

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

and/or common YWCA (Preferred)

(VHLC File #127-300)

2. Location

street & number 6 North Fifth Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Richmond

N/A vicinity of

state Virginia

code 51

county (City)

code 760

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Social work

4. Owner of Property

name Young women's Christian Association, c/o Betsy Brinson

street & number 6 North Fifth Street

city, town Richmond

N/A vicinity of

state Virginia 23219

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Richmond City Hall

street & number 900 East Broad Street

city, town Richmond

state Virginia 23219

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None Previously Recorded

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date N/A

N/A federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town N/A

state N/A

# 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>    N/A    </u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

## Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

### SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The Central Administration Building of the Richmond Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) is located at 6 North Fifth Street, a street in downtown Richmond which is the location of a cluster of historic structures, including residential, religious, commercial and hotel building types that date from the early 1800s to the early 1900s. The YWCA was erected after the plans of the Richmond architectural firm Noland and Baskervill, which completed the plans in January 1913, and was paid \$5,000 in fees. The building was completed and dedicated in late April of 1914, at a cost of approximately \$89,480. with furnishings costing an additional \$2,500. The building is a brick and stone faced, rectangular shaped five-bay, three-story structure whose design is roughly modelled after the Roman urban palazzo type of the 16th century. It differs from this model only in the incorporation of an elaborately designed entry portico with curved exterior staircase.

### ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

The YWCA building was built as central headquarters for the non-profit organization from which it could administer its other properties and programs that were located in the industrial, financial, and shopping districts in the city. The structure also housed many of the social, cultural, and physical activities and programs that the YWCA operated for its members. The freestanding building is composed of two rectangular, cubic blocks, forming a stoutly proportioned T-shaped plan, and nearly fills its lot except for small setbacks at the front and sides of the main (front) block.

The front block, which primarily contains spaces for social, educational, food preparation, and administrative activities, is three stories in height (plus an attic), and rests on a full basement, which itself is situated half above ground. The rear block is similarly arranged with a main-floor gymnasium (with balcony above) resting on a half-raised basement, which contains a health (exercise) club and swimming pool. The front block is higher, but narrower, than the rear block.

The building is astylar, except for the front projecting porch, which has columns in antis on its three exposed sides. The front facade is divided into five bays defined by widely spaced, but well articulated windows, and is symmetrically arranged around the wider central bay which has doorways on the first and second floors and a window with sidelights on the third floor. The Flemish bond, brick facade is framed on both sides by limestone quoins which are set flush with the wall surface; on the bottom by a limestone water table and stuccoed base; and on the top by a largely proportioned, bracketed entablature of stucco and galvanized iron. The roof of the front block is hipped and low in profile, and is clad in standing seam tin (or terne). The only visible projections are two masonry chimneys (one for the front library (one for the front library fireplace and the other at the rear for the heating plant), and a roofed extension of the original elevator shaft (that was shown on the original drawings as having a glass skylight for a roof).

Other features shown on the drawings but not present on the building include:

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1913-1914 **Builder/Architect** Noland & Baskervill

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

#### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Richmond's Central YWCA served as the Association's administrative center for coordination of the many education, religious and social programs conducted for white women and girls in the city. Inspired by the Social Gospel philosophy of the Progressive era, the Richmond YWCA was the first association in the South; the early leadership sought to establish humanitarian programs to "help others to help themselves." The YWCA embodied the reform impulse rooted in Christian doctrine and practice aiming to abolish ignorance, poverty, crime, preventable diseases and to spread democracy throughout America and the world. Among these programs were day care for working women; employment referral services; room and board facilities for hundreds of single women wage earners employed in local tobacco factories, department stores and office work; travelers aid; and physical fitness programs. The Central YWCA operated similar programs for women and girls in Richmond's black community at the Phyllis Wheatley Branch. Erected after the plans of the Richmond architectural firm Noland and Baskervill (which completed the plans in January 1912 and was paid \$5,000 in fees), the building was completed and dedicated in late April of 1914, at a cost of approximately \$89,480. with furnishings costing an additional \$2,500. The architectural firm of Baskervill and Son, Richmond, Virginia, still possesses the original ink on linen construction drawings for this building. Upon completion, the granite, limestone, brick and stucco building, in the Second Renaissance Revival style, recalled the Romano-Tuscan Mode of the earlier Renaissance Revival style, which peaked in the years 1820-1860. Thus, through the building style chosen (one which was typical for city clubs at that time), Richmond's YWCA assumed the reserved dignity associated with other private clubs of the period (which were usually for male membership), and was described by one of the administrators shortly after dedication as being "splendid, useful and attractive."

