NPS Form 10-900
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

Historic name Downtown YMCA Building

Other names/site number Centenary Tower

Name of related Multiple Property Listing n/a

2. Location

Street & number 1528 Locust Street | n/a | not for publication

City or town St. Louis | n/a | vicinity

State Missouri Code MO County St. Louis (Independent City) Code MO Zip code 63101

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 _x_ C ___ D

Mark A. Miles May 14, 2014

Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles, Deputy SHPO Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

_✓_ entered in the National Register ____ determined eligible for the National Register

____ determined not eligible for the National Register ____ removed from the National Register

____ other (explain:)

for Edson H. Beall 6-27-14

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

x	private
	public - Local
	public - State
	public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

x	building(s)
	district
	site
	structure
	object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	**Total**

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL/clubhouse
DOMESTIC/institutional housing

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL/clubhouse
Vacant

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Renaissance Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete
walls: Brick
Limestone
roof: Composite
other:

x **NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION ON CONTINUTATION PAGES**

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.)

[x] 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.

[x] 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.)

Property is:

[ ] 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.

Areas of Significance

ARCHITECTURE

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1926-1964

Significant Dates

1926

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

LaBeaume & Klein, architects

[X] **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE ON CONTINUTATION PAGES**

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

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:

_x_State Historic Preservation Office
____Other State agency
____Federal agency
____Local government
____University
____Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.53 acres

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84:_____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

	Latitude:	Longitude:		Latitude:	Longitude:
1	38.631462	-90.202534	3		
2			4		

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)
_____ NAD 1927 or _____ NAD 1983

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1				3			
2				4			

Verbal Boundary Description (On continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification (On continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michael R. Allen/Director (Primary Author) with Laura G. Jablonski/Intern (Parts of Section 8: Social History)

organization Preservation Research Office date REV March 18, 2014

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city or town St. Louis state MO zip code 63118

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications 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.).
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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: Downtown YMCA Building

City or Vicinity: St. Louis

County: St. Louis (Ind. City) State: Missouri

Photographer: Michael R. Allen

Date Photographed: April 9, 2013

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

1 of 14. View of the building looking southeast from 16th Street north of Locust Street.
2 of 14. View of the building entrance looking southwest from Locust Street.
3 of 14. Detail of stone work at main entrance.
4 of 14. View of the building looking northeast from 16th Street north of Olive Street
5 of 14. Detail of entrance on 16th Street elevation.
6 of 14. View of the building looking southwest from Locust Street west of 15th Street.
7 of 14. View of the east wing and roof sign looking across light well from the west wing.
8 of 14. View in the main vestibule looking toward Locust Street.
9 of 14. View of the lobby area.
10 of 14. View of the gymnasium looking toward the southwest.
11 of 14. View of the second floor meeting room, looking toward the corridor.
12 of 14. View of the swimming pool room.
13 of 14. View of an apartment on the fourth floor.
14 of 14. View down corridor on the east wing of the fourth floor.

Figure Log:

Include figures on continuation pages at the end of the nomination.

1. View east on Locust Street from 17th Street showing the context of the Downtown YMCA Building.
2. Undated photograph of the Downtown YMCA Building before the 1978 remodeling.
3: The Downtown YMCA Building after completion, viewed from the southwest.
4. The lobby of the Downtown YMCA in the 1930s.
5: The Downtown YMCA Building under construction, 1926.
6: The entrance to Jefferson College in 1939.
7. The Young Women's Christian Association Building at 1411 Locust Street (Mariner & LaBeaume; 1912) after completion.
8. The Beaumont Medical Building (LaBeaume & Klein; 1926) as it appeared in 1984.
9. First floor plan.
10: Second floor plan.
11. Third floor plan.
12. Fourth floor plan.
13. Fifth and sixth floors plan.
14. Seventh through tenth floors plan.
15. Photo key.

Summary

The Downtown YMCA Building is a ten-story building located at 1528 Locust Street in downtown St. Louis (Ind. City), Missouri (see photograph 1). The building was completed in 1926 and employs the stylistic traits of the Renaissance Revival with some Gothic Revival elements. The flat-roofed building forms a U-shaped configuration with a light well at rear. The street-facing elevations convey a formal design with a two-story limestone base featuring extensive carved detailing and ornamental balconies. Above the base, the main rise of the building is unadorned and exhibits the ochre-toned brick that clads the entire building. Cornices frame an upper floor where a decorative brick diaper pattern provides a topping visual element. There is a large metal sign on the eastern wing that reads “YMCA”; this element likely dates to 1941. The rear and side elevations are less formally arranged. The interior of the building features a spacious vestibule and lobby, specialized recreational and athletic facilities and six floors of sleeping rooms converted into apartments in 1978. The building retains excellent integrity despite some changes during remodeling.

Setting

The Downtown YMCA Building is located in western downtown St. Louis in a setting characterized by the presence of large twentieth century commercial and apartment buildings (see figure 1). The exceptional building in this setting is directly to the east across a parking lot: the Robert G. Campbell House (1849; Edgar & Wash; NR 4/21/1977) at Locust Street, the last vestige of Lucas Place. Otherwise, the setting is definitely urban with high density although several surface parking lots record where buildings have been lost. To the north are commercial warehouse buildings that comprise the Washington Avenue Historic District (NR 2/12/1987), which includes a southern area down to Locust Street. To the west is the concrete-framed, brick-clad Leather Trades Building (1912; Albert B. Groves). To the immediate south, the rest of the block is occupied by surface parking facing Olive Street, which reflects its post-1923 widening. Across Olive Street are the Modern Movement apartment buildings of the Plaza Square Apartments Historic District (Hellmuth Obata & Kassabaum with Harris Armstrong, 1957-1961; NR 7/12/2007). Just one block east at 1411 Locust Street is the historic Young Women’s Christian Association Building (1911; Mariner & LaBeaume), designed in an earlier variant of the Renaissance Revival and sharing an architectural pedigree with the nominated building.

Exterior

The primary elevation on Locust Street is divided into nine bays (see photograph 1). The base is clad in Bedford limestone; there is a rounded course above the basement level and a cornice above the second that features a foliated frieze on its face and is supported by square brackets. The first floor is articulated as a piano nobile over the lower level, whose window openings contain single-light replacement windows. The entrance is at center at sidewalk level, and consists of a large round-arched opening set in a lancet hood framed by a heavily ornamented archivolt (photograph 2). The inner columns within the archivolt have braided bodies and Corinthian capitals supporting blocks with relief work tiger figures; the outer columns have plain bodies with similar capitals supporting blocks featuring ram’s heads at the corners (photograph

3). Patterns face the layers above. On the outside, a projecting molding springs from gargoyles. Inside of the entrance is non-historic metal-framed glazing above two metal-framed glass doors. To each side of the entrance arch at the second floor are cartouches with YMCA symbols incised. Above those incised in the wall is the name “YOUNG MEN’S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION.” On the first floor, the three bays to each side of the entrance is configured as a door opening framed by pilasters under frieze work headers; inside are multi-light wooden French doors under transoms. The bay adjacent to the main entrance at the north has been reconfigured with recessed steel doors into an entrance connected to a concrete ramp at the front elevation; this structure dates to 1978. The outer bays on the first floor feature window openings containing paired three-light metal casement windows above panels featuring festoons. Above these openings are openings containing four-light narrow, tall windows separated by heavy stone mullions; in front are stone balconets with gargoyle-adorned brackets and patterned iron railings. The bays between contain openings with rounded stone sills and paired three-light casement windows. Above these are decorative stone plaques. A bracketed, patterned stone belt course divides the stone base and brick body above.

At the third floor, the stone work is attenuated through heavy voussoirs and surrounds around alternating arcade windows and round-arched window openings. At the corners are quoins that partially make the third floor rise. The arcade windows have shields in their spandrels, and all openings have pronounced imposts under label courses and contain one-over-one replacement metal windows. Above the third floor, the fourth through ninth floors are configured as one rise. There are paired window openings centered above the arcade windows and single window openings centered over the other openings on the third floor. These openings have stone sills, jack arches and contain either one-over-one metal replacement windows or metal louvers. Above the ninth floor is a belt of pairing a rounded terra cotta course over a dentil course. This belt forms a sill course for the tenth floor windows, which are segmental-arched and are set in surrounds with pronounced terra cotta voussoirs. Above there is a terra cotta cornice featuring an entablature faced with lion heads above an ovolo course over a blind arcade. The tenth floor is articulated further by the employment of a diaper pattern composed of projecting red-tinged brick headers.

The western elevation faces Sixteenth Street and is configured similarly to the main elevation (photographs 1 and 4). There is a central entrance at sidewalk level similar to the main entrance, except that it has a stone tympanum inscribed with the phrase “BOYS DIVISION” under a cross and above a shield fitted into a stone header over the steel entrance doors (photograph 5). The phrase “YOUNG MEN’S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION” also appears over the second floor here, over five window openings similar to those on the second floor of the primary elevation. At each end of the second floor are similar windows flanked by the balconet-type window opening from the main elevation. Below the second floor openings, the first floor features and asymmetrical mix of the first floor corner window type from the main elevation, windows above door openings and smaller windows in openings at the south end. The upper floors are configured like the front elevation, with the third floor having five round-arched openings in the center and arcade windows set to each side of round arch windows to the north and south.

On the rear elevation, the light well is visible above the third floor (photograph 4). The lower levels have irregularly-spaced jack-arch window openings with paired windows inside and rowlock sills, while the third floor has round-arch window openings with rowlock headers and a projecting rowlock sill course. Steel doors open onto steel fire escapes. All windows on these levels are replacements. Above, the narrow western wing returns the façade treatment from the street-facing elevations and has three window bays. Below the top floor the left two bays on each level have door openings (not originals) opening onto steel balconies while the rightmost bay openings contain one-over-one replacement sash. Formerly the balconies connected to fire escapes (see figure 3). The exception is the fourth floor where the left bays openings are filled with metal and the rightmost bay opening contains a transomed Chicago window. The eastern wing rises out of a wider volume and features less ornate treatment. Dentillated brick cornices top the volumes on this side, and the terra cotta belt course beneath the top floor is exchanged with a brick sill course. The residential section has bay treatment like the east wing, but openings only start at the seventh floor. The windows in the rightmost bay openings are two-over-two steel sash save the top floor's arched opening, which has a double-hung multi-light steel window. Below the seventh floor there are paired steel two-over-two windows in jack-arch openings to the right of a bay of openings with two-over-two steel sash.

The light well contains stepped masses and descends to the second floor, although that area is concealed by the third floor connector on the rear elevation. The walls facing the light well are divided into bays of openings mostly containing one-over-one metal replacement windows. Where the western wing joins the northern section of the building, above the elevator shaft, is a cantilevered utility room with a prominent chamfered corner. This room is treated with extended dentillation where it meets the lower cornice line and a terra cotta cornice above.

