

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 Phyllis Wheatley Branch YWCA of St. Louis/Women's Christian Home

and/or common Phyllis Wheatley Branch YWCA

2. Location

street & number 2709 Locust Street not for publication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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: YWCA facility

4. Owner of Property

name Board of Trustees of the Young Women's Christian Association

street & number 1015 Locust Street, Suite 310

city, town St. Louis vicinity of state MO 63101

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number Tucker Boulevard

city, town St. Louis state Missouri

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Missouri State Historical Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date October 1983 federal state county local

depository for survey records Historic Preservation Program
Missouri Department of Natural Resources

city, town P. O. Box 176 state MO 65102

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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

Completed in 1927, the Phyllis Wheatley Branch of the St. Louis YWCA is a three-story plus basement institutional building with reinforced concrete frame, gypsum block interior walls and 12-inch red matte brick curtain walls articulated in a Colonial Revival style. The building is located on the northwest corner of Locust and Beaumont Streets at the eastern edge of St. Louis' Midtown district.

With a U-shaped facade fronting 130 feet on Locust Street, the building extends 130 feet on Beaumont Street, forming an ell on the east elevation; it measures approximately 70 feet on the west elevation where it joins a 1953 gymnasium (not included in the nomination). Rising above a Bedford stone basement level, first story windows are recessed in a blind arcade on the front (south) elevation and on the ten-bay east elevation; on all three stories, double-hung windows are headed with brick jack arches and employ wooden sash with eight over eight lights (with the exception of one over one first story windows flanking the entrance). (Photo #1) A white stone cornice is surmounted by a brick parapet with stone balusters which wraps around three elevations; the roof is flat. The Locust Street (principal) entrance is framed with a stone entablature and classical columns surmounted by a wood framed tri-part window featuring a broken scroll pediment. (Photo #2) The rear elevation is sparsely detailed; double-hung wooden sash windows employ brick sills and eight over eight or six over six lights. The exterior of the building has survived virtually unaltered and in good condition with the exception of a few broken balusters in the parapet. No significant architectural features are present 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/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1926-27

Builder/Architect LaBeaume & Klein, architects

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Phyllis Wheatley Branch of the St. Louis YWCA is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C, and is significant in the following categories: ARCHITECTURE: Constructed in 1926-27 from plans drawn up by prominent St. Louis architects LaBeaume & Klein, the Phyllis Wheatley Branch of the St. Louis YWCA is a distinguished and well-preserved example of 1920s institutional architecture. The building combines solid reinforced concrete construction and functional plan with handsome facades articulated in a Colonial Revival style displaying particularly fine classical detailing and quality materials.

SOCIAL-HUMANITARIAN: Opened in 1927 by the St. Louis Women's Christian Association, the building served as a residence for young, working women providing them with an attractive, homelike, protective environment at a small cost. Known as the Women's Christian Home, the institution was originally founded in 1868 as St. Louis' oldest organization devoted to the interests of women. The building is the oldest extant structure associated with the organization's work.

Among the social problems facing urban centers in the aftermath of the Civil War was the plight of inexperienced, widowed women forced to find their way alone in the world. In response to the needs of these homeless women, the St. Louis Women's Christian Association was organized in 1868 by thirty women from prominent local families. Within a short time the non-denominational Protestant group was able to raise funds and lease a building to offer working women suitable room and board at cost; rooms were furnished by various churches and individuals.¹ Less than a decade later, the services of the Women's Christian Association were in even greater demand and larger quarters were required as a result of the influx of increasing numbers of young, single women from rural areas seeking employment in St. Louis. In 1876, the Association erected its first permanent building, a three-story brick structure at 1814 Washington Avenue (demolished) known as the Women's Christian Home, which for nearly fifty years provided room and board and a protective environment for over ten thousand working girls of small means.²

As early as 1903, however, the Home was reported inadequate to accommodate the many applicants. Two decades later when the "dust, smoke, the wear and tear of seventy-five people going in and out began to show the work of decay" Board President Mrs. C. E. M. Champ urged that a new building was an absolute necessity. Through the initiative of Mrs. Champ, land was purchased in 1925

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and plans made to construct a larger, modern, fireproof Home at Beaumont and Locust Streets seven blocks west of the Washington Avenue building.³ A massive city-wide campaign was launched in late January 1925 to raise \$250,000 for the building fund. Spearheaded by prominent St. Louis businessman Norman B. Champ (son of the Home's Board President), the campaign was supported by fifty other leading men (including Mayor Henry W. Kiel), members of the Women's Christian Home Board and eleven ministers of local churches and synagogues. A total of 350 volunteers were organized into teams directed to contact personally over 10,000 citizens.⁴