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The YWCA had its origins in that period of time when our country was shifting from a rural, agrarian society to an urban, industrial one. The oldest association in the south, the YWCA of Richmond was conceived in 1887 in a parlor meeting of eight white women at the home of Emily Fairfax Whittle, wife of the Episcopal Bishop. Concern for the more than seven hundred white women working in Richmond factories and shops had moved Anna Rahm to call this meeting to discuss what could be done. After several meetings, the group established the Woman's Christian Association of Richmond with president Emily Whittle and a vice-president from each religious denomination in the city. To these were added an Advisory Board of six white men. "The object of said Association shall be to promote the spiritual and temporal welfare of such indigent and dependent women as it may see fit to assist, and especially of young women as must rely on their own exertions for livelihood" stated the first charter.<sup>1</sup>

## 9. Major Bibliographical References (See Continuation Sheet #13)

"The Woman's Christian Association, Richmond, Virginia." International Messenger,  
March, 1896.  
Southern Historical Publication Society. The South in the Building of the Nation,  
vol. 10, 1903, pp. 635-636.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 0.25 acres

Quadrangle name Richmond, VA

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 

1	8	2	8	4	4	0	0	4	1	5	7	4	4	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C 

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D 

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H 

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**Verbal boundary description and justification** The nominated property is identified by the city as map reference #W000-0023/010 and is approximately 77' x 137' in size.  
**Verbal Boundary Justification:** The property lines are identical to those appearing in the deed of November 15, 1912 when the land was acquired by the YWCA.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county N/A code

state N/A code county N/A code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth S. Brinson, Director of Development;  
H. Christopher Slusher, Architectural Preservationist

organization YWCA: Organizational Consultant date October 31, 1983

street & number 6 North Fifth Street telephone (804) 643-6761

city or town Richmond state Virginia 23219

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature H. Bryan Mitchell

title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission date March 20, 1984

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
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YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION (YWCA), RICHMOND, VA

Continuation sheet #1

Item number 7

Page 1

7. DESCRIPTION -- Architectural Analysis

a paneled parapet wall above the cornice made of galvanized iron (divided into five bays on the front and back and into six bays on the sides); a round, metal flagpole anchored to the ceiling structure of the third floor, projecting through the roof structure, on axis with the center bay at the front; and a turned stone balustrade between the columns in anthis on the front side of the porch. Air conditioning exhaust grills have been installed through the masonry walls under the windows on the first and third floors. It is interesting to note at this point that while these grills are both obvious and modern alterations to the facades, they are not entirely without precedent. The original drawings show smaller, metal grills under a majority of windows on the north and south facades (but not the east facade). A sectional drawing through the exterior wall shows they were intended as fresh air intakes for the heating system, since they are located under east iron radiators spaced throughout the building.

Entry to the main floor at the front facade is effected by twin, curved staircases on either side of the porch. The base of the porch and staircase (including the steps) is granite ashlar. In the middle of the projecting porch base is a small rectangular window (to a cloakroom under the porch) covered with a grill of iron bars. All of the upper structure of the staircase and porch is made of carved limestone. The carved handrails are carried on short paneled walls and terminate at the sidewalk in short paneled posts which have simply molded caps and bases. The stairs join the porch at the sides between the columns in anthis. The columns are Tuscan in their simplicity, although the capitals are without necking and have simple volutes with garlands instead of an echinus. The columns stand between ashlar piers with molded caps and bases. On the street sides of the piers are two ornately framed shields of carved stone; the left one has the founding date (1887) of the organization and the right one has the building construction date (1913). A composite entablature above has a simple, molded fascia; the frieze on the street side has the words "Young Women's Christian Association" carved in Roman letters, and the cornice has dentils under simple molding. The balustrade around the top of the porch once had turned stone balusters and stone handrail, but the balusters have been removed and replaced with small, square metal ones. Square, paneled posts of limestone, similar to the staircase newel posts terminate the balustrade. A metal flagpole is attached to each of the posts and extends outward over the sidewalk.

