

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

Historic name Joplin YMCA

Other names/site number N/A

Name of related Multiple Property Listing Historic Resources of Joplin, Missouri

2. Location

Street & number 510 S. Wall Ave.

N/A	not for publication
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City or town Joplin

N/A	vicinity
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State Missouri Code MO County Jasper Code 097 Zip code 64801

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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

Burk Ase DEREK SHPO 12-8-21
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

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

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

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register

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

other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Joplin YMCA
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5. Classification

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

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

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

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
	1	structures
		objects
1	1	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL/Clubhouse

RECREATION/Sports Facility

DOMESTIC/Hotel

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19th & 20th CENTURY REVIVALS

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Brick

Stone

roof: Other: EPDM

other: _____

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION ON CONTINUATION PAGES

Joplin YMCA
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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE ON CONTINUATION PAGES

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

Areas of Significance

RECREATION

Period of Significance

1921-1960

Significant Dates

1921

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Smith, Rea, & Lovitt (architects)

Eberhardt Construction Company

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10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property Less than one acre

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 37.086567 -94.515956 3 _____
Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

2 _____ 4 _____
Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

Verbal Boundary Description (On continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification (On continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Amanda K. Loughlin, National Register Manager

organization Rosin Preservation, LLC date Mar. 2021, rev. Apr., June, & Aug. 2021

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city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64109

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

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

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Photographs

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

Photo Log:

Name of Property: Joplin YMCA

City or Vicinity: Joplin

County: Jasper County State: Missouri

Photographer: Brad Finch, f-stop Photography

Date Photographed: January 2021

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

- 01 of 15:** East elevation, looking W
- 02 of 15:** East and north elevations, looking SW
- 03 of 15:** North and west elevations, looking SE
- 04 of 15:** South and east elevations, looking NW
- 05 of 15:** Ground floor, main entry vestibule, looking S
- 06 of 15:** First floor, main lobby, looking SE
- 07 of 15:** First floor, north meeting room (former Boys Lobby), looking SE
- 08 of 15:** First floor, gymnasium, looking NE
- 09 of 15:** Second floor, main stair hall, looking NW
- 10 of 15:** Second floor, gymnastics area (former dormitories), looking WNW
- 11 of 15:** Second floor, exercise room, looking SE
- 12 of 15:** Third floor, exercise room (former dormitories), looking NW
- 13 of 15:** Third floor, free weights (former dormitories), looking SE
- 14 of 15:** Fourth floor, walking/running tracks (former dormitories), looking SE
- 15 of 15:** Ground floor, swimming pool, looking NW

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Figure Log:

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

Figure 01: Contextual map, showing the YMCA within Joplin. Source: Base map from Google.

Figure 02: Boundary denoted by dashed line. Source: Base map from Google Earth, 2017 aerial.

Figure 03: Contextual images of Wall Avenue, looking S (top) and north (bottom). Source: Brad Finch, January 2021.

Figure 04: Snippet of the 1950 Sanborn map, showing the southwest corner of West 5th Street and South Wall Avenue. The YMCA boundary is represented with dashed line. Source: *Insurance Maps of Joplin, Missouri* (New York: Sanborn Map Company 1906, rev. 1950), 20.

Figure 05: Snippet of the 1963 Sanborn map, showing the southwest corner of West 5th Street and South Wall Avenue. The YMCA boundary is represented with dashed line. Source: *Insurance Maps of Joplin, Missouri* (New York: Sanborn Map Company 1906, rev. 1963), 20.

Figure 06: The Joplin YMCA in 1921, shortly after opening. View is looking southwest at the east and north elevations. Note the lawn and house to the south of the building. Source: "Organizations—YMCA" Vertical File, Joplin Public Library.

Figure 07: Undated photo (circa 1963) showing the east and north elevations. Source: The gymnasium in the early 1920s, looking east from running track. Source: "Organizations—YMCA" Vertical File, Joplin Public Library.

Figure 08: Exterior photo key. Source: Base map from Google Earth.

Figure 09: Details of the east elevation parapet details. Source: Brad Finch, January 2021.

Figure 10: View from fourth floor, looking NW and showing the lightwell. Source: Brad Finch, January 2021.

Figure 11: Current First Floor Plan and Photo Key. Not to Scale. Base floor plan: Goetz-Ketron General Contractors, 1985.

Figure 12: Proposed first and second floor plans published in *Joplin News Herald* (5 April 1918): 18.

Figure 13: View of lobby in 1943, looking SSW and showing reception desk. Source: "An Inquirer Learns About the YMCA in Wartime," *Joplin Globe* (31 January 1943): E-5.

Figure 14: Lightwell to south of Boys' Lobby on first floor, looking NW. Source: Brad Finch, January 2021.

Figure 15: The gymnasium in the early 1920s, looking east from running track. Source: Clipping in "Organizations—YMCA" Vertical File, Joplin Public Library.

Figure 16: Proposed dormitory & ground floor (basement) plans published in *Joplin News Herald* (5 April 1918): 18.

Figure 17: Current Second Floor Plan and Photo Key. Not to Scale. Source: Goetz-Ketron General Contractors, 1985. On file with owner.

Figure 18: Current Third Floor Plan and Photo Key. Not to Scale. Source: Goetz-Ketron General Contractors, 1985. On file with owner.

Figure 19: Current Fourth Floor Plan and Photo Key. Not to Scale. Source: Goetz-Ketron General Contractors, 1985. On file with owner.

Figure 20: Current Ground Floor Plan and Photo Key. Not to Scale. Source: Goetz-Ketron General Contractors, 1985. On file with owner.

Figure 21: Top: Old Memorial High School, 310 W. 8th Street, constructed in 1918; bottom: Memorial Auditorium, 212 W. 8th Street, constructed in 1925. Source: Google Streetview, 2019 captures.

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Figure 22: 821 S Main Street where the John Graue Athletic Club met (top); the Elks Building (bottom). Source: Google Streetview, 2018 (top) and 2019 (bottom).

Figure 23: The first YMCA building in Joplin circa 1910 (top). Source: "Y.M.C.A, first building (colorized)," Joplin Historical Postcards Collection, Joplin Public Library, Missouri Digital Heritage.
<https://cdm16795.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/jplnpstcrds/id/530/rec/2> Snippet of Sheet 22 of the Sanborn Insurance Map of Joplin, showing the extent of the building (outlined) (bottom).

Figure 24: Selected examples of early twentieth century, pre-Building Bureau-era YMCA buildings throughout North America. Source: Lupkin, *Manhood Factories*, iii & xii.

Figure 25: Images from local papers during the weeklong fundraising campaign. At left, a sketch from "First Day of General Canvassing Brings Fund for New Y.M.C.A. Home to \$85,962," *Joplin Globe* (25 March 1917): 1, and at right, the fundraising clock showing where the building fund was on March 29, *Joplin News Herald* (29 March 1917): 3.

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Summary Description

The 1921 Joplin YMCA is located at 510 South Wall Avenue in Joplin, Jasper County, Missouri. The brick and stone building sits at the southwest corner of West 5th Street and South Wall Avenue at the west edge of downtown Joplin. Designed by the Kansas City-Joplin architecture firm Smith, Rea, & Lovitt in early 1918, the institutional building is an example of the Cultural and Recreational Property Type described in the “Historic Resources of Joplin, Missouri” Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF). The Joplin YMCA building has a rectangular footprint with a two-and-a-half-story rectangular gymnasium wrapped by a four-and-a-half story L-shaped mass; the form of the building historically followed the interior programming that included spaces for both recreation and socialization. When constructed, the first floor of the Joplin YMCA featured meeting rooms, lounges, and a two-story gymnasium. The second floor had smaller classrooms and dormitories. The top two floors exclusively contained dormitory rooms, and the ground floor (basement) housed a swimming pool, handball court, and associated recreation rooms—all functional spaces associated with YMCAs of the early 1900s. In the following decades, the mission of the Joplin YMCA shifted to focus primarily on recreation for all ages and genders. As early as the 1950s, spaces within the facility were updated and altered to accommodate the diverse membership and new recreational activities; by 1970, the dormitory function of the building was obsolete, and a one-story metal-clad handball court was added to the southwest corner of the building in 1975, after the period of significance. A major renovation campaign in 1985 replaced the unused upper stories with additional recreational spaces in order to continue the mission of the YMCA in this building. Alterations to the ground and first floors included finish upgrades; significant spaces—gymnasium, pool, meeting rooms—were retained and reused. Windows and doors throughout the building also were replaced at this time. The 1921 Joplin YMCA was constructed in an era of increased standardization of YMCA architecture. Besides the interior spatial organization, common characteristics of these modest institutional buildings include the placement at edges of downtown districts and applied stylistic references typical of Late Nineteenth & Early Twentieth Century Revivals. Extant character-defining features of the Joplin YMCA include stone tabbing, semi-hexagonal entrance vestibule, decorative stone ornament on the parapet of the primary (east) elevation, exterior rhythm of fenestration, tiled swimming pool, open gymnasium, wood paneled main lobby, and first floor boys’ lounge. An asphalt parking lot (circa 1961) extends to the south of the building and is considered a non-contributing structure due to its construction after the period of significance.

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The Joplin YMCA retains historic integrity as and meets the registration requirements of a Cultural and Recreational Property Type with a period of significance spanning 1921 to 1960.

SETTING AND SITE

The Joplin YMCA sits at the southwest corner of South Wall Avenue and West 5th Street at the west edge of downtown (*Figures 1 & 2*). The property is within two blocks of three historic districts: the Joplin Downtown Historic District (east), the Joplin and Wall Avenues Historic District (northeast), and the residential Murphysburg Historic District (northwest and west).¹ One- and two-story early twentieth century brick auto-related commercial buildings surround the YMCA to the north, east, and south (*Figure 3*); the Joplin First Presbyterian Church occupies the full half-block immediately west of the nominated property.² Both Wall Avenue to the east and 5th Street to the north are asphalt-paved, one-way streets with on-street parallel parking along one side; Wall Avenue is a two-lane thoroughfare.

The YMCA property occupies the northeast quadrant of its block. A north-south mid-block alley defines the west boundary. The public rights-of-way of West 5th Street and South Wall Avenue create the north and east boundaries respectively, and the north wall of the adjacent garage forms the south boundary. Concrete sidewalks line the north and east sides of the building within the right-of-way, outside the nominated boundary. Deciduous street trees, metal streetlights, and road signs dot the concrete sidewalk; the trees are centered on the east elevation of the building, and all of these site features are outside the nominated boundary. Former planting beds that flanked the east entry stairs are now paved (*Figures 6 through 8; Photos 1, 2, & 4*). A flagpole (circa 1960s) occupies the northwest corner of the property.³

An asphalt **parking lot** (circa 1961) covers the south half of the nominated property. Three rows of striped parking spots cover the lot: seven line the south elevation of the building, one abuts the south elevation of the 1975 handball court; seven spots fill the east portion of the center of the lot; and fifteen spots line the entire north elevation of the adjacent building to the south. When

¹ Listed in the National Register in 2008, 2010, and 2015, respectively.

² The Presbyterian church historically occupied the southwest quadrant of the block with houses and an auto-related commercial building occupying the northwest quadrant of the block. A new church building constructed between 1963 and 1981 (according to 1963 Sanborn and 1981 aerial image) replaced all buildings on the west half of the block. See also Figures 4 & 5.

³ The flagpole does not appear in existing images of the building from the 1920s; Figure 7 shows the pole in place.

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the building was constructed, a grassy lawn covered the north portion of this parking lot while a late nineteenth century house occupied the south half until circa 1961 (*Figures 4 & 6*). No landscaping remains on the property. The parking lot is a non-contributing structure, as it was constructed after the period of significance (*Figure 5*).

MASSING AND STRUCTURE

The Joplin YMCA has a raised full ground story with four stories above, making it a four-and-a-half-story building. Generally, it has a rectangular footprint, measuring 128 feet east-west by 104 feet north-south, and sits back 21 feet from the sidewalk to the east. Two masses organize the building. A two-and-a-half story rectangular mass creates the southwest portion of the building and houses the gymnasium and swimming pool. A four-and-a-half story L-shaped mass wraps the north and east sides of the rectangle; the west wall of this mass steps back seven feet from the alley and west wall of the gymnasium. Gathering spaces, meeting rooms, and dormitories filled this portion of the building originally. A partially intact rectangular lightwell at the center of the south wall of the L extends from the first to fourth stories. A small one-and-a-half-story rectangular appendage on the south side of the gymnasium, constructed in 1975, houses a handball court.

The historic building has a reinforced concrete structural system. Square concrete columns line the perimeter walls of both masses and run the center of the L-shaped mass. The columns rest atop concrete footings and connect to poured concrete floor and roof slabs. Brick spans the voids between exterior columns, and red tapestry face brick laid in running bond clads the exterior, producing a uniform appearance.⁴

EXTERIOR

The Joplin YMCA exhibits stylistic characteristics of the early twentieth century revival styles as applied to an institutional building. Tudor/Jacobethan Revival references include notched parapets with stone coping, decorative stone strapwork on the east parapet (*Figure 9*), engaged buttresses on the gymnasium walls, tabbed stone architraves and building corners, grouped

⁴ Whether intentional or not, the mortar joints of the ground and first stories are more prominent than the upper stories (*Figures 6 & 7; Photos 1 & 2*).

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windows, and semi-hexagonal entry bay. Classical Revival details are found in the vertical organization of the exterior with prominent half-story base, stone water table between the ground and first stories, decorative first story with stone cornice, uniform upper stories with decorative cornice between the fourth story and parapet, and the ornate stone entry on the east elevation. The exterior retains the majority of its 1921 design and materials, excepting the windows and doors. Historically, the ground level featured four-over-four hung sashes; the upper stories had eight- and ten-over-one hung sashes (*Figure 6*), and the first story windows had divided-light transoms. The upper stories today have fixed aluminum replacement units with a single horizontal muntin simulating two sashes (unless noted otherwise); cement board panels cover the ground level windows. Windows were replaced during the 1985 renovations; however, masonry openings and fenestration patterns remain intact. Grouped windows have continuous stone lintels, individual stone sills, and no side trim (unless noted otherwise). The brick parapets hide flat roofs on both masses.

East (Primary) Elevation

The primary elevation faces east onto South Wall Avenue (*Photos 1, 2, & 4*). Five bays organize this symmetrical façade; the three center bays extend nine inches from the rest of the elevation. Bays 1 and 5 (south and north) feature three grouped rectangular masonry window openings at each story. Bays 2 and 4 have paired windows at each story and decorative stone strapwork (*Figure 9*) in the parapet. The center bay, Bay 3, contains the main entrance at the first story, paired windows in the upper three stories, and a decorative stone shield in the parapet (*Figure 9*). This tripartite shield features a taller, rounded center panel with YMCA logo above garland; a finial rises from the center of the arch. Flanking the rounded central panel are identical rectangular panels with floral elements. All first story window openings feature tabbed stone architraves. Smooth stone veneer lines the base of the wall. A stone water table separates the ground and first stories; a molded stone cornice separates the first story from the upper stories, and a larger stone cornice separates the fourth story from the parapet. Stone tabbing accentuates the corners of the center wall at each story and the corner of the building at the first story. A stone medallion with YMCA logo is centered within the ground level brick at the north end of the elevation.

A Y-shaped set of concrete steps leads up from the sidewalk to the main entrance at the first story of the center bay. Brick wingwalls with stone coping line the steps; a stone-framed brick panel adorns the center of the east wall of this stair, and a built-in concrete bench is located below this

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panel. A lamp post extends up from each side of the wingwall above the bench; the globe of the south lamp is missing.⁵ The stairs lead up to the one-story brick semi-hexagonal appendage containing the non-historic entry doors. This entry vestibule has a flat roof behind parapet, and stone tabbing accentuates the junction of the entry appendage to the east wall of the building. The pair of glazed aluminum doors fills the historic opening. A semi-circular transom with scrolled keystone surmounts the doors; plywood fills the historic opening. Stone Tuscan engaged columns flank the door system and support an engaged stone pediment.

East Elevation of Handball Court

The 1975 handball court at the southwest corner of the building sits back from the 1921 elevation approximately eighty feet. The one-story east elevation is painted concrete block (*Photo 4*). A single pedestrian door pierces the center of the elevation; this metal slab door has a narrow lite on the south end of the door.

North Elevation

The north elevation fronts West 5th Street (*Photos 2 & 3*). Seven evenly spaced bays organize this wall. Each bay consists of a pair of windows at each story except for the ground story of Bay 5. This bay contains a door and a window (*Photo 3*): a non-historic metal slab door fills the historic door opening; a window well with metal pipe railing corresponds to the window. Continuous lintels span the paired windows; the east four windows of the ground story, however, have individual lintels (*Photo 2*). The stone veneer base, water table, and cornices from the primary elevation continue onto the north side of the building. The stone water table steps up at Bay 5 to accommodate the doorway. Like the east elevation, the first story windows have tabbed stone surrounds, and stone tabbing accents the corner of the building at the first story. The western five windows of the first story have a stone mullion. No decorative stonework adorns the notched parapet on this elevation.

West Elevation

The west elevation faces the mid-block alley (*Photo 3*) and is divided into two halves. The north half corresponds to the L-shaped mass and sits back from the alley approximately thirteen feet. A

⁵ Globe lampposts are shown in early photos of the building (*Figure 6*), but these may be replacement fixtures based on the materials.

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concrete pad with mechanical equipment fills the space between the building and alley, obscuring the ground story.⁶ The decorative treatment of this half of the elevation matches the north elevation with water table, cornices, notched parapet, and tabbed stone architraves. Two bays organize the first story with a pair of windows in the north bay and a group of three windows in the south bay. Three bays organize the upper stories. A single window fills the north bays at each story. The center bays contain an egress door onto a historic metal fire escape; non-historic metal slab doors fill the historic door openings at each story. A pair of windows fills the south bay of the second story, and a single window fills the south bay of the third and fourth stories. Vents fill the historic window openings in the north and south bay of the fourth story and the south openings of the first and second stories.

The south half of the west elevation corresponds to the gymnasium mass, which abuts the alley. The stone water table continues onto this wall, and a simple stone cornice separates the second story from the plain parapet (no notching). Brick buttresses separate the three bays that organize this façade, and corner buttresses accent the corners. Insulated panels fill the masonry openings at the ground story of the north and center bays; a vent pierces the northern end of the north opening. No openings pierce the south bay of the ground story. Paired windows fill the north south bays of the first and second stories, and a group of three windows fill the center bay at each upper story. The second story window are shorter than the upper windows, and every other unit has an operable hopper sash. A vent fills the center window opening of the second story.