The eastern elevation is marked by a projecting mass at the south end that is blind save three window openings with multi-light metal replacement windows paired inside (photograph 6). There are two exposed concrete piers on this mass. At the north end there is a projecting bay at the main elevation, on which the primary elevation decorative treatment continues, and wraps the return to the main wall plane. There are single openings in bays on each side of this bay above the fourth floor; these contain one-over-one metal replacement windows. Below are irregularly spaced openings with similar windows. The main wall plane is divided into thirteen bays of single window openings, all of which are the same size save the twelfth bay from the south which has smaller openings. These openings contain a mix of metal one-over-one replacement windows and louvers. Below are paired double-hung steel multi-light windows in openings spaced somewhat irregularly. On top of the eastern elevation at the south end is the steel sign board with red enameled letters spelling "YMCA." The sign is placed at a diagonal so that it can be seen from Olive Street and points east (photograph 7).

Interior

The main entrance to the building leads to a vestibule that provides a transition from the sidewalk grade to the first floor with staggered landings and steps between (see photograph 8). Metal banisters run down the center of the vestibule. The floor is marble. The walls are clad in marble. At what is the chair rail height on the first floor is a raised course in which decorative blocks are spared between roundel elements. On the side walls are window openings in which

are set four tall transomed windows in varnished wooden casings. The window headers are marble friezes; the same frieze pattern repeats over the entrance to the lobby. Above, the ceiling is coffered with recessed panels featuring projecting rosettes in 21 panels surrounded by a border of simple panels. A contemporary light fixture hangs from center.

The opening between the vestibule and lobby is filled with a metal-framed glass door system in which a double-leaf entrance is located. The lobby has been remodeled but retains a marble tile floor laid in a running bond (see photograph 9). The ceiling is coffered with pronounced false beams; contemporary light fixtures are located in the recesses. The only other historic feature present is a run of dark varnished paneling on the walls round the entrance and a wide opening leading to the billiard room in the front. The rest of the spaces around the lobby are offices, meeting rooms and other spaces typified by contemporary drywall finishes and tile or carpeted floors (figure 9). On the east side of the lobby, a wide opening leads to an open staircase to the second floor offices; this staircase has marble tile flooring and a patterned wrought iron railing with wooden hand rail. The reverse side of the lobby wall features a varnished casing with modillions at each corner.

On the second floor is located the facility's main gymnasium, which retains its historic appearance (see photograph 10). The gymnasium has a polished wooden floor, exposed and painted brick walls, and exposed and painted concrete beams above. Large windows light the lower level with groups of arch-top windows above. A banked walking track is suspended from steel supports on the perimeter. Stairs on the western side lead up to the mezzanine level that provides access to the suspended track. On this level also are fitness rooms and three racquetball courts. On the third floor in the northwest corner is a former meeting room that retains is historic appearance and Gothic stylistic influence (see photograph 11). The plaster ceiling has applied wooden tracery, while the walls are clad in varnished paneling. There is a marble fireplace with a shallow mantel on the south wall. On the east and south walls are double-leaf paneled doors in Gothic arch openings. There is also a large open former dining room on the third floor.

A hall running along the eastern side lobby leads to stairs to the basement where the swimming pool, fitness room and locker rooms are located. The pool is the only area on the lower floor with historic character (see photograph 12). The pool has window openings on the south elevation, and runs parallel to that wall. The walls are clad in polychromatic encaustic tile with repeated lozenge patterning.

The fourth through tenth floors are configured almost exactly alike. Narrow corridors run laterally with the wings and main section, forming a U-shape configuration. The corridors and elevator lobbies lack any remaining historic wall finishes, flooring or millwork save metal surrounds around some of the elevator doors (see photograph 14). Apartments accessed from the corridors also lack historic appearance; they are generally configured with a bedroom, closet, living area, bathroom and kitchen (see photograph 13). The apartments have heavily-textured drywall surfaces, carpeted and vinyl tiled floors, rolled vinyl baseboards, slab doors and plain laminate window sills. The stairwells retain utilitarian appearance with painted concrete floors, steel railings and plain plastered surfaces. There is a utility room over the elevators.

Integrity

The Downtown YMCA Building exhibits excellent integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The exterior reflects its historic design, with only slight modifications. The replacement of most of the windows, some with louvered panels, certainly impacts the fenestration pattern but not to any extent that removes integrity. The addition of the concrete ramp on the main elevation and the related alteration of the first floor bay is reversible and also not of significant consequence. The building retains its historic materials, with masonry details iron ornament intact.

The interior of the building shows more changes across time than the exterior. The first floor retains historic features in the main public entrance and in key recreational rooms such as the former billiards room. The lobby area has been altered with removal of paneling, historic front counter and flooring. Offices, halls and meeting rooms around the lobby show heavy alterations but historically would not have been part of public reception of the building.

Athletic facilities within the building include the pool on the lower level, which has a remarkable degree of integrity with encaustic tile walls, ceilings and floors intact; the workout room in the basement, which retains historic exposed painted brick walls and plaster ceiling; the gymnasium and track on the third floor which retains its historic appearance nearly exactly; and the enclosed handball courts on the fifth floor which retain wooden floors and wall finishes. On the second and third floors, the former educational rooms used by the Downtown YMCA and by Jefferson College retain most of their historic layout although wall, ceiling and floor finishes are contemporary. The sleeping rooms on floors four through ten are only in their intact layout in a small section of the building above the sixth floor, where the western end of the southern wing was never remodeled. Otherwise those floors retain only the double-loaded corridors, which no longer retain historic placement of door openings. Beyond the corridors, the sleeping room layout was gutted to create the studio apartment plan of 1977. The remodeled appearance of the apartment floors impacts an area that would not have been part of the public experience of the building, so its impact on the building's ability to convey its two areas if significance is minimal.

Summary

The Downtown YMCA Building is locally significant for listing under Criterion A for SOCIAL HISTORY and under Criterion C for ARCHITECTURE. Completed in 1926 and designed by the eminent local firm of LaBeaume & Klein, the Downtown YMCA Building epitomizes the national YMCA's efforts in the early twentieth century to modernize its building practices through a combination of nationally-coordinated facility planning and individual local architectural expression. Although locally-designed, the ten-story building includes in its plan the facilities that were devised to become standard in the modern YMCA buildings built in the wake of the 1915 creation of the Building Bureau within the YMCA. The Building Bureau's modern program for YMCA planning was fully realized in St. Louis in the Downtown YMCA Building, which includes the standard plan of lobby, recreational rooms, athletic facilities and swimming pools below floors of sleeping rooms. The Downtown YMCA also possesses social significance for being the largest local YMCA branch providing the most diverse range of services including athletics, lodging and educational programs. The Downtown YMCA housed Jefferson College, an experimental higher education program, from 1929 through 1942. The presence of Jefferson College distinguished the Downtown YMCA Building from other branches and associated it with an education program that served general needs and later World War II training demands. The period of significance spans the date of completion in 1926 to 1964 due to a 50-year cut-off on the building's significance.

Background: The Young Men's Christian Association in St. Louis

The Young Men's Christian Association was founded in London in 1844. It was formed by a group of clerks led by a young man named George Williams. Its initial goals were to aid the spiritual development of its members, particularly urban working-class men for whom Sunday was the only day off in a 6-day work week. The mission gradually expanded to include the "mental, social, physical, recreational and vocational needs so that the whole man became the object of the 'Y's' concern."[1] The movement spread rapidly, disseminated in part by the great Exposition of 1851 in London. The first YMCA in the United States opened in Boston in 1851. The St. Louis YMCA was founded two years later at the Union Methodist Episcopal Church at 11th and Locust Streets (demolished).

By the third meeting in October 1853, the local YMCA had admitted one hundred members. At the first public meeting (November 13, 1853), the purposes and principles of the new organization were laid out. Members would have access to lectures on science and religion, read and hold discussion groups, practice oratory, and study the Bible. The speaker at that first meeting expressed a hope that the YMCA would unify Protestant denominations, reach out to young men in need, and to help young men "accomplish their Christian purpose."[2]

Twenty years after the local branch was founded, it had lost focus and withered to the point that it was inactive for a decade. When a group of 12 men met to reorganize the St. Louis YMCA in

1 Adele Starbird, *The Story of the Young Men's Christian Association of St. Louis and St. Louis County* (St. Louis: Greater St. Louis YMCA, 1953), p. 3.
2 Starbird, p. 6.

1875, they rededicated themselves to its founding principles. The nation was still struggling to recover from the Panic of 1873, and the new group's services were tailored to help men in crisis. By the end of 1876, the organization had opened the Friendly Inn, where unemployed men could be housed, fed, attend twice daily religious services, read, bathe, have their clothes laundered, and take advantage of a free employment service.[3] By the end of March 1877, the organization claimed to have served almost 15,000 free meals, aided by a membership of over 300 and numerous private donations.[4] Six months later, the membership had doubled.

By this time, the YMCA had a paid secretary and a rented office. In 1879, the organization was electrified by the visit of Chicago evangelist Dwight L. Moody, who had served the U.S. Christian Commission of the YMCA during the Civil War. He challenged St. Louisans to raise $40,000 for a permanent facility of its own.[5] In the following year, a board of trustees purchased the Union Methodist Church, where the group had its first meeting in 1855. The organization moved into the church, using the former parsonage as sleeping rooms for those arriving in St. Louis seeking employment. They were able to lease part of the property to a skating rink and with the proceeds managed to lease a house at 29th and Pine (demolished), following the center of population as it spread west from downtown. They built the branch's first gymnasium on the rented property (including a bowling alley and baths), opening it in 1886.[6]

In 1892, the Association sold its building at 11th and Locust for $128,000 and used the proceeds to buy a lot at Grand and Franklin.[7] The new Central Branch was dedicated in 1898. The four-story building included a swimming pool among its many amenities. This building was used until it was destroyed by fire in 1921. Loss of the Central Branch would lead to the convergence of the local YMCA's interest in a downtown branch, modern centralized YMCA architectural planning coming from the national Building Bureau, and the design acumen of the esteemed local architectural partnership of LaBeaume & Klein.

Architecture: The Downtown YMCA Building Brings the Building Bureau Ideal to St. Louis

The Downtown YMCA Building embodied the planning model developed by the YMCA Building Bureau and its director Neil McMillan after 1920. This model employed spatial planning based on standardized functions and division of spaces determined by the Building Bureau with an aesthetically advanced building envelope designed by local architects. Thus the destruction of the Central YMCA Building in January 1921 set into motion the rise of a modern YMCA facility for the central city. At that time, the national YMCA was advancing new principles for standardizing the programmatic plans and interior design of its facilities around the country.