The main-floor entry is surrounded with a carved, molded architrave, and a composite entablature which has modillion blocks and is supported on each side with an ancone. The entry doors are bi-valve, with oak frames, plate glass and ornate brass hardware. The porch floor is paved with checkered squares of marble, and the wainscot in the air lock (vestibule) is also marble. Entry into the building at the front also can be gained through two doors at the basement level. The basement walls are stuccoed and scored to simulate limestone ashlar. The water table is carved limestone and is connected to the first-floor (main) windows by limestone panels and window aprons capped by a limestone string course from which the window sill is formed.

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

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YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION (YWCA), RICHMOND, VA

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7. DESCRIPTION -- Architectural Analysis

The windows are elaborately framed and are of varying height from floor to floor. The first-floor windows are (aluminum) double hung with four over four lights. (These windows along with others on the north, south and east facades, were originally double wood casements with three lights each, but were replaced in 1969.) The window is framed with a molded limestone architrave which terminates in accentuated impost blocks in the upper corners. The window is capped with a round head architrave surrounding an ornate, white glazed, terra cotta panel which has a complex monogram made up of the letters "YWCA" in an interwoven pattern. The window sill is in line with the lower string course and has an apron below it which is framed on either side by a shallow, plain bracket.

With the exception of the center bay, the second-floor windows are (new) double-hung units with four over four lights and topped with an awning with two lights. The molded architrave is shouldered at the awning window and is flat across the top. The stone aprons are paneled and are framed on each side with shallow brackets which have fluting or ribbing on the front. A second limestone string course separates the first- and second-floor windows. The central-bay fenestration provides access to the porch roof, and is composed of double, glassed doors (resembling casement windows with paneled wood bottoms) with sidelights. The flat architrave at the top is mounted with carved limestone ornament which steps up in height from the sides to the center, where a singular, large anthemion is placed, with garlands of foliage trailing off in volutes to each side.

The third-floor windows are (new) double-hung units with four over four lights, and are also capped with an awning unit with two lights. The architrave is identical to those below and is similarly shouldered. There are no aprons below the sill on the third floor, although miniscule brackets are found under the sill on either side.

The wall is topped by an elaborate entablature. The limestone fascia supports a stuccoed frieze, to which are applied ornate, galvanized iron brackets (or consoles). Interspersed along the frieze are metal grills to the attic beyond, which are placed over the bay divisions. The galvanized iron cornice has flat, round paterae on the soffit between the brackets. Built-in gutters serve to collect rain water, and on the frieze (along the sides of the building) are positioned rain leader boxes which have the raised numbers "1913" on the front.

On the south facade of the main block, the architectural elements are the same as those on the front, except the windows are treated differently. A different rhythm is found in the first five bays than in the last two (seven total). The round-head windows from the front are continued on the main floor in the first five bays, while above, on the second and third floors, are found units identical to those on the third floor of the front facade. (The fifth bay contains the main interior stair.) The last two bays have large windows with trim similar to the shouldered units, except the unit is composed of two double-hung windows with one over one lights, joined with a mullion. The entablature is the same except that only three grills to the attic appear in the frieze, spaced over bays one, three and six.

(See Continuation Sheet #3)



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7. DESCRIPTION -- Architectural Analysis

The hipped roof of the rear block is standing seam tin (or terne), and is capped by a gabled skylight raised above the roof line, which serves to illuminate the gymnasium below.

The interior of the building is crafted with as much architectural skill and excellent workmanship and materials as is the exterior. The basement of the front block houses a day school program and, with changes effected through the 1979 renovation, has administrative offices, activity areas and classrooms for the school clustered in the front. Food preparation areas, a cloakroom, toilets and other utilitarian spaces support the program. The basement level is accessible from the street by doors at the front of the building, and from the main floor by a main stair, a rear service stair, and an elevator which was an original feature of the building.

