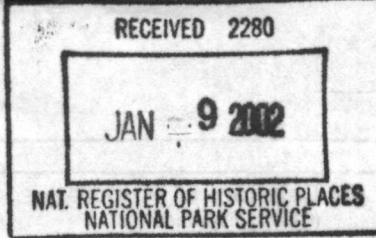


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



25.

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Wilmington YMCA

other names/site number Wilmington Central YMCA CRS # N-07540

2. Location

street & number 501 W. 11th Street  not for publication

city or town Wilmington  vicinity

state Delaware code DE county New Castle code 003 zip code 19801

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)  
Donald G. Gifford January 3, 2002  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official/Title Date  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Elson A. Beall 2/20/02  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Wilmington YMCA

Name of Property

New Castle County, Delaware

County and State



**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- 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

**Name of related multiple property listing**

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

-0-

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC / multiple dwelling

RECREATION & CULTURE / sports facility

SOCIAL / meeting hall

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC / multiple dwelling

RECREATION & CULTURE / sports facility

SOCIAL / meeting hall

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19th & 20th CENTURY REVIVALS /

Spanish Colonial Revival

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation limestone

walls brick

limestone

roof ceramic tile

other

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 3 Page 1

Central YMCA  
name of property  
New Castle County, Delaware  
county and State

=====

Agency Certification

In my opinion, the Central YMCA does meets /     does not meet the National Register Criteria.

James M. Baker

James M. Baker  
Mayor  
City of Wilmington, Delaware

Nov 9, 2001

Date

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Wilmington YMCA, New Castle County, Delaware

Section number 7 Page 1

---

The Wilmington YMCA is a six-story Spanish Colonial Revival style building that occupies the block bounded by W. 11<sup>th</sup> Street, N. Washington Street, W. 12<sup>th</sup> Street, and N. Jefferson Street in downtown Wilmington, Delaware. Erected in 1929 and designed by the Wilmington firm of Brown and Whiteside Architects, the building evokes a restrained and conservative interpretation of the Spanish Colonial Revival style with symmetrical fenestration and the judicious use of ornamentation. Smooth Indiana limestone serves as cladding on the lower two stories and also appears as accents on the red brick upper stories. The building stands in good condition and retains the features and characteristics representative of the Spanish Colonial Revival style and thus retains architectural integrity.

The building is comprised of the main 1929 build, situated at the immediate corner of W. 11<sup>th</sup> and N. Washington Streets, with a large one-story addition to the west that continues to N. Jefferson Street. A parking lot spans across the entire north side of the site. The building is buffered by landscaping with small grass plots and street trees along W. 11<sup>th</sup> Street, N. Washington Street, and N. Jefferson Street. A small outdoor playground is located at the corner of W. 11<sup>th</sup> and N. Jefferson Streets. Sidewalks surrounding the entire site also serve to separate the building from the street. A gentle downward slope toward the north allows for an elevated basement level at the building's rear.

The Wilmington YMCA is a significant example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, a style somewhat uncommon in the City of Wilmington. Elements of the Spanish Colonial Revival style exhibited on the facades include: flat and shallow pitched roofs, clay tile roofing, arched main entrance with dramatic carvings, entrance doors emphasized by carved columns, low-relief carved stonework, shallow arches surrounding prominent windows, multi-paned and paired windows, large focal windows, casement windows, leaded glass windows, iron balconettes, window grillwork, iron lanterns, and a round tower within the courtyard.

As evident in the photographs, the main (W. 11<sup>th</sup> Street) elevation is comprised of a center 6-story, 9-bay main block flanked by 5-story, 1-bay wings, setback slightly from the main façade. Entrance is gained through the center bay that is denoted by a large arched opening. The entrance is embellished with low-relief carvings on the face of the arch, with a series of elaborately carved engaged columns that are recessed within the arch. The main entrance doors are modern double-leaf aluminum glazed doors with a modern canvas awning above. Carved limestone 'YMCA' letters with the association's triangle symbol are positioned above the entrance and beneath a large semi-circular window with elaborate iron grillwork. Original iron lanterns flank the main entrance.

Fenestration on the first floor of the main elevation is provided by paired leaded glass casement units with transoms. In many instances the original leaded glass has been removed. On the second floor, the windows are paired 12-light steel windows with paired 3-light transoms. The

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Wilmington YMCA, New Castle County, Delaware

Section number 7 Page 2

---

outer transom lights are notched inward to accommodate a low-relief limestone carving. Fenestration on the upper stories is provided by paired 8-light steel casements with a narrow 4-light steel transom that spans across the entire opening. On the main block, the outermost bays and the second bays in from the outer bays contain paired windows. The remaining bays are distinguished by tall shallow recessed arches that surround the windows at the third and fourth stories. Limestone balconettes project from beneath the third story windows at those bays. A running band of limestone arches with limestone cap crowns the main 6-story block at the parapet. The 5-story, 1-bay projections are topped by a modillioned limestone cornice. The roof of the building is predominately flat with some areas containing a shallow pitch. The flat roofed sections are covered in bituminous coatings while the shallow pitched roofs contain a combination of bituminous and Spanish clay tile.

The east (N. Washington Street) elevation is comprised of a main 5-story, 9-bay section with a 3-story, 4-bay section to the north. Fenestration on the 5-story section continues the pattern established on the main façade. The first two bays at the south end are slightly recessed from the remainder of the elevation. The contiguous 7-bays to the north are symmetrically arranged with a center entrance bay with a shallow recessed arch above. Iron balconette railings are located at the 4<sup>th</sup> story windows in the bays that flank the center bay. The entrance, which served as the primary point of entry for the boys' division, contains a squared opening with modern double-leaf doors topped by the carved limestone 'YMCA' letters. Surrounding the entrance is a wide limestone band with intricate carvings. The 3-story, 4-bay section to the north contains a limestone raised basement with red brick above. A simple band of limestone runs beneath and above the 3<sup>rd</sup> story windows and serves as the only ornament. The windows on this section follow the type and pattern established on the upper red brick sections on the previously described elevations.

The rear or north elevation is clad in red brick and has a more industrial appearance with wide window bays filled with glass block divided by tall thin piers of brick. This elevation is three stories in height and nine bays in width. The easternmost bay follows the materials and details of the east façade. The westernmost three bays rise an additional story above the flat roofline with no fenestration at the 4<sup>th</sup> story. Situated to the west is the one-story glass curtain wall fitness center addition. The letters 'YMCA' stand atop the flat roof.

Along N. Jefferson Street this glass addition continues south toward W. 11<sup>th</sup> Street. The addition steps back from the street at the building's mid-way point and a contiguous section of red brick with no fenestration fronts W. 11<sup>th</sup> Street. The west elevation of the original building is finished in a combination of the industrial style to the north and in the Spanish Colonial Revival to the south. The industrial section rises four stories and contains minimal fenestration. The 5-story, 4-bay section to the south contains the materials and fenestration type that follows that established on the main elevation.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Wilmington YMCA, New Castle County, Delaware

Section number 7 Page 3

---

Inner courtyards allows for ample light to enter all dormitory rooms. At the first floor level, there are two courtyards (east court – west court). Above the first floor the courtyard opens up into a large rectangular space approximately centered within the volume of the building. The courtyard walls are brick, accented with limestone sills. The windows are predominately the 8-light steel casements with narrow 4-light transoms. There are no significant architectural details in the courtyard aside from the round tower that projects at the first story west court.

A vestibule with marble floor and wainscoting and molded plaster ceiling provides access from the main W. 11<sup>th</sup> Street entrance to the main lobby on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor. The main lobby has been somewhat altered over the years with a suspended ceiling and altered partitions, though the original tile floor and tile wainscoting survive as does the original ceiling above the suspended grid.

Off the main lobby is the primary stair featuring terrazzo treads and risers from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> stories and an elaborate metal balustrade. Above the 2<sup>nd</sup> story the stair treads and risers are metal and the metal balustrade becomes more utilitarian in character. A number of secondary stairs are located throughout the building and typically contain metal treads and risers with simple metal balustrades. Two passenger elevators (one located beside the main stair and the other toward the rear of the building) service the building and contain unornamented metal doors and no significant detailing.

The director's office (formerly the library) is situated along the front wall, beside the main lobby, and contains original plaster walls and crown molding, though all other original features have been removed. Numerous small office spaces are also located along the south wall, now utilized by the daycare function. In certain areas, plaster ceilings with crown molding survive, though in many spaces more recent renovations are evident.

The daycare function primarily occupies the original boys' department entered off N. Washington Street. An original vestibule with marble floor and walls and molded plaster ceiling with iron chandelier lead from the N. Washington Street entrance into the boys' department. This large space remains almost entirely in original condition with wood beamed walls and ceiling in the theme of a pirate's ship. A stone fireplace is positioned along the south wall.

A main central corridor leads from the main lobby toward the pool at the rear, passing by a significant curved stair within a round tower that leads to the basement level. Arched multi-light windows line the exterior stair wall. Continuing down the main corridor, beyond the curved stair, is a short east-west corridor that leads to the auditorium on the building's west wall. The auditorium contains the original stage and considerable original woodwork. Occupying the north wall of the first floor is the upper spectator gallery level of the pool.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Wilmington YMCA, New Castle County, Delaware

Section number 7 Page 4

---

The pool is located on the basement level and retains its original tile walls and tiled pool. Large window openings have been infilled with glass block to provide additional light to this space. The spectator's gallery, with iron balcony railing, is located along the south wall. Also located on the basement level is an architecturally significant private dining room entered through elaborate metal gates a half-flight down from the main stair. The dining room is a two-story space with wooden beamed ceiling with hanging iron chandeliers. Iron balconette railings are located on the window openings at the upper story of this space. Three large openings with multi-light French doors with arched transoms access the west court.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> and upper floors are organized around the large rectangular central courtyard. Above the pool along the building's north wall are the two gymnasiums which can be combined into one large gym by opening the dividing doors. The gymnasiums are largely original with wooden floors and glazed brick walls. As in the pool, the window openings in the gymnasiums have been infilled with glass block. Three squash courts line the west wall of the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. A small chapel, located beside the stair, features original vaulted ceiling, stained glass window, and ecclesiastical style wooden door. The remainder of the floor is devoted to the dormitory function with a double-loaded corridor, central bathroom and individual dormitory rooms.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> floor contains the upper part of the gymnasiums and squash courts, with the remainder of the floor devoted to the dormitory rooms. The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> floors contain three handball courts at the building's northwest corner with the remainder of the floors containing the dormitory rooms. Since the majority of the building is less than 6 stories in height, the 6<sup>th</sup> floor is comparatively small, spanning only across the building's main façade. This floor is entirely devoted to dormitory use.

The corridors in the dormitory sections of the building typically contain linoleum or carpeted floors, and plaster walls and ceilings with no ornamentation. The dormitory rooms are simply finished with carpeted floors, plaster walls and ceilings and a simple wood window sills. The bathrooms were renovated in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and contain features and finishes typical of that era.

The large addition to the west houses the fitness center in the glass enclosed section with three handball courts in the red brick unfenestrated section. This addition was erected in 1996 and contains features and finishes typical of the period.

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.)

- Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
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.
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:

- owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
removed from its original location.
a birthplace or grave.
a cemetery.
a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
a commemorative property.
less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Social History

Architecture

Period of Significance

1929 - 1951

Significant Dates

1929

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Brown and Whiteside Architects

William M. Francis Co. general contractor

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

Hagley Museum & Library
Wilmington Public Library

Wilmington YMCA

Name of Property

New Castle County, Delaware

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 452860 4399960
Zone Easting Northing
2

3
Zone Easting Northing
4

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Cynthia Rose Hamilton / Associate
organization Powers & Company, Inc. date July 27, 2001
street & number 2230 Mt. Vernon Street telephone 215-236-9006
city or town Philadelphia state PA zip code 19130

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

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.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name YMCA of Delaware, Inc.
street & number 501 W. 11th Street telephone 302-571-6908
city or town Wilmington state DE zip code 19801

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. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Wilmington YMCA, New Castle County, Delaware

Section number 8 Page 1

---

**SUMMARY**

Constructed in 1929, the Wilmington YMCA is significant as an architectural representation of that institution's ideology during its heyday in the 1920s. With associations in most urban communities across the nation, the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) organization achieved nationwide recognition in promoting its mission of improving the mind, body and spirit of its members. This goal was established over a century ago. Designed with permanence and tradition in mind, YMCA buildings have achieved stature in communities throughout the country, and typically represent variations on the classical styles. The organization's approach to establishing new associations relied on fundraising and construction efforts drawn directly from the local community, a concept that instilled a sense of community ownership and pride and essentially guaranteed long-term prosperity. The Wilmington YMCA has served its community in a multitude of capacities for over seven decades and is one of the city's most locally significant buildings. The building stands as an intact example of a typical 1920s YMCA building and gains its significance in the areas of social history and architecture and thus meets National Register criteria A and C. The level of significance is local. The period of significance begins in 1929 with the opening of building and ends in 1951, complying with the fifty years closing date of the National Register standards.

**CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY**

Settlement of Wilmington began in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, though population remained sparse until the Borough of Wilmington officially became a city in 1832, at the brink of the industrial revolution. Five years after incorporation, the Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore Railroad was completed and paved the way for the transformation of these cities into industrial centers. By the 1870s, Wilmington led the country in the production of iron ships, gunpowder, carriages, and leather.<sup>1</sup> Between the Civil War and World War I, industrial growth continued, and spurred one of the city's greatest increases in population. In 1860 there were 21,250 people residing in Wilmington; by 1920 that number had risen to 110,168.<sup>2</sup> Both World Wars had a profound effect on the city's economy. Industries vital to the war effort such as shipyards, steel foundries, machinery and chemical producers, operated on a 24-hour basis during war times. Wilmington's flourishing economy brought a swell of shrewd businessmen and a skilled labor force to the city, thus providing the demographics necessary for the establishment of a YMCA chapter.

Wilmington's YMCA chapter was founded at the height of the city's industrial revolution. In May 1889, a group of citizens gathered at the Delaware Avenue Baptist Church for the purpose of

---

<sup>1</sup> "Historical Overview of the City of Wilmington," City of Wilmington Website: <http://www.ci.wilmington.de.us/history.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> "Historical Overview of the City of Wilmington."

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Wilmington YMCA, New Castle County, Delaware

Section number 8 Page 2

---

discussing the formation of an organization for the welfare of the city's young men. Later that year, the group acquired the Ebbett House property located on Market Street, north of 10<sup>th</sup> Street for its first home, and arranged for a lease on nearby athletic fields. At that time, the group appointed their first general secretary and physical instructor. Young men over sixteen years of age and 'of good moral character' were to be eligible for membership. The preamble of their constitution read as follows:

"We, the subscribers, desirous of the spiritual, intellectual, social and physical welfare of the young men of Wilmington, and impressed with the importance of concentrated effort to this end, do hereby form an association therefore, and adopt for the government thereof, the following constitution."<sup>3</sup>

The organization began to outgrow their first facility almost immediately following their incorporation. In 1906, the organization sold the Ebbett House to the DuPont Company and moved into temporary quarters in what was then known as the First Presbyterian Church, located at 10<sup>th</sup> and Market Streets, where they stayed for two years.<sup>4</sup> During that period, a fundraising campaign was initiated to raise \$250,000 to finance the construction of a new home.<sup>5</sup> Two years later, a five-story building was constructed at the northeast corner of 10th and Orange Streets for the headquarters of the Wilmington chapter of the YMCA. At the time it was completed, that structure was considered one of the most superior facilities in the nation.<sup>6</sup> It adequately served Wilmington's young men for only a short time, however, as the city began to experience a rapid growth in population in the 1910s.

At the time the 10<sup>th</sup> and Orange building opened in 1908, the population of Wilmington was approximately 85,000, but by 1926 that number had soared to 124,000.<sup>7</sup> Originally designed to serve 1,000 members, membership had risen to 1,800 by 1925, rendering the facilities entirely inadequate.<sup>8</sup> The dormitory was regularly filled to capacity, the athletic facilities were equally cramped, and there was little space for educational programs. It was apparent that the organization was in need of a considerably larger facility and one that would prove adequate for many decades.

---

<sup>3</sup> "Wilmington's New 'Y': A Brief History of the Organization and a Description of its Splendid New Building," *Wilmington The Official Publication of the Chamber of Commerce, Wilmington on the Delaware*, Vol. IV, Number 7 (November 1929): 7.

<sup>4</sup> The church was located on the southeast corner, the site of the current Public Library. "Progress of Our Y.M.C.A. Since It Started" *Journal Every Evening*, March 18, 1944. There are two common spellings of Ebbett found in the research: Ebbitt and Ebbett.

<sup>5</sup> "Progress of Our Y.M.C.A. Since It Started."

<sup>6</sup> That facility was impressive in terms of its size as well as its equipment. "*Wilmington Must Build A New 'Y.'*" Publication distributed by New Building Committee, 1928. Crane Collection, Hagley Museum and Library, 3.

<sup>7</sup> As reported in *Wilmington Must Build*, 2.

<sup>8</sup> "New Home for Y.M.C.A. Decided On" *Evening Journal* September 27, 1927.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Wilmington YMCA, New Castle County, Delaware

Section number 8 Page 3

---

In 1926, the Organization commissioned a two-year study to examine the programmatic needs of such a new facility and to review recently completed YMCA buildings in other comparably sized cities. The study evaluated the current programs and predicted the potential and areas for growth that might be possible in a larger facility. In addition to an expanded physical department, the study findings recommended that a new facility would allow for the expansion of the social headquarters, educational programs, religious facilities, dormitory, and community service divisions. The formation of a separate 'Boy's Division' was also a primary recommendation of the study.

It was agreed by the building committee that a new facility would be essential to the continued success of the organization and, thus, a major fundraising campaign was initiated. That committee launched an ambitious plan to raise \$750,000 between October 10<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> 1927.<sup>9</sup> Correspondence between the committee members and a number of Wilmington's prominent citizens suggests that the committee was aggressive and uncompromising in their search for sizeable donations.<sup>10</sup> The policy of enlisting private support was an important component in the organization's philosophy. The YMCA creed promoted that the money must be generated primarily from private donations in order to enlist the future support and interest of the community's residents. Suggestions for 'Memorial Gifts' for the new Wilmington YMCA recommended minimum donations of \$1,000 and top gifts of \$75,000 and \$100,000. Success was declared by the committee as they reached their goal of \$750,000 in just over a week. A total of 4,279 individuals contributed \$754,326 for the new building.<sup>11</sup>

In January 1928, the organization announced that it had purchased the residence with surrounding property known as the Job Jackson estate. Jackson served as president of the Jackson and Sharp Company and owner of what became the local plant of the American Car and Foundry Co.<sup>12</sup> It was on this site that the new facility would be constructed.

Wilmington architects, Walter Stewart Brown and Morris Whiteside (Brown and Whiteside Architects), were commissioned for the design of the Wilmington YMCA. The YMCA organization believed that the branch buildings should be conceived of and constructed entirely by local firms to instill a sense of community ownership. To that end, the general contractor selected was Wilmington's William M. Francis Co. and nearly every subcontractor chosen was also based in Wilmington. These subcontractors represented the following trades: electrical, plumbing, masonry, tilework, painting, woodwork, plaster, elevator, steel sash, and excavation. In addition, the building supplies were almost entirely purchased from Wilmington dealers.

---

<sup>9</sup> A kick-off dinner for the fundraising campaign was held at the Hotel DuPont. *Wilmington Must Build*, 2 and 14.

<sup>10</sup> The papers of Pierre DuPont, housed at the Hagley Museum and Library, contain considerable correspondence attesting to the aggressive fundraising campaign.

<sup>11</sup> "Over the Top with \$754,326 for 'Y' Fund" *Evening Journal*, October 19, 1927.

<sup>12</sup> "Achievements of the Y.M.C.A. Over the Years" *Journal Every Evening*, March 15, 1947.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Wilmington YMCA, New Castle County, Delaware

Section number 8 Page 4

---

With groundbreaking in September 1928, the Wilmington YMCA became one of the largest buildings contracted for and started in the City of Wilmington during that year.<sup>13</sup> The cornerstone with time capsule was laid the following February.<sup>14</sup> Almost immediately after construction was underway, it soon became apparent that the money raised would be insufficient to cover costs. This deficit resulted from additional property purchased to allow for land for future expansion, as well as cost estimating problems during construction. A 'quiet campaign' that focused on securing additional funds from the largest donors brought in the \$100,000 balance needed to complete the project.<sup>15</sup> The building opened in November 1929 and within the first three months, membership increased from 1,543 to 2,324 with a 15 percent vacancy rate for the dormitory.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the citywide enthusiasm generated during its construction, Wilmington's new YMCA could not escape the effects of the Depression which followed shortly after the grand opening. During this era, the board carefully reviewed the budget to determine where costs could be cut. A decision was made to extend memberships to those who were unemployed and unable to continue their membership fees. It was agreed by the Board of Directors that those who were more fortunate should be willing to contribute to assist those who had lost their jobs and could no longer afford membership.<sup>17</sup> Annual reports from the board during the 1930s suggest that cuts in programs were avoided as much as possible during this period of great instability. As a result, the YMCA began operating at a deficit. In 1934, the projected income was \$149,225 while projected expenses totaled \$179,165. The numbers for the following year mirrored the numbers for 1934 with an approximate \$30,000 deficit. The operating deficit brought about considerable discussion regarding the need for an endowment fund. However, within a decade, the annual budget was balanced, all debt was liquidated, and an endowment fund was established.<sup>18</sup>

A period of sizeable growth occurred immediately following the end of World War II. In 1944 membership stood at 2,600; two years later, that number jumped to 3,400.<sup>19</sup> The 1948 report of the General Secretary stated that the Wilmington YMCA had the largest participation of members in activities in the history of the Association. It was also reported that the dormitory

---

<sup>13</sup> "One of the Biggest Local Building Contracts of Year" *Every Evening*, January 1, 1929:10.

<sup>14</sup> The time capsule was said to contain a bible given to the YMCA when the 10<sup>th</sup> and Orange building opened, as well as, local newspapers, fundraising campaign folder, copy of the YMCA constitution, list of board of directors, list of new building committee, and a list of the employed staff. "Stone Laid at 'Y'; Ready Oct. 1, Maybe" *Evening Journal*, February 227, 1929:1.

<sup>15</sup> "Wilmington's New 'Y'". Correspondence in Pierre DuPont's papers at the Hagley Museum and Library attests to the fact that it was the largest donors who were enlisted to cover the construction deficit.

<sup>16</sup> Letter from William B. Foster, Wilmington YMCA to Mr. J.J. Raskob, Claymont, DE, March 4, 1930. Raskob Collection, Hagley Museum and Library.