Before 1915, the YMCA International Committee had allowed local branches to contract the design of facilities to architects of their own choosing, with little planning oversight. The national YMCA had never proffered programmatic standards, leading to variety of layouts. Men's and

[3] Starbird, p. 19.
[4] Starbird, p. 19-20.
[5] Starbird, p. 23.
[6] Starbird, p. 33.
[7] Starbird, p. 34.

boys' entrances were not separated. YMCA employee Erskine Uhl began collecting exemplary local branch designs for publication in *Association Men*, and published several in the 1900s.[8] Uhl's work demonstrated an evolution from the Victorian YMCA buildings, which seemed like gymnastic club houses, to service facilities that were more like hotels or fraternal club buildings.[9] This shift showed that YMCA building programs had grown more complicated, and required a more demanding standard to ensure the quality of the YMCA brand.[10]

Led by architect Neil McMillan, the national YMCA Building Bureau opened in 1915 initially to create standards and offer technical assistance to local organizations trying to develop new YMCA facilities. McMillan was not pleased with either the efforts of general practice architects in planning new YMCA buildings or with specialist architects in design.[11] McMillan endeavored to create standards to which local buildings would be designed that would be inclusive of plan, design, materials and sanitation. McMillan's leadership transformed the Building Bureau into a full-service internal design firm that could coordinate the dozens of YMCA building projects around the country so that there was a consistent, branded YMCA building type.[12]

McMillan also was concerned with the "cold, institutional character" of YMCA buildings, which he felt thwarted efforts to promote the desirability of the social setting inside.[13] In place of sterile interiors he promoted the idea of the "homelike" space – well-furnished, tastefully-decorated spaces conducive to conversation, educational meetings, recreational activities like billiards and other activities that would keep men away from the abundant iniquities that the YMCA sought to combat.[14] McMillan led the Building Bureau to push national standards of decorating to foster better interiors. Even color selection was part of the program; McMillan wrote in 1919 that "in consultation with an experienced decorator the colors and the tones for all the parts should be selected so that the window hangings, pictures, furniture and floor coverings all blend into a harmonious whole."[15]

McMillan's vision for the Building Bureau essentially cut against emergent modernism in his insistence on the division of the functional and aesthetic programs of YMCA Buildings. Still, his drive to establishing central planning to lower cost and create uniform quality mirrored the contemporary architectural practices of religious denominations and even some corporations. McMillan saw the inside of the YMCA as a precisely-organized, functionally-divided "factory" in plan and the outside as an art work, and rather than integrate the two created a mechanism to keep each separate and responsive to different considerations. This approach gained support within the International YMCA structure quickly.

In its first phase, the Building Bureau served as a consulting entity, while in its second phase after 1917, it became a paid architectural advisory service. After 1919, however, McMillan found

[8] Paula Lupkin, *Manhood Factories: YMCA Architecture and the Making of Modern Urban Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), p. 160.
[9] Lupkin, p. 135.
[10] Lupkin, p. 160.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Lupkin, p. 160-161.
[13] Neil McMillan, "The Friendly Building," *Physical Training* 17.5 (March 1920) p. 213.
[14] McMillan, p. 214.
[15] McMillan, p. 216.

support to convert the Building Bureau into a complete design service for local YMCAs. McMillan introduced a new structure in 1920 that minimized the role of the outside architect and gave more authority to efficiency planners and engineers within his Bureau.[16] The Bureau had control over selection of site, recommendations on architect selection, the building program, specifications, interior design (supervised by a Furnishings Service) and the architect's contract. The local architect would handle working drawings, interior plan (within constraints), construction supervision and exterior design.[17]

After World War I, the YMCA rejected the aesthetic austerity of its facilities, seeking instead to build facilities that possessed a cultural atmosphere promoting art and individualism. The Building Bureau's drive toward a standardized approach to design included a new concern for the aesthetics of the buildings, especially their interiors. Building Bureau employee Sherman Dean wrote that the YMCA architectural agenda was "turning from prohibitory mandate to the silent, subtle preachment of atmosphere, surroundings and example."[18] The relationship between the Building Bureau and YMCA organizational philosophy became very close. Architectural historian Paula Lupkin notes that the Building Bureau gained considerable importance within the national YMCA culture: "[b]y the early 1920s, the Building Bureau had a strong impact on both the structure of the organization and its philosophy."[19]

By the 1920s, McMillan's Building Bureau standards for new buildings were obvious:

- Modern, fireproof construction in masonry;
- Exterior design contracted to local architects, whose artistic freedom was encouraged;
- Interior design either supplied or directed by Building Bureau architects;
- Interiors arranged around a formal hotel-like lobby, with social, dining and meeting spaces on separate floors from athletic facilities and sleeping rooms;
- Abandonment of the older YMCA "panopticon" arrangement where the manager's desk provided views to all recreational and athletic facilities on a first floor, in favor of functions segregated on different levels;
- Interiors furnished and decorated artistically, with a "home like" effect emphasizing comfort;
- Separate entrances for men and boys monitored by a common front desk or counter.[20]

Despite aggressive centralization of planning and assumption of program elements previously left to local architects, the Bureau made it clear that it was not trying to usurp or restrain architects working for the YMCA. A Bureau article stated that the Bureau "desires rather to provide a co-operating source of accumulated and authoritative knowledge, upon which the architect can draw his own immediate benefit, and ultimately to that of the organization and its membership."[21] Still, the Bureau ruffled the feathers of the profession. In addition to reducing

[16] Lupkin, p. 165.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Sherman Dean, "The Advancing Wave of Color, Association Men 54.1 (January 1929), p. 216.
[19] Lupkin, p. 167.
[20] Lupkin, p. 169-174.
[21] Charles C. May, "A Post-War Construction Program: The Building Bureau of the International Committee of the YMCA," *Architectural Record* 45 (March and April 1919), p. 223.

the architect's authority, the Bureau took two percent of the building costs as its fee, reducing the architect's standard fee from six to four percent.

Eventually, the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and its chapters began publicly challenging the Bureau, starting with a 1928 resolution by the Pittsburgh AIA chapter calling on the YMCA to limit the role of the Bureau. Coincidentally, the growing unrest would draw in Downtown YMCA Building architect Louis LaBeaume in his capacity as a national AIA director. LaBeaume and McMillan's discussions after 1928 led to McMillan's recognition that the profession was most offended by the split fee structure. The Bureau reduced its fee to one and a half percent, and AIA objections dissipated.[22] Support within the YMCA remained strong. By 1930, 90 percent of local YMCAs were utilizing the Building Bureau service for new facilities – including St. Louis.[23]

By the time that St. Louis YMCA leaders would be examining how to replace the lost Central YMCA, McMillan and his office had transformed the YMCA concept of its facilities as utilitarian "manhood factories" designed inconsistently by local architects into buildings that merged expressions of art and individualism with standard forms and layouts.[24] The local YMCA used the loss of the Central YMCA to raise money for a facility in line with the national ideals. Still, there were financial difficulties involving insurance of the old building. The local organization's history reports that director Philomen Bevis provided a poetic account of the building loss: "The deeply worn steps give their mute testimony to thousands of feet. Around this old building cluster the memories of a generation."[25] The YMCA had underinsured the building, and the insurers offered $97,500.00 toward the actual loss of $132,432.00. The trustees attempted to secure a $105,000.00 settlement but that offer was rejected by seven of the eight insurers involved. Ultimately, the trustees did secure the $105,000.00 settlement. Yet this sum was insufficient for building a replacement facility. Under the leadership of businessman Murray Carleton, president of the Board of Trustees, the YMCA elected to proceed with plans for a large modern facility.

In the first meeting after the fire, board Vice President Melville L. Wilkinson implored his fellow trustees to remember the "necessity in these days of stress of providing facilities for men and boys."[26] By the end of 1921, the trustees votes to undertake a fundraising campaign for $3 million to build a new building. According to the organizational history, one trustee reportedly stated that "it is easier to do something big than something mediocre."[27] "Something big" fit nicely with the principles of McMillan and the national YMCA at this time. St. Louis would have the opportunity to join the ranks of cities building modern, sanitary YMCA buildings.

The Downtown YMCA Building joined other urban YMCA buildings in planning or nearing completion around its construction in 1926-7. Los Angeles, Boston, Philadelphia, New York and other cities had major facilities in the works. One building that compares well to the Downtown St. Louis YMCA building is the West Side YMCA in New York, completed in 1930 from designs

[22] Lupkin, p. 179.
[23] Lupkin, p. 167.
[24] Lupkin, p. 169.
[25] Starbird, p . 49.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.

by Dwight James Baum. While the facility's size was much larger than the nominated building, its relationship of exterior and interior are similar. According to Lupkin, when the local organization contracted the Building Bureau for the West Side YMCA, the Building Bureau created a program of over 30 pages and sketch plans for dividing the interior space.[28] Then the Building Bureau facilitated selection of the architect, whose Italian Renaissance design matches themes of LaBeaume & Klein's St. Louis design. The hotel-like building's elevation drawings bore Baum's name while the floor plans bore the Building Bureau imprimatur; the division of design reflected McMillan's wishes.[29]

The local YMCA received a major gift when shoe magnate and long-time donor George Warren Brown passed away. Brown left $300,000.00 toward the building campaign, and trustees of his estate provided an additional $150,000.00.[30] [31] The trustees looked for sites in the downtown area, where the organization felt its services could be more centrally located and also be placed closer to areas where working men were living lives in need of "character-building." The organization selected a site at the southeast corner of 16th and Locust Streets on what once was the fashionable Lucas Place. For this prominent site, the YMCA trustees followed their peers across the country and turned to the Building Bureau for the basic spatial planning of the new building. For the exterior design, the trustees looked to one of the city's best-regarded architectural firms for the building design. The trustees hired LaBeaume & Klein to design a modern, functional and beautiful building that would serve local needs and advance the national building goals of the YMCA.

The division of design duties for the Downtown YMCA Building fit the new Building Bureau model: the office would plan the building's spaces and oversee interior decoration, while a local architectural firm would select the architectural style and design the elevations and lobby. Records that would show the relationship between the St. Louis YMCA and the Building Bureau are scarce, but during this period the Building Bureau controlled most of the interior program and design detailing. LaBeaume & Klein worked closely with McMillan and his designers to design a building both deeply rooted in their own design vision (demonstrated through its relationship with the firm's other buildings) and the national principles of planning. The interior spatial program included a public lobby, clear large corridors, recreation rooms, dining facilities, meeting rooms, a gymnasium and swimming pool. Above these areas on the first two floors were eight floors containing 400 sleeping rooms rented hotel-style to working men who could afford themselves of YMCA facilities.

All of the building's interior spaces were determined through programmatic planning by the Building Bureau. Interior spaces on the ground floor included paneled lobby, billiard room and parlor areas that were "home like" in the manner prescribed by McMillan.[32] One interior element that suggests LaBeaume & Klein may have been more greatly involved is the lobby, which utilizes the same marble types for flooring and wainscoting as does the firm's near-

[28] Lupkin, p. 172.
[29] Lupkin, p. 174.
[30] Neil Mcmillan, "Are We Getting Better Buildings?", *Association Men* 51.1 (January 1926), p. 232.
[31] Starbird, p. 51.
[32] "Two New Y.M.C.A. Buildings Constructed in Huge New Development Campaign," *Greater St. Louis* (September 1926).

contemporary Louderman Building at 11th and Locust streets. Original paint colors are now gone, but likely were derived from the color charts and checklists of the Furnishings Service under the direction of LaMont A. Warner. Greater St. Louis reported in September 1926 that the interiors (including "special color schemes", rugs and draperies, furniture, and athletic areas) of the Downtown YMCA and the contemporary Carondelet YMCA Branch were designed with "cooperation of national architectural experts of the 'Y'."[33]

Today, the Downtown YMCA retains an interior layout that reflects its historic Building Bureau design that includes spatial planning and general aesthetic atmosphere. The lobby and adjacent recreation rooms retain wood paneling that reinforces the "home like" atmosphere. The subordinated athletic facilities remain, with the tiled lower level swimming pool, lower level athletic room, second level gymnasium and lockers and third level handball rooms all in place. The exterior of the building retains the marked separated entrances for men and boys, a common element in Building Bureau planning. While support facilities related to dining and cooking have been removed, and the sleeping floors greatly altered (save some unrenovated areas on floors seven through ten above the handball courts), the spatial divisions and some interior finishes still reflect the historic plan.