Promotional literature announced that plans prepared by architects LaBeaume & Klein provided for a building of basement and three stories, "fire-proof and modern in every respect" with special attention given to sanitation. In June 1926, drawings and details of the building were published in local newspapers and it was reported that construction would begin shortly. With Bedford stone basement story and dark matte brick above, the building was arranged with "light and airy" bedrooms (accommodating 116 women) on the upper two floors and a first floor with living room, dining room, general offices and matron's quarters. The kitchen and service areas were located at the rear and exercise, recreation and laundry rooms in the basement; a roof garden was also included in the plans. Intended to improve upon conventional boarding house accommodations, emphasis was placed on creating a "domestic and friendly atmosphere" achieved through amenities of the interior arrangements and enhanced by the low-rise exterior "colonial" design which recalled residential styles popular at the time. The desired "homelike" feeling was furthered by the U-shaped plan featuring a terrace set back from the street on the front facade.⁵ (Photo #1) Like the earlier Women's Christian Home buildings, the rooms were furnished by local businesses, churches and members of the Association.

When the building was completed in 1927, architects LaBeaume & Klein had worked together in St. Louis for some fifteen years designing private residences, churches and major civic and institutional buildings such as the downtown YMCA, central YWCA, St. Louis Maternity Hospital, additions to St. Luke's Hospital, buildings for Lindenwood College and later, Kiel Auditorium. St. Louisans Eugene S. Klein, FAIA (1876-1944) graduated from Harvard in 1899 and the Lawrence Scientific School in 1901; he worked for the St. Louis firm of Mauran, Russell & Garden before forming a partnership with Louis LaBeaume in 1912. Born in St. Louis, Louis LaBeaume (1873-1961) studied at Columbia University and abroad; he first established practice in Boston before returning to St. Louis in 1902 to work on designs for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. Following the Fair he opened the office of Mariner & LaBeaume which was succeeded by LaBeaume & Klein. He served as a member of the City Plan Commission (1914-1916), the Plaza Commission (1925-1940) and the Board of Control of the City Art Museum (1916-1941).

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A 1928 feature article on the Home highlighted the institution's long years of service to the community continued to the present day by children and grandchildren of the founding group as well as by members of over fifty years. In addition to directing the business of the Home, members raised money necessary to maintain the building and provide the "good cuisine" and other amenities for which the Home was noted since the small charges for board (ranging downward from a high of \$7 a week to "whatever a girl can pay") did not meet operating expenses. Association members also participated in counseling when problems arose and provided educational opportunities for interested girls. In order to care for the neediest applicants, residency in the Home was restricted to women between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five who earned less than \$85 a month; at the time a woman exceeded the limits on age or salary, she was asked to leave so that help could be offered to less fortunate girls "just beginning on the ladder of life." On occasion temporary accommodation was also provided to stranded women travelers.⁶ In spite of the general hard times during the Depression years, the Home was able to remain solvent and no one was turned away because of unemployment and the lack of funds to pay for board; food was also regularly dispensed to numbers of women who appeared at the back door without money.⁷

In 1941, when the Home was sold to the Board of Trustees of the YWCA for \$70,000⁸ (less than one-third of the construction cost), the building entered into another period of significance as the new location of St. Louis' first Y for black women, the Phyllis Wheatley Branch. Originally organized in 1911, the Y was renamed in 1912 in honor of Phyllis Wheatley, a black American slave who achieved recognition as a poet. Contributions from the St. Louis black community and Mrs. Clay Jordan (a President of the Women's Christian Association) provided funds for the purchase in 1915 of the Branch's first permanent building, a large, nineteenth century private house (demolished) at Garrison and Lucas Streets.⁹ Located just a few blocks from the future site of the Women's Christian Home at 2709 Locust, the house stood in the heart of a once prestigious white neighborhood which by the mid-1920s was described as "densely populated with different types, negroes and whites living side by side" with over half of the residents black.¹⁰ By 1930, the area's racial balance had rapidly shifted to nearly eighty percent black following the general city-wide black population growth and movement westward away from the riverfront wards.¹¹

In 1937, the Phyllis Wheatley building was condemned by the city and the Branch was forced to move into less satisfactory, temporary accommodations in nearby churches. However, the organization's continued growth and important service in segregated St. Louis soon prompted the appointment of an inter-racial committee charged with finding a suitable permanent location for the Branch. Although it was first planned to construct a new building, the Women's Christian Home building met all the requirements set by the study group with the advantages of immediate occupancy and an unusually reasonable price.¹²