<sup>17</sup> Letters from Pierre DuPont written during the Depression era attest to the board's decision to extend membership privileges to the recently unemployed. Pierre DuPont Collection, Hagley Museum and Library.

<sup>18</sup> "Achievements of the Y.M.C.A."

<sup>19</sup> "Progress of Our Y.M.C.A. and "Achievements of the Y.M.C.A."

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Wilmington YMCA, New Castle County, Delaware

Section number 8 Page 5

---

was filled and the education classes were immensely popular. The following year, Wilmington's YMCA received great accolades by the national council as having better activities than any other branch in the nation.<sup>20</sup>

During the 1950s, the national YMCA chapters witnessed one of its most remarkable periods of popularity and growth. More than half of all YMCAs began admitting women, and families became the new emphasis. Eventually, all barriers began to fall with all races and religions included as members, and in leadership positions as well. As a result of the swelling membership in YMCAs across the country, many inner-city YMCA buildings grew insufficient and were abandoned. New chapters were erected with modern facilities in the cities and suburbs were erected following population shifts.

In 1956, a long-range planning program was announced for the Wilmington YMCA chapter, in anticipation of population increases in the suburbs. The planning study resulted in the formation of the Newark, Brandywine and Southwest branches, and Wilmington's main downtown YMCA became known as the Central YMCA from that point forward. The Wilmington Central YMCA continued to flourish and the health club was 'modernized' in the 1950s to meet the needs of increasing membership. An \$875,000 renovation campaign took place in the 1960s which brought significant changes to the youth division, health and physical education facilities, locker room areas, and updating of the building's electric, plumbing, heating, and air conditioning systems.<sup>21</sup>

The latter half of the 1960s and the 1970s witnessed great turbulence and turmoil in the country and the YMCA was challenged to re-evaluate its philosophies and programs. New outreach efforts were undertaken and the YMCA directed its focus toward core family issues. Interest in physical fitness and healthy lifestyles became a nationwide trend in the late 1970s and brought renewed interest back to the YMCAs. Pressure for up-to-date buildings and equipment brought on a boom in construction that lasted for two decades. In 1985 two racquetball courts, two squash courts, and new locker rooms were added to the Wilmington YMCA. A decade later, a large glass-enclosed fitness center was added to the rear of the building. Various alterations, primarily cosmetic in nature, have occurred in many spaces in recent decades. These included the installation of suspended ceilings, and the relocation of partition walls to accommodate changing room uses.

---

<sup>20</sup> "Wilmington YMCAs Program Recognized as Best in U.S." *Journal Every Evening*, September 2, 1949:1.

<sup>21</sup> *Future of the YMCA of Wilmington and New Castle County, Delaware, 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*, Published by YMCA, Wilmington, DE, 1964. Wilmington Public Library YMCA Vertical File.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Wilmington YMCA, New Castle County, Delaware

Section number 8 Page 6

---

**SOCIAL HISTORY**

The Young Men's Christian Association began as a worldwide fellowship of men and boys united by a common loyalty to Christianity and dedicated to serving the "Mind, Body and Spirit," the three ideals of the organization. Since the mid-nineteenth century, the YMCA provided America's urban population with a variety of services and programs to fulfill these principles. Initially the associations, although motivated by religious concerns, differed little from the numerous voluntary societies that surfaced in American cities during the nineteenth century. Yet, unlike the many short-lived urban associations, the YMCA continues to flourish nearly a century-and-a-half after its emergence. Since its establishment, the organization has witnessed the expansion of services and programs to meet the ever-changing needs of the community. The YMCA established a physical presence in large and small cities alike by constructing buildings for lodging, education and recreation.

The YMCA was initially founded in London, England on June 6, 1844 by a group of twelve young dry good clerks who met to organize a society for "the improvement of the spiritual condition of young men engaged in the drapery and other trades, by the introduction of religious services among them."<sup>22</sup> They gathered in the small bedroom of one of their members, 22-year-old George Williams, a Somerset farm boy who had come to London to work in the drapery trade.<sup>23</sup> Williams was appalled by the conditions facing young men in London; hours and wages were inhumane with young men working fourteen to seventeen hours a day. The industrial revolution had brought vice and corruption, along with power and wealth to the cities, and Williams' group sought to provide a spiritual outlet for the distressed workers.

Williams' association grew in strength and in numbers. Within six months, seventy members were conducting services and the work required a full-time paid executive or 'missionary.'<sup>24</sup> In the first year, the association expanded its programs to include the mental as well as spiritual needs of young men through lecture offerings in science, history and archaeology. These courses proved immensely popular and were instrumental in spreading the organization's influence.<sup>25</sup>

In December 1851, a month after the first YMCA in North America had been organized in Montreal, sea captain J.V. Sullivan led a group of young men in Boston to organize the first association in the United States. Within a few years, there were YMCA associations from coast to coast.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> "The 'Y' Has Grown from One Room to a World Movement in 100 Years," *Serving with Youth Throughout the World, 1844-1944*. Booklet located in the 'Organizations - YMCA' file, New Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.

<sup>23</sup> "The 'Y' Has Grown..."

<sup>24</sup> "The 'Y' Has Grown..."

<sup>25</sup> "The 'Y' Has Grown..."

<sup>26</sup> "The 'Y' Has Grown..."

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Wilmington YMCA, New Castle County, Delaware

Section number 8 Page 7

---

Wilmington's chapter was established several decades later, in 1889. In the early years of the YMCA organization, most major urban centers had chapters, though they generally moved from building to building, lacking a central headquarters. Establishing permanence in the community became a great concern for many of the largest chapters. It became the general consensus of the Organization that permanence and stability in the community was essential in meeting the association's goals of fulfilling the social, physical, mental, and spiritual needs of men.<sup>27</sup> New York City erected the first YMCA building to house all activities under one roof. Dedicated in 1869 and costing nearly \$500,000 (a tremendous sum for Civil War times), the building became a model for cities throughout the world.<sup>28</sup> With modern buildings replacing the back street rooms, the YMCA association was better able to compete with the saloons and gambling halls as a source of entertainment. Nonetheless, most cities were slow in establishing headquarters with some of the largest chapters not completing their main centers until the 1920s.

At the time the Wilmington chapter was established, the standing committees included: membership, reception, religious meetings, visitation of the sick, church, employment, boarding house, athletic, boys, women's auxiliary, and invitations.<sup>29</sup> Leadership of the YMCA was assumed by those who figured prominently in the local business, social, and professional life of the community. As a general rule, not more than one-third of the directors could be members of the same religious denomination.

In 1897, the 'mind-body-spirit' triangle was authorized at the organization's national convention.<sup>30</sup> Those areas had always represented the core focus of the organization, but the establishment of the triangle formalized the association's principles.

'Mind' represented the importance of education in the professional growth of young men. In the early years, educational programs offered at the YMCA were organized classes in the traditional learning areas. However, by 1910 interest began to dwindle with the success of the city's public schools. From that time forward, educational programs served to supplement the core subject areas and focused more on professional and character development. Such classes sought to train young men in all aspects of business and management. During the Depression, the YMCA education programs focused on vocational training, seeking to redirect those considered unemployable. In the years after the Depression, the YMCA established cooperative agreements with some of the country's most prestigious colleges and universities.

---

<sup>27</sup> "The 'Y' Has Grown..."

<sup>28</sup> "The 'Y' Has Grown..." Baltimore had erected the first YMCA in the United States in 1859. It was a church-like structure designed to serve solely as a meeting hall with no gym or pool.

<sup>29</sup> "Wilmington's New 'Y'"

<sup>30</sup> "A Brief History of the YMCA" Website: "<http://www.tased.edu.au/tasonline/ymca/history1.htm>"

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Wilmington YMCA, New Castle County, Delaware

Section number 8 Page 8

---

'Body' symbolized the value of fitness in the physical development of young men and boys. Millions of people across the country were introduced to sports at their local YMCA. Many of the sports played today were introduced at YMCAs including: Volleyball which was invented at the Holyoke, MA YMCA in 1895, racquetball invented in 1950 at the Greenwich, CT YMCA, and basketball which was invented by James Naismith at the International YMCA Training School in 1891.<sup>31</sup> Swimming and aquatics have long been associated with YMCAs. The first YMCA swimming pool was built at Brooklyn, NY in 1885.<sup>32</sup> In 1907, the concept of group swim lessons was developed at the Detroit YMCA.<sup>33</sup> Two years later the learn-to-swim campaign was initiated by the YMCA in an effort to teach every boy in the country how to swim.

'Spirit' signified the spiritual guidance that the organization valued as an essential component in nurturing young men. Although the YMCA was established as a Christian organization, the religious program was not conceived as a separate department. Rather, was intended to permeate the whole association. Religious programs in the early years of the Wilmington YMCA included: bible classes (for nearly all members of the boys' division), life problem classes, and adult bible classes. In the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as religious barriers were brought down along with gender and racial barriers, the Wilmington chapter moved to broaden the interpretation of this core philosophy. The secularization of the YMCA in the late twentieth century reflects the decline of religious influence in mainstream civic culture.

In planning for the construction the Wilmington YMCA, much concern was expressed for establishing a separate and adequate 'Boys' Division.' The board of directors commissioned a study by the Boys' Club Federation in New York City entitled, "A Study of the Boy Conditions in Wilmington" to assess the needs of the city's youth. The study looked at the status of the juvenile courts, cost of crime, custodial care of delinquent boys, and the need for boys' clubs.<sup>34</sup>

The Wilmington YMCA building campaign's promotional literature endorsed the proper development of boys' leisure time.<sup>35</sup> "The Young Men's Christian Association capitalizes the boys' leisure time by engaging him in wholesome fourfold activity, helping him to obtain symmetrical development; physically, intellectually, devotionally and in service...your investment goes for character building...it is not asking too much of Wilmington to provide facilities for assisting 800 boys to become real men," the literature continued.

YMCAs became involved in camping as early as the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, encouraging youth to participate in such excursions as a means of promoting the importance of teamwork. A decade after the Wilmington YMCA was completed, the chapter purchased land on the Chesapeake

---

<sup>31</sup> "A Brief History of the YMCA Movement" Website: "<http://ymca.net/about/cont/history.htm>"

<sup>32</sup> "A Brief History of the YMCA Movement."

<sup>33</sup> "A Brief History of the YMCA Movement."

<sup>34</sup> This study was referenced in the papers of Pierre DuPont, Hagley Museum and Library, file 493, folder 1928.

<sup>35</sup> "Wilmington Must Build A New 'Y.'" Publication, 7.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Wilmington YMCA, New Castle County, Delaware

Section number 8 Page 9

---

Bay for the establishment of Camp Tockwogh.<sup>36</sup> By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, Camp Tockwogh had grown to 290 acres and could accommodate 175 boys and counselors.<sup>37</sup> The Wilmington YMCA continues to operate Camp Tockwogh today.

The one aspect of the YMCA that has perhaps changed the most since the opening of the Wilmington YMCA is the dormitory function. At the turn of the twentieth century, the Association discovered that one of the most valuable services it could provide young men was to provide them a wholesome and decent place to live. This led to the inclusion of dormitory facilities in practically all Associations built in the twentieth century.<sup>38</sup> The dormitory typically served young men moving to new cities at the start of their careers and it was a provision that had great appeal, not only for the young men, but for their parents who were given some assurance that their sons were well sheltered and fed. At the time that the Wilmington YMCA opened, it was a requirement that those utilizing the dormitory had to be less than 30 years of age, with incomes below \$2,500 annually, and the stay could not exceed 3 years. All of the residents were members of the Association and most participated in some activities. Downtown businesses, such as DuPont, referred newly hired employees to the YMCA for comfortable interim housing.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, the clientele served by the dormitory began to change from that as originally intended. The age of the men moved from under 30 to an average age of 40 and over. As the homeless population of Wilmington continued to grow and existing shelters became inadequate, the YMCA began to house those turned away at the local shelters. The dormitory which had originally served young professionals began to serve an older and less stable demographic.

