

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

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

## 1. Name

historic Blind Girls' Home

and/or common

## 2. Location

street &amp; number 5235 Page Boulevard not for publication

city, town St. Louis vicinity of

state Missouri code 29 county City of St. Louis code 510

## 3. Classification

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

to be converted to apartment

## 4. Owner of Property

name Workshop Enterprises, Inc.

street &amp; number 2709 Locust Street

city, town St. Louis vicinity of state MO 63103

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. St. Louis City Hall

street &amp; number Tucker Boulevard at Market Street

city, town St. Louis state MO 63103

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Missouri State Historical Survey has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ nodate February 1984 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Historic Preservation Program, Missouri Department of Natural Resources; P.O. Box 176

city, town Jefferson City, state MO 65102

## 7. Description

### Condition

☐ excellent  
☒ good  
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
☐ unexposed

### Check one

☐ unaltered  
☒ altered

### Check one

☒ original site  
☐ moved date \_\_\_\_\_

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

Constructed in 1908 from plans drawn by St. Louis architect J. Hal Lynch, the Blind Girls' Home is a two and one-half story plus basement structure with a reinforced concrete frame faced with a twelve-inch red brick curtain wall. A 1922 addition, also designed by Lynch, is constructed of the same materials. The original building, estimated to cost \$46,000, is enhanced by cut limestone and terra cotta detailing. Its impressive Georgian Revival elevation on Page Boulevard complements the predominately residential neighborhood in the city's West End.

Rising from a high basement faced with limestone, the original building is formally articulated on the nine-bay primary elevation and the first four bays of the east and west elevations. The overall dimensions for the irregularly U-shaped structure are 84 by 116 feet. (See Site Plan.) Limestone parapets flank basement level entrances on the primary (south) facade (Photo #1). Cut limestone steps, heavily patched with concrete, lead from the street to a grand entrance distinguished with cut limestone classical detailing. Two fluted columns flank the entrance and support an entablature crowned with a limestone balustrade. Behind the columns are two Doric order engaged piers which flank an arch opening to a recessed entry panelled with marble. Terra cotta Gibbs Surrounds embellish first and second story double-hung wood windows; the second story double window in the central bay is framed with ornate terra cotta molding. (Photos #2 & 3) Terra cotta is also employed as quoining and ornamental detailing on the entablature and attic story (Photos #1, 2 & 3). The building features a hip roof.

The brick walls of the two subordinate dormitory and service wings are laid in Flemish bond with dark headers and are simply detailed with brick soldier course lintels. A two-story wood and concrete porch with iron railings links the two wings, forming a central courtyard. The east wing extends six bays; a protruding pedimented brick service entrance to the basement is located on the first floor. The west wing extends eight bays; a two-story addition, constructed with the same brick bonding, is attached to the north end. The addition, designed in 1922 by J. Hal Lynch, has four bays on the east and west facades and three bays on the north facade. A private elevator shaft on the west wall of the addition connects the two floors. (The addition may have been used originally as an infirmary.) Lynch was also the architect of a brick and terra cotta wall which enclosed the north and east lawns of the Home. Built in 1928, the wall employs the same brick pattern as the wings. The southern portion of the wall is composed of terra cotta balustrades (Photo #1, lower right-hand corner).

A comparison of photographs #1 and #4 (circa 1910) indicates that the Blind Girls' Home has survived with virtually no alteration other than the replacement of the red tile roof with asphalt shingles. Several bricks and terra cotta blocks are missing from the entablature on the south facade (Photo #3). The interior has suffered a great deal of water damage due to a leaking roof and a missing skylight, recently removed by vandals. The first floor foyer and dining room have glazed ceramic tile fireplaces (both stripped of their mantelpieces). The fireplaces and twin winding wood staircases in the foyer are the most notable architectural features surviving on the interior.

