



Figure 3-9. 65 Potomac Avenue (ca. 1874)

From the 1890s to the 1920s, Grant Street grew into the chief commercial street in the western part of the survey area. Ground floor shops with apartments above—so-called “mom and pop” stores—set the pattern for early commercial development along Grant Street. 212 Grant (ca. 1895), 83 Grant (ca. 1896), 91 Grant (designed in 1922 by Louis Greenstein with shop front modernization in 1951), 242 Grant (1914), and 285 Grant (1923) are all in use today for their same purpose that gave them life decades ago.²⁵ Together with Elmwood Avenue on the eastern side of the survey area, Grant Street continues to be one of the liveliest neighborhood commercial streets left in Buffalo.

3.2.2 Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux’s Buffalo Park and Parkway System, 1868-1876.

In 1868, Frederick Law Olmsted visited Buffalo to discuss with civic leaders the creation of public parkland. His visit eventually resulted in the ambitious proposal that he and his partner, Calvert Vaux, submitted to the city in October 1870. Their plan called for the creation of a system of parks that consisted of one large pastoral park, the present Delaware Park, in the northern part of town and two smaller parks, one on the east side of town and the other on the waterfront overlooking the beginning of the Niagara River adjacent to Fort Porter. This park became known as The Front, presently Front Park. These parks were to be connected by wide, tree-lined streets that the designers referred to as parkways. “There had before seemed to be no boundary line of the city,” stated the *Buffalo Express* in 1888 about the effects of the new parks on city property values, “but the lines of the park sharply defined the city limits, and from

²⁵ The largest residential-commercial building along Grant Street in the survey area, 185 Grant, was originally the Oscar Goldhagen warehouse.

the time the parks were laid out real estate took a new start.”²⁶ Olmsted and Vaux’s entire Buffalo park and parkway system is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In tandem with the construction of the parks and parkways, Olmsted and Vaux laid out the grounds of the new Buffalo State Hospital, the present Buffalo Psychiatric Center, at Forest and Elmwood Avenues. Although located just outside of the survey area, the hospital affected the neighborhood by limiting growth northward at that point. Created by an act of the legislature in 1869, the hospital building was designed by Henry Hobson Richardson. Long listed as a National Historic Landmark, the picturesque Richardsonian Romanesque building is the premier neighborhood architectural landmark. Its dominating presence is reflected in the design of three churches within the survey area: the Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church at 598 Lafayette Avenue (ca. 1895) and the Richmond Avenue Methodist Church at 467 Richmond Avenue (ca. 1895; Figure 3-10).

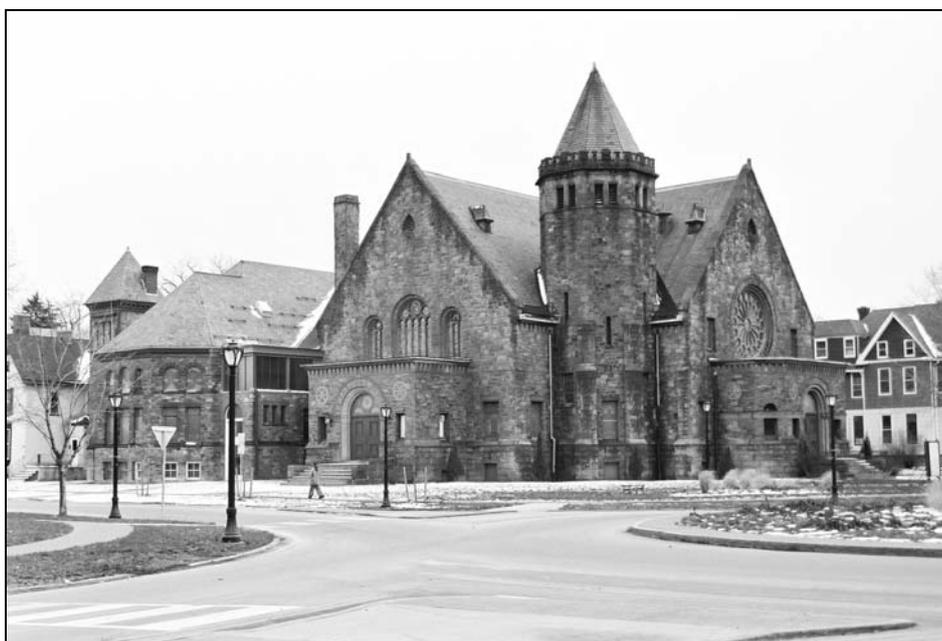


Figure 3-10. Richmond Avenue Methodist Church (ca. 1895) at 467 Richmond Avenue.