Programs offered at the YMCA also evolved over the years to meet the changing needs of its members. In the early decades, there was a strict interpretation of the core principles of mind-body-spirit. By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the interpretation of those principles began to broaden to reflect a more inclusive approach to membership and to reflect shifts in society. In response to the turbulent civil rights movement, the association sought to integrate its membership and programs. African Americans began to use local branches to train leaders for their cause. For the first time women and girls were allowed to join the YMCA chapters as fully participating "associate" members. Association literature from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century featured coed and family programs, such as Family swim nights and coed outings.

---

<sup>36</sup> "Achievements of the Y.M.C.A."

<sup>37</sup> "Achievements of the Y.M.C.A." and *Future of the YMCA of Wilmington*.

<sup>38</sup> Letter from A.E. Lindley, Wilmington Central YMCA General Secretary to Pierre DuPont, May 10, 1941, Pierre DuPont papers, Hagley Museum and Library, file 493.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Wilmington YMCA, New Castle County, Delaware

Section number 8 Page 10

---

In the summer of 1975, the national YMCA endorsed the "family" concept for local associations, and shortly thereafter required that women be granted full membership privileges. Childcare provisions and day camps were a key component in the 20<sup>th</sup> century movement to broaden the YMCAs scope of services for women and families. The YMCA organization became a leading agency in providing support for families, offering a host of programs geared toward strengthening family values.

In the decades prior to the YMCAs more inclusive view on membership, African Americans and women in Wilmington established their own branches. While the primary mission of those branches was to serve the direct needs of their respective demographics, both groups maintained open policies on membership, without any restrictions.

The first YMCA for African Americans was founded in Washington, DC in 1853 by Anthony Bowen, a freed slave. Aside from churches, it was the first African American institution in America. By 1924, there were 160 African American YMCAs with 28,000 members. YMCAs became integral parts of the African American community, serving important roles in the struggle for civil rights.<sup>39</sup>

Delaware, being a border state between the North and South, historically had a sizeable African American population. In 1928, a small group of African Americans met to organize a separate YMCA branch. After a decade of planning and fundraising, the Walnut Street Branch of the Wilmington YMCA opened in 1940 at 10<sup>th</sup> and Walnut Streets. Although the newly formed branch served a predominantly African American membership, the Walnut Street Branch maintained an 'open-door' policy, with members representing a diverse cultural population and a "Young Women's Branch" for African American women and girls.

The Walnut Street Branch followed the YMCA organization mission of improving the mind-body-spirit of its members, and generally the programs mirrored those of the Central Branch. The Walnut Street Branch did, however, offer additional services to meet the needs of its minority members such as the establishment of a credit union.

The building that housed the Walnut Street Branch featured a pool, gymnasium and auditorium, however, the dormitory was significantly smaller than the Central Branch with only 17 rooms. The building was designed by G. Morris Whiteside, II (the architect of the Central Branch) in what the architect described as a 'modern Scandinavian' style.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> "A Brief History of the YMCA Movement."

<sup>40</sup> "Cornerstone of New Walnut Street Christian Association Laid Today," *Sunday Star*, November 19, 1939: 2.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Wilmington YMCA, New Castle County, Delaware

Section number 8 Page 11

---

In 1998, the Walnut Street Branch moved to a new facility and the original building was demolished with its landmark tower retained as a symbol of the early history of the organization and its decorative frieze incorporated into the new building.

The early history of women in the YMCA is not well-documented, although it is believed that the first female member of a YMCA joined in Brooklyn, NY in the late 1850s. Women were not granted full membership status in the organization however for many decades.<sup>41</sup>

The YWCA, which is an historically different organization than the YMCA, can trace its origins to the 1850s (a decade after the establishment of a YMCA) when a group of Protestant women formed a religious-based group that demonstrated concern for the worth of all persons. They later incorporated under the name, Young Women's Christian Association. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, YWCAs had sprung up in cities throughout the country. In 1875 there were 28 YMCAs in the United States and within 15 years, that number had jumped to over 100.<sup>42</sup>

The Wilmington YWCA was founded in 1895, just a few years after the founding of the Wilmington YMCA. The group was housed in a building at 908 King Street until 1998 at which time that building was demolished and the organization moved to another building located at 233 King Street. The building at 908 King Street had been built for the YWCA in the 1920s and like the YMCA contained a gymnasium and pool. An important service provided by the Wilmington YWCA over the years has been the dormitory function. The dormitory currently has the capacity to serve approximately 40 single women and 65 families, significantly fewer rooms than the Wilmington YMCA.

The YWCA differs from the YMCA in several important areas, most notably in its historically inclusive approach to membership. The primary mission of the YWCA is the empowerment of women and the elimination of racism. Toward that end, the YWCA historically offered programs more focused on strengthening families and finding opportunities for advancement. The dormitory function best demonstrates the organization's differences from the YMCA in that the dormitory historically and today serves families (often headed by single men) as well as single women.

The success of the YMCA organization is realized in its ability to constantly adapt its programs to meet evolving trends and needs in its community while adhering to its core principles of mind-body-spirit. It has, and continues to be, a cornerstone of urban life, promoting an important arena for social, physical, and spiritual activities.

---

<sup>41</sup> "A Brief History of the YMCA Movement."

<sup>42</sup> YWCA Website: <http://www.ywca.org>.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Wilmington YMCA, New Castle County, Delaware

Section number 8 Page 12

---

**ARCHITECTURE**

YMCA facilities were typically designed in architectural styles that evoked the concepts of importance and permanence, and as a result, these buildings often became community landmarks. The International YMCA Committee, headquartered in New York, maintained a regular building bureau that specialized in YMCA architecture. As early as 1926 the Wilmington chapter had decided to explore the possibility of erecting a new facility and had begun studying recently commissioned YMCA buildings in other comparably sized cities.<sup>43</sup> Working with the committee and its national architect, the Wilmington YMCA had the plans and specifications drawn-up by the local architectural firm of Brown and Whiteside. Designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, this building was destined to become a local landmark and was planned with permanency and tradition in mind. In accordance with YMCA doctrine, the building was conceived of and constructed entirely by Wilmingtonians.

Brown and Whiteside later recounted the challenges in the design of this building, particularly related to the incorporation of the various functions under one roof. In local newspapers, they explained the uniqueness of this building type; one that required a multitude of provisions for religious meetings, athletic activities, educational endeavors, public meetings, while providing comfortable lodging for 200 men.<sup>44</sup> In addition, Brown and Whiteside had to accommodate the chapter's insistence on the duplication of facilities for men and boys.

Accounts published upon the building's opening reported with great enthusiasm that the building would leave a visitor amazed and speechless with "a feeling of pride in seeing the accomplishment of a dream of those directors and members who have worked so hard and been so interested in the work."<sup>45</sup> One newspaper proclaimed, "its facilities rank with those of the finest metropolitan clubhouse, yet luxurious though it is in its appointments, it still presents an atmosphere of friendliness, the comfort of a well-furnished home."<sup>46</sup>

The Wilmington Chamber of Commerce reported in their November 1929 publication that the building featured, "beautiful woodwork, handsome tiling, magnificent carvings, wonderful examples of interior decorating...with it all...a feeling of bigness, completeness, efficient planning and workmanship."<sup>47</sup>

Extensive descriptions of the building's spaces were provided in local newspapers and in the November 1929 Chamber of Commerce publication. The main lobby, since altered, was described as a "large beautiful room" with ornamental ceiling, that accessed the men's social

---

<sup>43</sup> Papers of Pierre DuPont, Hagley Museum and Library, file 493, folder 1921-1926.

<sup>44</sup> "Many Problems Faced Builders of New 'Y' Home" Every Evening, November 23, 1929:12.

<sup>45</sup> "Wilmington's New 'Y'."

<sup>46</sup> "New Y.M.C.A. Building Modern as Most Metropolitan Clubhouses" *Sunday Star*, December 8, 1929.

<sup>47</sup> "Wilmington's New 'Y'."

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Wilmington YMCA, New Castle County, Delaware

Section number 8 Page 13

---

rooms, reading room, billiard room, soda fountain, elevator foyer, coat rooms, telephone booths, private dining room with beamed ceiling and adjacent outdoor patio, barber shop, and large auditorium. Aside from the private dining room, these spaces typically have received alterations over the years with partitions moved to accommodate new room uses and modern finishes installed. The kitchen, located in the sub-basement, was entirely electric and contained every modern convenience capable of serving up to four hundred persons that could be seated in the cafeteria. Descending half a floor, the Chamber of Commerce publication continues, one would find the Personal Health Service Department with the men's and senior boys' locker rooms, dry rooms, showers, massage, violet ray, wet slab, steam, and rest rooms. This is where one could enjoy a Turkish bath, salt bath, or "hot fomentation."

A complete description of the swimming pool with gallery and the double gymnasium with elevated running track, both little altered from the time of construction, was provided in the Chamber of Commerce publication as well. In one newspaper account, the swimming pool was described as "the best in the city and one of the finest to be found anywhere."<sup>48</sup> The pool was considered quite large for the time and featured two diving boards, a large spectators gallery, and the most modern filtration system.

Great accolades were bestowed upon the design of the boys' department entered from Washington Street. This space, one of the most architecturally significant spaces in the building, remains almost entirely in its original condition, designed to resemble a sixteenth century pirate's ship with raised 'poop deck.' Perhaps due in part to the fact that the YMCA organization had a supervising architect that oversaw the work of the local architects, common themes and design features exist in YMCA buildings around the country. The Detroit, Michigan YMCA also has a pirate's ship for their boy's division.

Originally, the building featured ten bowling alleys and a nine-hole obstacle golf course; both since removed. The second floor originally served as the Club and Educational Department with ten large rooms, as well as the official boardroom and General Secretary's office, two large meeting rooms, dining room, ladies' room, chapel, and eighteen dormitory rooms. Alterations have subsequently occurred to accommodate changing uses, though the more significant spaces such as the boardroom and chapel, have been less altered. The third and fourth floors were outfitted with squash and handball courts, which still remain.

The dormitory rooms, originally 178 in number, were originally furnished with a large clothes closet, chifonier, writing table, easy chair, reading lamp, and comfortable bed.<sup>49</sup> The walls were covered in a special washable paper and the floors were covered with two rugs. Many rooms were wired for telephones and all were wired with an intercom system that connected to

---

<sup>48</sup> "New Y.M.C.A. Building Modern as Most Metropolitan Clubhouses"

<sup>49</sup> "Wilmington's New 'Y'."

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Wilmington YMCA, New Castle County, Delaware

Section number 8 Page 14

---

the front desk.<sup>50</sup> The sixth floor was described by the Chamber of Commerce as "particularly well decorated and furnished" with ample washrooms, trunk rooms and storerooms. Each floor was fitted with a bathroom with showers, wash bowls, tooth brushing bowls, and sanitary toilets.<sup>51</sup> The layout of the building with center courtyard allowed for natural light to enter every dormitory room.