## 8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1908

Builder/Architect J. Hal Lynch, architect

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Blind Girls' Home at 5235 Page Boulevard is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C, and is significant in the following categories: ARCHITECTURE: Designed in 1908 by local architect J. Hal Lynch, the Blind Girls' Home is a well-preserved example of early twentieth century institutional architecture. The brick structure features stone and terra cotta Georgian Revival detailing of unusually fine quality. SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN: The Blind Girls' Home is significant as St. Louis' earliest experiment in providing a communal home environment for indigent blind women who sought to live independent of family. Organized in 1867 by a group of five young women from the Missouri School for the Blind, the Blind Girls' Home was adopted in 1884 by the St. Louis Women's Christian Association as one of their branch organizations. In 1908, a building constructed specifically for the Blind Girls' was erected on Page Boulevard. The Home remained at that address for nearly fifty-five years, a haven for blind women who wanted to lead a normal, productive life.

Until the founding of the Blind Girls' Home in 1867, there was little option for blind women in St. Louis after graduation from the Missouri School for the Blind where they boarded nine months of the year. Most went back to their families, but for many this was not a viable solution either because they had no family or because they wished to become independent. Although boys and girls at the school were instructed in certain skills, the girls' training was primarily domestic: cooking, needlework, etc. The boys learned more marketable trades enabling them to find employment after leaving the school. In 1867, a group of girls who were soon to be graduated from the school decided to take their future into their own hands. They called themselves the "Blind Girls' Band," pooled their meager resources and started a fund-raising campaign to establish a home for themselves. With the permission of the school, they held musical concerts and sold their handicrafts to the public. The school donated the proceeds from items they had sold from their workshops.<sup>2</sup> James E. Yeatman, a Tennessee-born banker/philanthropist who moved to St. Louis around 1850, was a Board member of the school and handled their finances. Yeatman remained a life-long friend of the Home, often donating time and money to keep the Home functioning.

After leaving the Missouri School for the Blind, the girls first moved to a poorly furnished room in North St. Louis where they attempted to earn a living by producing and selling the handiwork they had learned. It was not until 1877, however, that the Home was officially chartered as "Blind Girls' Industrial Home." (Later, the "Industrial" was dropped from their name.) With the aid of Mr. Yeatman, who brought the girls' impoverished situation into public light, the

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Home moved to larger quarters where they remained for approximately four years.<sup>3</sup> In 1881, the Sanitary Commission (a voluntary group organized in 1861 originally to provide medical assistance to Civil War casualties) gave them the use of one of their own properties, the former home of St. Louis artist Charles (Carl) F. Wimar (demolished).<sup>4</sup> In 1884, the Home was visited by Mrs. Allen of the St. Louis Women's Christian Association (SLWCA). After viewing the poor living and financial conditions, Mrs. Allen consulted with Mr. Yeatman and together they approached the Board of the SLWCA to see if they could remedy the situation. The Association readily agreed to adopt the Blind Girls' Home as one of their branch organizations and a Board was elected to assume Mr. Yeatman's responsibility as treasurer/advisor.

The St. Louis Women's Christian Association was organized in 1868 by thirty women from prominent local families who were concerned about the plight of young Civil War widows left without any means or family. Their first project was to establish a home where young women could live at cost in "suitable" surroundings while earning a living.<sup>5</sup> (Mr. Yeatman was instrumental in obtaining their first lease.) In subsequent years the SLWCA organized a retirement home (the Memorial Home), a training school, Summer Rest -- a county retreat for city working girls, Traveler's Aid and a number of other homes all dedicated to aiding, protecting and enriching the lives of poor working women.<sup>6</sup> Thus, when the SLWCA assumed responsibility for the Blind Girls' Home, they were not strangers to this type of work. The SLWCA subsidized room and board allowing the girls to keep any money they earned from the sale of their crafts for personal use. The Home moved several more times to accommodate its growing numbers. In 1886, the Blind Girls' Home Board decided to purchase a building of their own. They first moved to 1828 Wash Street, but were soon cramped and purchased the old Nicholson Home (demolished) at 1214 North Garrison Avenue.

In 1908, the Blind Girls' Home Board decided it was time to move once more. The neighborhood surrounding North Garrison was showing signs of deterioration and the Board felt that a home specifically designed for them would suit their purposes more fully. An empty lot on Page Boulevard was chosen as the site for their new home. Unlike their former location, this new address was in a developing, middle-class neighborhood in the city's fashionable West End. Large two and two-and-one-half story brick homes and flats filled the block. A year earlier (1907) the Twelfth (and final) Police District was created; its headquarters (constructed a few months prior to the new Blind Girls' Home) was located on the corner of Page and Union, half a block west of the home.<sup>7</sup>

Architect J. Hal Lynch was selected to design a structure that would meet the "needs and life of the blind." The Home was a gift of Mrs. L. L. Culver, a long-time active member of the SLWCA and the Board of the Blind Girls' Home. Mrs. Culver also provided an endowment so that the Home could continue to subsidize the residents. The girls moved to their new quarters in November 1909.