The exterior of the building wrapped the rational program in a package both evident as a modern YMCA and as an Italian Renaissance-inspired work of LaBeaume & Klein (figure 5). The building's essentially modern form was a direct response to its spatial planning, but its finely-detailed base and crown were places where artistic genius revealed itself. In St. Louis, architects explored Italian Renaissance designs in public, commercial and residential buildings starting after 1900. Cass Gilbert's Central Library (1912) prominently explored Italian Renaissance motifs, and likely popularized them in the city. The American interpretation of the Italian Reniassance derived principles largely from 14th and 15th century Florentine architecture, especially the palazzo built by wealthy families like the Medici. The resulting American interpretations frequently employed symmetrical front elevations, use of stone (often rusticated) at the base, low-pitched or flat roofs, floor divisions articulated by string courses or cornices, different window types at different floors, and the use of round-topped window openings that pair windows divided by colonettes.[34]

The Downtown YMCA embraces the key principles of Italian Renaissance Revival architecture, with the distinguishing characteristic of matte-finished buff brick cladding on much of the envelope. Given the use of Italian Renaissance motifs also found on the earlier YWCA building one block east, the design likely came from Louis LaBeaume. There are definite references to other earlier fraternal buildings; the diaper brick patterning at the crown also can be seen in William B. Ittner & George F.A. Brueggemann's Missouri Athletic Club Building on 1914 (NR 4/16/2007), and the use of Gothic window treatments, balconets and expansive plain brick shaft link the design to Tom P. Barnett's design for the later heavily-altered City Club Building (NR 6/6/2002). There were separate entrances for adult males and boys, in keeping with national YMCA practice. The entrances echo the round arches and some detailing seen in other YMCA

[33] Ibid.
[34] "Italian Renaissance Revival." Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation. <http://www.dahp.wa.gov/styles/italian-renissance-revival>. Accessed 17 January 2014.

buildings of the period, including Baum's West Side YMCA. However, the building's architectural significance comes from its association with the Building Bureau practice rather than its style.

Admiration for the new building followed in short time. The first permit for the new building was obtained on May 11, 1925 for demolition of the one-story commercial building on the site. The foundation permit is dated June 29, 1925 and reports a $10,000 cost. The main building permit dates to August 10, 1925 and reports a cost of $875,000.00. Construction was swift, and the building was open by the end of 1926. According to the YMCA's history: "It is said that when the building was dedicated, the key was thrown into the Mississippi River and that the doors have never been closed night or day."[35] Upon completion, the new Downtown YMCA received national recognition through publication in *The American Architect* and local recognition through inclusion in the first statewide portfolio of modern architecture, John Albury Bryan's 1928 volume *Missouri's Contribution to American Architecture.* Powell already included the building in *Public Art in St. Louis* before the building's completion.[36]

At the start of 1926, while the Downtown YMCA Building was under construction, McMillan published an article in the national YMCA publication, *Association Men*, entitled "Are We Getting Better Buildings?" McMillan's article records the evident Building Bureau influence on recent local building projects. According to McMillan, the Building Bureau program had promoted standards rooted in "simplicity", beauty and rational layouts. Overall, McMillan reported, new YMCA buildings "are more dignified and less institutional, they make young men feel like they want to belong."[37] The key traits McMillan identified in the new YMCA buildings were both solid interior planning and the aura of place inscribed through design. McMillan wrote disparagingly of the old YMCA social spaces designed "so you could turn a hose on them" – minimally decorated and furnished with stiff durable institutional furniture.[38] To the Building Bureau, such a look conveyed that YMCAs were only placed for the "down and out," not the educated, strong young men the YMCA wanted to attract. McMillan emphasized the interior quality of the "social atmosphere" which should "attract youth at its best."[39] Alongside the more home-like furnishings came sensible, economical layouts that avoided wasting space and plans that would be confusing to guests. Also, the exteriors required designs more concerned with proportion and material quality than the pretense of ornament. The Downtown YMCA Building's relatively restrained exterior treatment and comfortable interiors were in accord.

LeBeaume & Klein went on to prepare plans for the new home of the St. Louis Women's Christian Association, later known as the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA, at 2709 Locust Street (NR 7/24/1984). Completed in 1927, the three-story plus basement building demonstrated the same concern for modernization the firm developed at the Downtown YMCA. The fireproof, reinforced concrete building placed bedrooms for 116 women over communal spaces below.[40] The plan was a U-shape, turned out toward the street. The St. Louis Women's Christian Association Building was designed in a Colonial Revival style, and its layout and concern for fireproofing and

[35] Starbird, p. 51.
[36] Powell.
[37] McMillan, "Are We Getting Better Buildings?", p. 228.
[38] Ibid
[39] Ibid.
[40] Stiritz.

sanitation made it as decidedly modern as the new Downtown YMCA. The impact of the Downtown YMCA Building could be seen in the St. Louis Women's Christian Association Building.

The Architects: LaBeaume & Klein

The partnership of LaBeaume & Klein brought together one of the city's long-time leading designers and civic raconteurs with an experienced draftsman and designer. Born to a family with long roots in north St. Louis, Louis LaBeaume (1873-1961) had a career that included significant residential, civic, apartment, fraternal and hospital buildings around his native city. Early in his career, LaBeaume left St. Louis to study at Columbia University and then practice in Boston. In Boston, LaBeaume worked in the offices of Peabody & Stearns; C. Howard Walker; Andrews, Jacques & Rantoul; and Parish & Schroeder. LaBeaume returned to serve as assistant to E.L. Masqueray, the Chief of Design of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. After work on the Exposition, LaBeaume partnered with architect Guy Mariner in the firm of Mariner & LaBeaume, which lasted from 1904 through 1912.[41]

LaBeaume's public service included membership on the City Plan Commission (1914-1916), the Plaza Commission (1925-1940) that shaped the "civic center" around Memorial Plaza and the Board of Control of the City Art Museum (1916-1941).[42] Within his profession, LaBeaume was an active leader locally and nationally. LaBeaume served as president of the St. Louis Chapter of the American Institute of Architects from 1918 through 1921. LaBeaume also served as a director of the national American Institute of Architects from 1928-1931 and vice president from 1935-1936. The national organization named Louis LaBeaume a Fellow in 1923.[43] LaBeaume's widely-engaged civic spirit was noted by the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* upon his death in 1961. The newspaper ran a special editorial entitled "The Spirit of Louis LaBeaume" that stated: "He was a wit and an urbane talker, delighting in the city's changes. … But there can be no scoffing at his enlightened devotion to his community. It helped shape the character of St. Louis."[44]

The partnership of Mariner & LaBeaume produced many significant local buildings ranging from large dwellings to public buildings, showing a mastery of early twentieth century masonry detailing and a penchant for non-ostentatious stylistic programs with classical and Renaissance antecedents. Their work was frequently published in national architectural periodicals including *The American Architect* and *The Western Architect.* The firms' designs would include the Missouri Supreme Court Building in Jefferson City (extant) and the Con P. Curran Printing Company Building (demolished), Church of the Ascension (extant), Central Presbyterian Church (extant) and Navarre Building (demolished) in St. Louis.[45] Early work included many residences

[41] Architects' Files: Louis LaBeaume. Collection of the Landmarks Association of St. Louis.
[42] Mary M. Stiritz, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory Form: Phyllis Wheatley YMCA* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Interior, 1984), p. 8-1.
[43]George McCue, editor, *The Way We Came: A Century of the AIA in St. Louis* (St. Louis: The Patrice Press, 1991), p. 147.
[44] "The Spirit of Louis LaBeaume," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (13 November 1961).
[45] Addresses as follow: Missouri Supreme Court Building: 207 W. High Street in Jefferson City; the Con P. Curran Printing Company Building: southeast corner of Eighth and Walnut streets in St. Louis; the Church of the Ascension: Cates at Goodfellow avenues in St. Louis, Central Presbyterian Church: Delmar at Clara aveues in St. Louis; and the Navarre Building: 600 Chestnut Street in St. Louis.

showing the firm's interest in reconciling convenient floor planning with classical exterior designs. Two extant private-place houses from 1908 demonstrate the firm's acumen: the Colonial Revival Georg Doane House at 42 Portland Place and the Georgian Revival William Stickley house at 46 Portland Place (both contributing to the Central West End Historic District, NR 11/15/1979). The firm's reconciliation of classicism and function is even more clear in the firm's design for the Divoll Branch Library in the city's Hyde Park neighborhood, completed in 1909 (extant; contributing to the Hyde Park Historic District, NR 3/15/1982). The hipped-roof, symmetrical brick library exhibits a restrained Beaux Arts classicism.

In 1910, the firm published the Kingsbury Apartments (extant), an eight-story apartment building with prominent bay windows, classical details and an elaborate overhanging cornice; the Church of the Ascension (extant) at Goodfellow and Cates, an eclectic English Gothic design; and second design entitled Kingsbury Apartments consisting of a three-story apartment building with a striking neoclassical entrance with round pediment, an attic story showing the influence of the Arts & Crafts movement and a projecting cornice with pronounced brackets. That same year, Lindenwood College in St. Charles, Missouri retained the firm as the campus architects.[46]

Mariner & LaBeaume's Young Women's Christian Association Building at 1411 Locust Street (1912; figure 7) received accolades in one of the twentieth century's earliest architectural guides to the city, Mary Powell's issue of the *St. Louis Public Library Monthly Bulletin* entitled *Public Art in St. Louis* (1925). Powell wrote that the building "is an attractive combination of rooms for club life, gymnastics, education and religion. … Architecturally, it is one the best club buildings in the city."[47] The Renaissance Revival character of the building seems to have influenced the later Downtown YMCA Building. The symmetry and proportion of the main elevation (which masks the incongruity of building's internal spaces), articulation of the first floor as a piano nobile, the use of friezes and panels to articulate window openings, the tripartite division of the building mass and the facing of the building in matte brick are all shared traits between the two buildings. Additionally, the arrangement of a complex series of programmatic spaces, including a gymnasium, meeting and social rooms, sleeping rooms and other facilities within one elegant building volume connects the two buildings.