The east leg of the L-shaped mass is substantially set back from the alley, rising two stories above the east wall of the gymnasium mass. This utilitarian brick wall does not have a parapet. Masonry openings have segmental arch lintels and stone sills. Seven bays organize this elevation. A window fills each bay but the north bay of the third story; a metal slab door fills this bay and leads onto the roof of the gymnasium.

The west wall of the 1975 handball court addition abuts the east side of the south corner buttress. Corrugated metal sheeting covers this wall, and no openings pierce the wall.

South Elevation

⁶ Historic plans indicate there are two pairs of masonry openings at the ground level.

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The south elevation of the YMCA building overlooks the asphalt parking lot (*Photo 4*). Eight bays organize this elevation. The west five correspond to the two-and-a-half-story gymnasium mass while the east three bays correspond to the four-and-a-half-story L-shaped mass (described below). Like the west elevation of the gymnasium, brick buttresses separate the five bays of the gymnasium's south elevation, and the stone water table continues across the façade as does the simple cornice at the second story. The 1975 handball court obscures the ground and first stories of the west three bays. Pairs of windows pierce the exposed brick exterior wall of the gymnasium at each exposed bay. Smaller windows at the first story have operable hopper sashes. Corrugated metal sheeting covers the south elevation of the handball court, and no openings pierce the wall.

The east three bays of the south elevation correspond to the four-and-a-half-story L-shaped mass. The decorative treatment of this part of the south elevation matches the north elevation with water table, cornices, notched parapet, and tabbed stone architraves. Paired windows fill the east and west bays of the ground, first, and second stories. Single windows fill the east and west bays of the third and fourth stories and the center bays of the ground and first stories. Metal slab egress doors fill historic doorways in the center bays of the upper three stories; the doors correspond to a historic metal fire escape.

The north leg of the L-shaped mass is substantially set back from the parking lot, rising two stories above the gymnasium's north wall. This utilitarian brick wall steps back around the former lightwell and does not have a parapet (*Figure 10*). Masonry openings have segmental arch lintels and stone sills. Seven bays organize this elevation, three within the wall of the lightwell. A window fills each bay. The east and west walls of the lightwell both have a single centered window. A non-historic shed roof covers the third story of the lightwell wall (as seen in *Figure 10*).

INTERIOR

Historically, the function of the interior follows the form of the building. The gymnasium and swimming pool occupied the two-and-a-half story mass while the four-and-a-half-story L-shaped mass housed gathering spaces, meeting rooms, and dormitories organized on a central double-loaded corridor. In 1985, the building underwent an interior renovation to add recreational spaces

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within the L-shaped mass.⁷ Among the most extensive alterations were the removal of the dormitories and classrooms on the second, third, and fourth floors. Unless otherwise noted, finishes throughout the building date to the 1985 renovation and include carpeting, rubber flooring, drywall partitions and ceilings, and dropped acoustical grids.

First Floor (Figure 11)

The east entry leads into the historic hexagonal vestibule (*Photo 5*). Carthage marble lines each wall of this space, including the base and crown mouldings. A rubberized mat covers the historic marble tile floor and acoustical ceiling tiles (circa 1960) cover the plaster ceiling.⁸ A pair of historic ten-lite glazed wood doors is centered in the west wall; a fixed five-lite transom surmounts the doors.

The wood doors open onto a small stair landing. At the west end, a short set of marble steps leads up the vestibule to the historic lobby of the first floor (*Figure 11*). Historically, narrow marble stairs to the ground floor abutted the north and south sides of the main stair, and wood paneled wing walls wrapped the entire stair block (*Figure 12*). Today, a door in the north wall of the landing opens to the historic stair; the 1985 renovation removed the south door, and paneling covered the former stair opening in the south wall.⁹ The north stair retains its marble treads and risers from 1921.

Historically, the open main lobby at the top of the entry stairs extended to the north wall and halfway to the south wall of the building. A rectangular game room (extant) filled the south end of the floor. A reception desk with open counter was centered on the entry (*Figure 13*). The building's U-shaped primary stair (rebuilt) wrapped the south side of the reception, and a short hallway between the stair and game room led into the gymnasium. A Trophy Hall to the west of the lobby office connected the gymnasium hall to the director's office. An elevator shaft (extant)

⁷ Marta Churchwell, "'Y' Renovation at Halfway Point," *Joplin Globe* (18 August 1985): 3; Goetz-Ketron General Contractors. 1985 Remodel plans. On file with owners.

⁸ Dates based on visual assessment as well as known alterations that occurred in the early 1960s in other areas of the building as discussed in Section 8.

⁹ This paneling matches historic paneling throughout the first floor. It may be reused paneling from the south stair or reproduction.

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abutted the north wall of the office.¹⁰ To the north of the elevator, an east-west corridor (extant) led from the main lobby to the boys' lobby (extant) in the west half of the floor. Three offices lined the north side of this corridor, and a storage room spanned the south side. A fireplace (extant) was located in the wall between the east office and main lobby. The lobby, including the office and corridor, had oak-paneled perimeter walls, plaster crown moulding and wood picture rail, wood flooring, and a plaster ceiling.¹¹

The 1985 renovations created offices within the northeast corner of the lobby with large, glazed windows within drywall partitions. The reception desk was removed. The game room was extended into the lobby's southeast corner where a new reception desk was installed. The three offices along the north side of the boys' lobby corridor (extant) were combined and a small closet created at the west end of the new room. A former "check room" on the south side of the corridor was reconfigured into a kitchen and bathrooms (accessed from the lobby); the former director's office and trophy hall became storage rooms connected to the kitchen. The historic oak paneling in the lobby was purposefully retained.¹² New or reused paneling was installed on new partition walls within the smaller lobby area. A drop ceiling with gold panels was installed below the plaster, and sheet vinyl now covers the floor (*Photo 6*).¹³

The expanded game room in the southeast corner of the floor today has a dropped ceiling, drywall walls, and carpet flooring.¹⁴ A drywall partition divides the room in half; this wall was added after the 1985 renovation.

Historically, the west half of first floor within the L-shaped mass contained rooms specifically for boys, including the boys' lobby, game room, and exercise room. The corridor from the main lobby led into the boys' lobby. According to the original drawings for the building, oak wainscoting lined the walls, wood covered the floors, and the plaster ceiling had plaster crown

¹⁰ Noted as "future elevator" on the 1918 first floor plan; the date of installation is unknown, but the current unit within the historic shaft dates to the 1985 renovation.

¹¹ As noted on the 1918 plans.

¹² "Family Y's Renovation Completed; New Goals Set," *The Joplin Globe* (26 June 1986): B-1.

¹³ It is unknown if the vinyl covered the historic floor or replaced it entirely.

¹⁴ The south wall of the game room is furred out and covers all but the center window.

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moulding and wood picture rail like in the main lobby.¹⁵ A cased opening along the north half of the west wall opened into the game room, and a pair of doors to the south of this opening led into a small passageway that provided access to the exercise room to its west and the gymnasium to the south. A stair along the east wall of this passageway provided access between all floors. To the south of the boys' lobby was the historic brick-lined lightwell.

The 1985 renovations retained the square volume of the former boys' lobby (*Photo 7*). Drywall infilled all openings along the west wall and covered the windows into the lightwell on either side of the fireplace on the south wall. A door replaced one of the windows on the west side of the fireplace, leading into the former lightwell. The oak paneling in the lobby (now meeting room) was refinished and reinstalled around the perimeter, and the historic fireplace was retained and the face retiled. Vinyl sheeting now covers the floor, and a dropped ceiling with wood inserts was installed below the plaster.

The lightwell was converted into a mechanical room and hallway in 1985. An unfinished ceiling was installed, but the historic yellow brick and some historic windows remain (typical all floors) (*Figure 14*). A non-historic door within a historic masonry opening in the west wall of the lightwell leads into a large exercise room. This room is the combination of the boys' game room, exercise room, and passageway; the historic stair in the passageway was removed. Non-historic finishes within this space include drywall walls, wood flooring, and dropped ceiling. A door in the south wall leads into the gymnasium.

The gymnasium is a rectangular two-story volume (*Photo 8*); this is a significant space that communicates the historic recreation association of the building. Historically, an oval wooden running track lined the perimeter walls (*Figure 15*). A stair in the northwest corner of the gym led up to the track, as did doors within the north and east walls. The 1985 renovation removed the track and its stair.¹⁶ The historic brick wainscot lines the perimeter walls and steps around doors in the north and east walls. Fiberglass reinforced plastic (FRP) panels above the wainscot, applied in 1985, hides masonry openings at the former track level on the north and east walls; painted plaster extends above the panels to the ceiling. Acoustical ceiling tiles cover the ceiling, and exposed steel roof trusses run north-south.

¹⁵ Smith, Rea & Lovitt Architects, "Joplin YMCA," blueprints dated 1918. Drawings held by owner and have not been digitized.

¹⁶ The reason for the removal of the track is not explained in available newspaper clippings.

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Upper Floors (Figures 16 through 19)

An L-shaped double-loaded corridor historically organized the upper three floors of the YMCA (Figures 12 & 16). Classrooms and meeting spaces occupied the east portion of the second floor, and dormitory rooms filled the north portion of the second floor and all of the third and fourth floors. Large restrooms occupied the west side of the elevator. Dormitory rooms had finished concrete floors and bases and plaster walls and ceilings. The 1985 renovations removed all classrooms and dormitories from the three floors; a portion of the south leg of the corridor remains on the second floor with non-historic finishes (Figure 17; Photo 9). Two two-story racquetball courts were installed along the east side of the second and third floors (Figures 17 & 18). Open exercise spaces replaced the rooms on the second and third floors (Photos 10 through 13). Restrooms remain (updated finishes) to the west of the elevator on the second floor. Plaster remnants remain in place above dropped ceilings. The fourth floor was demolished down to the structure, and an L-shaped combination running-walking track installed throughout the entire floor (Figure 19; Photo 14). The historic concrete floor and base was exposed and remains intact.

Ground Floor (Figure 20)

The full ground level historically contained the swimming pool, locker rooms, and cafeteria (Figure 16). The pool room occupied the north half of the gymnasium block. To the south of the pool was the handball court and exercise room. Locker rooms filled the south half of the L-shaped mass and the north side of the pool within the north leg of the L. The northeast corner of the ground floor contained the cafeteria; a conference room and large kitchen adjoined the west side of the cafeteria. The boiler room filled the northwest corner of the floor with adjacent coal room to the west.

The ground floor saw the greatest number of alterations over the decades the YMCA operated out of this building (Figure 20). Saunas, steam rooms, and massage rooms were added for men beginning in the 1950s, and in the 1960s, similar facilities for women, including locker rooms, were installed. The 1985 renovations to the ground level mostly updated fixtures and finishes throughout the ground floor. The men's and women's locker rooms were also expanded. The men's locker rooms, showers, and saunas occupied most of the north side of the floor where the cafeteria and kitchen were historically located. The women's areas along the south half extended into the former handball court in the southwest corner of the floor. A small passageway south of

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the swimming pool leads into the 1975 handball court; an existing window in the 1921 building was modified into an opening, but otherwise the addition did not impact the historic building. The pool room received new finishes in 1985 but the pool itself retains its historic form and tilework (*Photo 15*).

Partial Basement

The boiler room in the northwest corner of the ground floor is a one-and-a-half-story cubic volume. The open room has exposed brick walls and concrete structure. A pair of historic wood doors in the south wall leads into a subbasement under the swimming pool that houses pool and other mechanical equipment. A small opening in the west wall of the boiler room leads into a narrow rectangular coal room. The room is under the concrete slab along the alley to the west.

INTEGRITY

The Joplin YMCA retains historic integrity as a recreational facility that functioned between 1921 and 1960 and is an example of the Cultural and Recreational Property Type described in the “Historic Resources of Joplin” MPDF. The building meets the registration requirements of this property type (*Table 1*).¹⁷ The building remains in its historic *location* within the 1960 city boundaries of Joplin (*Table 1*). The YMCA building committee intentionally selected this site at the west edge of downtown Joplin. This siting followed the trend of early twentieth century YMCA planning that placed new facilities on the fringe of commercial districts with other larger institutional buildings. As a Cultural and Recreational Property Type, the Joplin YMCA conforms to the locational trend of these resources that place them along major arterial or collector streets in transitional areas between commercial and residential neighborhoods.¹⁸ The location at 5th and Wall is on a collector street between downtown and a historic residential area. Like its historic location, the historic *setting* of the YMCA building remains intact. Early twentieth century commercial buildings to the north, east, and south transition into institutional and residential properties to the west, emphasizing the location of the property at the edge of downtown.

¹⁷ Sally F. Schwenk, “Historic Resources of Joplin,” National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form (2008): F-25 to F-26. The building historically functioned as both recreation facility and social hall; because of this duality, the subtypes of this property type do not apply.

¹⁸ Schwenk, “Historic Resources of Joplin,” F-22.

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The building retains its historic *design* that continues to communicate its historic function as an early twentieth century recreational property in Joplin (*Tables 1 & 2*). The building massing is a crucial component of the historic design, as the form followed the function of the interior programming. This era of YMCA buildings shares common interior layouts that included significant recreational spaces such as basement swimming pools and two-story gymnasiums as well as social spaces and upper story dormitories. The exterior forms of these buildings corresponded to these functions. At the Joplin YMCA, a four-an-a-half-story L-shaped mass that housed the dormitories, lobby, and classrooms wraps around a two-and-a-half-story rectangular mass that contains the major recreational spaces (gymnasium and swimming pool). Although the exterior continues to communicate the historic interior arrangement, the interior has been altered, most substantially in 1985. The alterations removed most of the socialization spaces and all of the dormitories, replacing these obsolete areas with additional recreational spaces. The interior program adapted from one that shared recreational and social spaces to one primarily focused on the recreational activities of its members. The two most significant historic spaces, the gymnasium and the swimming pool, underwent the least amount of change because they continued to be relevant spaces to the recreational facility; because of the alterations the building continued to remain an important location for fitness and recreation for the residents of Joplin. The 1985 changes to the gymnasium included the removal of the running track and the updating of finishes, but the space remains clearly discernible as a gymnasium. Similarly, finishes within the swimming pool room were updated in 1985, but the form, design, and materials of the pool remain from its 1921 construction. Ancillary support spaces such as the ground floor locker rooms were expanded during the period of significance and were updated during the 1985 renovations. Additional remaining historic *materials* can be found in the entry vestibule, the first floor lobby, and the boys' lobby.

Along with its massing, the exterior *design, materials, and workmanship* of the Joplin YMCA correspond to the trends of early twentieth century YMCAs and Joplin's Cultural and Recreational properties (*Table 1*). These buildings featured conservative stylistic references applied to masonry institutional buildings. The brick-and-stone Joplin YMCA features stylistic references to Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century revivals. These features include the organization of the public-facing elevations with raised base, decorative first story, uniform upper stories, and parapet; the symmetrical brick façade; the stone water table and cornices; semi-hexagonal entry vestibule with stone columns and pediment; stone tabbing; and stone

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strapwork and medallion in parapet. The primary alteration to the exterior was the replacement of all windows and doors. The historic masonry openings remain intact, however, allowing the historic fenestration patterns to remain discernible.

The interior alterations to the 1921 building coincided with organizational changes particularly in the latter decades of the twentieth century. Rather than construct a new facility outside of the downtown, the Joplin YMCA decided in the 1980s to continue to invest in the existing building, altering the interior to meet the fitness-focused mission of the organization. Prior to this change, the top three floors of the building were underutilized, as the dormitory functions had ceased by the early 1970s, a trend seen throughout the country. The 1980s renovation kept the major historic recreational spaces (gymnasium and swimming pool) and larger gathering spaces such as the former game room and boys' lobby on the first floor. The historic oak paneling found on the first floor also was retained, as was the marble vestibule, and the two historic fireplaces. Even the historic concrete floors of the fourth story were exposed during the renovations. Apart from the window replacement, the interior alterations did not encroach upon the historic exterior design by constructing new additions. The only addition to the building occurred in 1975 with the small one-story handball court at the southwest corner of the gymnasium. This addition does not negatively impact the exterior appearance and can be removed, if needed, without harming the historic building. The 1985 alterations do not diminish the ability of the Joplin YMCA to communicate its *feeling* and *association* as a significant historic recreational resource of Joplin.

Table 1. MPDF Registration Requirements of the Cultural and Recreational Property Type as Applied to the Joplin YMCA¹⁹

- Constructed between 1870-1960.
 - ✓ The Joplin YMCA opened in 1921.
- Located within Joplin's 1960 city boundaries.
 - ✓ Joplin YMCA constructed at the west edge of downtown.
- Retains architectural composition, ornamental details, and materials of primary elevation(s).
 - ✓ Doors and windows have been replaced, but the public-facing east and north elevations retain their historic composition, details, and materials. Non-historic

¹⁹ Schwenk, "Historic Resources of Joplin," F-22 to F-27. The registration requirements specifically are on pages F-25 to F-26.

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window units fill existing masonry openings and can be replaced with new units without altering the historic openings.

- ✓ Fenestration patterns, ornamental details, and materials of the primary elevations remain intact.
- Interior alterations, including the loss of ornamental detailing/trim and architectural elements and the rearrangement of floor plans, may not preclude listing if the defining exterior design elements, location, setting, siting, or contribution to streetscape remain intact.
 - ✓ The interior of the Joplin YMCA retains its significant recreation spaces (gymnasium and swimming pool), as well as the basic room arrangement on the first floor and some historic material (oak paneling).
 - ✓ The exterior design elements, the building's location, setting, and siting remain intact despite the interior changes.
- The majority of the building's openings on the primary façade should be unaltered or altered in a sensitive and appropriate manner, using similar materials, profiles, and sizes as the original building elements.
 - ✓ The majority of openings on the Joplin YMCA's public facades continue to contain window units. Openings have not been reduced or expanded. Windows do not match historic units but could be replaced with more appropriate units without harming the building. Windowsills and stone trim remain. The main entrance on the east retains its historic opening, as well; although, a new door system has been installed.
- The exterior brick masonry should remain intact and exposed.
 - ✓ The Joplin YMCA retains its historic brick façade with stone trim.
 - ✓ The 1975 handball court obscures a portion of the south elevation of the gymnasium's brick exterior wall. The addition is small in scale and located at the back of the building as depicted in the Figure 2 boundary map. Despite this addition, the vast majority of the exterior brick masonry is currently visible.
- Significant character-defining decorative elements should be intact.
 - ✓ The Joplin YMCA retains its historic notched parapets, stone tabbing, semi-hexagonal entry bay, strapwork in the parapet, buttresses, stone water table and cornices, and the columned portal around the entry doors.
- Design elements intrinsic to the building's style and plan should be intact.