In period accounts, particular attention was given to the amount and variety of tilework in the building, much of which still remains. George W. McCaulley and Sons, Inc. of Wilmington, was awarded the contract for the tilework.<sup>52</sup> As described in the Chamber of Commerce publication, the vestibules featured Roseal Appalachian marble, and the main lobby featured Batchelder-Wilson Mottled tiles on the walls in a Spanish and Italian design, with 'pavers' of the floor evoking the style found in ancient Spain and Mexico. The tiles used in the swimming pool were known as Sparta Ceramic, described as 'oriental' in character.

Upon completion of the building, the Architectural Bureau of the National Council of YMCAs stated, "[after careful examination of the building and plans], although there may be larger association buildings in the country, there is none that is better fitted for the purposes for which it was constructed than the Wilmington YMCA building."<sup>53</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The Wilmington YMCA gains its significance as an important social institution that played a role in the lives of thousands of the city's residents, and as an intact example of the type and style of construction popular for civic and institutional architecture in the late 1920s. The building stands in good condition and retains architectural integrity and thus meets National Register standards A and C.

---

<sup>50</sup> "New Y.M.C.A. Building Modern as Most Metropolitan Clubhouses"

<sup>51</sup> "Many Problems Faced Builders of New 'Y' Home"

<sup>52</sup> "New Y.M.C.A. Building Modern as Most Metropolitan Clubhouses"

<sup>53</sup> "Many Problems Faced Builders of New 'Y' Home"

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Wilmington YMCA, New Castle County, Delaware

Section number 8 Page 15

---

Zone: Urban  
Period: 1880-1940+/-: Urbanization and Early Suburbanization  
Themes: Architecture, Engineering and Decorative Arts  
Community Organizations  
Property Types: Spanish Colonial Revival  
Recreational and Cultural

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Wilmington YMCA, New Castle County, Delaware

Section number 9 Page 1

---

**REFERENCES**

"Achievements of the Y.M.C.A. Over the Years." *Journal Every Evening*. March 15, 1947.

"A Brief History of the YMCA." Website: <http://www.tased.edu.au/tasonline/ymca/history1.htm>

"A Brief History of the YMCA Movement." Website: "<http://ymca.net/about/cont/history.htm>"

"Cornerstone of New Walnut Street Christian Association Laid Today." *Sunday Star*. November 19, 1939: 2.

*Future of the YMCA of Wilmington and New Castle County, Delaware, 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*. Published by YMCA, Wilmington, DE, 1964. Wilmington Public Library, YMCA Vertical File.

"Historical Overview of the City of Wilmington." City of Wilmington Website:  
<http://www.ci.wilmington.de.us/history.htm>.

Letter from A.E. Lindley, Wilmington Central YMCA General Secretary to Pierre DuPont. May 10, 1941. Pierre DuPont papers, Hagley Museum and Library, file 493.

Letter from William B. Foster, Wilmington YMCA to Mr. J.J. Raskob, Claymont, DE. March 4, 1930. Raskob Collection, Hagley Museum and Library.

"Many Problems Faced Builders of New 'Y' Home." *Every Evening*. November 23, 1929:12.

"New Home for Y.M.C.A. Decided On." *Evening Journal*. September 27, 1927.

"New Y.M.C.A. Building Modern as Most Metropolitan Clubhouses." *Sunday Star*. December 8, 1929.

"One of the Biggest Local Building Contracts of Year." *Every Evening*. January 1, 1929:10.

"Over the Top with \$754,326 for 'Y' Fund." *Evening Journal*. October 19, 1927.

Papers of Pierre DuPont, Hagley Museum and Library. File 493, folder 1921-1926.

"Progress of Our Y.M.C.A. Since It Started." *Journal Every Evening*. March 18, 1944.

"Stone Laid at 'Y;' Ready Oct. 1, Maybe." *Evening Journal*. February 227, 1929:1.

"*Wilmington Must Build A New 'Y.'*" Publication distributed by New Building Committee, 1928. Crane Collection, Hagley Museum and Library, 3.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Wilmington YMCA, New Castle County, Delaware

Section number 9 Page 2

---

"Wilmington's New 'Y': A Brief History of the Organization and a Description of its Splendid New Building." *Wilmington*. The Official Publication of the Chamber of Commerce, Wilmington on the Delaware. Vol. IV, Number 7 (November 1929): 7.

"Wilmington YMCAs Program Recognized as Best in U.S." *Journal Every Evening*. September 2, 1949:1.

"The 'Y' Has Grown from One Room to a World Movement in 100 Years." *Serving with Youth Throughout the World, 1844-1944*. Booklet located in the 'Organizations – YMCA' file, New Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.

Young, William S., Jr., Chairman, Anniversary Committee, Walnut Street Branch YMCA, "History of the Walnut Street Branch YMCA" n.d.

YWCA Website: <http://www.ywca.org>.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Wilmington YMCA, New Castle County, Delaware

Section number 10 Page 1

---

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

New Castle County and City of Wilmington Parcel: 26-028.30-328

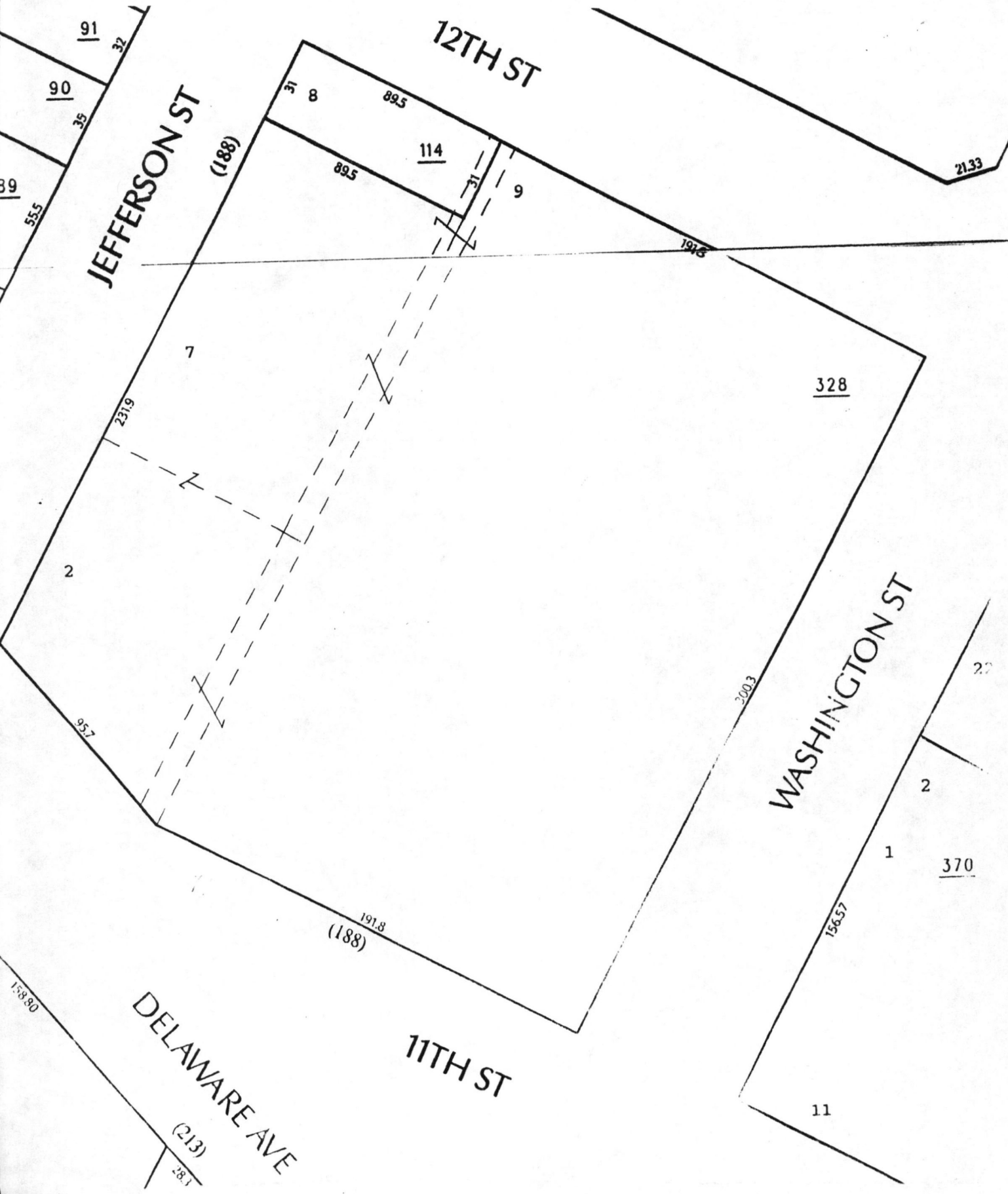
Beginning at the northwest corner of 11<sup>th</sup> and Washington Streets and continuing northeast along Washington Street a distance of 300' 3" to the southwest corner of 12<sup>th</sup> and Washington Streets; thence continuing northwest along 12<sup>th</sup> Street a distance of 191' 8" to a point on 12<sup>th</sup> Street a distance of 89' 5" from the east side of Jefferson Street; thence continuing southwest on a line parallel to Jefferson Street a distance of 31' to a point; thence continuing northwest along a line parallel with 12<sup>th</sup> Street a distance of 89' 5" to the east side of Jefferson Street; thence continuing southwest along the east side of Jefferson Street a distance of 231' 9" to the northeast corner of Delaware Avenue and Jefferson Street; thence continuing southeast along Delaware Avenue a distance of 95' 7" to a point where Delaware Avenue and 11<sup>th</sup> Street converge; thence continuing southeast a distance of 191' 8" to the place of beginning.