In 1912, Guy Mariner left the partnership with LaBeaume. LaBeaume then joined Eugene S. Klein in what would be yet another significant partnership. Klein (1876-1944) had worked as a designer for the prolific firm of Mauran, Russell & Garden before joining the partnership with LaBeaume. Klein had graduated with degrees from Harvard University (1899) and Lawrence Scientific School (1901).[48] Klein had been born in St. Louis as the son of Circuit Court Judge Jacob Klein, and forged a career that included his own extensive public service. Klein served on the city's Plaza Commission and Public Recreation Commission, after having worked in the Emergency Fleet Corporation's housing division during World War I. Klein's architectural career includes stints as supervising architect for the Missouri penal system (1934-1939) and architectural commissions for the United States Army in Arkansas and Missouri. Like his better-

[46] "Louis LaBeaume Dies, Architect," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (10 November 1961).
[47] Mary A. Powell, *Public Art in St. Louis, St. Louis Public Library Monthly Bulletin* (July-August 1925), p. 225.
[48] Stritiz.

known partner, Klein also served as president of the local American Institute of Architects chapter, from 1931 through 1932 and became a national Fellow in 1938.[49]

Around the time that the downtown YMCA was completed, LaBeaume & Klein also completed the new 12-story Louderman Building at 11th and Locust Streets in downtown St. Louis (1925; extant; NR 11/22/2000), the 10-story Beaumont Medical Building on Washington Avenue in midtown St. Louis (1926; demolished; NR 1/19/1984; figure 8) and the 8-story St. Louis Maternity Hospital at Barnes Hospital (1928; extant). These buildings share a stylistic temperament with the Downtown YMCA Building exhibited through tripartite building division, Renaissance Revival detailing, stone base cladding and stark, plain brick building rises between the base and attic or cornice. Later work by the firm of note includes the neoclassical Municipal Auditorium (1932; extant; NR 2/11/2000) as well as revival-style houses for J. Porter Tirrill (1928) and C.M. Rice (1928) that both were published in journals. LaBeaume & Klein dissolved the partnership after Klein suffered injuries from an accident near Rolla, Missouri in 1943. The architect died one year later at the age of 59, while LaBeaume continued to practice and serve as a public voice on design until his death in 1961.

Social History: The Downtown YMCA Building in Operation, 1926 - 1964

When the Downtown YMCA opened, the Greater St. Louis YMCA observed that "[n]ever was a character-building agency more needed" than in the Jazz Age with a youth culture fueled by illegal alcohol and increasingly liberal sexuality.[50] The Downtown Branch provided a suitable homelike environment for men only, separating them from perceived vices. The Downtown YMCA Branch offered recreational activities ranging from billiards to chess, athletic facilities, classes in physical education and practical knowledge, and lounge areas for conversation. Most local YMCA branches provided sleeping rooms for rent to members, but the Downtown YMCA offered 400 rooms in recognition of the advantages of placing rooms near employment and the city's homeless population.

After the stock market collapse of 1929, the Downtown YMCA made a special effort to reach the growing unemployed and increasingly homeless population around Downtown.[51] The Downtown YMCA's membership grew during the Great Depression. By 1937, the Downtown YMCA reported that 2,500 people entered its doors every day.[52] The Downtown YMCA boasted that it especially was reaching out to boys who lived in the downtown area, who came in to meet with groups using the building for meeting space, for physical exercise, for instruction, for competitive sports and for personal counseling.[53] Today the remaining pool, exercise room, gymnasium, racquetball courts and meeting rooms show where those activities took place. The Downtown YMCA also offered meals, tailoring, cleaning, and barber service for members.[54] Some of the service rooms associated with these member activities remain.

[49] McCue.
[50] Starbird, p. 51.
[51] Stabrird, p. 52.
[52] *The March of Youth* (Greater St. Louis YMCA pamphlet, 1937).
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.

The Downtown YMCA also maintained a unique use on its second and fourth floors: Jefferson College, a general education program that remained in the building until 1942. Jefferson College had its roots in the origin of the local Association, whose 1877 constitution noted that the organization would aim to foster the "…improvement of the spiritual, intellectual and social condition of young men."[55] To satisfy the "intellectual" condition and carry out the founders' organizational mission, the St. Louis Association established an educational department in 1895. After the loss of its home at the Franklin Avenue building in 1921, the Association reopened the school in two sections: a Commercial School at the Ambassador Building downtown and an Automobile School at 9th and Carr streets on the north side.[56] The Commercial School relocated to the North Side Branch YMCA in 1923, and the automobile school to Grand and St. Louis avenues. Educational Secretary H.H. Walton worked for expansion and brought in Tom Nelson of the New York YMCA to guide development.

Walton oversaw the move into what seemed to be permanent classroom space in the new Downtown YMCA. From the new quarters, the Commercial School offered courses in accounting, business economics, typing, drawing, radio, French, architectural and mechanical drafting and other practical subjects.[57] In 1928, the Commercial School began grating a Bachelor of Commercial Science degree upon completion of 60 hours of college credit plus forty hours of business experience. At the same time, the Automobile School closed. By 1929, the School had 980 students.

The college's wide variety of programs and classes adjusted to the nation's growing trends. An employment department introduced in 1931 gave men "vocational guidance and general council" to better endure the Great Depression, as well as built morale among students.[58] In such troubled financial times, the school offered many students free tuition while also fostering dedication to personal goals through free weekly talks given by professional men. The Depression led to declining paid enrollment, and the School allowed unemployed students to continue courses when they could not pay. A June 1934 special meeting of the Association's Board of Governors led to the selection of Paul Williams as Director of the Commercial School. Under Williams, the school reformed its programs and changed its name to Jefferson College in 1935 (see figure 6).

At the request of Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), "Freshman College" was opened in 1934, offering a year of free college education for young St. Louis men and women with transferrable credits.[59] That same year, the Day Cooperative College provided students with both educational and professional experience through alternating six-week periods of classes and then work experience.[60] FERA transferred the Freshman College Project to the Works Progress Administration in 1935, and was terminated in 1939.[61]

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[55] *History of Jefferson College of the Saint Louis Young Men's Christian Association, 1929-1944 (*Self-published manuscript, 1944; Collection of the State Historical Society of Missouri), p. 5.
[56] Ibid.
[57] *History of Jefferson College*, p. 6.
[58] *History of Jefferson College*, p. 8.
[59] *History of Jefferson College*, p. 9.
[60] *History of Jefferson College*, p. 10.
[61] "The Freshman/Community Colleges Collection" (index document), The Freshman Community Colleges Collection, Wayne State University Library, p. 2.

When the University of Missouri accredited Jefferson College in 1940 for its work, the college acknowledged the "stamp of approval" as a telling achievement of its progress.[62] Jefferson College's growth necessitated more space, and by 1936 it was taking over more of the Downtown YMCA Building's fourth floor (today divided into apartments). Eventually part of the third floor was claimed by college classrooms too.

By January 1941, the College was leasing of space nearby on Seventeenth Street to meet demands. A pilot training program opened in response to World War II, training 1,200 young men for military air service.[63] In 1941, the newly opened Air Corp Institute prepared young men for the Air Corps' presence in the war.[64] War-related training spurred the final decision to relocate the College to the former Knights of Pythias building at Grand and Delmar in Midtown. In August 1942, Jefferson College moved from the Downtown YMCA Building, ending a significant early chapter in the branch history. Jefferson College had developed innovative work-study models allowed students to help themselves, and therefore help their communities and society as a whole.

In 1946, the Greater St. Louis YMCA had 21,666 members registered at nine branches. The Downtown YMCA reported 5,052 members, with the South Side branch in distant second with 2,901 members; the Downtown Branch was the only branch with members residing in all 47 membership districts.[65] A YMCA planning report from that year reported that the Downtown YMCA "carries on a large program for men all over the county and city, for transients and for its residents."[66] The report recommended expanding the reach, because the branch only reached 88 white residents per 10,000 within its immediate membership districts (the Downtown YMCA was segregated at the time).[67] The building needed additional program space, and the 1946 report recommended a two-story addition be constructed to accommodate the facility's needs.[68]

Yet the Downtown YMCA Building addition would never be built, despite documented increases in enrollment in the next decade. Issues of the branch newsletter, *Downtown Men*, report successes after World War II. One example is the Boys Department, a Saturday program that brought young men ages 9 through 15 to the building for gymnastics, movies, swimming and crafts. In March 1950, the YMCA expanded the program to meet five days a week in summers, and reported enrollment was up by 70 members.[69] As downtown changed, so did the YMCA. The April 1951 issue of *Downtown Men* boasted how popular the decision to create a parking lot to the east had been.[70] Several years later, as the western end of downtown faced major changes through urban renewal, the Downtown YMCA was undeterred. In a 1954 article entitled

[62] *History of Jefferson College*, p. 20.
[63] *History of Jefferson College*, p. 24.
[64] *History of Jefferson College*, p. 28.
[65] Roy Sorenson and H.B. Rogers, *A Plan for community Service of the Young Men's Christian Association of St. Louis and St. Louis* County (St. Louis: Greater St. Louis YMCA, 1946), p. 24, p. 29.
[66] Sorenson and Rogers, p. 19.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Sorenson and Rogers, p. 16.
[69] *Downtown Men* 11.11 (March 1950), p. 2.
[70] *Downtown Men* 12.4 (April 1951), p. 4.

"No Blight Here," the management stated that the facility was more vital than ever and was anticipating the new residents of the Plaza Square Apartments to the south.[71]

Still, some functions declined in the 1950s and 1960s. The use of the sleeping rooms fell from favor, and the YMCA sought new uses for the upper floors of the building. In February 1978, work started on a $2.8 million renovation of the top eight floors of the building. Sam Edgar, president of the YMCA of Greater St. Louis, created an unprecedented legal arrangement in which the building was turned into condominiums.[72] The YMCA purchased the lower recreational and athletic floors, and developer Donn H. Lipton purchased the upper floors. Lipton expanded the 400 sleeping rooms into 100 one-bedroom apartments for the elderly known as Centenary Tower. The name came from nearby Centenary Methodist Church at 16th and Pine streets, which provided social services to the new residents.

In 1978, many of the changes seen on the building today took place: the construction of the ramp and conversion of the window bay into an entrance on the front elevation; extensive window replacement; and gutting of all of the upper floors' interiors. With some remodeling of the interior spaces, the YMCA spaces are still being used today. Recently the Centenary Tower apartments closed, but a developer is proposing renovation of those floors in the next two years.

Renovation work left many of the historic spaces associated with the building's social history in their historic uses. While the construction of the elevator lobby for the apartments removed a small area of the lobby, the lobby and vestibule remain configured as the entrance to the Downtown YMCA facility. From the lobby, there are parlors and recreation rooms. On other floors, the pool, exercise room, gymnasium, locker areas, racquetball courts and meeting rooms remain. On the upper sleeping floors, corridor locations are largely intact although the floor plans beyond the corridors are heavily altered except above the racquetball courts where a section of the building was not renovated in 1978.