The basement of the rear block contains exercise facilities and related support spaces. A twenty by forty foot swimming pool of white "enameled bricks" is set below the floor level, in a large room with walls and floor of similarly glazed brick, which is located under the gymnasium. The room also contains the changing rooms, which are formed of upright slabs of marble. The rectangular changing rooms are arranged in fours in a pinwheel configuration, with a single shower stall as the wheel's center (accessible from all four sides). There are eight such pinwheel "shower baths," grouped in twos, forming aisles which lead from the entry area (at a towel room) to the pool. Security and control of the pool is maintained by cast-iron gates approximately four feet high, equipped with locks. From an elevated platform at the north end of the large room, a new weight room and sauna have been created behind a modern, hollow metal frame, and glass wall.

Accessible from the street via the twin staircase and front porch, the main floor is used primarily for reception of the public, and for administrative activities. A double set of bi-valve doors creates a vestibule (or air lock) at the entry, which has wainscoting and floor tiles of marble. The lobby and reception areas are elaborate, with paneled wood (now painted) and large-scaled, molded ornamentation. The administrative areas are set behind a screen created of three, low counters faced in paneled wood (the middle one protrudes from the line of the screen in a semielliptical bow), and of pillars with pilasters which have recessed panels, and capitals composed of enriched egg and dart moldings. Major doorways are framed with either single or clustered paneled pilasters, which carry an over-scaled entablature. The entablature terminates at the ceiling which has caissons, or sunken panels (without ornamentation). The entablature wraps around the room and is carried across the ceiling from pilasters in such a manner that the ceiling is divided into six, nearly square sections. The grid appears to follow main structural members for the second floor (above), and may be a way of dealing with (or disguising) their depth. Windows have shouldered, plainly molded architraves. Four marble steps lead from the lobby area to the main stair and elevator core of the building.

(See Continuation Sheet #5)

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7. DESCRIPTION -- Architectural Analysis

The most formal and public room is the library, which is to the south (or left) of the lobby. All casework and flooring is oak, and the plastered ceiling has a series of three recessed panels with enriched classical decoration. The fireplace mantel has paired, fluted Doric columns (on both sides), set on a single pedestal. An enriched entablature is above. The firebox surround and hearth are white marble with black veining. The mantelpiece above the fireplace is decorative with enriched egg and dart molding and a three-panel frieze, composed of fluting on either side of a raised panel centerpiece.

Paneled wainscoting is on the east and south walls, capped by a chair rail which continues the line of the bookcase cornice. The window architraves are shouldered. Interior window sills are of the same marble as that which surrounds the fireplace. Electric illumination of the library is provided by nine double-fixture, metal wall sconces, in foliated design, located just above the wainscot. Plastered walls terminate at the top in an elaborate plaster entablature and ceiling. The entablature is enriched with egg and dart and acanthus leaf decoration, and foliated, scrolled modillion blocks. Decoration on the (shallow) paneled ceiling includes acanthus, bead and reel, and egg and dart moldings. Round, flowered paterae are found at each of the four corners of the ceiling.

In the stair hall beyond the lobby, the main stair has cast-iron newel posts and balustrades, with marble treads. A rear stair of one flight connects the exercise room and poolroom with the gymnasium in the rear block. The elevator commutes to all four floor levels.

The gymnasium, located in the rear block of the building, fills the entire two-story space. A balcony around the entire room is nine feet wide and, although once open all around, now has a partition wall placed at each end of the gym behind the basketball goals. The ceiling structure is exposed steel trusses with riveted fasteners. The balcony is suspended from the truss work on round steel rods. A gabled skylight, mounted along the ridge of the hipped roof, is approximately eighteen feet wide by twenty-two feet long, and was originally designed to have operable awning windows at its base for ventilation. The gym has a wood floor and is equipped for basketball, as well as for true gymnastic exercises.

The primary spaces on the second floor include a large multipurpose room in the front of the main block, which was originally used for a dining area at a time when the YWCA maintained lodging houses and operated "Rest Rooms" (places to rest and eat lunch) for working women. The room was equipped with a built-in, raised stage in the 1969 renovation, and it is now used for meetings, aerobic classes, and special functions. This room has access to the front porch roof through bi-valve doors in the central bay.

Other spaces on the second floor include a commercial kitchen and a small dining room, which are leased by the YWCA to a private proprietor. Over the years, several programs have operated out of this space to provide low-cost meals for patrons of the YWCA and the public alike. Other rooms on this floor are utilitarian and have a variety of uses (e.g., classrooms, food storage, toilets, etc.).

(See Continuation Sheet #6)

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7. DESCRIPTION -- Architectural Analysis

Primary access to the gymnasium balcony is from this level.