New Castle County and City of Wilmington Parcel: 26-028.30-114

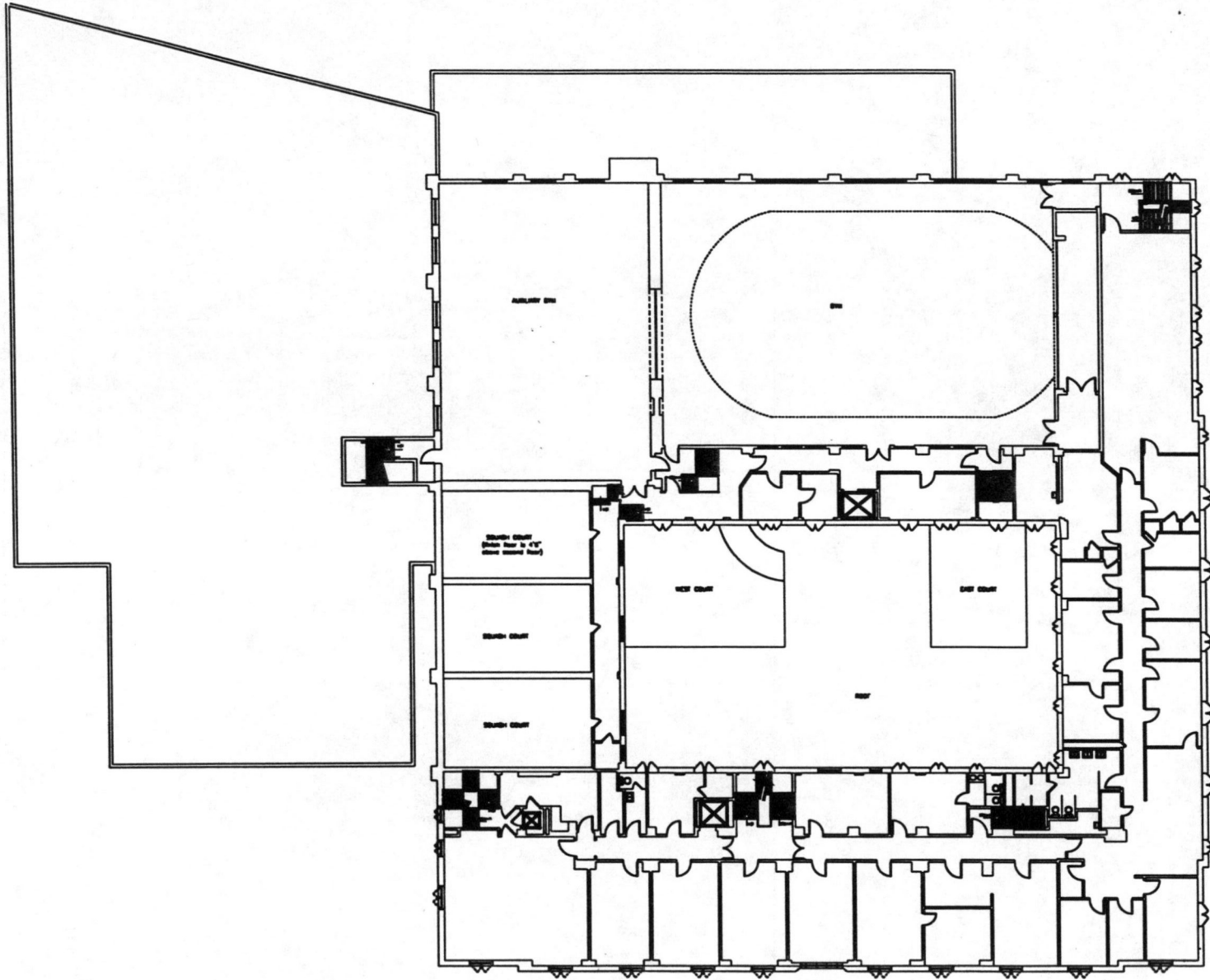
Beginning at the southeast corner of 12<sup>th</sup> and Jefferson Streets and continuing southwest along Jefferson Street a distance of 31' to a point; thence continuing southeast on a line parallel with 12<sup>th</sup> Street a distance of 89' 5" to a point; thence continuing northeast on a line parallel with Jefferson Street a distance of 31' to a point on 12<sup>th</sup> Street; thence continuing northwest along 12<sup>th</sup> Street a distance of 89' 5" to the place of beginning.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The nominated property includes the entire parcel currently owned by the Wilmington YMCA. This parcel is comprised of the entire block bounded by 11<sup>th</sup> Street, 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Washington Street and Jefferson Street in the City of Wilmington.



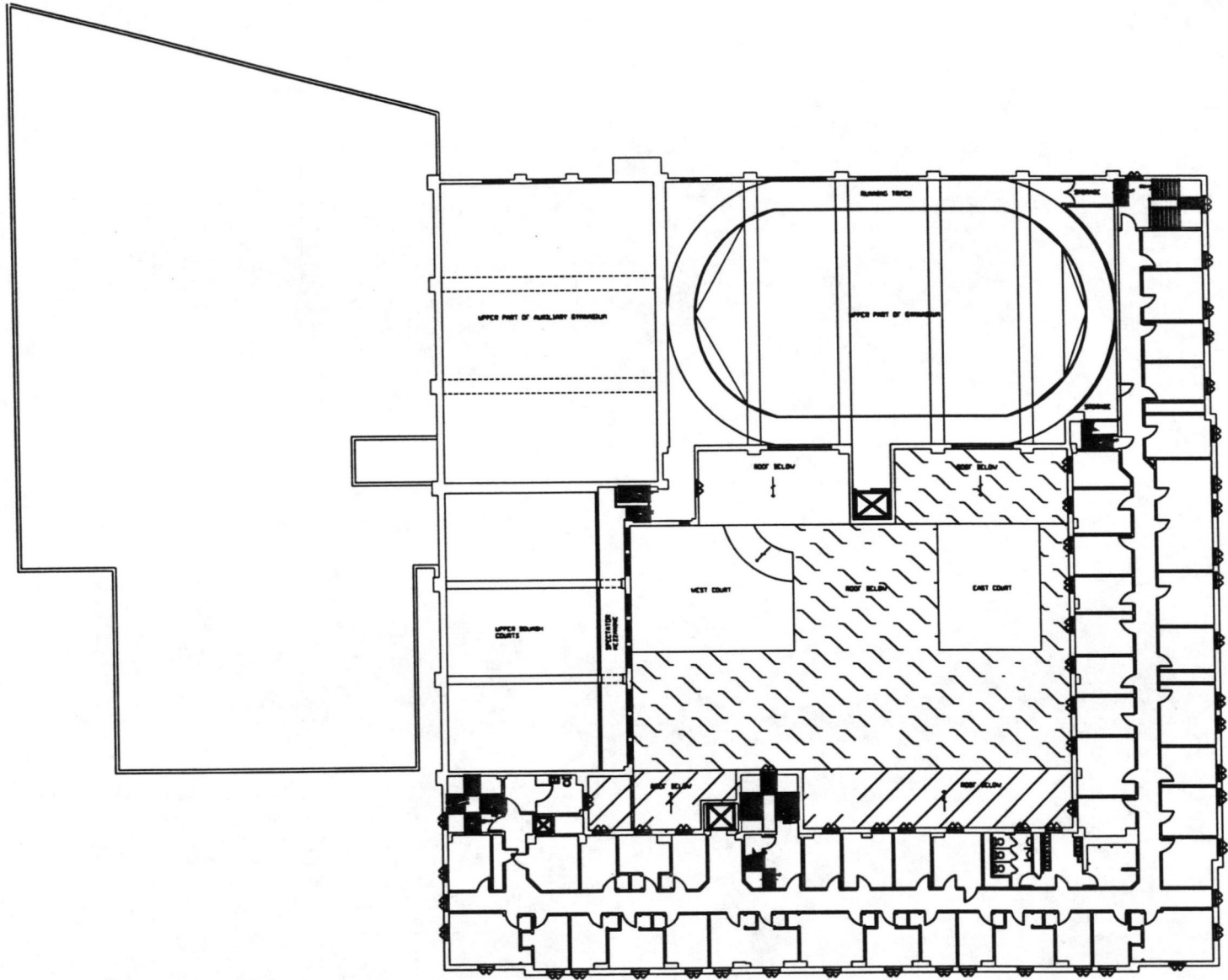




SECOND FLOOR

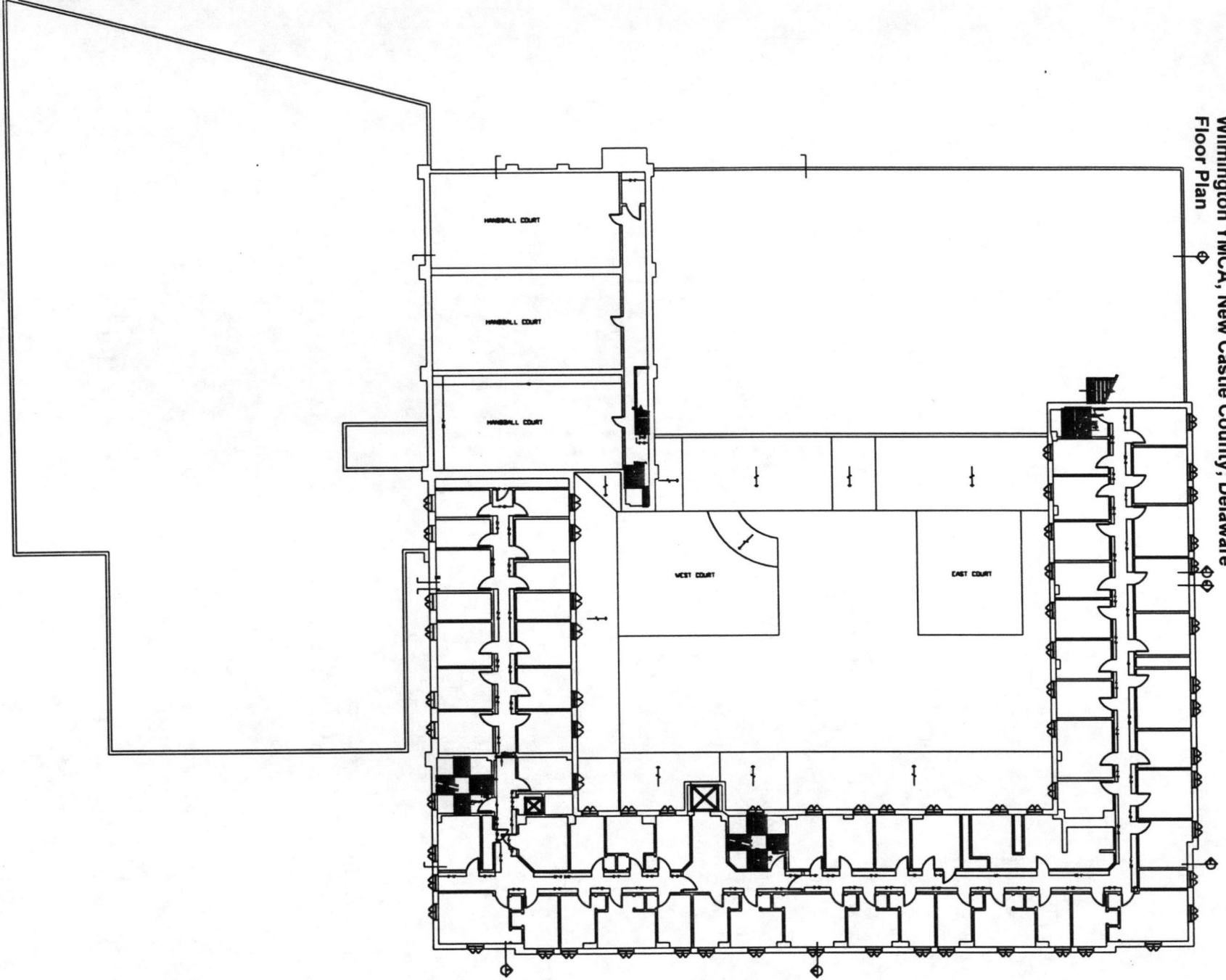
TOTAL FLOOR AREA — 2ND FLOOR: 21,600 SF  
TOTAL FLOOR AREA (RESIDENTIAL) — 2ND FLOOR: 9,765 SF