3.2.3 Residential Development of the Eastern Portion of the Survey Area

Together with improved urban transport, the construction of the Olmsted and Vaux park and parkway system (which was in place on the ground by the centennial year, 1876) stimulated residential development of the survey neighborhood. Portions of the parkway system lie in the eastern section of the survey area. Bidwell Parkway and Richmond Avenue (renamed from Rogers Avenue in 1879 to honor prominent local citizen Jewett M. Richmond), together with Colonial Circle (former Bidwell Place) and Ferry Circle, were the most prestigious addresses in the survey area—indeed, among the most prominent within the city—in the late nineteenth and

²⁶ “Real Estate,” *Buffalo Express, Extra Number*, (September 1888), 16.

early twentieth centuries. These thoroughfares and nearby streets became the location of many fine individual houses. With the opening of Elmwood Avenue as far north as Forest Avenue in the 1890s, this wide, straight street, which forms the eastern border of the survey neighborhood, also assumed the rank of an address of note.²⁷ By the 1890s, real estate developers were referring to this part of the survey area as the Elmwood District. “The parent thoroughfare has been well filled with handsome houses and the adjacent streets are growing apace,” observed a local newspaper reporter in the late summer of 1894. “Over 250 houses are said to be in the course of construction in the Elmwood district,” he wrote, “and many of the dwellings are big and costly ones, equal to the best on other fashionable residence streets, such as Delaware, North, and Summer.”²⁸ At the turn of the twentieth century, the neighborhood, reported a local magazine, was “well filled up” with homes of the well-to-do.²⁹

The spacious, elm-lined parkways and the comfortable, mostly single-family housing that grew up surrounding them attracted more affluent homeowners than did the streets in the western portion of the survey area. One of the chief real estate firms to deal in property here was that run by George L. Thorne and Byron P. Angell. Both men were also among the first residents of the eastern portion of the survey area. In 1890, Thorne & Angell advertised for sale “a number of very desirable investments on . . . Richmond, Elmwood, Bouck [Lafayette] and Plymouth Avenues, and Bidwell Parkway [and] Ferry.”³⁰ Among the builders who erected expensive speculative houses in this rapidly growing area were H. H. Lanctot, Walter D. Putnam, F. Stephen Grist, and John W. Gibbs.³¹

Along the streets of the eastern sector of the survey area, one finds excellent examples of late nineteenth-century residential architecture. (Because of the greater coast of land, Bidwell Parkway and Richmond Avenue were among the last streets to attract residents. Hence, most of the houses along them date from the early twentieth century.) The picturesque Queen Anne style is particularly well represented. Notable examples are at 40 Bidwell Parkway (1885; Figure 3-11), 465 Ashland Avenue (designed by Buffalo architects Roberts & Balsam, 1890), 471 Ashland Avenue (ca. 1890), 551 Richmond Avenue (ca. 1890), 601 West Ferry Avenue (ca. 1893), 19 Claremont Avenue (ca. 1895), and 537 Ashland Avenue (1897). The popular Shingle Style is also encountered along these gracious streets. Good examples are at 47 Bidwell Parkway (ca. 1890), 65 Bidwell Parkway (ca. 1892), 6 Claremont Avenue (ca. 1894), 1089 Elmwood Avenue (ca. 1895), and 558 West Ferry Avenue (ca. 1895; Figure 3-12). And the house erected for the Turner family at 490 Ashland Avenue in 1887 epitomizes the taste for so-called Stick Style design that was popular for suburban houses in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

²⁷ “About a dozen years ago,” noted a local reporter in 1894, “lower Elmwood Avenue was known as North William Street and soon thereafter was rechristened Fremont Place. With the opening of Elmwood Avenue—practically an extension of Fremont Place—the street extended in a straight northerly line from Virginia to Forest Avenue. With the completion of the bridge over Scajaquada Creek, Elmwood Avenue will be extended to North Elmwood Avenue near the Country Club property. Elmwood Avenue divides the State Hospital yard [the present Buffalo Psychiatric Center] and the North Park [the present Delaware Park] and is one of the straightest, as well as one of the finest streets of Buffalo.” The writer defined the entire Elmwood district as the area bounded by Virginia Street, Delaware, Richmond and Forest Avenues. “Where Houses grow,” *Buffalo Courier*, September 9, 1894.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ “The New Elmwood District,” *Greater Buffalo*, 5(October 1902), 8.

³⁰ George M. Bailey, *Illustrated Buffalo: The Queen City of the Lakes*, New York: Acme Publishing, 1890, 160.

³¹ For a list of these men’s activities, see “The New Elmwood District,” *loc. cit.*, 19-20.



Figure 3-11. 40 Bidwell Parkway (1885)



Figure 3-12. 558 West Ferry Avenue (ca. 1895)