The third floor once served as extra lodging rooms for working girls who were new to Richmond. It also contained rooms for examination and medical treatment (when necessary) and for storage, linens, toilets, etc. The area is used now for administrative offices of the YWCA, as well as headquarters for several outreach and educational programs to and for women.

The YWCA today retains a great portion of its original design and architectural embellishments. Fortunately, where changes have occurred, they have been undertaken with a good degree of sensitivity to the building, and have not resulted in serious compromise of the building's integrity.

The building was of good design and construction, and today it remains a monument to the great strides made in the early women's movement at the turn of the century.

8. SIGNIFICANCE -- Historical Background

Similar movements were building in other communities across the country since the first organization convened in New York City in 1858. While joint meetings among the groups began by 1875, these groups did not join together officially as a national movement until 1906 when the Richmond YWCA became a charter member of the national YWCA. Soon thereafter the organization would become international in scope, operating in seventy-six countries by the 1930s.

The first project of the new Richmond Association was to provide housing for women coming to the city to find work. A six-room flat, furnished with donated household articles, was opened in 1887 on Main Street between Sixth and Seventh streets. News of the home quickly spread so that there was soon full capacity with nine occupants; the following year the Association rented a house which accommodated nineteen young women. In 1891 the Association raised money, in part through a bazaar, to purchase two connecting houses at 709-11 East Franklin Street. Equipped to serve forty-five women with "shelter, a friend and the personal touch that would transform the world of business and money into some semblance of a home," the weekly board charges were \$2.00.<sup>2</sup>

An internal report issued in 1893 claimed that during the year the house provided lodging to sixty regular boarders and twenty-four "transients," of which twenty-seven worked in the city during "the busy season and returned home for the dull months" to move back later.<sup>3</sup> Each different denomination on the governing board furnished a room. The "Quiet Room," under the care of local Quaker women, was used for sickness "when rest is needed to restore the nervous system."<sup>4</sup>

(See Continuation Sheet #7)

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8. SIGNIFICANCE -- Historical Background

Services to residents included medical care, a library of over 1800 "instructive and entertaining books," sewing classes, prayer groups and entertainment of a "social and educational nature."<sup>5</sup> The Employment Committee located jobs for forty of these young women. Finally, the home offered "the motherly care of a Christian matron along with the kind interest and sympathy of a Board of Managers, the members of which are all their true friends."<sup>6</sup>

The early Association established as its second project a day nursery and a kindergarten in 1890. It was designed to offer day care for working mothers, and "little babies and children were cared for, taught, warmed and fed while their mothers earned family support."<sup>7</sup> Mothers were charged a nominal sum of fifteen cents a week primarily "to cultivate in the mothers a spirit of industry and to relieve them of any idea of pauperism."<sup>8</sup> The project served from thirty to thirty-five children daily.

The kindergarten had as its goal keeping, for working mothers, "those children who have arrived at that age when they begin to wander around the streets, out of mischief."<sup>9</sup> Supported entirely by voluntary contributions and a City Council appropriation of \$550, the kindergarten employed a "competent teacher to administer the program and to instruct the children."<sup>10</sup> Shortly thereafter the entire program was renamed the Belle Bryan Day Nursery in tribute to the Association president.

Recognizing the value of exercise for good health, the Association next chose to open its first gymnasium to relieve "the hard wear and tear of city life."<sup>11</sup> Here were offered "physical culture" classes in calisthenics and the game of "Basketball" considered by local instructors to be an excellent gymnasium exercise for women because of its "wonderful alertness, a good deal of running, bending, jumping, and, best of all, hard breathing and consequent lung expansion." Physical exercise for working women in particular was strongly promoted in order to relieve the stresses of standing and sitting for long periods each day. Several years later the Association expanded the health or physical program for wage-earning women through the establishment of week-long summer camps at country locations. In these camps women could "come close to nature for a while."<sup>12</sup>

Community women rallied support for the new program, and by 1894 membership in the Association numbered a total of 669 women. While almost one third of these women came from the city's Episcopal churches, other women represented the Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Christian denominations. Among the membership were three Quakers in addition to the fifty-one women who joined as sustaining supporters but not representing any particular church affiliation. By 1914 the membership would increase to 2,362 women.