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- ✓ Besides the stylistic elements described above, the two most significant recreation spaces (gymnasium and pool) intrinsic to this building's recreational associations remain intact.
- ✓ The exterior form continues to communicate the historic associations of the building.
- The overall feeling or character of the building for the time in which it was erected should be intact.
 - ✓ The Joplin YMCA retains its feeling and character as an early twentieth century institutional building with a recreational function.
- The building also should tie into the historic context(s) of the MPDF
 - ✓ See Section 8 of this nomination.

Table 2. Character-defining features of the Joplin YMCA

Exterior

- Massing
- Red brick with stone accents
- Notched parapets with stone coping
- Decorative stone strapwork on the east parapet
- Engaged buttresses on the gymnasium mass
- Tabbed stone architraves and building corners
- Cornerstone at north end of east elevation
- Semi-hexagonal entry bay with Tuscan pilasters and pediment
- Stone water table and cornices
- Regular fenestration pattern

Interior

- Oak paneling in lobby, office suites, and boys' lobby
- East entry vestibule with historic interior doors
- Two fireplaces on first floor
- Tiled swimming pool
- Gymnasium volume
- Main first floor lobby
- Boys' Lobby and corridor
- Yellow brick lightwell (although divided per floor)

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Summary Paragraph

The 1921 Joplin YMCA at 510 South Wall Avenue in Joplin, Jasper County, Missouri is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of RECREATION as an example of the Cultural and Recreational Property Type described in the “Historic Resources of Joplin, Missouri” Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF). Applicable historic contexts discussed in the MPDF include “Evolution of Joplin as a Regional Commercial and Industrial Center: 1871-1960” and “Community Development Patterns in Joplin: 1871-1960.” The Joplin YMCA organization began in 1891 primarily as a men’s social club. Over the following decades, the YMCA expanded its mission to include physical development and its membership to include boys. In 1917, members and civic leaders advocated for a facility to accommodate the recreational and fitness interests of the growing membership. The Kansas City-Joplin architecture firm Smith, Rea & Lovitt designed the new building in 1918 with recreational spaces common to YMCA buildings in the era such as game rooms, gymnasiums, swimming pools, and locker rooms. The location of the new building on the periphery of downtown allowed for a free-standing structure solely dedicated to the functions of the YMCA. World War I delayed the start of construction until 1919, and in January 1921, the four-and-a-half-story masonry building opened at 5th and Wall. One of the highlights of the building was the ground floor swimming pool, which remained the only indoor pool in Joplin for almost one hundred years. From its opening in 1921, the YMCA offered the city’s men and boys a range of sports activities, recreational spaces, and meeting rooms. During its period of significance, 1921 to 1960, the Joplin YMCA was one of the only indoor recreation and fitness facilities in town; despite its members-only stance, beginning in the 1940s, the YMCA slowly began to open to non-members. Non-members accessed the recreation facilities through use fees. The period of significance, 1921 to 1960, begins with the year the new building opened for use and ends with the closing date of the MPDF.

Narrative Statement of Significance

The development of the Joplin YMCA association followed national trends. When the local association organized in 1891, it was primarily a social club for men to gather in a Christian atmosphere. Joplin’s first dedicated YMCA building, constructed in 1901, was within the downtown commercial district, providing revenue to the organization from rentable first floor commercial space; upper story rooms allowed for club activities focused primarily on socialization. Over the following decades, membership expanded to include boys as well as men.

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The YMCA excluded girls and women from membership at the time, and though not specifically noted, Black male residents of Joplin likely were not allowed to join the organization, either. The need for a larger dedicated facility became apparent as early as 1911, as the mission of the YMCA more strongly emphasized the physical fitness and recreation of its members. Further, local YMCA leadership saw the construction of a new facility as a civic advancement at a time when Joplin was rapidly transitioning from mining town to civilized city. The 1921 building at 5th Street and Wall Avenue at the edge of downtown Joplin met this need. The brick institutional building was designed by Smith, Rea & Lovitt, incorporating dedicated fitness and recreation spaces. The building immediately became a significant recreational facility in Joplin. Although technically a private club, non-members increasingly utilized the facility, especially the pool. For instance, following World War II, the YMCA organization opened its recreational spaces to students then to the women and girls related to the male members. This led to the first real alterations in the building, as the need for women's locker rooms became apparent. By the early 1970s, the local YMCA organization also welcomed non-white residents. Officially opened in 1921, the Joplin YMCA building is locally significant for its role as one of the only indoor recreational and fitness facilities in Joplin until the late twentieth century. The building remained a functioning YMCA facility through the early 2010s.

THE JOPLIN YMCA AND THE HISTORIC RESOURCES OF JOPLIN, MISSOURI MPDF

The Joplin YMCA is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of RECREATION as a Cultural and Recreational Property Type described in the 2008 "Historic Resources of Joplin, Missouri" Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF).²⁰ According to the MPDF this property type was constructed to "meet the social, cultural, and recreational needs" of the residents of Joplin; the 1921 building originally functioned as both clubhouse and recreational facility.²¹ Within a few decades of its construction, the building primarily served as a members-only indoor recreation facility with a gymnasium and swimming pool and with overnight accommodations when needed.

²⁰ The Recreational Subtype of the Cultural & Recreational Property Type discussed in the MPDF focuses on outdoor recreation landscapes and not on buildings like the YMCA that had a recreational component.

²¹ Schwenk, "Historic Resources of Joplin," F-22.

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The 1921 Joplin YMCA building illustrates the evolution of the town in the early twentieth century as a civic advancement constructed during a period of civic investment.²² Leading businessmen and city leaders actively promoted and financially supported the construction of grand public buildings along with upgrades to civic infrastructure. These leaders saw the construction of a new YMCA building as an investment in the advancement of the town's physical character and the development of the men and boys who would use the facility.²³ Applicable historic contexts discussed in the MPDF include "Evolution of Joplin as a Regional Commercial and Industrial Center: 1871-1960" and "Community Development Patterns in Joplin: 1871-1960."

Evolution of Joplin as a Regional Commercial and Industrial Center²⁴

The leading businessmen in Joplin oversaw and promoted the civic advancement of the town at turn of the twentieth century. These men believed the formation of a local YMCA association corresponded with the advancement of the town by promoting the mental, physical, and spiritual character of its members. The Joplin YMCA organization formed and expanded during the height of an economic boom period at the turn of the twentieth century, ultimately constructing two dedicated buildings where men could socialize and recreate. The latter building, the nominated 1921 YMCA building, represents the historic apex of the local organization and remained the only YMCA facility in Joplin until the new branch was constructed in southwest Joplin in the early 2000s. The town leaders saw the 1921 building as an investment in the edification of the men and boys of Joplin but also as a semi-public building that would advance the physical character of the town by its presence and design.

Established in 1891, the Joplin YMCA organization paralleled the rise of the town as a regional commercial and industrial center. Lead and zinc mining in southwest Missouri, southeast Kansas, and northeast Oklahoma at the turn of the twentieth century led to the rise of Joplin as a hub of the tri-state region due to its central location; by 1900, Joplin was the largest city in the region.²⁵ A healthy railroad network connected the region, and an abundant supply of natural energy sources such as water, coal, natural gas, and oil supported a diverse array of manufacturers and

²² An example of "A-1" significance in Schwenk, "Historic Resources of Joplin," F-24.

²³ "Gravelle is Elated Over 'Y' Success," *Joplin News Herald* (1 April 1917): 1.

²⁴ This historic context is discussed in Schwenk, "Historic Resources of Joplin," E-12 to E-29.

²⁵ Schwenk, "Historic Resources of Joplin," E-12, E-42.

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milling operations.²⁶ Mining company owners and executives settled in Joplin, but so too did bankers, wholesalers, and other businessmen eager to take advantage of the growing economy, especially between 1880-1910. Despite the relocation of mining operations to Picher, Oklahoma around World War I, the diversified economy of Joplin and the regional transportation network (rail, streetcars, interurban, automobile) kept the town a leader in the region's commerce and industry up to the Great Depression. World War II and the Korean Conflict increased demand for lead and zinc, bringing a revival to the mining operations in the region, which economically benefitted Joplin.²⁷

When constructed in 1921, the Joplin YMCA opened to white male citizens of Joplin, although no records explicitly state this. Joplin practiced *de facto* segregation until the end of the 1960s. Racial tensions in the early twentieth century led to a substantial decline in Black residents by the time the new building opened in 1921.²⁸ Female residents also were excluded from using the facility until 1949 and from membership until the late 1950s. By the early 1970s, the facility was open to anyone.

Community Development Patterns in Joplin²⁹

The realization of the new YMCA facility occurred during a time of civic improvement in Joplin in the 1920s. During the 1920s, Joplin claimed eighty miles of paved roads, hundreds of miles of gas and sewer lines, expanded telephone service, and a formalized park system.³⁰ Promoters of a new YMCA building saw its construction as a way to help update the appearance of Joplin from mining town to civilized city by offering a large indoor recreation facility for the residents.³¹ As early as 1911, local YMCA secretary Silas Gravelle advocated for a new "modern" YMCA building, believing it to be a great civic advancement for Joplin and considering the building one of Joplin's "most needed civic improvements" along with a new high school.³² Civic buildings of

²⁶ Schwenk, "Historic Resources of Joplin," E-20-21.

²⁷ Schwenk, "Historic Resources of Joplin," E-22-23.

²⁸ Schwenk, "Historic Resources of Joplin," E-40.

²⁹ This historic context is discussed in Schwenk, "Historic Resources of Joplin," E-29 to E-48.

³⁰ Schwenk, "Historic Resources of Joplin," E-43-44.

³¹ Schwenk, "Historic Resources of Joplin," E-43.

³² "Gravelle is Elated Over 'Y' Success," 1.

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the era included a new high school (1918), YMCA (1921), Memorial Hall (1925) (*Figure 21*), and the Freeman Hospital (1925).³³

Located at 5th Street and Wall Avenue, the 1921 Joplin YMCA building sits at the west edge of the commercial district and the east edge of the Murphysburg residential area; Wall Avenue formed the west edge of downtown and the east edge of Murphysburg. This location was intentional and followed the trend of early twentieth century YMCA planning that placed new facilities on the fringe of commercial districts near other institutional buildings such as churches, schools, and libraries. The opening of the Joplin YMCA building in 1921 provided a new recreational community asset that was part of the growth of the city of Joplin in the early twentieth century.

Recreation Facilities in Joplin, 1921-1960

As Joplin continued its civic advancement in the first decades of the twentieth century, residents sought spaces for leisure and recreation. Public recreation options included at least six parks in 1921 when the Joplin YMCA opened. Joplin began promoting itself as “the Gateway to the Ozarks,” highlighting the parks, playgrounds, and resorts in and around the city. The available recreation facilities in Joplin after World War II attracted tourists and supported locals wishing for diversions. The 1960 Joplin city directory notes that the town contained twelve public parks totaling 660 acres. The amenities offered in these parks ranged from swimming pools to tennis courts to playgrounds.³⁴

In contrast to the public recreation amenities, indoor recreation facilities were scattered across Joplin and were overwhelmingly associated with institutional and educational properties. Some schools and churches included small gymnasiums even as early as 1918.³⁵ In 1949, Forest Park Baptist Church (725 S Highway Avenue) opened the East Joplin Youth Center, which included a gymnasium, to provide recreation and socialization for kids in the east part of the city.³⁶

³³ Schwenk, “Historic Resources of Joplin,” E-43.

³⁴ *Polk’s Joplin (Jasper County, MO) City Directory 1960* (Kansas City, MO: R.L. Polk & Co., 1960), 10; Schwenk, “Historic Resources of Joplin,” E-28-29.

³⁵ “Preparation of Site for New Y.M.C.A. to be Started at Once,” *Joplin News Herald* (21 February 1918): 6; newspaper.com search results for “gym” between 1921 and 1960.

³⁶ “East Joplin Youth Center One Year Old,” *Joplin Globe* (9 February 1950): 3; current views of the property indicate the center may have been incorporated into or replaced by the church building.

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Private clubs also often contained gymnasiums and recreation spaces for the use by their members.³⁷ As discussed below, one example was the YMCA. The association included a small gymnasium in their 1901 building at 4th and Virginia streets, and both an indoor swimming pool and a large gymnasium in their 1921 building. The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), which had formed in 1905, also offered a gymnasium to their members. In August 1917, the association opened a facility at 512 Joplin Avenue that contained a gymnasium with shower rooms. The association also provided boarding for young women in this building.³⁸ In 1920, the YWCA purchased a house at 504 Byers Avenue, two blocks due west of the YMCA building, for administrative offices, meeting rooms, and boarding, remaining here at least through 1960; they retained the building on Joplin Avenue until circa 1950 but conducted their gym classes at the Joplin High School gymnasium beginning in October 1924.³⁹ Another short-lived example of an indoor recreation facility was the John Graue Athletic Club. Local automobile dealer, John Graue, opened this private club with gymnasium in an upper story of the late nineteenth century commercial building at 821 Main Street in 1948 (extant) (*Figure 22*). The mission of the club was to train amateur boxers; by 1951, it had disbanded.⁴⁰

At the turn of the twentieth century, the amenities offered by private clubs commonly included overnight accommodations along with recreation and socialization spaces. The Joplin Elks Club offered members sleeping rooms when located at the southeast corner of 4th Street and Wall Avenue (extant) in 1900 (*Figure 22*).⁴¹ Dormitories were also available to members of both the YMCA and YWCA through the 1960s.

³⁷ Schwenk, "Historic Resources of Joplin," F-29.

³⁸ Kay Kirkman, "Joplin Family Y Born Out of Men's Bible Study Group in England," *Joplin Globe* (13 April 2005): 4A in YMCA clipping file, Joplin Public Library; "Spotlight on Joplin," clipping in YWCA file (13 August 2005): n.p., Joplin Public Library. It is unknown if the building at this address is the building referenced.

³⁹ Kirkman, "Joplin Family Y...", *Joplin Globe*, 4A; city directories, 1921 to 1960. "Y.W.C.A. Class Has Outgrown Gymnasium," *Joplin Globe* (21 October 1924): 2.

⁴⁰ "Gymnasium Opened for Boxers Here," *Joplin Globe* (29 September 1948): 10; the athletic club is listed in the 1949 city directory but not in later issues.

⁴¹ *Insurance Maps of Joplin, Missouri* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1900), sheet 10. According to this map, the Elks also offered Turkish baths and a swimming pool. It is unknown if this pool exists.

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Although the Joplin YMCA organization formed as a private club in 1891, its mission in the succeeding decades increasingly involved its service to the community. This was especially true after World War II. Memberships continued to be offered, but the gymnasium and swimming pool opened to non-members for small use fees or to rent.⁴² In this way, the YMCA transitioned from private to semi-public association, and the amenities housed in the 1921 facility filled a need for indoor recreational spaces not readily available elsewhere in Joplin or on the scale offered by the 1921 building.

YMCA IN THE UNITED STATES

The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), founded in England in 1844, became popular in the United States after the 1851 Great Exhibition in London introduced the group of young Christian professional men to visiting Americans.⁴³ American chapters first appeared in the 1850s and expanded after a hiatus during the Civil War.

Following the Civil War, the international YMCA organization evolved its methods in pursuit of its mission to improve the spiritual condition of young men. The most notable method was through building campaigns. The organization saw the built environment as integral to the congregation, recruitment, and service of members. The initial meeting spaces were rented reading rooms and parlors for leisure and socializing in a Christian atmosphere. In the 1870s, the organization began to design and build dedicated spaces in which to expand their influence and brand recognition. The design and distribution of those buildings evolved along with the growth of organization, and its focus transformed from an evangelical club to a community service. YMCA buildings represented the changing role of the organization in the communities they served.

Beginning in the early 1870s, YMCA buildings were exclusively clubs for men located in downtown commercial centers. Interior spaces included parlors, reading rooms, and assembly halls. Some had retail space on the ground floor in order to raise revenue and to create a link to businessmen who sponsored and populated the organization. That commercial aspect often

⁴² "'Y' Board Hears Committee Reports," *Joplin Globe* (17 February 1949): 6.

⁴³ Paula Lupkin, *Manhood Factories: YMCA Architecture and the Making of Modern Urban Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 2. Lupkin identifies specific eras of YMCA formation and building construction; this narrative section follows her chronology.

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dictated locations in central business districts to attract retail renters. The business community had an interest in fostering morality in the new generation of professional men moving from rural areas to city centers for work. Membership in the club also signaled social legitimacy to those same employers. The space offered young men a social affiliation and a physical leisure space that was free of vice.

In an era of industrialization and rapid population increases, the YMCA competed for young men's free time against commercial entertainment in increasingly urban settings. Beginning in the 1880s, the YMCA adopted a new recruitment model that offered recreation and fitness as part of its primary offerings. As a result, YMCA buildings at this time began to incorporate gymnasiums, hoping to attract young men to its organization. The YMCAs in San Francisco and New York City were the first purpose-built buildings to include gymnasiums.⁴⁴ Added focus on amusement and recreation evolved in the latter part of the nineteenth century to include swimming pools, billiards rooms, and bowling alleys.⁴⁵ In 1887, YMCA building designs also began to include rentable dormitories. This function provided a steady stream of income to supplement fundraisers, membership fees, and private donations that financed the maintenance and operation of the buildings in addition to the athletic, educational, and social events held at the YMCA.⁴⁶ The new building program shifted focus to the secular aspects of the club's services, offering amusement activities, fitness, and dormitory rooms.

While the YMCA expanded its facilities with recreational spaces, the organization also gained a new status as civic institution. Although technically a private club, the YMCA emphasized its services as a community benefit. Their buildings represented safe and morally acceptable spaces for bachelor men arriving in new urban commercial centers seeking work or socializing.⁴⁷ While earlier nineteenth century YMCA leaders viewed YMCA buildings as "sermons in stone," city leaders began to view the turn-of-the-century YMCA building as a sign of modernity and civic

⁴⁴ *Jubilee Year Book of the Young Men's Christian Associations of North America for the Year 1901* (New York: International Committee, 1901), 12.