Wilmington YMCA, New Castle County, Delaware  
Floor Plan



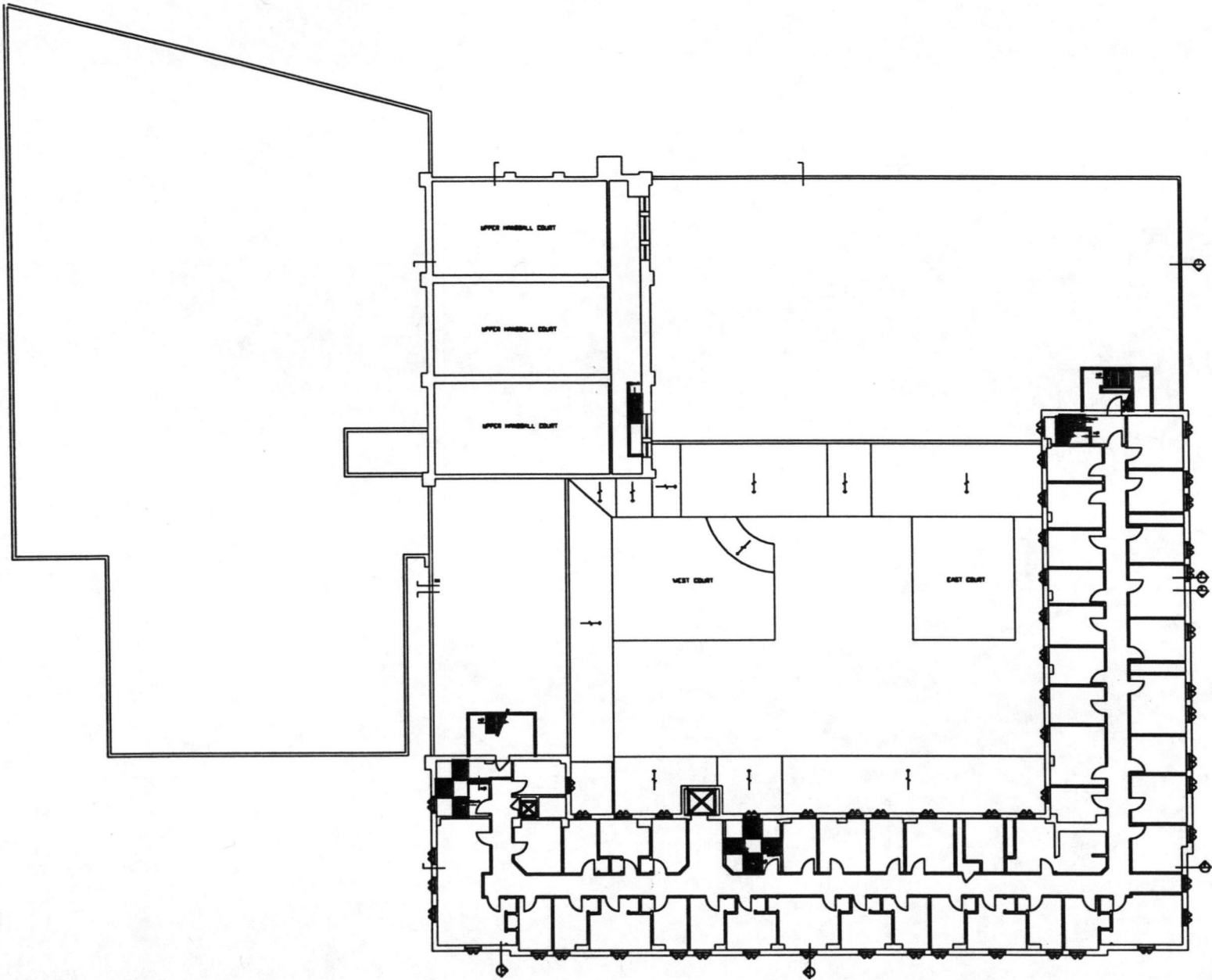
TOTAL FLOOR AREA - 3RD FLOOR: 11,190 SF  
TOTAL FLOOR AREA (RESIDENTIAL) - 3RD FLOOR: 8,490 SF

Wilmington YMCA, New Castle County, Delaware  
Floor Plan



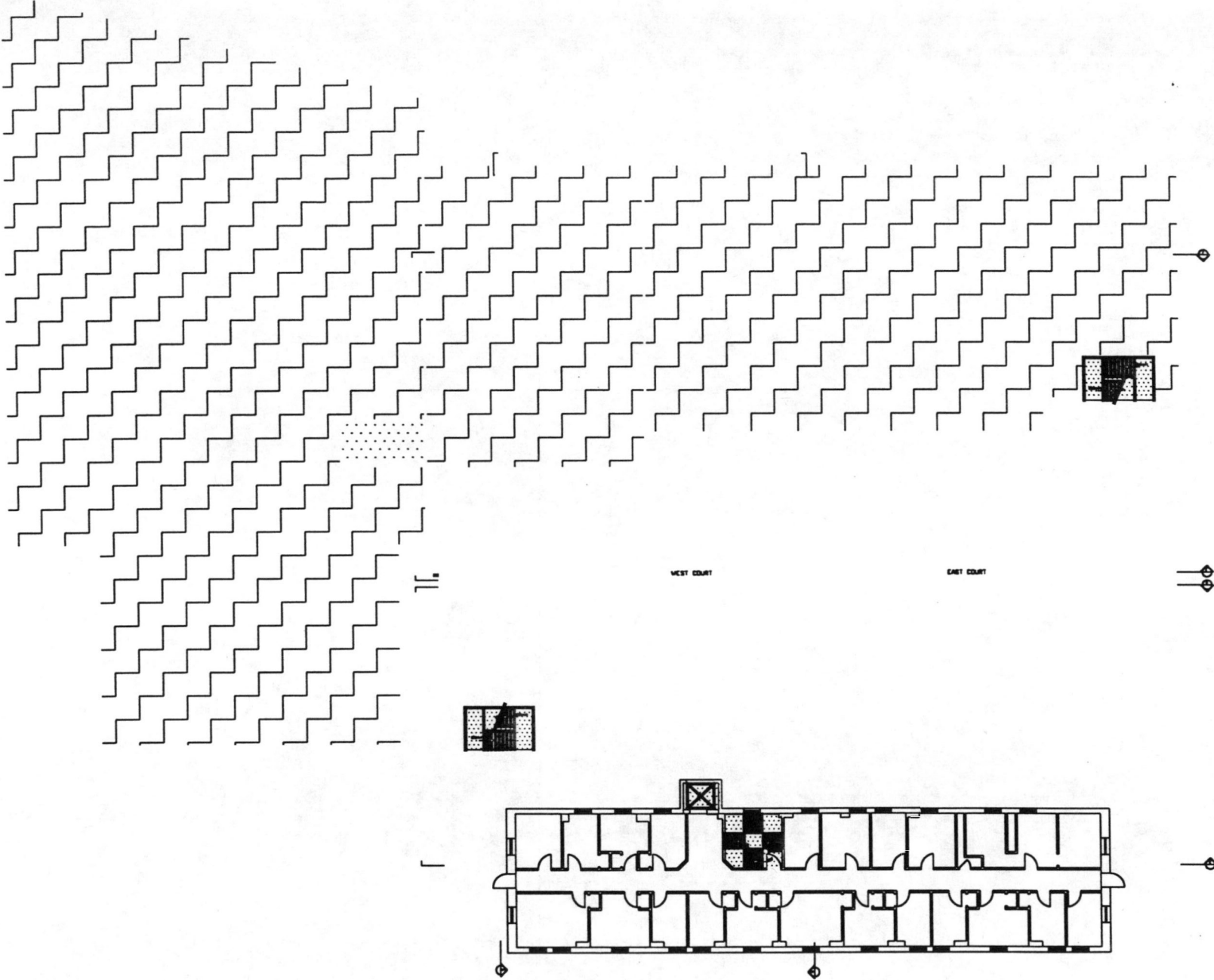
TOTAL FLOOR AREA - 4TH FLOOR: 12,050 SF  
TOTAL FLOOR AREA- RESIDENTIAL: 9,125 SF

Wilmington YMCA, New Castle County, Delaware  
Floor Plan



TOTAL FLOOR AREA - 5TH FLOOR: 7,939 SF  
TOTAL FLOOR AREA (RESIDENTIAL) - 5TH FLOOR: 7,574 SF

Wilmington YMCA, New Castle County, Delaware  
Floor Plan



TOTAL FLOOR AREA - 6TH FLOOR: 3,845 SF  
TOTAL FLOOR AREA (RESIDENTIAL) - 6TH FLOOR: 3,845 SF

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY     Wilmington YMCA  
NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY:   DELAWARE, New Castle

DATE RECEIVED:         1/09/02                     DATE OF PENDING LIST:   1/29/02  
DATE OF 16TH DAY:     2/14/02                     DATE OF 45TH DAY:       2/24/02  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER:   02000035

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL:   N   DATA PROBLEM:   N   LANDSCAPE:   N   LESS THAN 50 YEARS:   N  
OTHER:    N   PDIL:            N   PERIOD:       N   PROGRAM UNAPPROVED:   N  
REQUEST:  N   SAMPLE:           N   SLR DRAFT:   N   NATIONAL:        N

COMMENT WAIVER:   N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    2/20/02 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



501 West 11<sup>th</sup> Street

Wilmington YMCA  
New Castle County, Delaware

Photo 1 of 22

Robert Powers

July 2001

Powers + Co.

Hooking Northwest at Main (South) + East Elevations



Wilmington YMCA  
New Castle County, Delaware

Photo 2 of 22

Robert Powers

Powers & Co.

Looking Southwest at Ea

501 West 11th St



501 West 11th Street

Wilmington YMCA

New Castle County, Delaware

Photo 3 of 22

Robert Powers

Powers & Co.

Looking Southeast at REAK (North) and West Elevations



501 West 11<sup>th</sup> Street

Wilmington YMCA

New Castle County, Delaware

Photo 4 of 22

Robert Powers

Powers & Co.

Looking EAST & WEST ELEVATION



501 West 11th Street

Wilmington YMCA

New Castle County, Delaware

Photo 5 of 22

Robert Powers

Powers + Co.

DETAIL OF MAIN ENTRANCE, SOUTH ELEVATION



501 West 11<sup>th</sup> Street

Wilmington YMCA

New Castle County, Delaware

Photo 6 of 22

Robert Powers

Powers + Co.

DETAIL OF MAIN ENTRANCE, EAST ELEVATION

(ORIGINAL ENTRANCE FOR BOYS REVISION)



501 WEST 11th STREET

Wilmington YMCA

New Castle County, Delaware

Photo 7 of 22

ROBERT POWERS

POWERS - G.

LOOKING SOUTHEAST IN COURTYARD FROM 4th FLOOR



501 West 11th Street

Wilmington YMCA

New Castle County, Delaware

Photo 8 of 22

ROBERT POWERS

Powers + Co.

Basement Level, Private Dining Room, Looking NE EAST



501 West 11th Street  
Wilmington YMCA  
New Castle County, Delaware

Photo 9 of 22

Robert Powers

Powers & Co.

Basement Level, Pool, Looking East



501 WEST 11<sup>th</sup> STREET

Wilmington YMCA

New Castle County, Delaware

Photo 10 of 22

ROBERT POWERS

POWERS & CO.

1<sup>ST</sup> FLOOR MAIN ENTRANCE LOBBY,  
LOOKING SOUTH

ROOMS  
GENERAL OFFICES  
DIRECTOR 210  
KNOX 210  
CENTER 200



501 West 11th Street  
Wilmington YMCA  
New Castle County, Delaware

Photo 11 of 22

Robert Powers

Powers + Co.

1st Floor, Main Star, Looking Northwest



501 WEST 11th STREET

Wilmington YMCA

New Castle County, Delaware

Photo 12 of 22

ROBERT POWERS

POWERS + CO.

1ST FLOOR, STAIR IN ROUND TOWER,  
LOOKING SOUTHEAST

 Welcome to  
**The Central YMCA**  
We build strong kids, strong families, strong communities

 Y  
strong families...  
M  
C  
A

Y  
M  
C  
A

**New Summer Hours!**  
Friday 5:30am - 8:30pm  
Saturday 8:00am - 5:00pm  
Sunday 12:00pm - 5:00pm  
*Effective Friday June 15th, 2011*



501 WEST 11<sup>TH</sup> STREET

Wilmington YMCA

New Castle County, Delaware

Photo B0F22

ROBERT POWERS

POWERS & Co.