In 1910 the YWCA initiated the establishment of Travelers Aid to meet trains carrying young rural women into Richmond. Growing rapidly, by 1912 the staff totaled four persons who had responsibility for greeting twenty-four trains daily

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8. SIGNIFICANCE -- Historical Background

to keep "young women from entering into a life of evil."<sup>14</sup> Over 1,947 women were met in 1913. Enthusiasts applauded the service through letters to local newspapers where they pleaded with readers to help "your little sister, my little sister, coming to town with her sweet wistful face." Employment referral for prospective job applicants was a second service offered through Travelers Aid. In 1913 over 70% of the 301 applicants found jobs. These positions ranged from factory workers, store clerks, office assistants and stenographers to cashiers, mother's helpers, domestics, cooks and telephone operators.<sup>15</sup>

In 1914 Travelers Aid became a separate organization and affiliated itself with the national Travelers Aid Society; the newly created YWCA Extension Department, later renamed the Industrial Department, absorbed employment services. Lucy Randolph Mason became the first Industrial Secretary of the Richmond YWCA. In the same year, the new Central YWCA Building opened its doors at 6 North Fifth Street. With Miss Katherine Hawes installed as president, the YWCA was in 1914 about to engage in a new area of expansion and program building for women in the community. Providing services to working women remained central to the overall program goals. Outreach services to women in factories and businesses grew through the establishment of several separate rest rooms and luncheon facilities in the factory district; sex education, social clubs for women workers and vocational training courses began. With Lucy Randolph Mason aboard, girls and women of the Association were no longer regarded as the "indigent and dependent women" described in the organization's charter. Influenced instead by a new feminist ideology, every woman was treated as a "sister under the skin."<sup>16</sup>

In her first annual report to the YWCA Board of Directors, Mason outlined both the new philosophy and the new program growth. In order to promote the "mission to be a friend" YWCA staff and volunteers visited the "working girl" in seventeen factories and fifteen department stores during the first year. As a result of these visits, weekly classes in practical English, arithmetic, modern European history, and gymnastics were instituted for wage-earning women along with regular evening activities in recreation, music and reading discussion groups. The Employment Committee conducted almost 2,700 office interviews and succeeded in placing 268 women in new jobs, and an Education Fund offered scholarships to wage-earning women looking to enroll in college programs.<sup>17</sup>

On October 12, 1914, YWCA President Katherine Hawes established the first domestic science program in the city in memory of her mother. Classes included cooking, sewing, housekeeping, dressmaking and millinery. A Business Women's Club, comprised predominantly of stenographers among its two hundred members, was organized for networking. All of this work was conducted by the YWCA Extension Committee and its single staffperson Lucy Randolph Mason with seventy-five volunteer workers.<sup>18</sup> Plans for the future included opening three new boarding homes and expanding further the summer camp facilities and offerings.<sup>19</sup> "Little sisters" of the industrial women would become numerous enough to form a Girls Work Department, later named the Girl Reserves.

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Responsible for the "outside work," the Extension Department had as its aim to bring new women into association life and "to become a medium between different groups of girls who need each other." Support for the individual woman was given major emphasis. At the same time, the Department served as a setting in which women of leisure could learn much from the working girls of "courage, endurance and self-sacrifice." Networking with other social institutions "to receive and render mutual services" was considered key.<sup>20</sup>

The most prominent of the Richmond YWCA facilities was the Central Building. In 1911 over four hundred volunteers engaged in a whirlwind campaign raising \$161,000 to erect the Central Building. A year later the YWCA purchased property at 6 North Fifth Street for \$38,000 from Dr. Hugh Taylor. In an annual report dated January 1913, the Building Committee indicated that many meetings had taken place in deciding plans and bids for the proposed administration building. Chaired by W. Frank Powers, the seven member Committee finally awarded the architectural contract to Messrs. Noland and Baskervill of Richmond.

At long last, the YWCA celebrated the dedication of its new Central Building in April 1914. Offering the only swimming pool in Richmond exclusively for women, the building containing a gymnasium, a library, cafeteria, an auditorium, a domestic science room, committee rooms, offices, and bedrooms for the use of Travelers Aid and several YWCA staff who lived in the building.<sup>21</sup> At the dedication ceremony, Dr. S.C. Mitchell delivered the keynote address. In his remarks, he offered the following:

The building is expressive of the community as a whole. It is the product of united endeavor, and it represents no class or sect. This building is a nucleating center, where scattered forces can be unified and ideas clarified, organized purposes can be carried out for the good of Richmond women.

