get a property listed? The length of time required for the preparation and review of an individual nomination is typically twelve months or longer, depending on the quality of the application and staff workloads. Historic districts generally require at least a year to account for their greater complexity and the additional need for public comment.

How do the State and National Registers differ from local landmark designation? State and National Registers listing should not be confused with local landmark designation. Many communities have enacted local landmark ordinances that establish commissions with the authority to review proposed work on locally designated properties. These commissions are established and operated independently from the State and National Registers, which do not regulate the actions of private property owners unless state or federal funds are used or a state or federal permit is required. National Register listing does not automatically lead to local landmark designation, and local districts often differ from those listed on the registers.

Must owners of listed buildings open their buildings to the public? No. There is absolutely no requirement to open register-listed properties to the public.

Will a property owner be able to leave his property to his children or anyone else he/she wishes? Yes. Listing on the registers in no way affects the transfer of property from one owner to another.

Will listing on the State and National Registers, either individually or in a historic district, affect local property taxes or zoning? No. Listing has no direct bearing on any of these local actions.

How can an owner get a State and National Registers plaque to display on his or her building? Although the SHPO does not provide plaques, a list of manufacturers is available upon request.

How does listing protect a building and its surroundings? The registers are a valuable tool in the planning of publicly funded, licensed or permitted projects. Government agencies are responsible for avoiding or reducing the effects of projects on properties that are eligible for or listed on the registers. Listing raises awareness of the significance of properties, helping to ensure that preservation issues are considered early and effectively in the planning process.

How do I find out if my building is already listed? Check out the SHPO's online database, the Cultural Resource Information System (CRIS), which is on our website here: <https://cris.parks.ny.gov>. Here, you can enter as a guest, hit the "Search" button at the top of the page, and search with the address, name of the property, or search by zooming into the map. Your building may not already be listed, but we may have some preliminary information already in CRIS. For more guidance, contact your National Register Unit representative.

Where can I find out more about the State and National Registers? Contact the Division for Historic Preservation at (518) 237-8643, visit our website at <https://parks.ny.gov/shpo/national-register/> or see the National Park Service website at <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/index.htm>.