⁴⁵ Lupkin, *Manhood Factories*, 115.

⁴⁶ Lupkin, *Manhood Factories*, 123. Cafes and restaurants first began to appear at this time also to provide income.

⁴⁷ Lupkin, *Manhood Factories*, 68

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pride.⁴⁸ The buildings represented a social investment in the local youth and a community amenity.

Each local YMCA Building Committee was responsible for the design and construction of new buildings. However, the national YMCA association was available to help with building campaigns. By the turn of the twentieth century, the YMCA was an international organization with a strong central bureaucracy that could coordinate certain aspects of the process. Traveling YMCA field secretaries orchestrated coordinated community-level fundraising efforts using media, lists of prospects, record-keeping equipment, and a competitive process such as expedited fundraising campaigns.⁴⁹

The YMCA was a national organization whose mission was enacted through local associations. By the turn of the twentieth century, local organizations increasingly constructed their own dedicated buildings. As the mission of the organization evolved, so too did the architecture of the local buildings. The late nineteenth century YMCA buildings included similar characteristics (locations within central business districts, incorporation of rentable commercial space, inclusion of parlors and reading rooms); larger examples had assembly halls and gymnasiums in separate buildings. Their design varied by geography and preferred aesthetic of local building committees and were nearly indistinguishable from commercial buildings (*Figure 23*).

Into the early decades of the twentieth century, the design of YMCA buildings shifted. These new buildings were less commercial building and more civic monument. Buildings of this era shared common designs, programs, and characteristics, including: locations at the periphery of central business districts, free-standing two-to-five-story institutional buildings of masonry construction, simple massing that followed the interior spatial functions, applied stylistic references typical of revival styles, symmetrical facades with central entrances, raised first stories, dedicated upper dormitory floors, meeting and classrooms, cafes or restaurants (*Figure 24*). Significantly, these building dedicated large portions of their interiors to recreation and amusement spaces. Separate gymnasiums were a common feature. Small swimming pools in basements became common as were steam baths and locker rooms. Divided space on bottom floors often included game rooms, billiards rooms, reading rooms, meeting spaces, and offices.

⁴⁸ Lupkin, *Manhood Factories*, 86, 198

⁴⁹ Lupkin, *Manhood Factories*, 157.

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Upper floors were devoted to dormitory sleeping rooms.⁵⁰ The seeming standardization of design in this era is attributed to limited budgets that left local architects little flexibility for the overall design of the form or excessive ornamentation. At the same time, the high quality of the brick and stone exterior materials and conservative styling made them appropriate symbols of civic pride.⁵¹ Over two hundred YMCA buildings were constructed during this period leading up to World War I, especially between the years 1905-1915.⁵² During the years America was involved in World War I (1917-1918), associations like Joplin's, continued to plan new buildings that would be completed after the end of war.

The new status of the organization as a community benefit where young men could exercise, board, and build moral character elevated the YMCA building to a local institution during the early twentieth century. As such, these buildings usually had a prominent location near other institutions such as churches or civic centers.⁵³ The lack of storefront windows on the ground level separated them from commercial buildings. The YMCA buildings contained recreational space but had an outward appearance of an institution, rather than commercial entertainment facilities like theaters or religious facilities like churches.

Formal standardization of local YMCA buildings by the national organization occurred after World War I. During the 1915 YMCA national convention, delegates approved the formation of a Building Bureau. The YMCA membership charged this new department with identifying problems encountered by local associations in the planning, design, and construction of new buildings; the department was also to develop services to solve those problems.⁵⁴ The Bureau offered free advice to local associations during the first two years, acting as a clearinghouse for building information. Beginning in 1917, the Building Bureau offered paid consultant services to aid associations and architects in the building process, but associations were not obliged to use the Building Bureau. Seven associations (none in Missouri) hired the Bureau in 1917, but America's entry into World War I all but halted new construction. Beginning in 1919, the Building Bureau became a full-service design department, relegating local architects to the role

⁵⁰ Lupkin, *Manhood Factories*, 151.

⁵¹ Lupkin, *Manhood Factories*, 168.

⁵² Lupkin, *Manhood Factories*, 86, 147.

⁵³ Lupkin, *Manhood Factories*, 88.

⁵⁴ Lupkin, *Manhood Factories*, 156, 160.

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of architect of record.⁵⁵ In each case, local associations sought the services of the Building Bureau; the service was not compulsory for new construction. Early in the life of the department, the Building Bureau developed design standards to guarantee a successful building. These standards ranged from room sizes to swimming pool details.⁵⁶ The Building Bureau became a well-established department within the YMCA organization by the early 1920s, but again, the bureau was an optional service for associations seeking to construct new buildings.

YMCA buildings developed after World War I differ somewhat from those designed and constructed before the Building Bureau became a well-established resource. Similarities remain in spatial programming, especially. In a shift from the pre-World War I era “manhood factories,” the YMCA organization sought to produce high-style environments that would inspire good behavior, not by physically enclosing its occupants, but instead by providing a beautiful space.⁵⁷ This stated emphasis on beauty opened the door for individualized, high-style YMCAs before the Great Depression created another building hiatus; this is the most recognizable distinction of post-World War I YMCAs.

The post-World War II YMCA association shifted its mission even more to a secular organization focused primarily on fitness and the well-being of community members. The YMCA expanded its membership to include women and girls to accommodate whole families, often in competition with public fitness and community centers.⁵⁸ By the 1970s, YMCA membership was also open to all races. Between 1956 and 1966, the national YMCA organization instituted a targeted campaign to strengthen local associations, including their facilities.⁵⁹ Existing YMCA buildings received interior updates and building additions to support the fitness focus and women members. Some associations abandoned their downtown building in

⁵⁵ Lupkin, *Manhood Factories*, 164-165. See also Charles C. May, “A Post-War Construction Program: The Building Bureau of the International Committee of the Y.M.C.A.,” Parts I & II, *Architectural Record* XLV (January-July 1919): 217-241 & 325-342.

⁵⁶ Lupkin, *Manhood Factories*, 165.

⁵⁷ Lupkin, *Manhood Factories*, 170.

⁵⁸ The public alternatives to YMCAs—parks, playgrounds, community centers—saw increased advocacy during the first two decades of the twentieth century. These facilities were free to all community members. See Lupkin, *Manhood Factories*, 189-190.

⁵⁹ “History-1900 to 1950s,” the National YMCA website <https://www.ymca.net/history/1900-1950s.html> (accessed 24 February 2021).

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favor of new suburban facilities. By the mid-1970s, the dormitory function of the YMCA organization was abandoned altogether, making obsolete whole floors of earlier YMCA buildings.⁶⁰ The previous downtown YMCA, a symbol of an urban institution, eventually gave way to multiple branch locations intended to serve a dispersed population in their own geographic locations.

The YMCA in Missouri

The YMCA officially entered the state of Missouri in 1875 when St. Louis organized its association.⁶¹ By 1880, the state had ten local associations with just over twelve hundred members, and a state committee formed in 1879 to oversee the Missouri chapters.⁶² By the time the YMCA of North American published their *Jubilee Year Book* in 1901, Missouri had fourteen active town associations with a total membership over five thousand; five of these associations owned their own buildings.⁶³ At least six YMCA buildings in Missouri were constructed during the 1905-1915 building boom in Cameron, Carthage, Hannibal, Kansas City, Sedalia, and Springfield.⁶⁴ Although planning began prior to World War I, the Joplin YMCA would not be realized until 1921.

YMCA IN JOPLIN, MISSOURI

⁶⁰ The Springfield, Missouri YMCA discontinued its dormitory program in 1976, noting national trends toward this goal. Rachel Nugent, "Springfield YMCA" Part 1 submission (2016): 12.

⁶¹ *Year Book of the Young Men's Christian Association of North America for the Year 1880-1881* (New York: International Committee, 1880), 44-45.

⁶² *Year Book...1880-1881*, 66.

⁶³ *Jubilee Year Book...Year 1901*, 126, 182, 198; Lupkin, *Manhood Factories*, 143. Along with the town associations, Missouri was home to sixteen student and six railroad associations. According to Lupkin, St. Louis constructed a building between 1871-1880; Kansas City (not extant), St. Joseph, and Gallatin built YMCAs between 1880-1895, and Webb City erected its building between 1895-1905. It is unknown if most of these buildings are extant, and none are listed individually in the National Register.

⁶⁴ Lupkin, *Manhood Factories*, 143. Lupkin's list includes only those buildings constructed for the primary associations in a town, excluding buildings constructed for Black associations, Railroad associations, and those associated with colleges, as the national organization separated these statistics in their annual yearbooks. The 1914 Paseo YMCA in Kansas City, Missouri, is an example of this property type constructed for the African American YMCA association; this building was listed in the National Register in 1991 (NRIS #91001151). The 1913 Springfield YMCA (extant) was determined potentially eligible for the National Register in 2016 through a Federal Part 1 application, but it is currently unclear if the other four buildings are still extant. None are listed.

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In January 1891, a group of businessmen invited the secretary of the Missouri YMCA to Joplin to begin organizing a local association. The men raised \$3000 to rent and equip rooms within a downtown building and to fund programs for at least one year. Official formation of the Joplin YMCA occurred on February 13, 1891. By mid-March, the men obtained rooms above a bakery at 414 Main Street and remained at this location for the next decade.⁶⁵

The Joplin YMCA sought to construct a dedicated building within downtown while occupying the rooms on Main Street. In early 1897, the property at the northwest corner of 4th Street and Virginia Avenue, housing the former Haven Opera House, became available for sale, so the YMCA membership approved the purchase.⁶⁶ Planning for the new YMCA began in earnest in 1899. The local architectural firm of Garstang & Rea designed the three-story brick building (*Figure 23*).⁶⁷ As with YMCAs of the late nineteenth century, the Joplin building included rentable commercial space on the first story with the upper two floors dedicated to the functions of the association. The center of the building contained the entrance to the YMCA quarters, which featured a reading room, white marble bathing apartments that had plunge tubs and showers, and a small gymnasium.⁶⁸ The new building opened in March 1901.⁶⁹ For the next seventeen years, the Joplin YMCA operated out of their downtown building. However, as early as 1911, association secretary J. Silas Gravelle began dreaming of a larger facility to expand the programs offered by the YMCA.⁷⁰

Gravelle came to Joplin from Massachusetts in 1905 as the boys' work secretary of the YMCA, a position he held in both Boston and Melrose, Massachusetts between 1898 and 1905. He became

⁶⁵ "Ceremonies Mark Cornerstone Laying," *Joplin Globe* (14 October 1919): 4; Kirkman, "Joplin Family Y..." *Joplin Globe*, 3A. The July 1891, August 1896, and May 1900 Sanborn Insurance maps show the YMCA at this location.

⁶⁶ The 1900 Sanborn Insurance map shows the former wood-framed opera house still on the site and being used as a machinery workshop (Sheet 6).

⁶⁷ Historic photos in the YMCA clipping file note the architects. Charles E. Garstang and Alfred W. Rea. Any connection between Alfred and Frank S. Rea of Smith, Rea & Lovitt is currently unknown.

⁶⁸ Kirkman, "Joplin Family Y..." 3A; caption to photo "The Way We Were," (1 January 1998): n.p., in YMCA clipping file. This building is extant, but it underwent a complete exterior design change in the circa 1970s.

⁶⁹ "Ceremonies Mark Cornerstone Laying," 4.

⁷⁰ "Gravelle is Elated Over 'Y' Success," 4. The article notes that Gravelle even drew plans and developed specifications for a new building. The article also speculated that Gravelle's plans likely would be used, but it is unknown if or how much of his designs were incorporated into the final building.

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general secretary of the Joplin association in 1908, remaining in that position until 1927. Upon his arrival, Gravelle noticed that boys from poorer Joplin families did not participate in activities at the Y, so he sought ways to include these young men, organizing groups to hike, swim, and participate in other outdoor activities. His work among the boys was so successful that the YMCA board of directors decided to sponsor these activities, as previously Gravelle conducted these programs on his own.⁷¹ Under Gravelle's leadership, boys became a greater demographic served by the local association.⁷²

Planning and Constructing a New YMCA Building, 1917-1920

In early 1917, Gravelle and the YMCA board of directors determined that Joplin needed a new, larger facility to replace the 1901 downtown building. Membership of both men and boys had grown, and programming had shifted towards more physical activities; the current building could not accommodate the recreational needs of the YMCA. As was common at the time, the local association asked the national YMCA organization in New York to send their campaign manager, M.C. Williams, to help organize a fundraiser in Joplin. Williams proposed a weeklong campaign full of varied events and methods of raising funds. The YMCA staff was to solicit large donations among area businessmen and two divisions of YMCA members, comprised of multiple teams, would compete to raise subscriptions among the general public.⁷³

The YMCA association held a banquet for businessmen and civic leaders on Friday, March 16 to promote the need and introduce the campaign for a "modern" YMCA building. The executive committee saw this banquet as the "opening shot" in a "whirlwind" campaign to raise \$250,000 within eight days.⁷⁴ The campaign officially began on Friday, March 23. On the first day of

⁷¹ "Gravelle is Elated Over 'Y' Success," 1; "J. Silas Gravelle Dies After Long Life of Service," *Joplin Globe* (25 November 1942): 1, 7. His work with the boys of Joplin led to the organization of the Boy Scouts in Joplin. Gravelle also served as the first juvenile probation officer in the city.

⁷² An outstanding research question regarding the Joplin YMCA organization is whether it was racially integrated. Research for this nomination attempted to answer this question, as it was not uncommon for separate YMCAs to be constructed for Black residents, and Joplin did not have an African American YMCA association.

⁷³ "'Y' Building Assured When Tireless Workers Report \$250,232 Total," *Joplin News Herald* (1 April 1917): 16; "New Y.M.C.A. Will Help Mould Joplin's Future," *Joplin News Herald*, Mining and Industrial Edition (5 April 1918): 18.

⁷⁴ "Banquet to Start Campaign," *Joplin News Herald* (16 March 1917): 2; "Boys, Babies and Women to Aid in 'Y' Campaign Today," *Joplin Globe* (31 March 1917): 1.

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general canvassing, March 25, contributors pledged over \$85,000.⁷⁵ Within a week, subscriptions totaled \$181,548.⁷⁶ No money was to be collected until May 1, 1917, and a sixteen-month installment plan meant subscribers could more easily contribute the amount pledged. The last days of the campaign saw a greater push among different groups to meet the fundraising goals. Joplin women held a reception at the Elks' Club; area boy scouts placed blank subscription hangers on doorknobs throughout town; elementary students held a ceremony to collect small change for the project, raising over \$630.⁷⁷ A wide range of individuals, businesses, and religious institutions contributed and pledged financial support. On April 1, 1917, the *Joplin News Herald* reported the eight-day campaign successfully raised \$250,232, exceeding the goal and receiving 2,884 subscriptions with an average of \$90 per pledge (*Figure 25*).⁷⁸

Secretary Gravelle saw the community support of a new “modern” YMCA building as support of the civic advancement of Joplin and considered the building one of Joplin’s “most needed civic improvements.”⁷⁹ His dream was that the YMCA would serve a greater number of people than the downtown facility allowed.⁸⁰ This meant the building needed to be large enough to house a gymnasium, multiple gathering spaces for men and boys, and additional recreational spaces such as a swimming pool that the former building could not accommodate. Gravelle and the building committee aimed to construct the new facility at the edge of downtown on a lot large enough to accommodate a free-standing structure. Although the committee sought the help of the national organization in fundraising efforts, no evidence suggests the Building Bureau was consulted in the planning of the new facility.⁸¹

Throughout the next few months, the building committee looked for an appropriate site and sought an architect. Two sites stood out as potential locations for the new building. The first was

⁷⁵ “First Day of General Canvassing Brings Fund for New Y.M.C.A. Home to \$85,962,” *Joplin Globe* (25 March 1917): 1. The project was expected to cost around \$5.14 million in 2021 dollars.

⁷⁶ “Boys, Babies and Women...,” 1; \$3.73 million in 2021 dollars.

⁷⁷ “Boys, Babies and Women...,” 1, 2; over \$12,000 in 2021 dollars.

⁷⁸ “‘Y’ Building Assured...,” 1,16.

⁷⁹ “Gravelle is Elated Over ‘Y’ Success,” 1. He also advocated for a new high school, which was constructed a few years later.

⁸⁰ “Gravelle is Elated Over ‘Y’ Success,” 1.

⁸¹ No available records indicate that the association consulted the building bureau.

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at the southwest corner of 5th Street and Wall Avenue at the west edge of downtown; the other was a smaller site at 7th Street and Joplin Avenue at the southwest edge of downtown. Houses on both sites would have to be removed. The YMCA building committee unanimously approved of the purchase of the property at 5th & Wall, paying \$35,000 for the four city lots in October 1917. The committee preferred this site due to its larger acreage, its proximity to streetcar lines, and its more central location than the other property. In the same month, the committee invited architects to submit plans for the new structure.⁸²

Local papers did not report which firms submitted proposals. However, the building committee selected the architecture firm of Smith, Rea & Lovitt for the task. Charles A. Smith, Frank S. Rea, and Walter U. Lovitt formed the partnership in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1910, the same year their YMCA in downtown Kansas City opened at 10th & Oak streets (not extant). The firm mostly designed commercial and institutional buildings, including schools. Smith served as the architect for Kansas City Public Schools from 1892 to 1936. In 1916, the Joplin public school district hired the firm to design their new high school, which included a gymnasium. Due to the amount of work in town, Smith, Rea & Lovitt opened an office in Joplin in July 1917. The firm dissolved in 1921 with the deaths of Lovitt in 1920 and Rea in 1921.⁸³

Efforts to build a new YMCA in Joplin paralleled America's involvement in World War I. The United States Congress declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917, just five days after the end of the YMCA fundraising campaign. Despite the war, the local association did everything in its power to realize the new facility. Secretary Gravelle and Charles Smith of Smith, Rea & Lovitt Architects met in February 1918 to finalize the architectural plans, and site preparation was scheduled to begin immediately. The sitework to be performed was not specified but could have referred to removal of houses or excavation. Also of note is that no reports indicate that the architectural plans were sent to or reviewed by the YMCA Building Bureau. In March, the association sold their building at 4th & Virginia to the Joplin Globe, placed usable equipment from the old building in storage, and met in churches throughout Joplin, some of which had

⁸² "Committee Pays \$35,000 for Site for New Y.M.C.A.," *Joplin Globe* (9 October 1917): 1. The property cost the equivalent of nearly \$679,000 and the building nearly \$3.4 million in 2021.