Whenever you can inspire a community with a great structural impulse, something is going to happen. Something has happened, and this building represents a great civic purpose that has embraced all classes of our people. This building is not compacted merely of bricks and mortar. You might think so if you feel its walls and its solid doors; but there is more than bricks and mortar here. It is compacted of love; it is built of self-sacrifice and high aspirations; it represents the embodiments of an ideal. Unless we realize that all we see is interpretative of love—love of humanity, love of one's city, love of one's God—we will fail to understand the meaning of our meeting this afternoon.

This building stands as a concrete evidence of the forces at work that will at last abolish ignorance and poverty and crime and pre-

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ventable disease. This is the beginning of this building's great career. Think of the thousands that will flow through these halls; think of the democratic influences that will go out from here through our city; think of the young women who will have their spirits sweetened and strengthened by what they will receive and give here.<sup>22</sup>

Architecturally, the building is an excellent example of a local interpretation of a Renaissance Palazzo form. In employing a mode that was commonly associated with city clubhouses, the architect and client sought to imbue their building and the organization it housed with a respectability normally associated with selective private membership clubs.

The building shares a commonality of design with several other public buildings designed almost contemporaneously by the same firm, most notably, the Dooley Hospital (1917-20) and St. Phillip's Hospital (1917-20) in Richmond. The firm was the leading firm in Richmond at the time, having previously designed the wings of the Virginia State Capitol and the Second Baptist Church, hence the choice of the firm to build the YWCA's headquarters was obvious and reflects the client's desire for a prestigious structure.

Despite "democratic influences" the early YWCA operated segregated programs and facilities. The origins in both the black and white communities though were unsurprisingly similar, for Richmond black women of the early 1900s shared the same concern for young "colored" working women as did their white sisters. In much the same fashion as white women had given birth to the Central YWCA, a small group of black women met in the Jackson Ward residence of Mrs. A.G. Thompson Taylor, wife of the rector at St. Philip's Episcopal Church. In addition to the sewing and Bible reading, the women proposed to organize a club to provide "a Christian home for country girls coming to Richmond seeking work."<sup>23</sup>

Assisted by the Central YWCA and Addie Hunton of the national YWCA staff, the women recruited over two hundred members, thus officially allowing them to establish in 1912 one of the country's first black branches with the Phyllis Wheatley Branch of the Richmond YWCA. Located at 100 East Leigh Street, the club moved shortly to 22 West Leigh Street, where housing was available to a few working women. The first contributions to the apartment totaled "one-half-dozen spoons, one quilt, a blanket, two flat irons, one box of Dutch cleanser and two bars of Octagon soap."<sup>24</sup> After several moves the Branch purchased the "Presbyterian and Methodist Old Ladies Home"<sup>25</sup> at 505 North Seventh Street as a permanent residence and employed the first executive secretary in Adele F. Ruffin. Two years later the national YWCA office, recognizing her talent for leadership, hired her as the field supervisor for the South Atlantic states; she brought to the job "a strong body and a soul which refuses to be daunted."<sup>26</sup> The Phyllis Wheatley Branch became an official branch of the Central YWCA in 1914.

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<sup>3</sup>Jubilee Address of John Stewart Bryan, 16 February 1916.

<sup>4</sup>The International Messenger, March 1896, p. 136.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>WMBG Radio, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Richmond Times, 16 December 1894.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Jubilee Address, p. 3.

<sup>14</sup>Richmond Times, 16 December 1894.

<sup>15</sup>YWCA Annual Report (1914).

<sup>16</sup>WMBG Radio, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup>YWCA Searchlight (Yearbook) 1914.

<sup>18</sup>YWCA Annual Report (1914).

<sup>19</sup>YWCA Searchlight (Yearbook) 1914.

<sup>20</sup>Richmond Evening Journal, 15 June 1915.

<sup>21</sup>YWCA Searchlight (Yearbook) 1915.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 3-4.

<sup>23</sup>"History of the Phyllis Wheatley Branch YWCA" (n.d.).