Summary

The Downtown YMCA Building stands as evidence of the successful local implementation of the national YMCA Building Bureau's centralization of YMCA facility planning. Today, despite some alteration of the sleeping room floors, the building demonstrates the Building Bureau's formula of well-planned, artistic, home-like interior space in a building envelope entrusted to local master designers. Today the building envelope and intact athletic spaces and first floor demonstrate the historic design and use of the Downtown YMCA. The building's continued use is testament to the strength of the Downtown YMCA Branch, which rose to become the largest branch in the local system during the period of significance. Today, the facility offers recreational activities, gymnastics and classes in the same spaces used before. While the spaces used for Jefferson College and the sleeping rooms that helped unemployed men through the Great Depression are altered, the configuration of the building evokes the historic feelings and associations that define the building as the city's central urban YMCA building.

[71] *Downtown Men* 15.3 (March 1954), p. 6.
[72] "Renovation of Downtown 'Y' Is Begun," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 9 February 1978.

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Boundary Description

The nominated property is located at 1528 Locust Street in St. Louis, Missouri. The building stands on City Block 512. The property is legally identified by the Assessor's Office as parcel number 0512900010. The nominated property is indicated by a heavy line on the accompanying map.

Boundary Justification

The nominated parcel includes the entire historic site of the Downtown YMCA Building.

Downtown YMCA Building Boundary Map. Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1951.

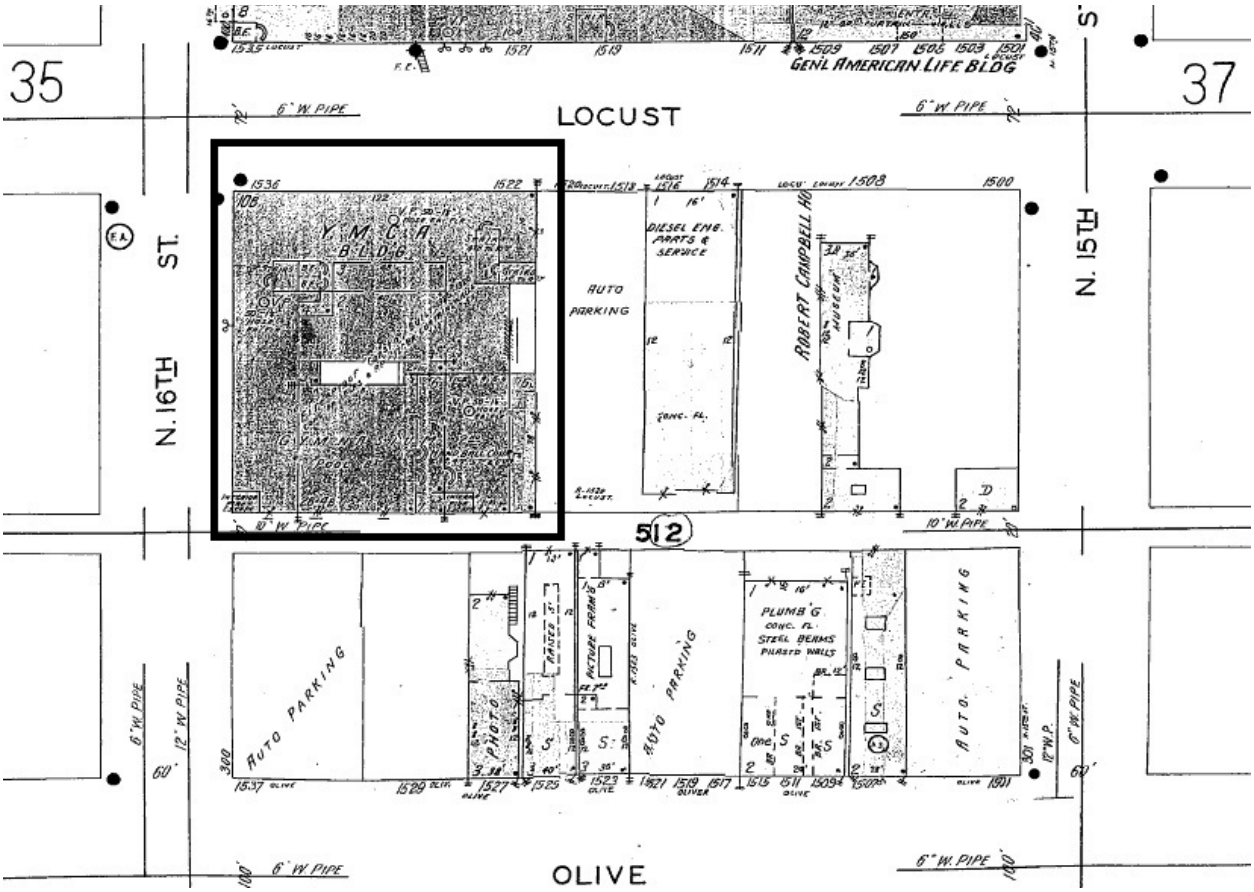


Figure 1: View east on Locust Street from 17th Street showing the context of the Downtown YMCA Building. Photograph by the preparer, April 2013.

Figure 2: Undated photograph of the Downtown YMCA Building before the 1978 remodeling.
Source: Rare Books and Manuscripts Collection, St. Louis Public Library.

Figure 3: The Downtown YMCA Building after completion, viewed from the southwest. Source: Katz Family YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota.

Figure 4: The lobby of the Downtown YMCA in the 1930s. Source: State Historical Society of Missouri.

Figure 5: The Downtown YMCA Building under construction, 1926. Source: Collections of the St. Louis Mercantile Library Association.

Figure 6: The entrance to Jefferson College in 1939. Source: Collections of the St. Louis Mercantile Library Association.

Figure 7: The Young Women's Christian Association Building at 1411 Locust Street (Mariner & LaBeaume; 1912) after completion. Source: Postcard view.

Figure 8: The Beaumont Medical Building (LaBeaume & Klein; 1926) as it appeared in 1984.
Source: Landmarks Association of St. Louis.

Figure 9: First floor plan. Source: Lydia Slocum, Preservation Research Office, 2014.

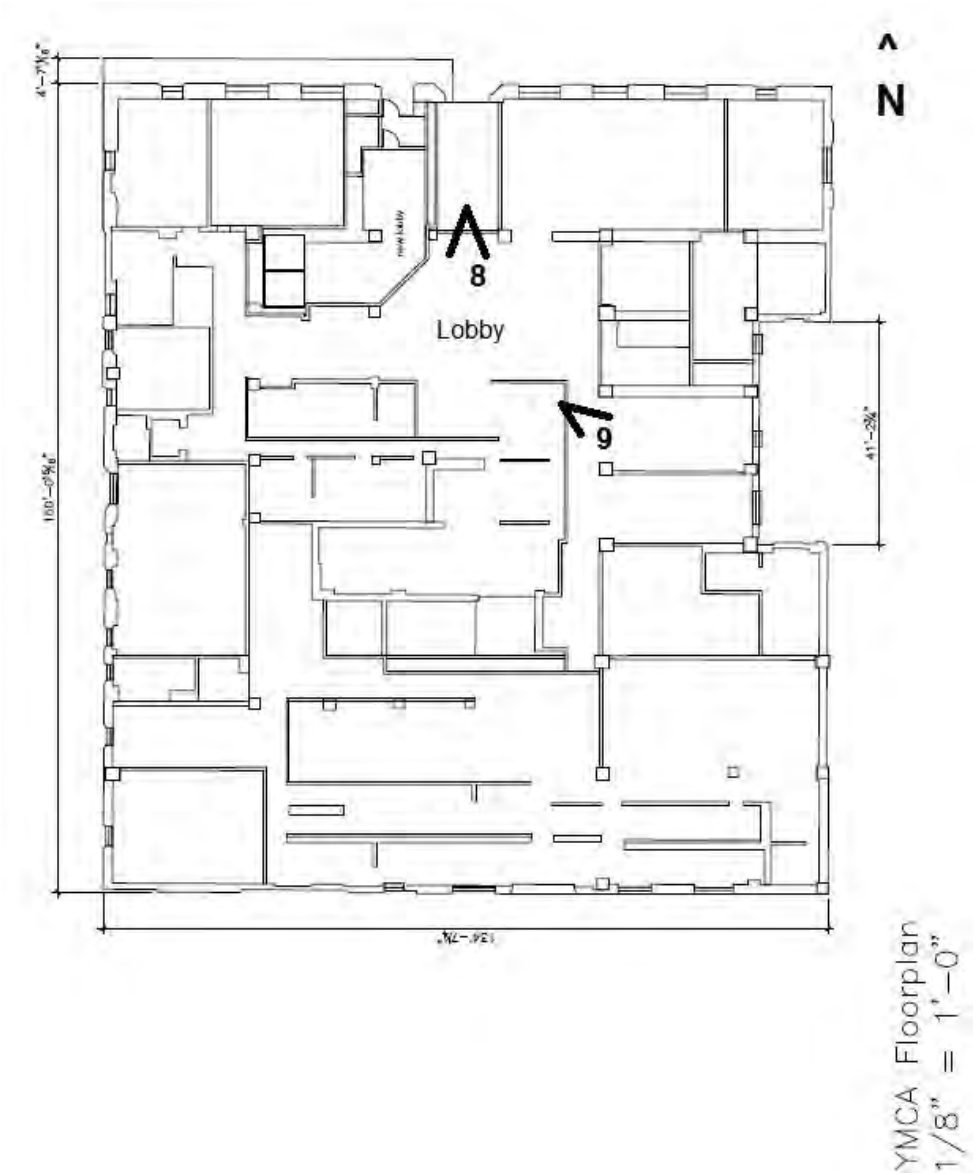


Figure 10: Second floor plan. Source: Claybour Architects, 1977.