⁸³ "High School Plans Near Completion," *Joplin News Herald* (4 August 1916): 4; Announcement in the *Joplin Globe* (29 July 1917): 5; Sherry Piland, "A Kansas City Architect: Charles A. Smith," *Historic Kansas City Gazette* (January/February 1986): 4-5; "Charles A. Smith Dies," *Kansas City Times* (12 January 1948): n.p.

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small gymnasiums and shower rooms.⁸⁴ In mid-May 1918, the YMCA association approved the plans prepared by Smith, Rea & Lovitt and looked for sitework to begin the following month.⁸⁵ Optimistically, the association anticipated the new building would be open by January 1, 1919 while at the same time acknowledging the possibility of delay due to the war.⁸⁶ It would be another two years before Joplin residents would be able to use the facility at 5th & Wall.

Construction on the new building began in April 1919, almost a year after the local association approved the plans.⁸⁷ The *Joplin News Herald* reported the following month that due to an error of judgment by the foundation contractor, the building piers had been poured about six feet too close to 5th Street, hindering the widening of the street if the city decided to do so in future. The piers were then repoured at a point eleven feet from the curb.⁸⁸

Progress on the building continued slowly, partially due to materials shortages following the war. A ceremony in October 1919 marked the laying of the cornerstone. YMCA officials included a zinc box containing documents about the history of the Joplin association in the cornerstone. The state YMCA secretary spoke at the ceremony, as did several local clergy and YMCA leaders.⁸⁹ The building was still under construction in February 1920. A delay in the delivery of radiators affected the application of interior plasterwork due to the lack of heat needed for drying.⁹⁰ The building contractor, Eberhardt Construction Company of Salina, Kansas, agreed to have the building open by April 1920 then mid-July 1920.⁹¹

⁸⁴ "Preparation of Site for New Y.M.C.A. to be Started at Once," *Joplin News Herald* (21 February 1918): 6; "New Y.M.C.A. Will Help Mould Joplin's Future," 18. Site preparation presumably meant the removal of existing dwellings from the site; whether this happened in February or not is currently unknown.

⁸⁵ "Committee Will Inspect Latest Building Plans," *Joplin News Herald* (20 May 1918): 5.

⁸⁶ "Preparation of Site ...," 6; "New Y.M.C.A. Will Help Mould Joplin's Future," 18.

⁸⁷ "Ceremonies Mark Cornerstone Laying," 4.

⁸⁸ "Error in Locating Pillars at Y.M.C.A. Detected by Board," *Joplin News Herald* (28 May 1919): 7.

⁸⁹ "Ceremonies Mark Cornerstone Laying," 4.

⁹⁰ "Must Make Good on Pledges to Y.M.C.A. Committeemen Rule," *Joplin News Herald* (4 February 1920): 8.

⁹¹ "Ceremonies Mark Cornerstone Laying," 4; "Y.M.C.A. Board to Collect All Unpaid Pledges," *Joplin News Herald* (8 June 1920): 1.

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Material shortage accounted for only some of the construction delay. Not all pledges made during the 1917 campaign drive had materialized.⁹² The committee still lacked almost \$50,000 in uncollected funds by June 1920, infringing on the ability to pay contractors as work finished in the building. The YMCA building committee threatened legal action against some uncollected accounts and used money received from the sale of their old building to pay for work in the interim.⁹³ Work on the new building continued into the fall of 1920.

Opening the New YMCA, 1920-1921

As construction neared completion in September 1920, the local association began planning to formally open the new YMCA in January 1921.⁹⁴ Over five thousand people attended an open house around Thanksgiving meant to excite the public about the new building; one thousand boys were given tickets to return the next day to take a plunge in the new heated pool, the first non-residential indoor swimming pool in Joplin.⁹⁵

A formal dedication on Sunday, January 16, 1921, inaugurated a week-long opening celebration reminiscent of the weeklong fundraising campaign in 1917. A crowd filled the gymnasium and running track to witness the dedication program led by the state secretary of the YMCA. Speakers, including Secretary Gravelle, praised the facility and spoke to the purposes of the YMCA organization to inspire and develop the moral, mental, and physical character of young men, goals made easier by the opening of the new building. On January 17, the building officially opened for use after a short concert by the Joplin High School orchestra and Kiwanis club.⁹⁶ Each night of the following week was dedicated to a different age group from grade school to high school to the general public.⁹⁷ Finally, after almost four years, the new Joplin YMCA was a reality.

⁹² "Must Make Good on Pledges...", 8.

⁹³ "Y.M.C.A. Board to Collect All Unpaid Pledges," 1.

⁹⁴ "Plans Under Way for Opening New Y.M.C.A. Building in January," *Joplin News Herald* (21 September 1920):2.

⁹⁵ "5,000 Inspect New Y.M.C.A. Building," *Joplin News Herald* (26 November 1920): 4. At first, this pool was for use only for YMCA members. No other pools were available to members of the general public in Joplin.

⁹⁶ "'Y' Building is Dedicated; Opening Tonight," *Joplin News Herald* (17 January 1921): 10.

⁹⁷ "Plans Under Way for Opening...", 2.

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The new building included spaces for socialization, recreation, and overnight accommodation. A spacious oak-lined lobby greeted visitors on the first floor. This floor also contained the two-story gymnasium, game rooms for boys and general members, and administrative offices. The second floor housed banquet rooms, classrooms, and a running track around the gymnasium. The banquet and classrooms had moveable partitions that enabled the entire east side of the building to be combined into one auditorium for large gatherings of up to four hundred men; this was larger than any public auditorium in Joplin until the opening of Memorial Hall in 1925.⁹⁸ The ground floor contained a cafeteria, kitchen, heated swimming pool, and a handball court. Additional amenities included steam rooms, Turkish bath facilities, and showers for boys, businessmen, and other male members; the locker rooms accommodated 265 men and boys. The swimming pool was an especially exciting addition, as Joplin had no indoor public pool. Eighty furnished rooms accommodated one hundred twenty overnight male guests in single or double rooms for \$2 and \$4 weekly.⁹⁹ The rooms provided income to the association formerly supplied by the rental of commercial space in their downtown building.

The Role of the YMCA

The YMCA building at 5th & Wall served Joplin's boys, young men, and business beginning in 1921. The gym hosted fitness classes (*Figure 15*); the pool allowed boys to learn how to swim; game rooms provided a safe place for entertainment; meeting rooms offered space for government or bible classes; dormitory rooms offered clean, affordable accommodations for young men. Advertisements and small announcements in both the *Joplin Globe* and *Joplin News Herald* throughout the following decades highlight classes offered and banquets given in the new building. During World War II, the YMCA became a place for visiting servicemen to gather and/or room (*Figure 13*).¹⁰⁰

The YMCA continued to serve the community of Joplin after World War II. In the postwar era, the mission of the YMCA focused less on socialization and more on the physical health of members. Unlike larger cities, Joplin experienced less suburban development after the war,

⁹⁸ "New Y.M.C.A. Will Help Mould Joplin's Future," 18.

⁹⁹ Advertisement in *Joplin Globe* (18 January 1921): 7, rates equal to \$27.53 and \$55.07 in 2021.

¹⁰⁰ The US Army established Fort Crowder near Neosho, Missouri, in 1941, approximately 30 miles southeast of Joplin.

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keeping the population near the 1921 facility and not necessitating the construction of a new building away from the downtown.

The facility became more open to non-members of Joplin, as needs arose. The YMCA entered into a cooperative agreement with the Joplin Junior College in 1948. This agreement allowed students use of the gymnasium and swimming pool because no adequate facilities existed at the college. This agreement also symbolizes the first time the facility would be available to women. According to the *Joplin Globe*, the decision “brought to a close long controversy over whether women should be allowed” to use the facilities.¹⁰¹ In 1949, the board of directors also approved a new policy that allowed the gymnasium to be rented when not in use for regular classes.¹⁰²

Programming at the YMCA became more family-focused, following a national campaign to strengthen local YMCA associations between 1956 and 1966. Beginning in October 1959, the Joplin YMCA directors again broadened their membership to include women. Wives of male members established the “Ladies of the YMCA” program, a scheduled routine of fitness. Both the gymnasium and swimming pool were utilized by the women, and childcare was provided for a small fee.¹⁰³ The classes were available to any interested woman without a membership requirement. By the following September, women-only swimming classes and recreational swimming was available for small fees, and the pool was opened to whole families for three hours on Friday evenings.¹⁰⁴

The dormitories continued to be utilized throughout the two decades following World War II. In 1958, rates had risen to \$6 (single) and \$7.35 (double) weekly, according to an advertisement in the October 13, 1958 issue of the *Joplin Globe*. In 1967, Missouri Southern University students rented rooms at the YMCA, but by 1970, the dormitory function was no longer in service.¹⁰⁵

The YMCA association established members-only health clubs for men and women in 1964. This club included massages, steam rooms, whirlpools, showers, lounge areas, and locker rooms,

¹⁰¹ “J.J.C. Coeds Will Use ‘Y’ Gym and Pool,” *Joplin Globe* (24 December 1948): 2.

¹⁰² “‘Y’ Board Hears Committee Reports,” *Joplin Globe*, 6.

¹⁰³ “Ladies of the Y.M.C.A. Program Being Organized,” *Joplin Globe* (19 September 1959): 6A.

¹⁰⁴ Advertisement in the *Joplin Globe* (18 September 1960): 22.

¹⁰⁵ “Joplin YMCA Plays Important Role in Lives of People in Community,” *Joplin News Herald* (15 September 1967): 3; Marta Churchwell, “‘Y’ Renovation at Halfway Point,” *Joplin Globe* (18 August 1985): 3.

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and separate times were allotted for men and women to use. The ground floor underwent some alterations around this time to create the health spa spaces, as well as new locker rooms and showers for women and girls. The former cafeteria and kitchen were adapted into locker rooms at this time, but not until 1980 was a separate women's health spa area dedicated within the ground floor.¹⁰⁶ By 1969, the YMCA offered men, women, and family memberships, officially orienting toward families rather than only young men. Gymnastics, football, weightlifting, and volleyball were offered at the YMCA by 1970.¹⁰⁷

The YWCA joined with the YMCA in 1981 to create the Joplin Family Y association. In the early 1980s, the organization pursued the idea of building a new facility. The building on Wall Avenue had become obsolete, according to the director at the time. After considering options, the association chose to renovate the 1921 downtown building. Most of the membership came from areas close to the building, from kids in the neighborhood to downtown employees. The renovation removed the dormitories and classrooms of the upper three floors, added open fitness spaces, two two-story racquetball courts to the second and third floors, removed the running track in the gymnasium and replaced it with a larger running-walking track on the fourth floor. The gymnasium, first floor lobbies, and swimming pool were retained and reused. The renovation cost less than the construction of a new facility, and membership increased with the new amenities. The YMCA remained the only indoor pool available in Joplin.¹⁰⁸

CONCLUSION

The history of the YMCA organization in Joplin corresponds with the historic contexts outlined in the "Historic Resources of Joplin" MPDF. The 1921 building is locally significant under Criterion A in the area Recreation as an excellent example of Cultural and Recreational Property Type outlined in the MPDF. The 1921 YMCA building was the third place in Joplin used for the social and recreational activities of the YMCA organization that started in town in 1891; it remained an active YMCA until the early 2010s. As the mission of the YMCA organization

¹⁰⁶ Full-page advertisement "National YMCA Week," *Joplin Globe* (19 January 1964): 36; "'Y' to Open Health Club for Women This Month," *Joplin Globe* (21 September 1980): 14.

¹⁰⁷ Paul Tuomala, "YMCA Offers Activities for All Members of Family," *Joplin Globe* (25 January 1970): 5. In 1969, the Y had 275 men, 102 women, and 119 family memberships, including 516 boys and 161 girls.

¹⁰⁸ Matt Moran, "Facilities Change to Satisfy Needs," *Joplin Chart* (2 April 1987): n.p. in clipping file.

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evolved, the building adapted to meet new needs that focused more on fitness and recreation rather than a social club. Alterations to the facility supported the recreation function and kept the building relevant to Joplin residents throughout the twentieth century. By 1970, membership had grown to include all races and genders, and the overnight accommodations of the upper stories were obsolete.

The Joplin YMCA meets the registration requirements of a Cultural and Recreational Property Type. The building was constructed in 1921 within the 1960 city boundaries of Joplin. Alterations to the building retained the primary recreational spaces (gymnasium, pool, locker rooms) on the interior and the architectural composition, ornamental details, and materials of the exterior.

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"Preparation of Site for New Y.M.C.A. to be Started at Once." *Joplin News Herald* (21 February 1918): 6.

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¹⁰⁹ The current owners found the full construction set in January 2021 in the garage to the south of the YMCA.

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Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The Joplin YMCA occupies the southwest corner of West 5th Street and South Wall Avenue and the north half of its current legal parcel. This parcel is described as follows by the Jasper County Assessor: Murphey's Second Addition, Block 51, North 50' of Lot 227 and all lots 228 to 232 inclusive. This parcel includes the YMCA building (lots 231 & 232), a paved parking lot (lots 229 & 230), and an unrelated brick automotive garage (lots 227 & 228).

The nominated property boundary includes the historic building and parking lot (lots 229 through 232) and excludes the unassociated garage to the south (lots 227 & 228). The nominated property is physically defined by the mid-block alley to the west, West 5th Street to the north, South Wall Avenue to the east, and the north wall of the garage to the south (*Figure 2*). The concrete sidewalks along the north and east are outside the nominated boundary and are considered public right-of-way.

Boundary Justification

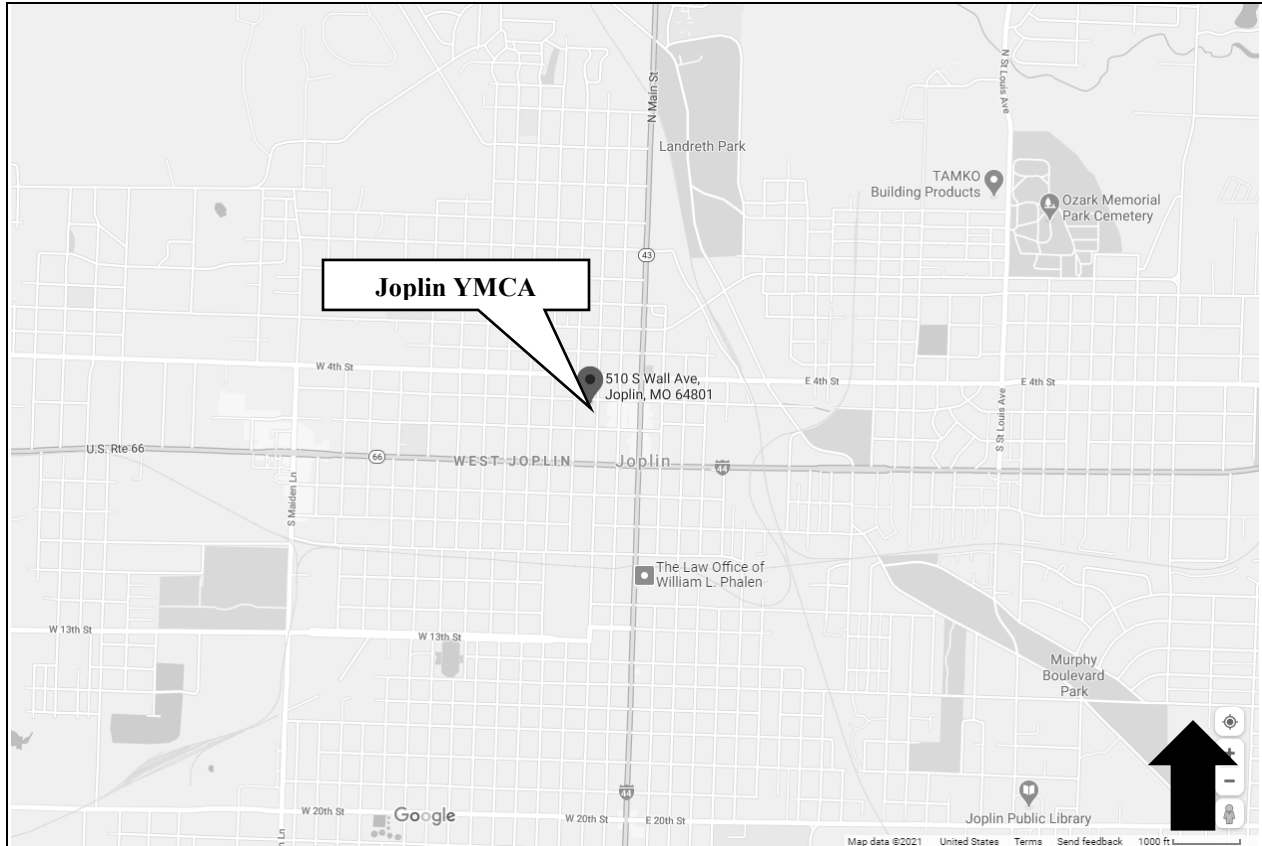
The nominated boundary includes the three historic lots purchased in 1917 for the YMCA (lots 230, 231, and 232), as well as lot 229. When the YMCA was constructed, lot 230 was lawn; parking began on this lot circa 1961. Sanborn maps and historic aerial images show a house and small garage occupied Lot 229 until circa 1961, after which time the YMCA paved lots 229 and 230 and utilized them for parking (*Figures 4 & 5*). The boundary includes the entire parking lot, a non-contributing structure, because it is part of the current legal parcel.

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Figure 1. Contextual map, showing the YMCA within Joplin. Source: Base map from Google.