1<sup>ST</sup> FLOOR, MAIN CORRIDOR,

WORKING NORTH



501 WEST 14th STREET

Wilmington YMCA

New Castle County, Delaware

Photo 14 OK 22

ROBERT POWERS

POWERS & Co.

1st Floor, Director's Office (ORIGINAL LIBRARY),  
WADING SOUTHWEST



501 WEST 11<sup>TH</sup> STREET  
Wilmington YMCA  
New Castle County, Delaware

Photo 15 OF 22

ROBERT POWERS

POWERS + Co.

1<sup>ST</sup> FLOOR, ORIGINAL BOY'S DIVISION SPACE,  
LOOKING SOUTH



501 WEST 11TH STREET

Wilmington YMCA  
New Castle County, Delaware

Photo 16 OF 22

ROBERT POWERS

POWERS - CO,

1ST FLOOR, ORIGINAL BOYS DIVISION SPACE,  
LOOKING NORTH



501 WEST 17TH STREET  
Wilmington YMCA  
New Castle County, Delaware

Photo 17 of 22

ROBERT POWERS  
POWERS COMPANY

2ND FLOOR OFFICE (ORIGINAL BOARDROOM),  
LOOKING SOUTH



501 WEST 11TH STREET

Wilmington YMCA

New Castle County, Delaware

Photo 18 of 22

2ND FLOOR CHAPEL, LOOKING NORTHEAST

ROBERT POWERS

POWERS + CO.



501 WEST 11TH STREET  
Wilmington YMCA  
New Castle County, Delaware

Photo 19 X 22

ROBERT POWERS

POWERS & CO.

2ND FLOOR, EAST GYMNASIUM,  
LOOKING NORTHEAST



501 WEST 11TH STREET

Wilmington YMCA

New Castle County, Delaware

Photo 20 OK ZZ

ROBERT POWERS

POWERS & Co.

2ND FLOOR, WEST GYMNASIUM

LOOKING NORTH



501 West 11th STREET  
Wilmington YMCA  
New Castle County, Delaware

Photo 21 of 22

ROBERT POWERS

POWERS + Co.

3RD FLOOR, DOMITORY CORRIDOR,  
LOOKING NORTH



501 WEST 11TH STREET

Wilmington YMCA

New Castle County, Delaware

Photo 22 of 22

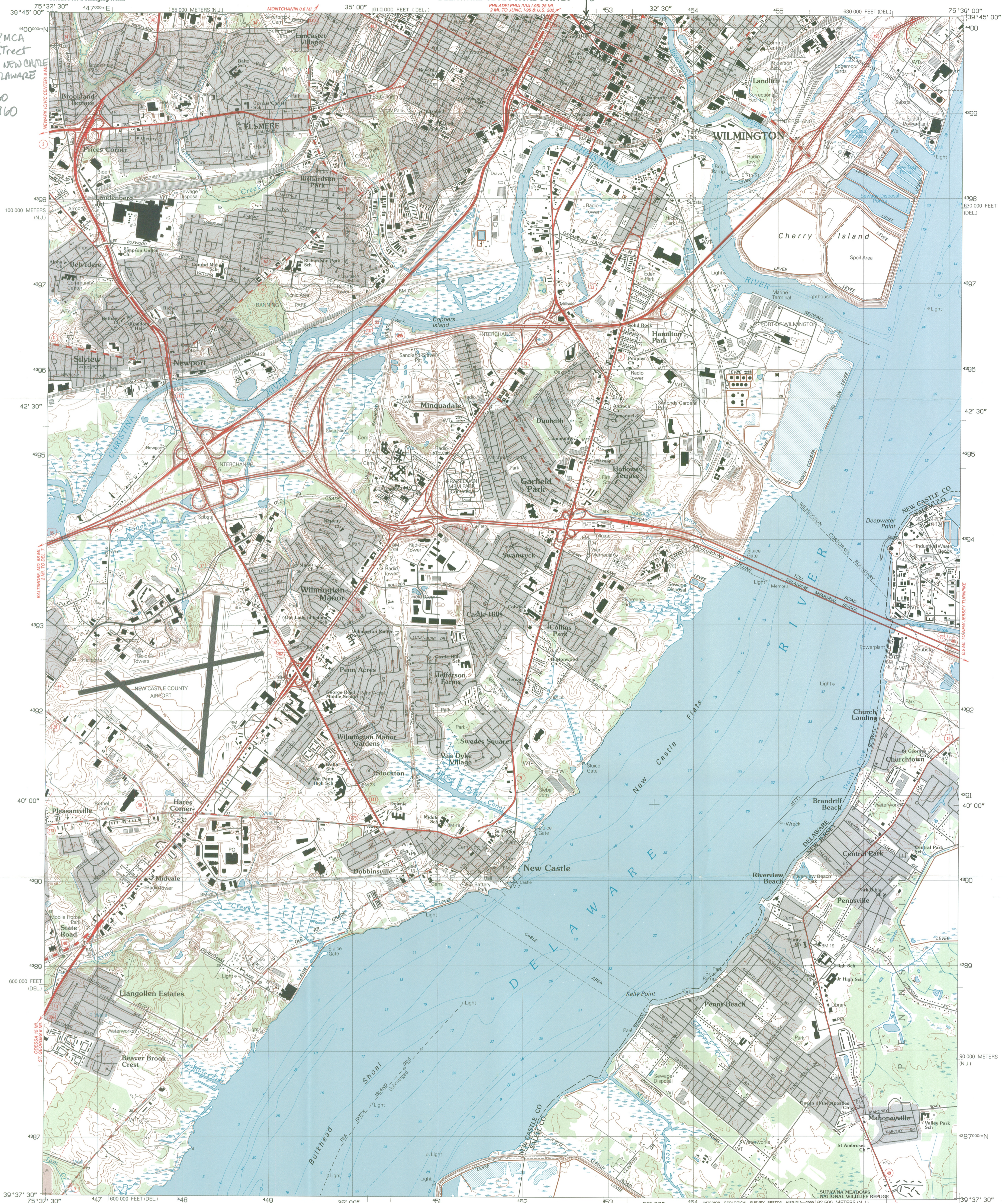
ROBERT POWERS

Powers + Co.

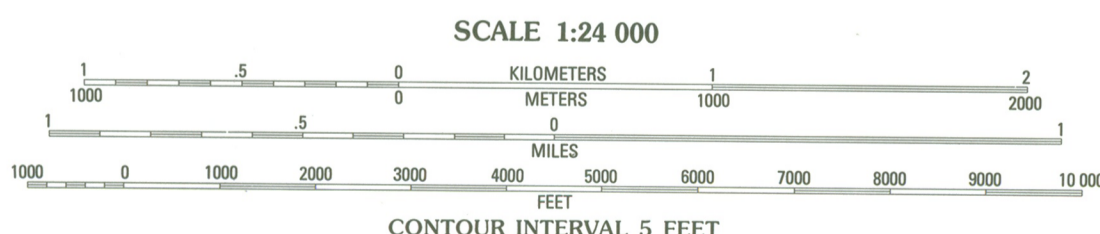
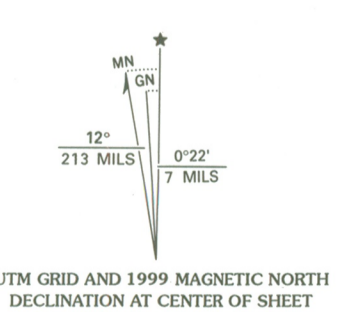
4th FLOOR, TYPICAL DORMITORY ROOM,  
LOOKING SOUTH

Wilmington YMCA 18 452860 4399960

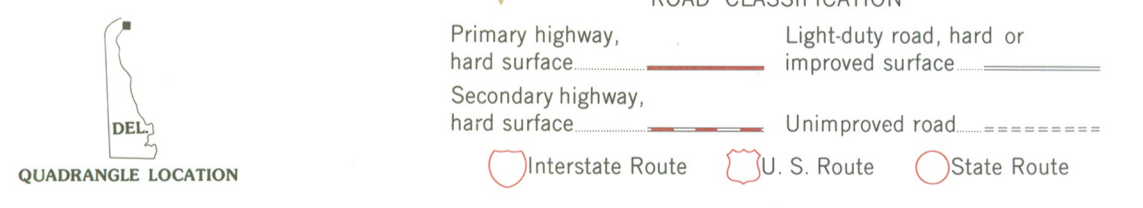
Wilmington YMCA 501 W. 11th Street WILMINGTON, NEW CASTLE COUNTY, DELAWARE 18 452860 4399960



Produced by the United States Geological Survey Derived from imagery taken 1989 and other sources. Photorectified using imagery taken 1997; no major culture or drainage changes observed. Survey control current as of 1991. Boundaries, other than corporate, verified 1999. Selected hydrographic data compiled from NOS chart 294 (1966). This information is not intended for navigational purposes. North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83). Projection and 1000-meter grid: Universal Transverse Mercator, zone 18 10 000-foot ticks: Delaware Coordinate System of 1983 2 500-meter ticks: New Jersey Coordinate System of 1983 North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27) is shown by dashed corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 83 and NAD 27 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic Survey NADCON software. There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map.



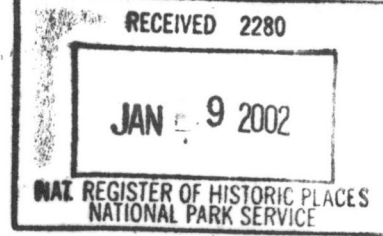
CONTOUR INTERVAL 5 FEET NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929 (NGVD 29) (TO CONVERT ELEVATIONS TO THE NORTH AMERICAN VERTICAL DATUM OF 1988, SUBTRACT 1 FOOT) DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET, DATUM IS MEAN LOWER LOW WATER THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO DATUMS IS VARIABLE THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS 5.6 FEET TO CONVERT FROM FEET TO METERS, MULTIPLY BY 0.3048 THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225 A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



QUADRANGLE LOCATION table with 8 cells and corresponding quadrant names: 1 Kennett Square, 2 Wilmington North, 3 Marcus Hook, 4 Newark East, 5 Penns Grove, 6 St. Georges, 7 Delaware City, 8 Salem.

WILMINGTON SOUTH, DEL.-N.J. 1997 NIMA 5863 II NE-SERIES V832





STATE OF DELAWARE  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
DIVISION OF HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE  
15 THE GREEN  
DOVER • DE • 19901-3611

TELEPHONE: (302) 739 - 5685

FAX: (302) 739 - 5660

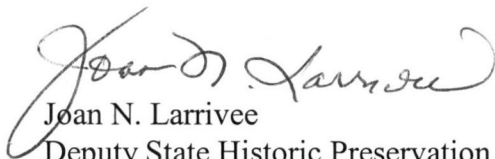
January 7, 2002

Ms. Carol Shull  
National Register of Historic Places  
Mail Stop 2280, Suite NC400  
1849 C Street , NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed please find the nomination form to place the Wilmington YMCA, located in New Castle County, Delaware, on the National Register of Historic Places. If there are any questions about this nomination, please contact Robin K. Bodo, National Register Coordinator, at (302) 739-5685.

Sincerely,

  
Joan N. Larrivee  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Enclosure