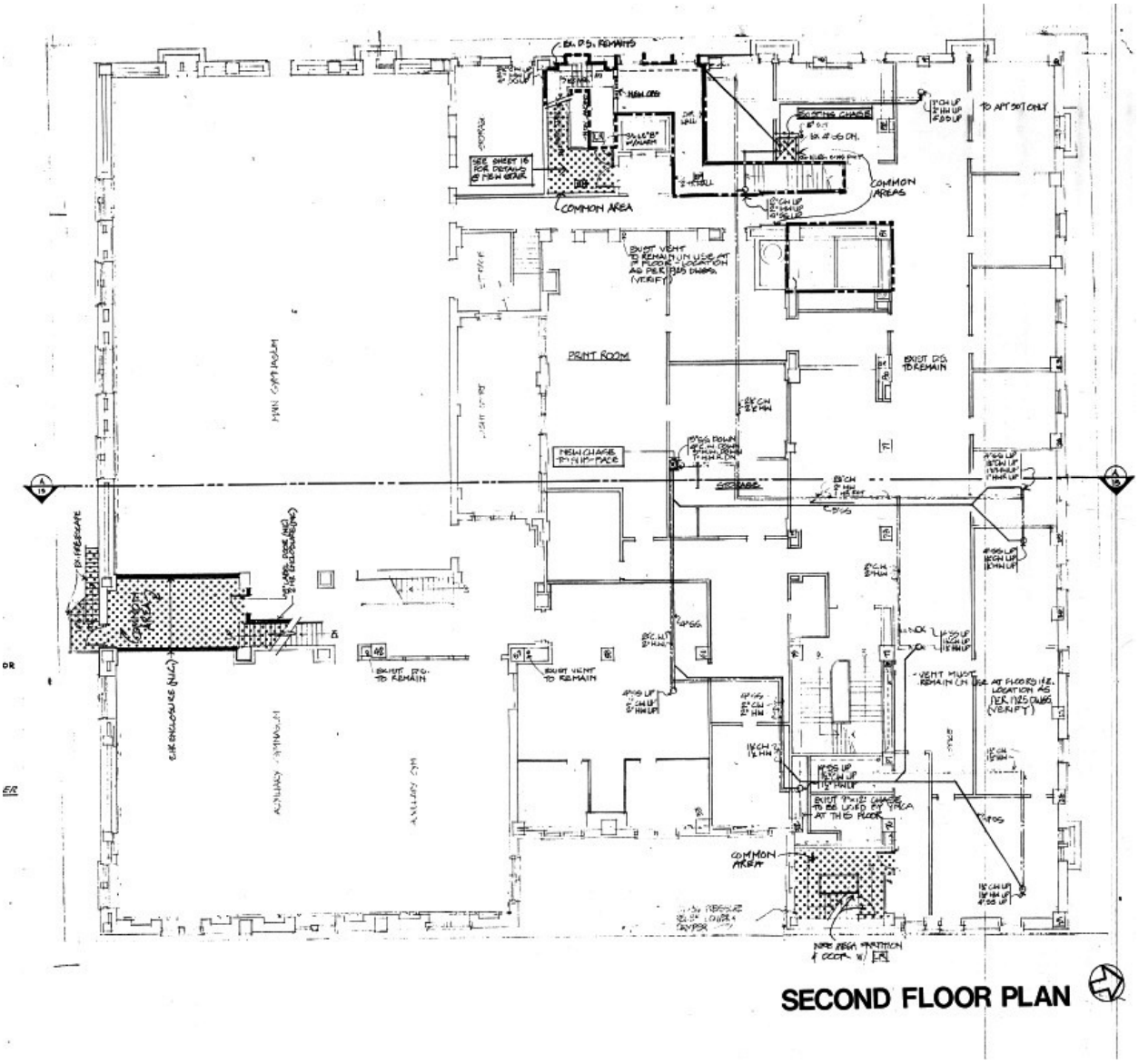


Figure 11: Third floor plan. Source: Claybour Architects, 1977.

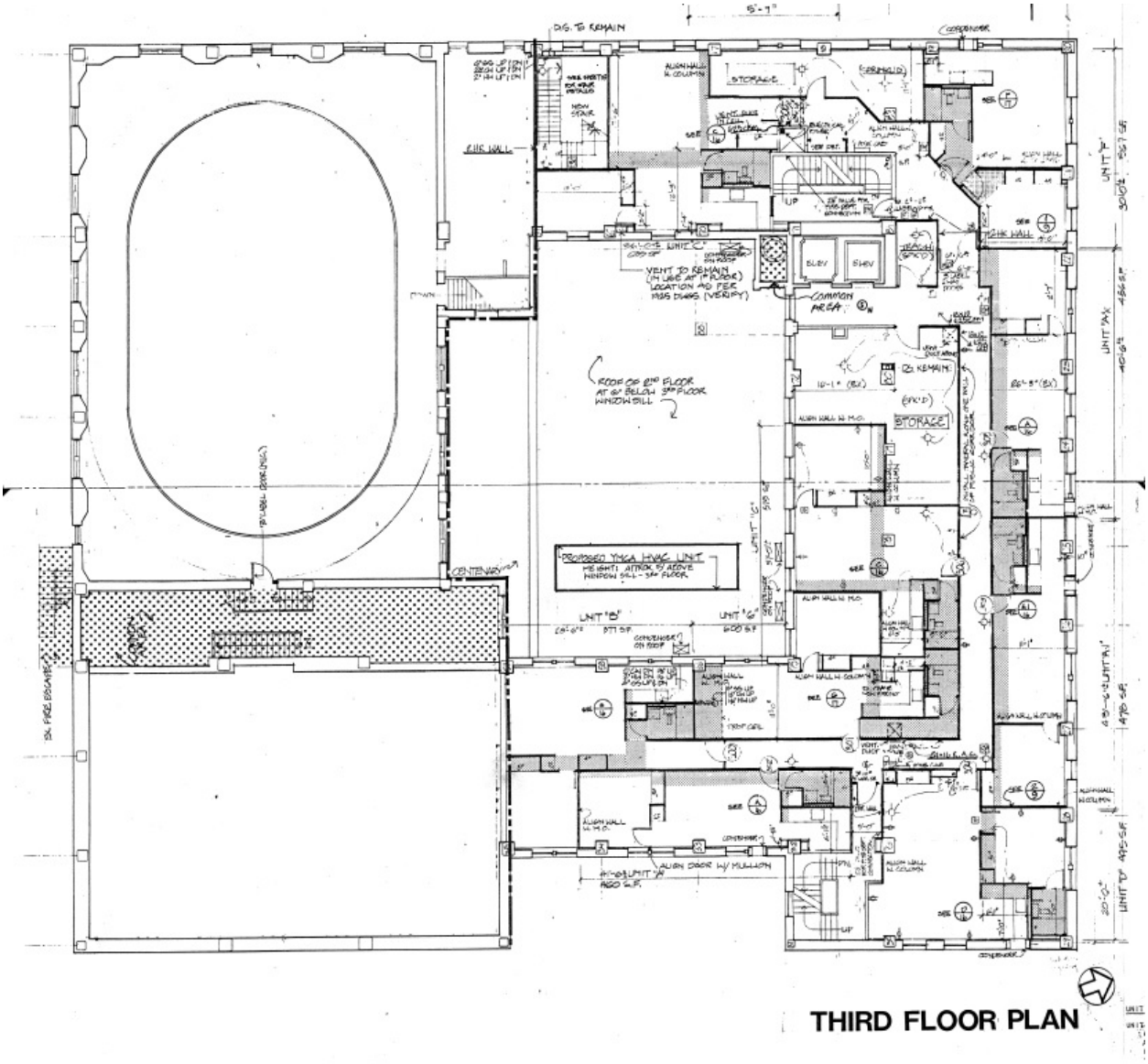


Figure 12: Fourth floor plan. Source: Claybour Architects, 1977.

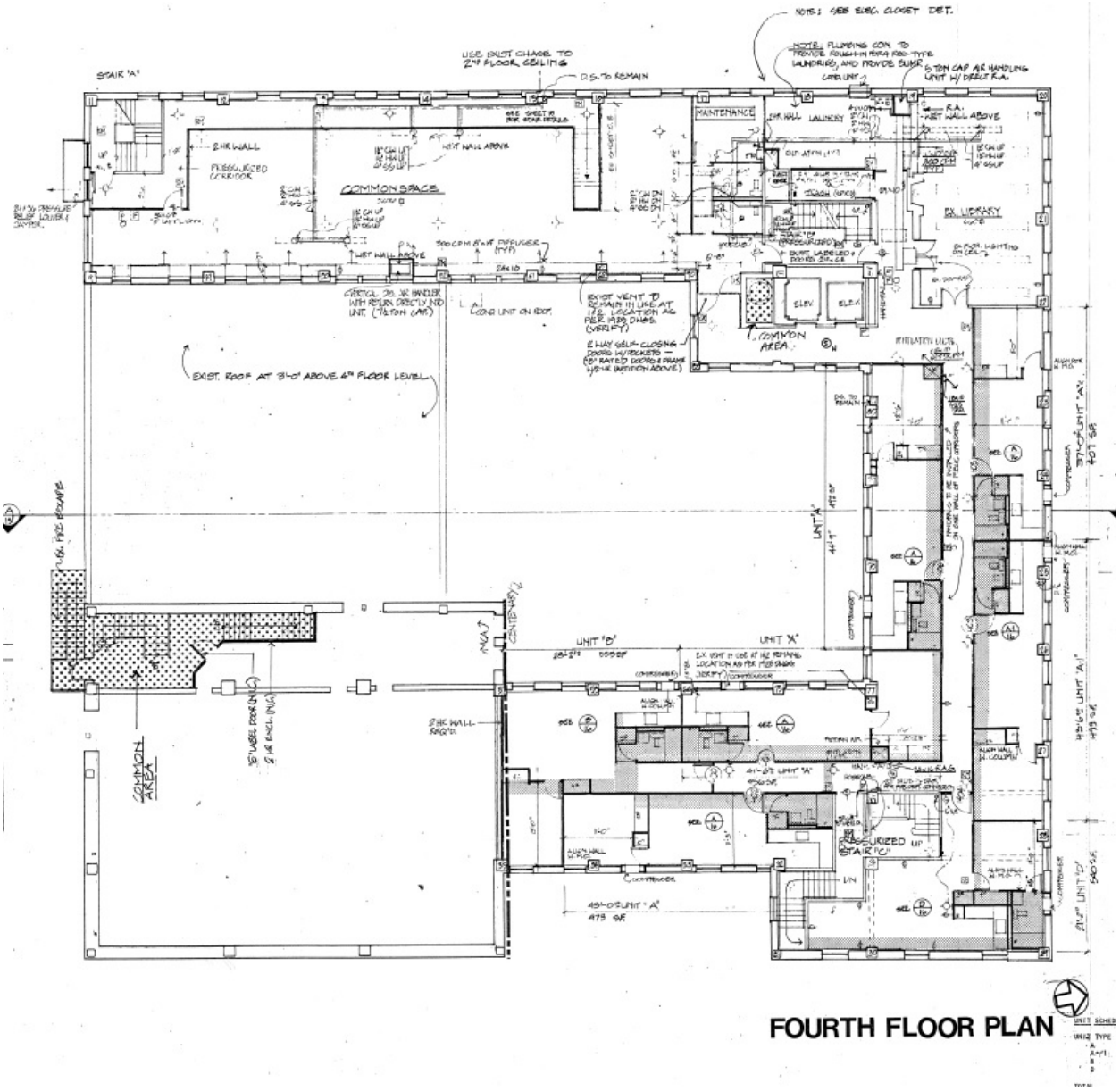


Figure 13: Fifth and sixth floors plan. Source: Claybour Architects, 1977.