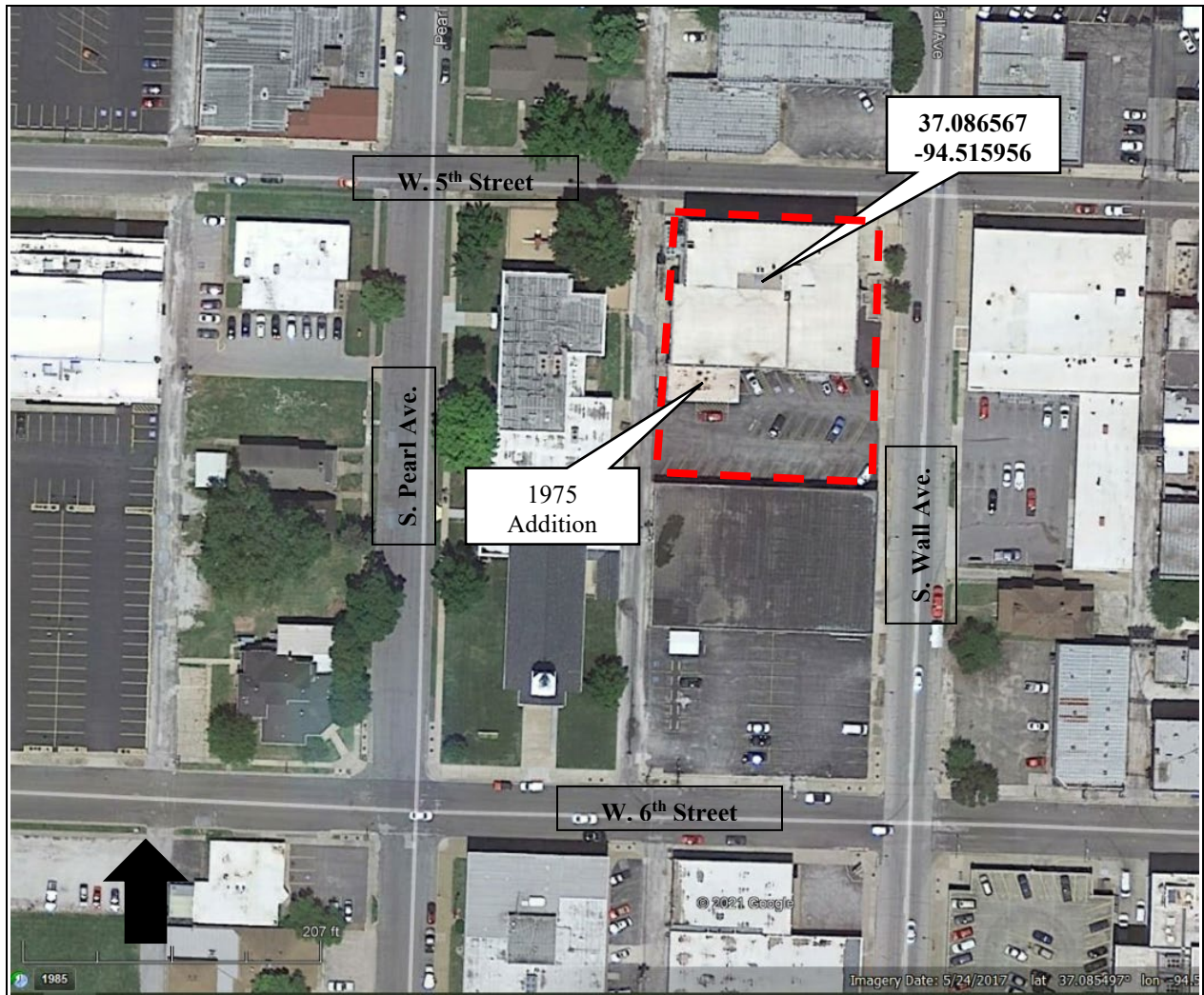


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Figure 2. Boundary map. Boundary denoted by dashed line. Source: Base map from Google Earth, 2017 aerial.



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Figure 3. Contextual images of Wall Avenue, looking S (top) and north (bottom). Source: Brad Finch, January 2021.

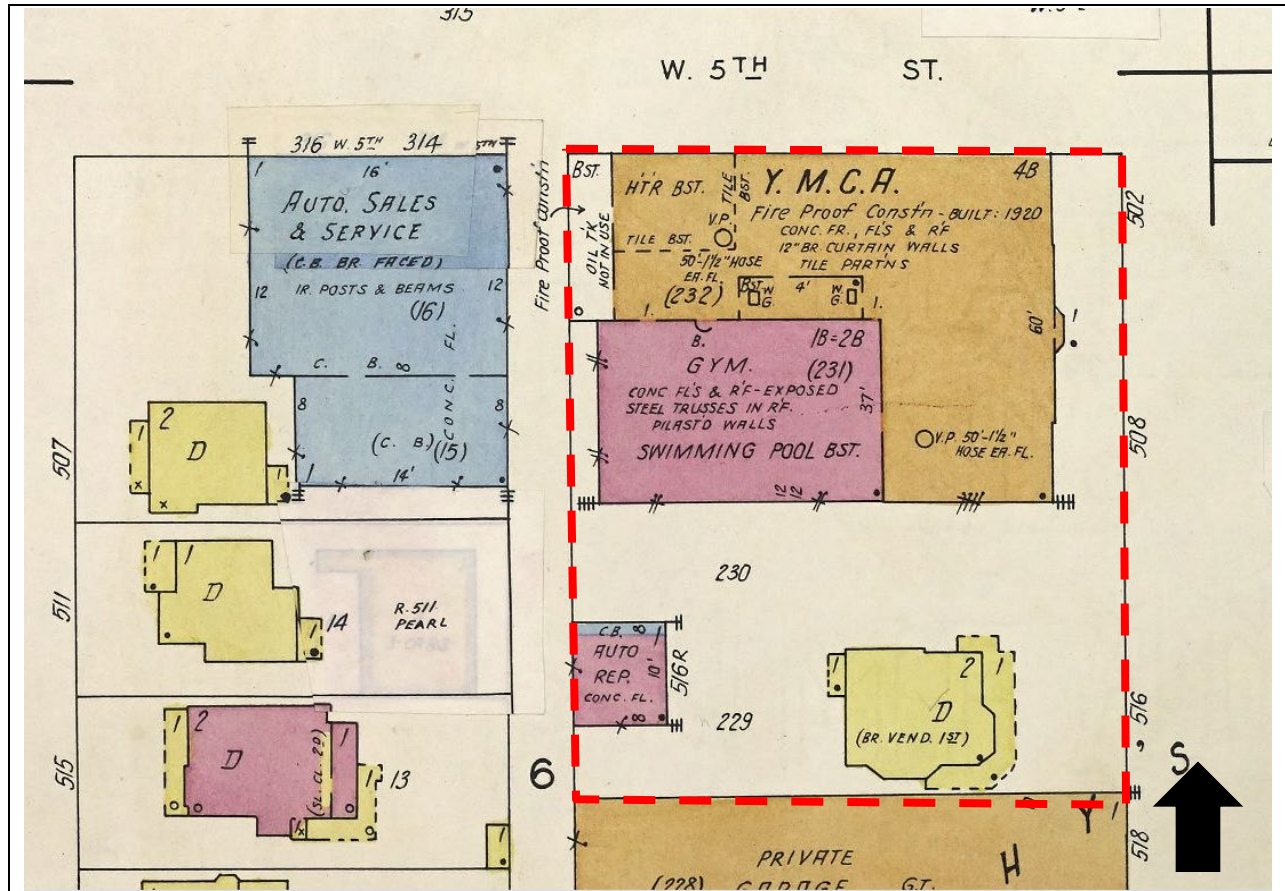


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Figure 4. Snippet of the 1950 Sanborn map, showing the southwest corner of West 5th Street and South Wall Avenue. The YMCA boundary is represented with dashed line. Source: *Insurance Maps of Joplin, Missouri*, (New York: Sanborn Map Company 1906, rev. 1950), 20.



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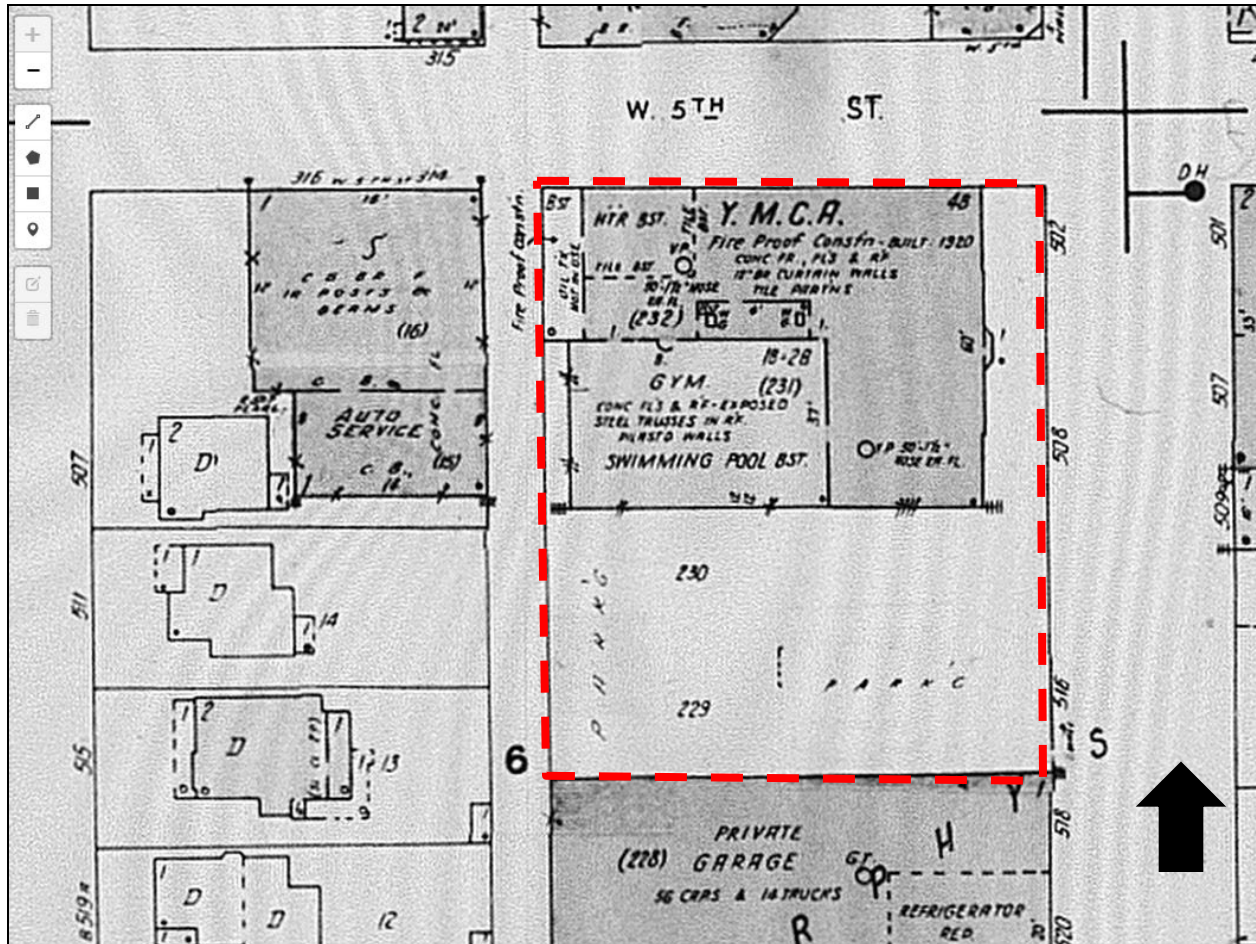
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Figure 5. Snippet of the 1963 Sanborn map, showing the southwest corner of West 5th Street and South Wall Avenue. The YMCA boundary is represented with dashed line. Source: *Insurance Maps of Joplin, Missouri* (New York: Sanborn Map Company 1906, rev. 1963), 20.



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Figure 6. The Joplin YMCA in 1921, shortly after opening. View is looking southwest at the east and north elevations. Note the lawn and house to the south of the building. Source: "Organizations—YMCA" Vertical File, Joplin Public Library.



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Figure 7. Undated photo (circa 1963) showing the east and north elevations. Source: The gymnasium in the early 1920s, looking east from running track. Source: "Organizations—YMCA" Vertical File, Joplin Public Library.



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Figure 8. Exterior photo key. Source: Base map from Google Earth.



Figure 9. Details of the east elevation parapet details. Source: Brad Finch, January 2021.

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Figure 10. View from fourth floor, looking NW and showing the lightwell. Source: Brad Finch, January 2021.

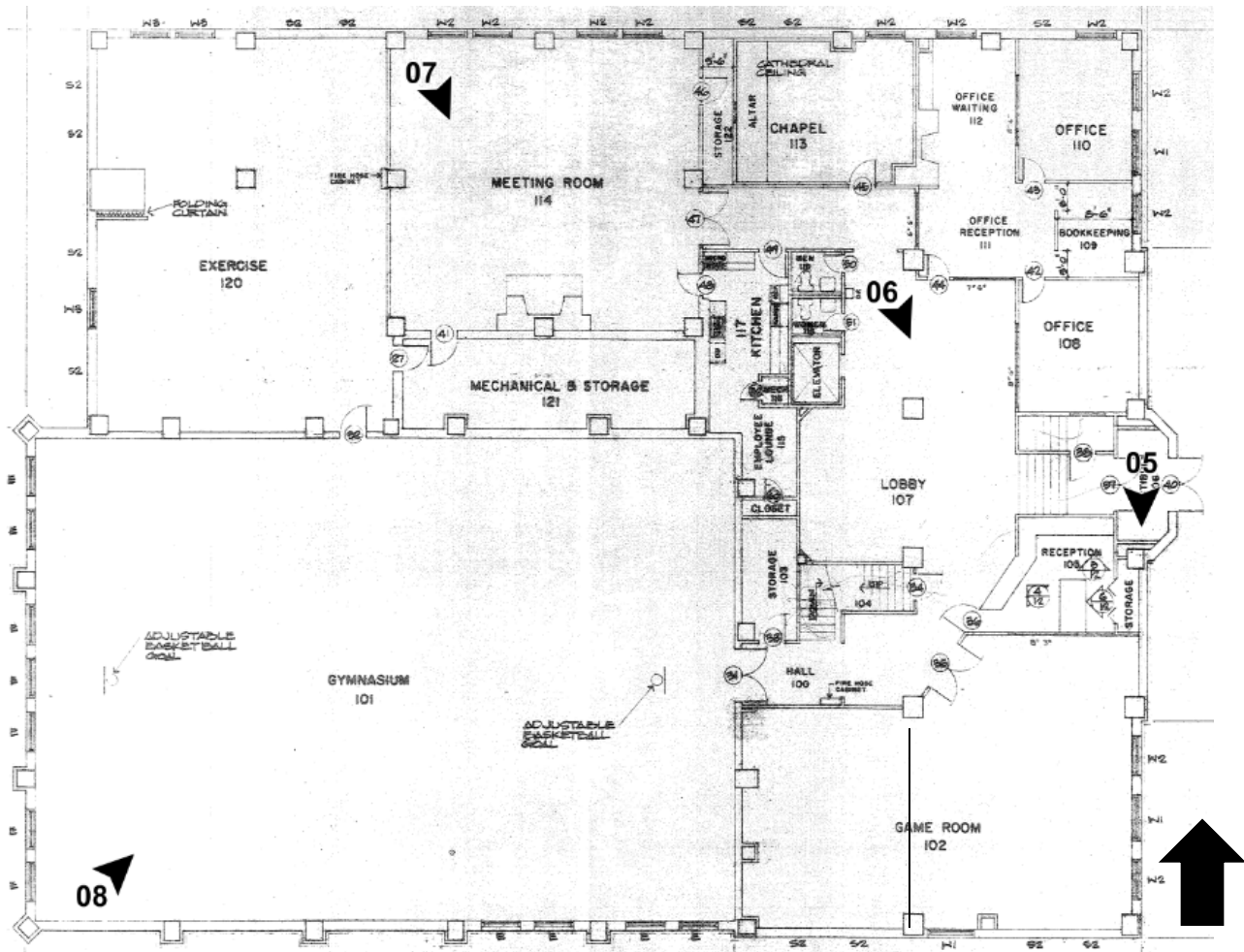


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Figure 11. Current First Floor Plan and Photo Key. Not to Scale. Base floor plan: Goetz-Ketron General Contractors, 1985.



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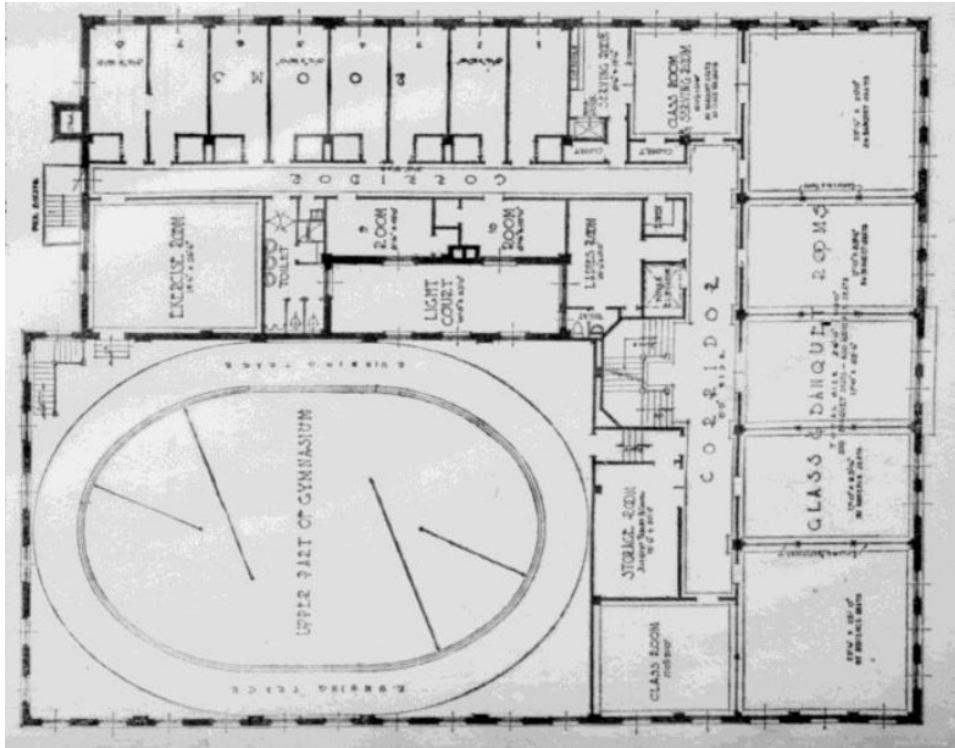
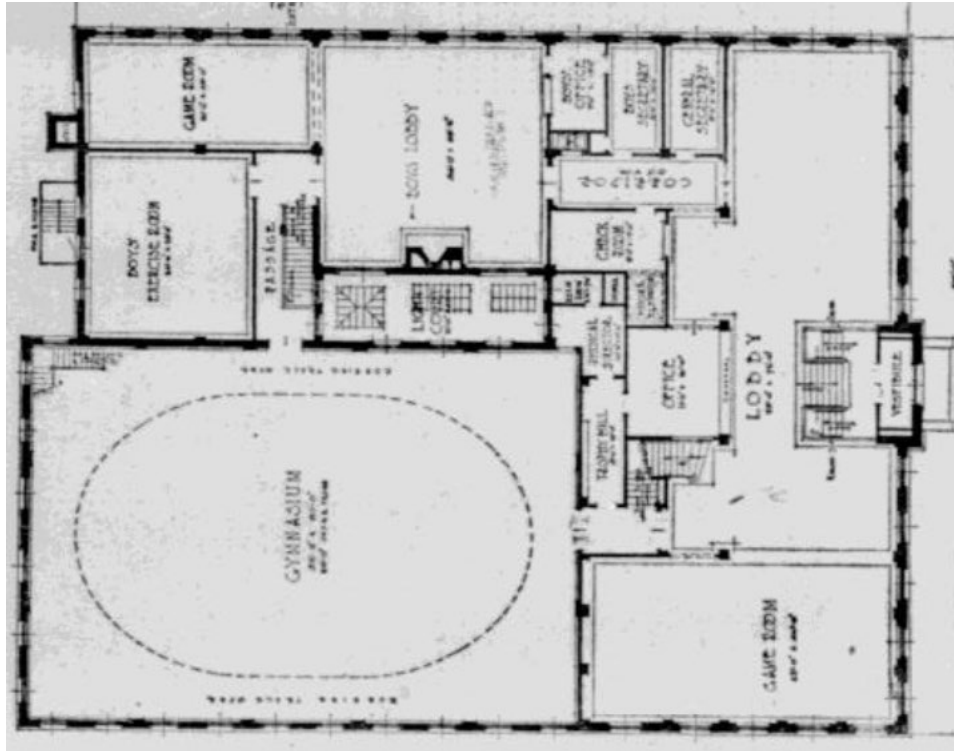
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Figure 12. Proposed first and second floor plans published in *Joplin News Herald* (5 April 1918): 18. With few exceptions, these resemble what was constructed.