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Fifty single bedrooms afforded each girl privacy; a two-room suite with bathroom was provided for the resident matron. There were two large sunny living rooms used for receiving visitors and as a place for the girls to assemble their handiwork. A grand hall with twin staircases and a large central fireplace greeted guests. In the basement was a stage where the girls held concerts, heard lectures or were entertained by theatrical or musical groups. Rooms were furnished by donations from local department stores, Association members and wealthy individuals. Annual teas and bazaars were held at the Home to help defray some of the costs and each resident was expected to do her share of the cooking and housekeeping. Local doctors and specialists regularly made rounds at the Home, donating their time and services. By 1928, a full-time nurse was employed.

Not much is known about the architect, J. Hal Lynch. He first appeared in the 1893 St. Louis City Directory as a partner with Roberts and Evans. By 1896, he was in private practice. The last listing in the City Directory for Lynch was in 1929, making his career in St. Louis over thirty-six years long. His son, Hallowell H. H. Lynch, was also an architect and became a partner in his father's firm in 1917. From 1906 until 1922, the elder Lynch was actively involved as the Secretary to the St. Louis Tenement House Association, an offshoot of the Civic League whose purpose was to provide workers with "clean healthy rooms and a high standard of living conditions" at low rents.<sup>8</sup> In 1922, a two-story structure was attached to the rear of the Home. (It is possible that this is the hospital mentioned in a 1928 report of the Blind Girls' Home to the St. Louis Women's Christian Association.) In 1928, the adjoining property to the east of the Home was purchased for fear that an apartment building would be erected on the site and block out the sunlight and fresh air.<sup>9</sup> The lot was landscaped as a small garden and enclosed with a terra cotta balustrade designed by Lynch.

The Blind Girls' Home separated from the SLWCA in 1956 to become an independent corporation. In 1966, after fifty-five years at the Page location, the Board decided to move the residents to a new building in Kirkwood (St. Louis County), Missouri where it exists today. It is the only home in the nation that provides housing exclusively for blind adult women without any state or Federal assistance.

The Page building was bought by a community day care center in 1970. In 1983, it was sold to Workshop Enterprises, Inc., a non-profit group which plans to restore and renovate the former Blind Girls' Home as a "Living and Training Campus." Sixteen Section 8 apartments will provide housing for unemployed families and individuals while they receive in-house and on-the-job training. Space in the basement will be provided for commercial and community work.

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Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>"Homes for Girls: Blind Girls' Home," undated, unidentified newspaper article, Blind Girls' Home Library, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>St. Louis Globe-Democrat, 6 June 1937.

<sup>4</sup>Mrs. John W. Booth, A Short History of the St. Louis Women's Christian Association and its Branches, 1868-1936 (St. Louis: St. Louis Women's Christian Association, 1935), p. 31.

<sup>5</sup>Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc., National Register Nomination for Phyllis Wheatley Branch, YWCA (St. Louis: 1983).

<sup>6</sup>Booth, pp. 31-32.

<sup>7</sup>The Colonial Revival Page Avenue Police Station was listed in the National Register in September of 1980.

<sup>8</sup>Glen E. Holt and Selwyn K. Troen, St. Louis (New York: New Viewpoints, 1977), p. 118.

<sup>9</sup>St. Louis Women's Christian Association, Annual Report of the Blind Girls' Home (St. Louis: St. Louis Women's Christian Association, 1928), p. 51.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approximately .5 acre

Quadrangle name Clayton, IL/MO

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A 

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The Blind Girls' Home is located in City Block 3792. The boundaries of the property are as follows: Beginning at a point on the north side of Page Boulevard approximately

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

state code county code

state code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By © 1984, Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc.

name Ilana Feitlowitz, Researcher and Mary M. Stiritz, Editor

organization Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc. date February 1984

street & number 721 Olive Street, Room 1113 telephone (314) 421-6474

city or town St. Louis, state MO 63101

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title Fred A. Lafser, Director and State Historic Preservation Officer, Department of Natural Resources

date 7/10/84

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Booth, Mrs. John W. A Short History of the St. Louis Women's Christian Association, 1868-1936. St. Louis: St. Louis Women's Christian Association, 1935.