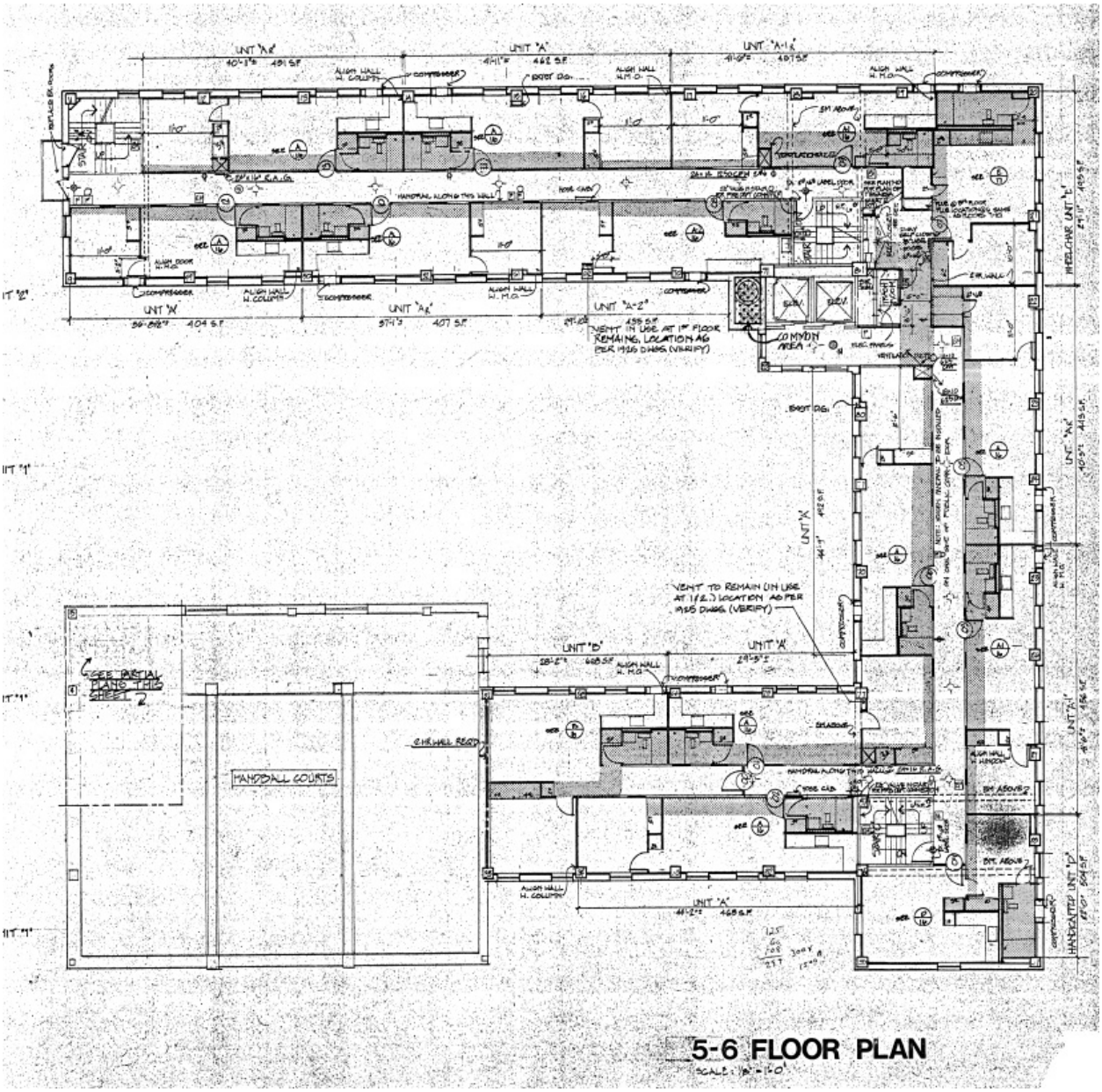


Figure 14: Seventh through tenth floors plan. Source: Claybour Architects, 1977.

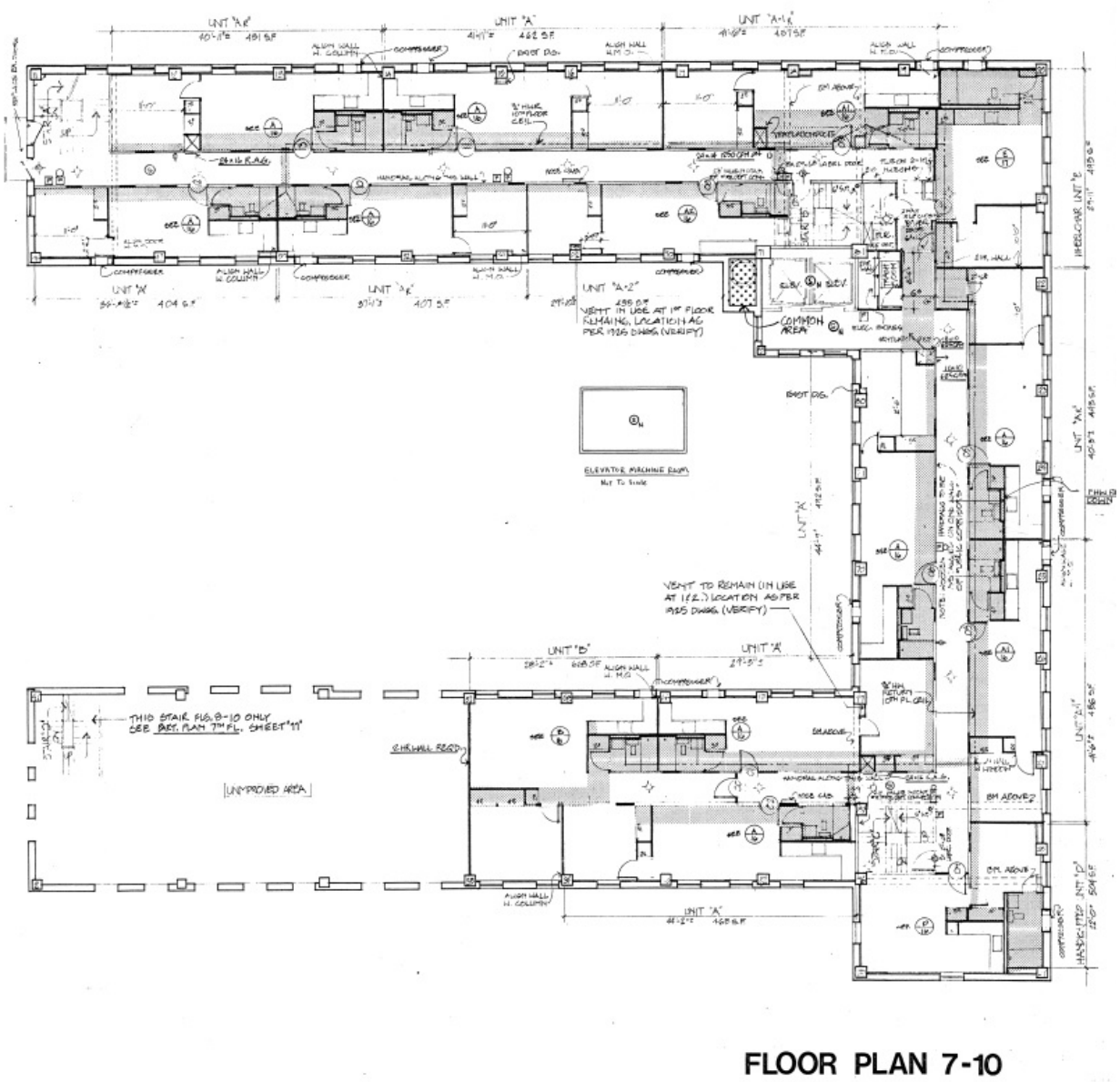
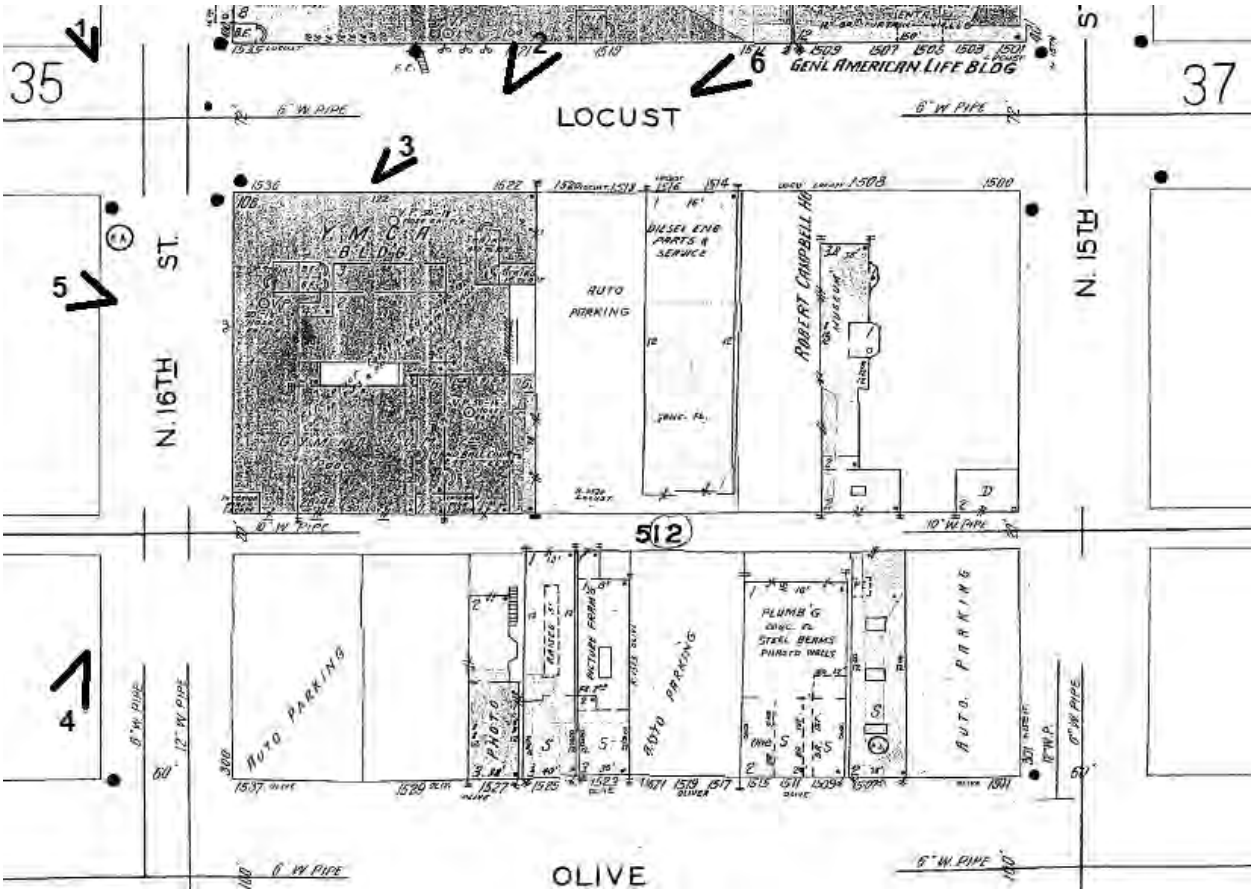


Figure 15: Exterior photo key. Source: 1951 Sanborn fire insurance map.



Downtown YMCA Building
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St. Louis (Independent City), MO
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Longitude: -90.202534

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