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Figure 13. View of lobby in 1943, looking SSW and showing reception desk. Source: "An Inquirer Learns About the YMCA in Wartime," *Joplin Globe* (31 January 1943): E-5.



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Figure 14. Lightwell to south of the former Boys' Lobby/current Meeting Room on first floor, looking NW. Source: Brad Finch, January 2021.



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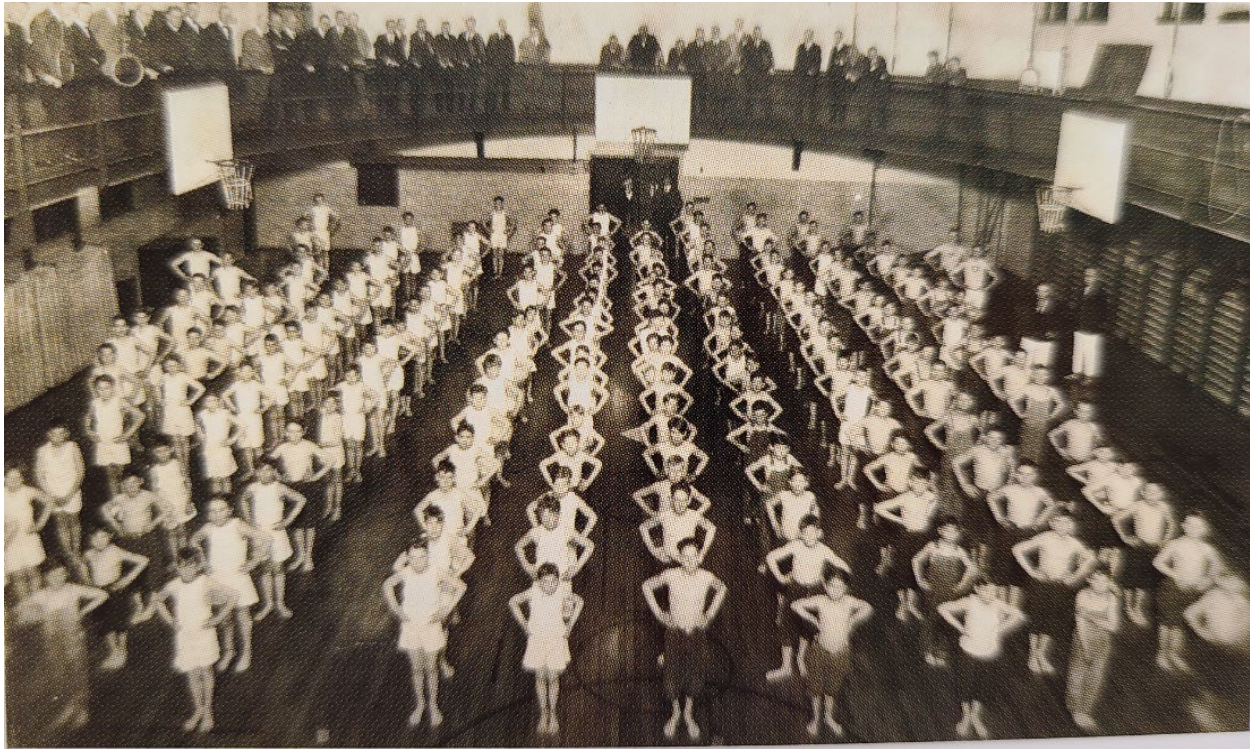
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Figure 15. The gymnasium in the early 1920s, looking east from running track. Source: Clipping in “Organizations—YMCA” Vertical File, Joplin Public Library.

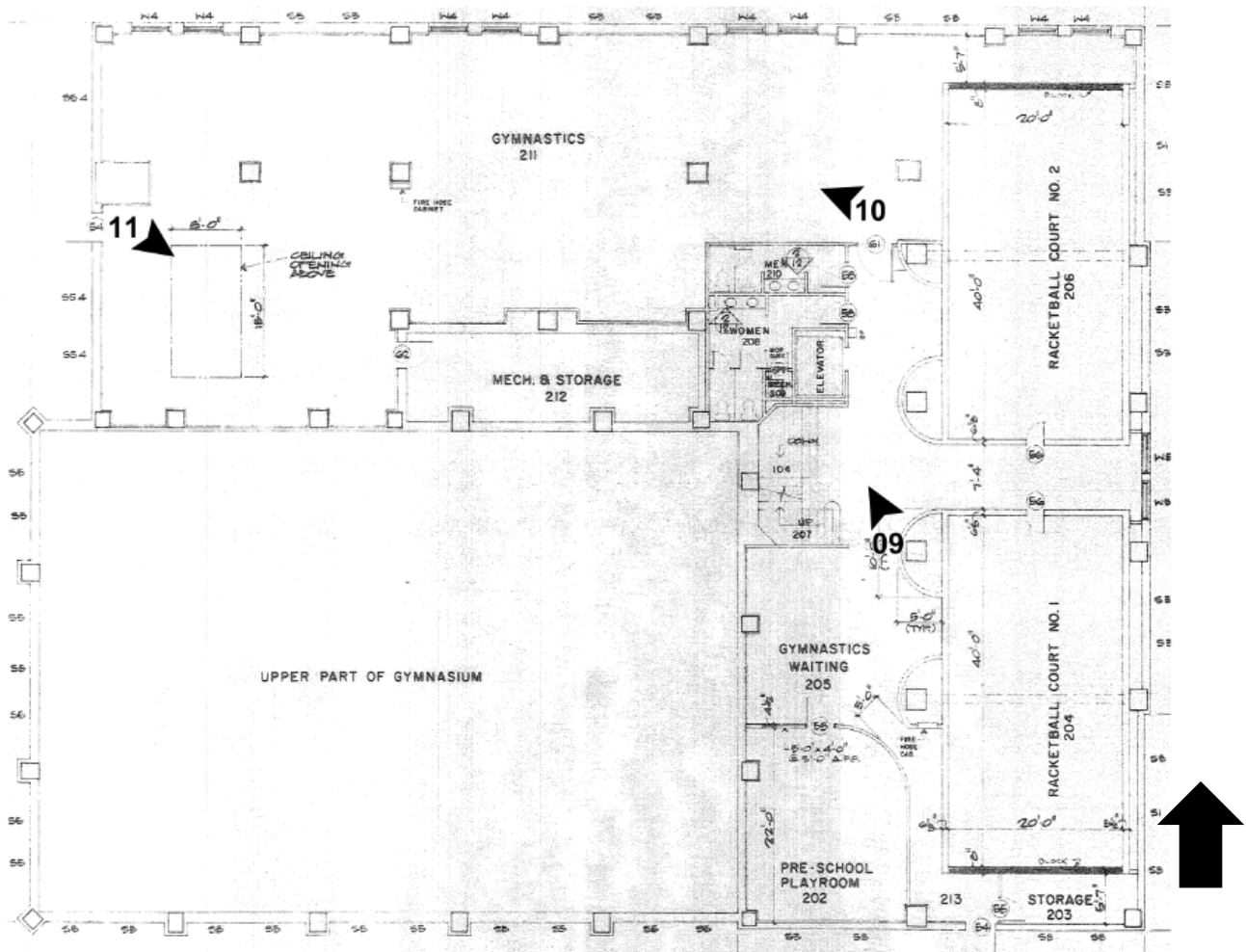


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Figure 17. Current Second Floor Plan and Photo Key. Not to Scale. Base floor plan: Goetz-Ketron General Contractors, 1985.

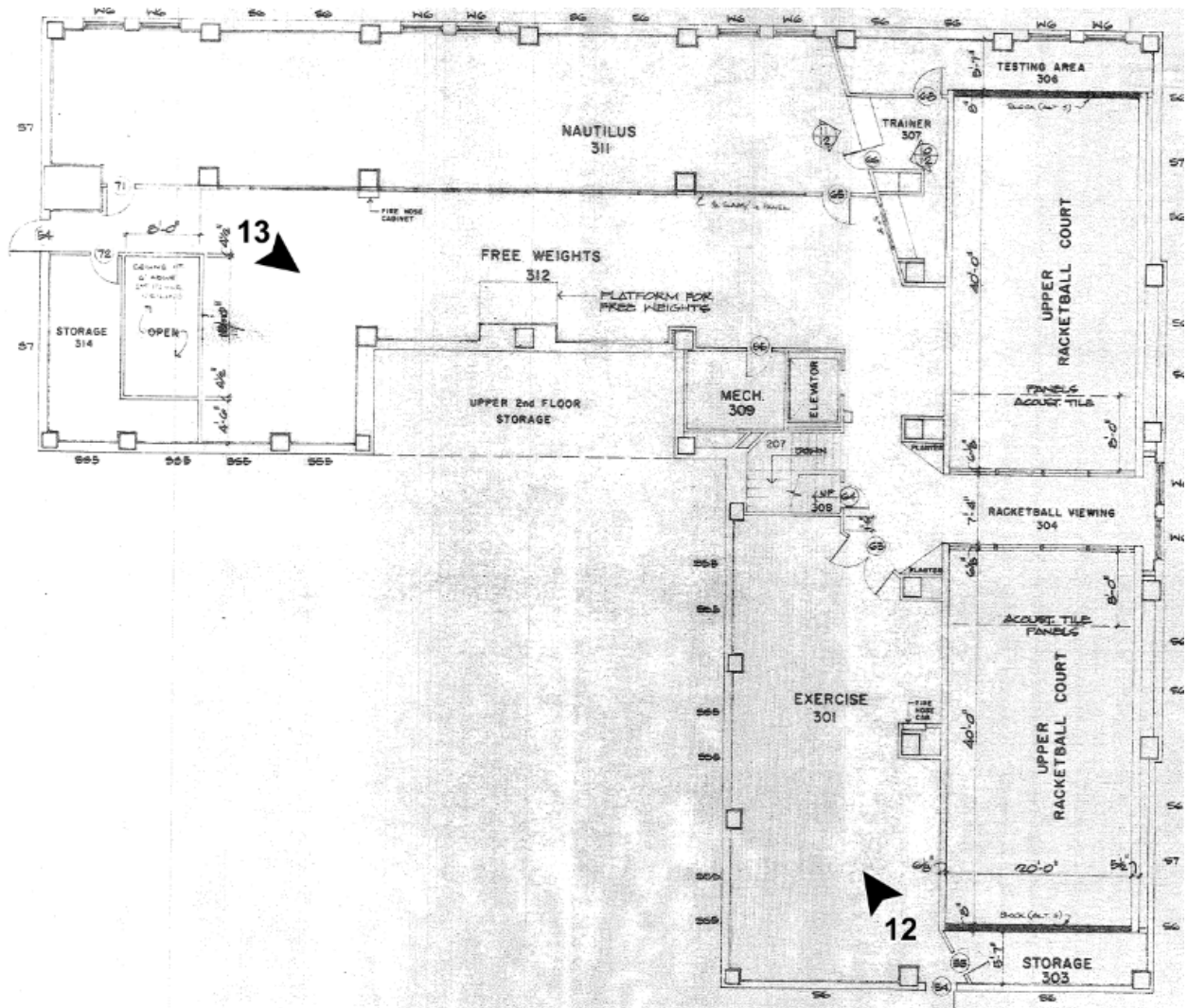


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Figure 18. Current Third Floor Plan and Photo Key. Not to Scale. Base floor plan: Goetz-Ketron General Contractors, 1985.

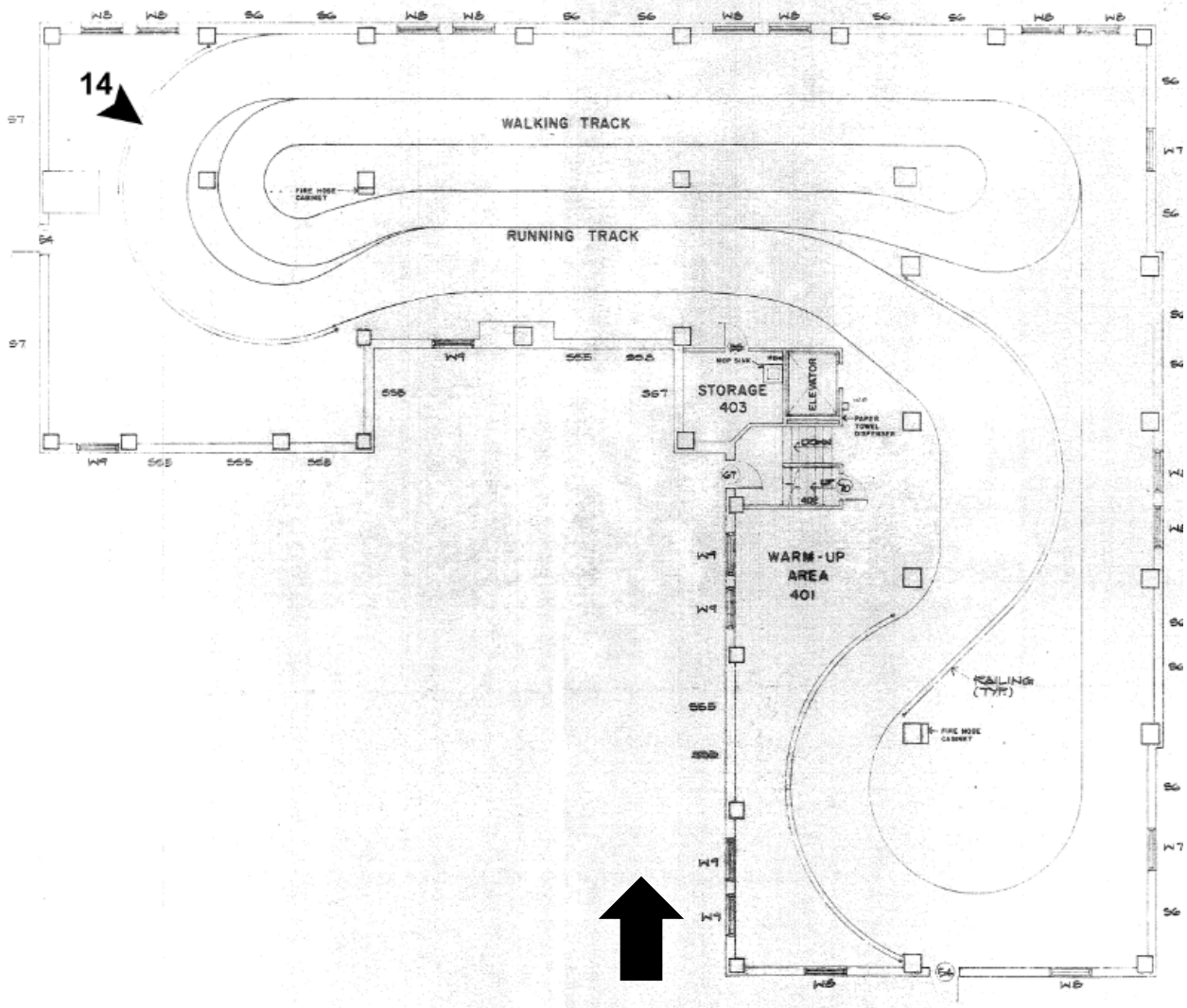


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Figure 19. Current Fourth Floor Plan and Photo Key. Not to Scale. Base floor plan: Goetz-Ketron General Contractors, 1985.