<sup>24</sup>Richmond Times-Dispatch, 21 March 1948.

<sup>25</sup>Mary Wingfield Scott, Old Richmond Neighborhoods (Richmond: Whittet & Shep-  
person, 1950), p. 270.

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<sup>26</sup>War Work Council, "The Work of Colored Women," p. 48.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>28</sup>Annual Report of Industrial Secretary YWCA (1930).

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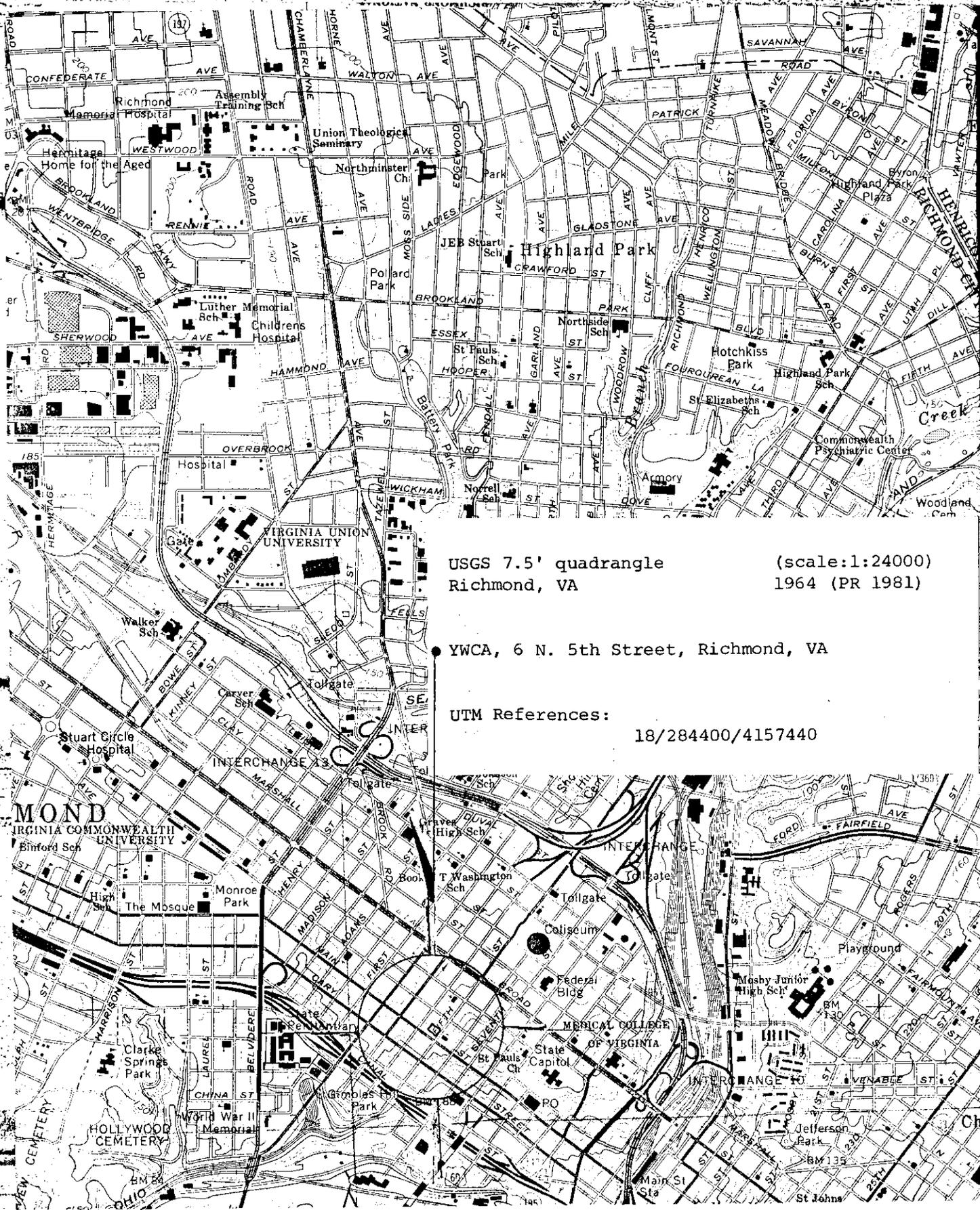
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