Hill, Coleen. Administrator, Blind Girls' Home, St. Louis, Missouri. Interview with Ilana Feitlowitz, researcher, Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc., February 1, 1984.

Holt, Glen E., and Troen, Selwyn K. St. Louis. New York: New Viewpoints, 1977.

Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc. National Register Nomination for the Page Boulevard Police Station. St. Louis: 1980.

\_\_\_\_\_. National Register Nomination for the Phyllis Wheatley Branch, YWCA. St. Louis: 1983.

St. Louis, Missouri. Blind Girls' Home Library. Undated, unidentified newspaper article, "Homes for Girls: Blind Girls' Home."

St. Louis Globe-Democrat, 6 June 1937.

St. Louis Women's Christian Association. Annual Report of the Blind Girls' Home. St. Louis: St. Louis Women's Christian Association, 1928.

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Item #10, Verbal Boundary Description cont.

540 feet east of the northeast corner of Page and Union Boulevards, continue northward approximately 175 feet to the south side of the east/west alley of City Block 3792; thence continue eastward along said alley approximately 100 feet; thence continued southwardly 175 feet to the north side of Page Boulevard; thence continue westwardly approximately 100 feet to the point of origin.



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2. Jim Denny, Chief, Survey & Registration  
and State Contact Person  
Department of Natural Resources  
P.O. 176  
Jefferson City

February 1984  
(314) 751-4096  
Missouri 65102

BLIND GIRLS' HOME  
5235 Page Boulevard  
St. Louis, Missouri

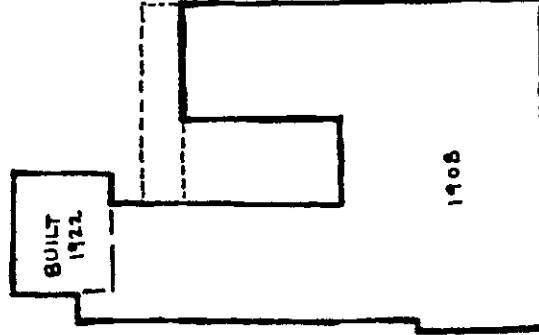
Site Plan.

Ilana Feitlowitz, 1984.

SITE PLAN:  
BLIND GIRLS' HOME  
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

N  
↑

3792



5235

5229

PAGE BOULEVARD

SCALE  
1" = 50'

MAP: FEBRUARY, 1904 ILANA FEITLOWITZ



BLIND GIRLS' HOME  
5235 Page Boulevard  
St. Louis, Missouri

UTM Reference Point:

15/737630/4282460

Clayton, IL/MO Quadrangle  
1:24,000, scale.

BLIND GIRLS' HOME

5235 Page Boulevard  
St. Louis, Missouri

#1 of 4 South (primary) and east  
elevations.

Photographer: Ilana Feitlowitz

Date: February 1984

Negative: Landmarks Association  
of St. Louis, Inc.

Camera facing northwest.



BLIND GIRLS' HOME  
5235 Page Boulevard  
St. Louis, Missouri

#2 of 4 Detail of main entrance,  
south elevation.

Photographer: Ilana Feitlowitz  
Date: February 1984  
Negative: Landmarks Association  
of St. Louis, Inc.

Camera facing north.





BLIND GIRLS' HOME  
5235 Page Boulevard  
St. Louis, Missouri

#3 of 4 Detail of cornice,  
south elevation.

Photographer: Ilana Feitlowitz  
Date: February 1984  
Negative: Landmarks Association  
of St. Louis, Inc.



BLIND GIRLS' HOME  
5235 Page Boulevard  
St. Louis, Missouri

#4 of 4 South (primary) elevation.

Date: Circa 1910

Photocopy: The Negative Touch,  
1984; negative:

Landmarks Association  
Original: St. Louis Public  
Library

View to north.