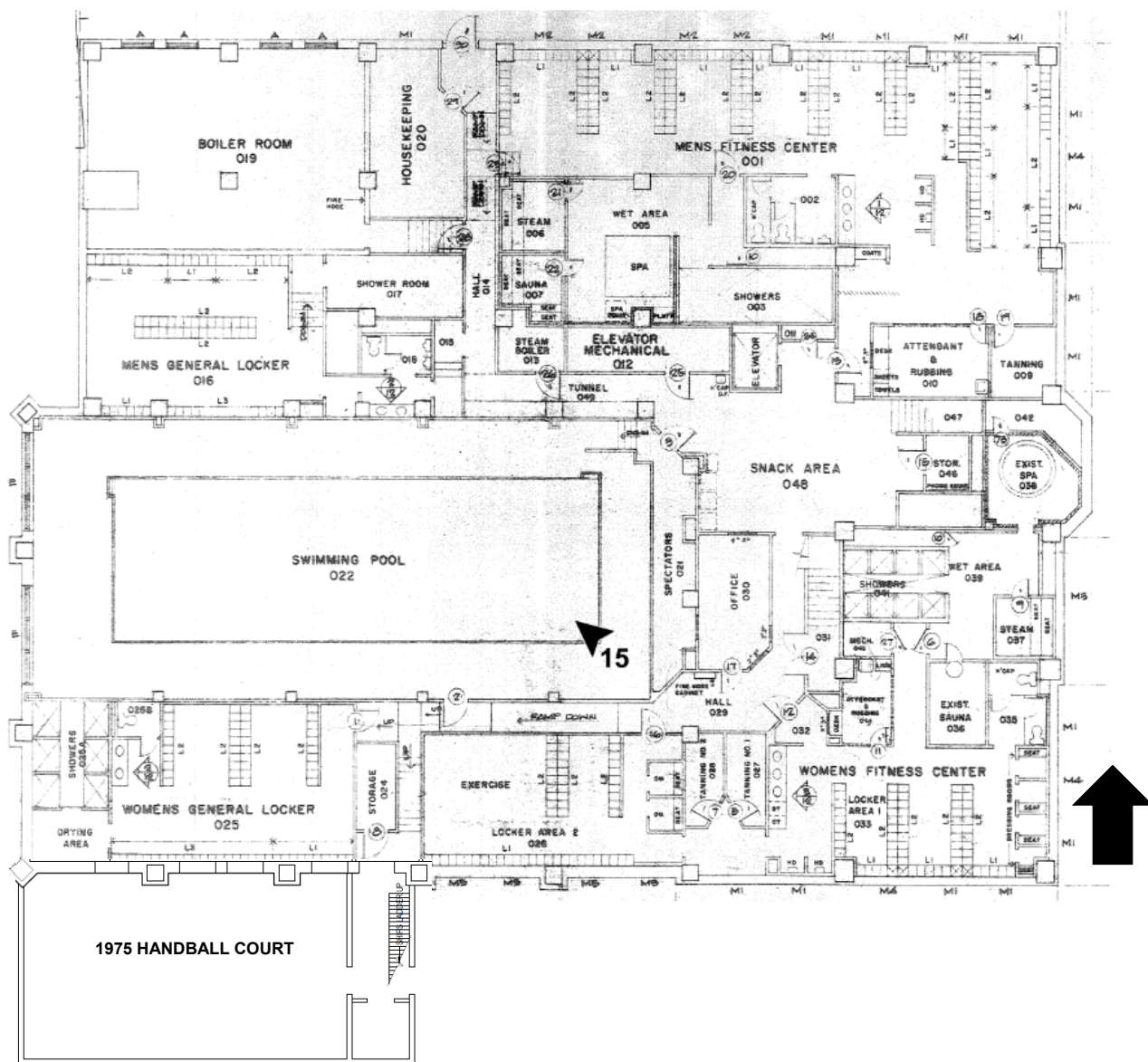


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Figure 20. Current Ground (basement) Floor Plan and Photo Key. Not to Scale. Base floor plan: Goetz-Ketron General Contractors, 1985.



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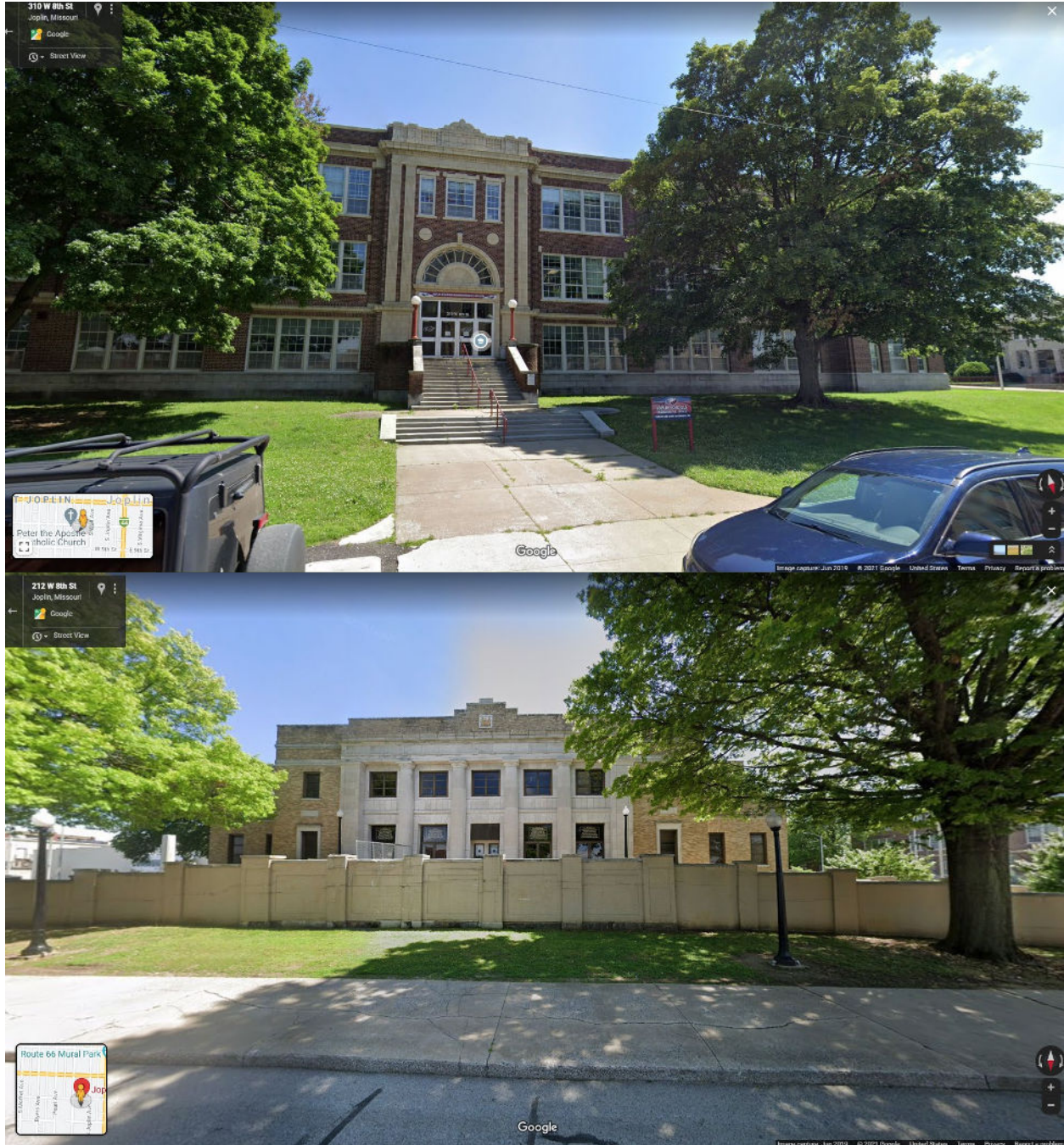
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Figure 21. Top: Old Memorial High School, 310 W. 8th Street, constructed in 1918; bottom: Memorial Auditorium, 212 W. 8th Street, constructed in 1925. Source: Google Streetview, 2019 captures.



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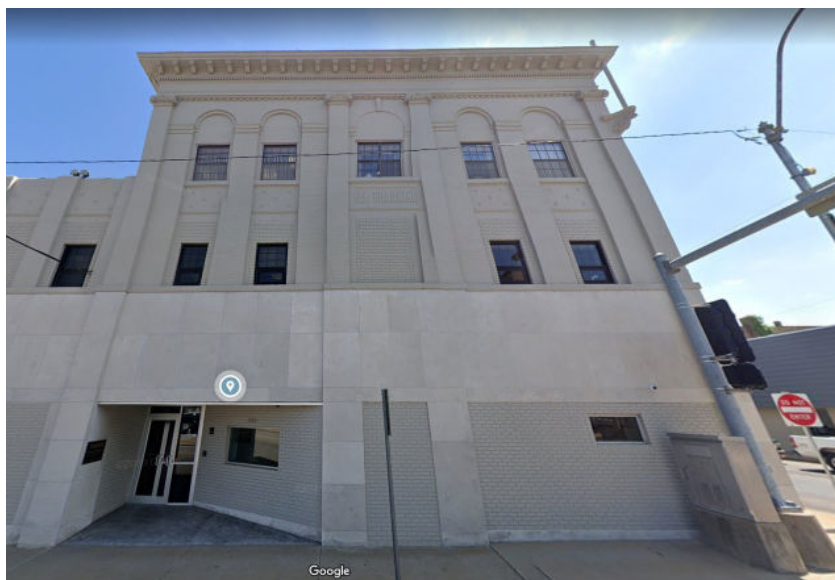
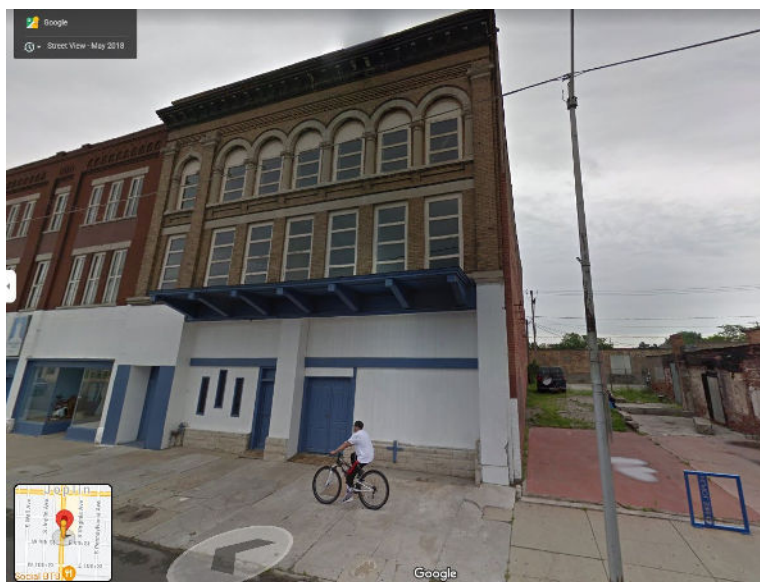
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Figure 22. 821 S Main Street where the John Graue Athletic Club met (top); the Elks Building (bottom). Source: Google Streetview, 2018 (top) and 2019 (bottom).

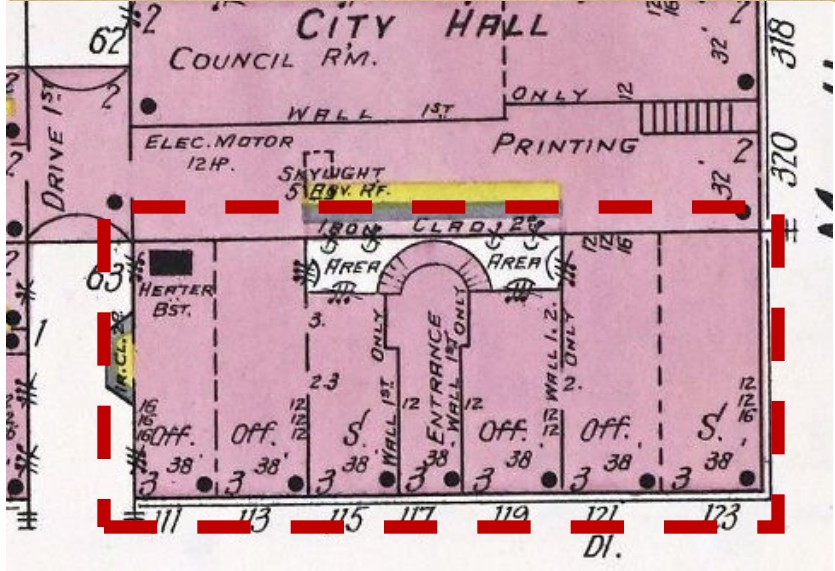


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Figure 23. Top: The first YMCA building in Joplin circa 1910. Source: “Y.M.C.A, first building (colored),” Joplin Historical Postcards Collection, Joplin Public Library, Missouri Digital Heritage. <https://cdm16795.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/jplnpstercds/id/530/rec/2>
Bottom: Snippet of Sheet 22 of the Sanborn Insurance Map of Joplin, showing the extent of the building (outlined).

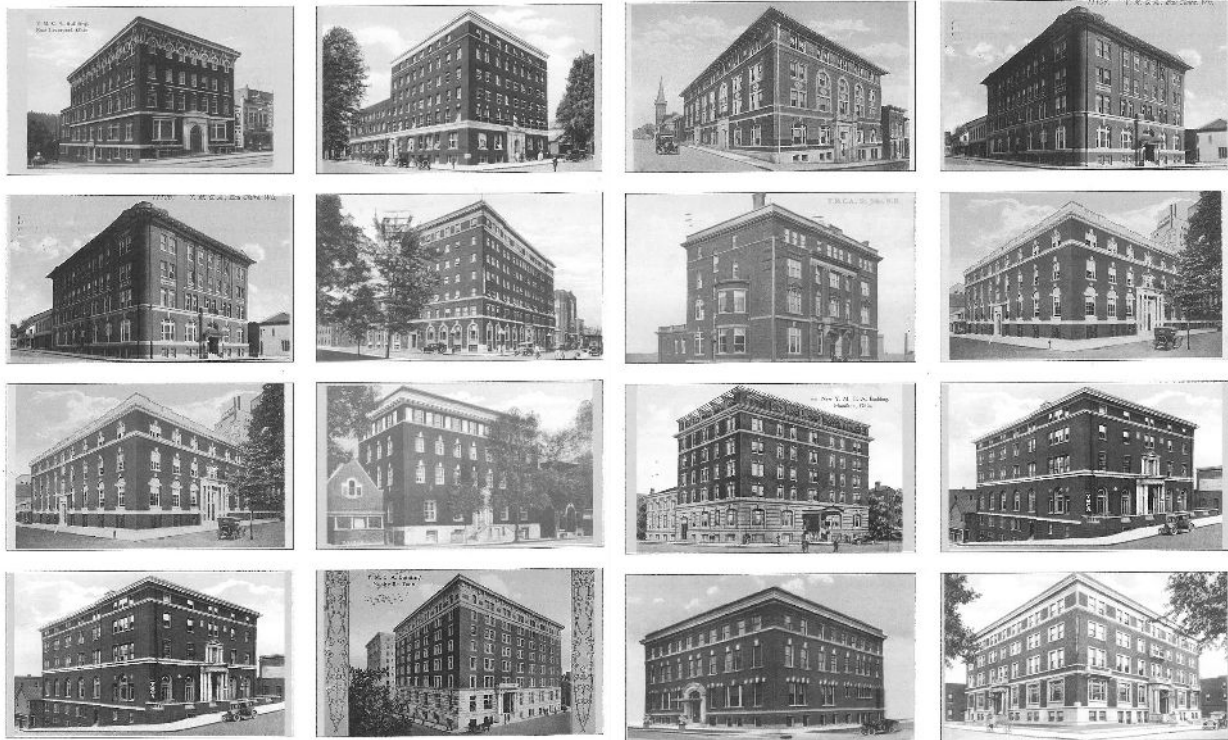


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Figure 24. Selected examples of pre-Building Bureau YMCA buildings throughout North America. Source: Lupkin, *Manhood Factories*, iii & xii.



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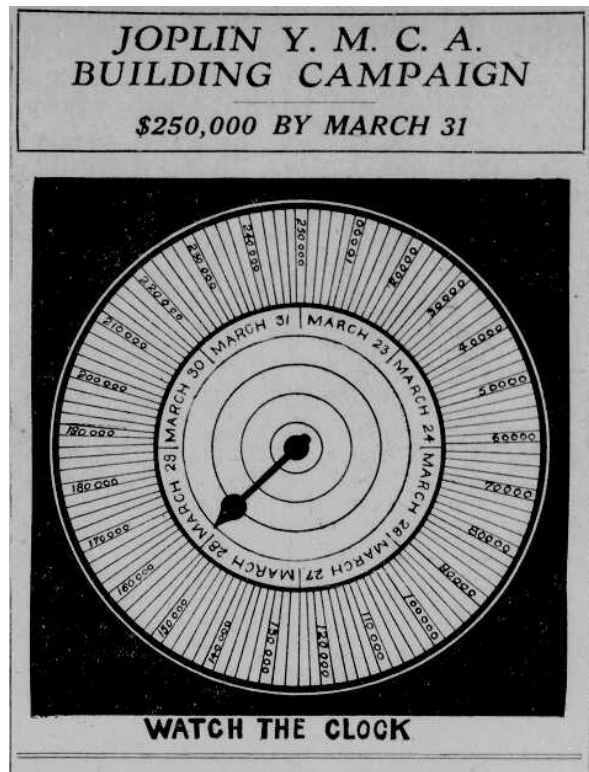
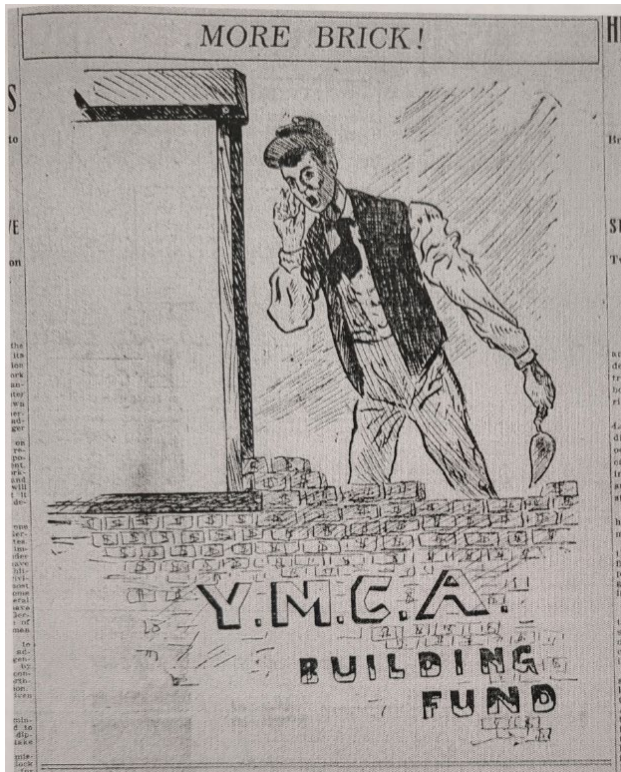
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Figure 25. Images from local papers during the weeklong fundraising campaign. At left, a sketch from “First Day of General Canvassing Brings Fund for New Y.M.C.A. Home to \$85,962,” *Joplin Globe* (25 March 1917): 1, and at right, the fundraising clock showing where the building fund was on March 29, *Joplin News Herald* (29 March 1917): 3.









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