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A new potential for achievement was envisioned when the Wheatley Branch opened in September 1941; at the dedication on October 9, 1941, the new quarters were reported as the realization of a "dream come true," placing the Branch "at the beginning of a new era in its history."¹³ Significantly, the architectural quality of the Branch's new building (less than fifteen years old) imparted a dignified public image to the Association, putting it on equal footing with similar institutional buildings reserved for whites. Moreover, the building's commodious space and facilities allowed the Branch to offer many more community services than previously had been possible. Residence rooms were now open to young black women who were streaming into St. Louis from rural areas and neighboring states; rooms were also available for class instruction, leadership training and income-producing food service along with recreation and physical improvement activities. Numerous local black women's groups used the club rooms and food services for meetings and social gatherings -- soon earning the Branch the distinction as a haven for black society.¹⁴

Much of the success of the Y's programs can be credited to the leadership of Anna Lee Hill Scott, a staff member and later Branch Director of Phyllis Wheatley. Educated at Howard and Columbia Universities, Mrs. Scott worked for the YWCA in the East before coming to St. Louis' Phyllis Wheatley Branch in the mid-1930s "determined to make things better for black girls." In addition to her achievements at the Wheatley Branch, Mrs. Scott led the way for the establishment in 1939 of Missouri's first camp for black girls, Camp Derricotte at the Cuivre River State Park. Her long years of service and leadership at the Wheatley Branch ended in 1966 when she was appointed Executive Director of the Metropolitan St. Louis YWCA--the second black woman in the United States to hold such a high office in the YWCA and the first in St. Louis.¹⁵

Today, the Phyllis Wheatley Branch is still actively involved in Y programs such as busing young girls from housing projects for after-school activities and developing a senior service center. Plans under discussion to renovate the upper floors for low-income efficiency apartments and the lower floor for Y programs would improve the facilities and expand the usefulness of a building long associated with important community services.

FOOTNOTES

¹William Hyde and Howard L. Conard, Encyclopedia of the History of St. Louis, 4 vols. (New York: The Southern History Co., 1899), 4: 2531-32.

²Women's Christian Home pamphlet, Missouri Historical Society Library, St. Louis, Missouri, c. 1925.

³Mrs. John W. Booth, A Short History of St. Louis' Women's Christian Association and its Branches, 1868-1936 (St. Louis: n.p., 1935), p. 10.

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⁴Women's Christian Home campaign letter and pamphlet, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Missouri, January 1925.

⁵St. Louis Globe-Democrat, 27 June 1926.

⁶St. Louis Globe-Democrat, 23 June 1928.

⁷Unidentified newspaper clippings, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Missouri, circa 1931-1933.

⁸Gertrude D. Randol, Three-Score Years and Ten: A History of Phyllis Wheatley Branch of the YWCA in St. Louis (St. Louis: n.p., 1981), p. 5.

⁹Ibid., pp. 2-3.

¹⁰St. Louis Public Library Annual Report, 1922-23, p. 98.

¹¹St. Louis Community Council, Research Committee, 1930 Federal Census for Metropolitan St. Louis Tabulated by Enumeration Districts and Census Tracts (St. Louis: St. Louis Community Council, 1930).

¹²Randol, pp. 3-5.

¹³St. Louis Argus, 17 October 1941.

¹⁴Randol, p. 8.

¹⁵Randol, pp. 4 and 8; St. Louis Globe-Democrat, 15 June 1973.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Granite City, IL/MO

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

115	74231015	4127107110
Zone	Easting	Northing

B

Zone	Easting	Northing

C

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D

--	--	--

E

--	--	--

F

--	--	--

G

--	--	--

H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The Phyllis Wheatley Branch YWCA is located in CB 984 and is approximately 130 feet along Locust Street and 130 feet along Beaumont.

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

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By © 1983, Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc.

name/title 1. Mary M. Stiritz, Research Associate

organization Lankmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc. date 24 October 1983

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

Fred A. Lefler

title Director, Department of Natural Resources and State Historic Preservation Officer

date

6/8/84

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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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Greene, Lorenzo J., Kremer, Gary R., and Holland, Anthony F. Missouri's Black Heritage. St. Louis: Forum Press, 1980.

Hyde, William, and Conard, Howard L. Encyclopedia of the History of St. Louis. New York: The Southern History Co., 1899.

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St. Louis Argus, 17 October 1941.

St. Louis Community Council Research Committee. 1930 Federal Census For Metropolitan St. Louis Tabulated by Enumeration Districts and Census Tracts. St. Louis: St. Louis Community Council Research Committee, 1930.

St. Louis Globe-Democrat, 27 June 1926; 23 September 1928; 15 June 1973.

St. Louis, Missouri. Missouri Historical Society Library, undated newspaper clippings and pamphlets on the Women's Christian Home, circa 1925-1933.

St. Louis Public Library Annual Report, 1922-23.

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2. James M. Denny, Chief, Survey & Registration
and State Contact Person

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Historic Preservation Program
P.O. Box 176
Jefferson City,

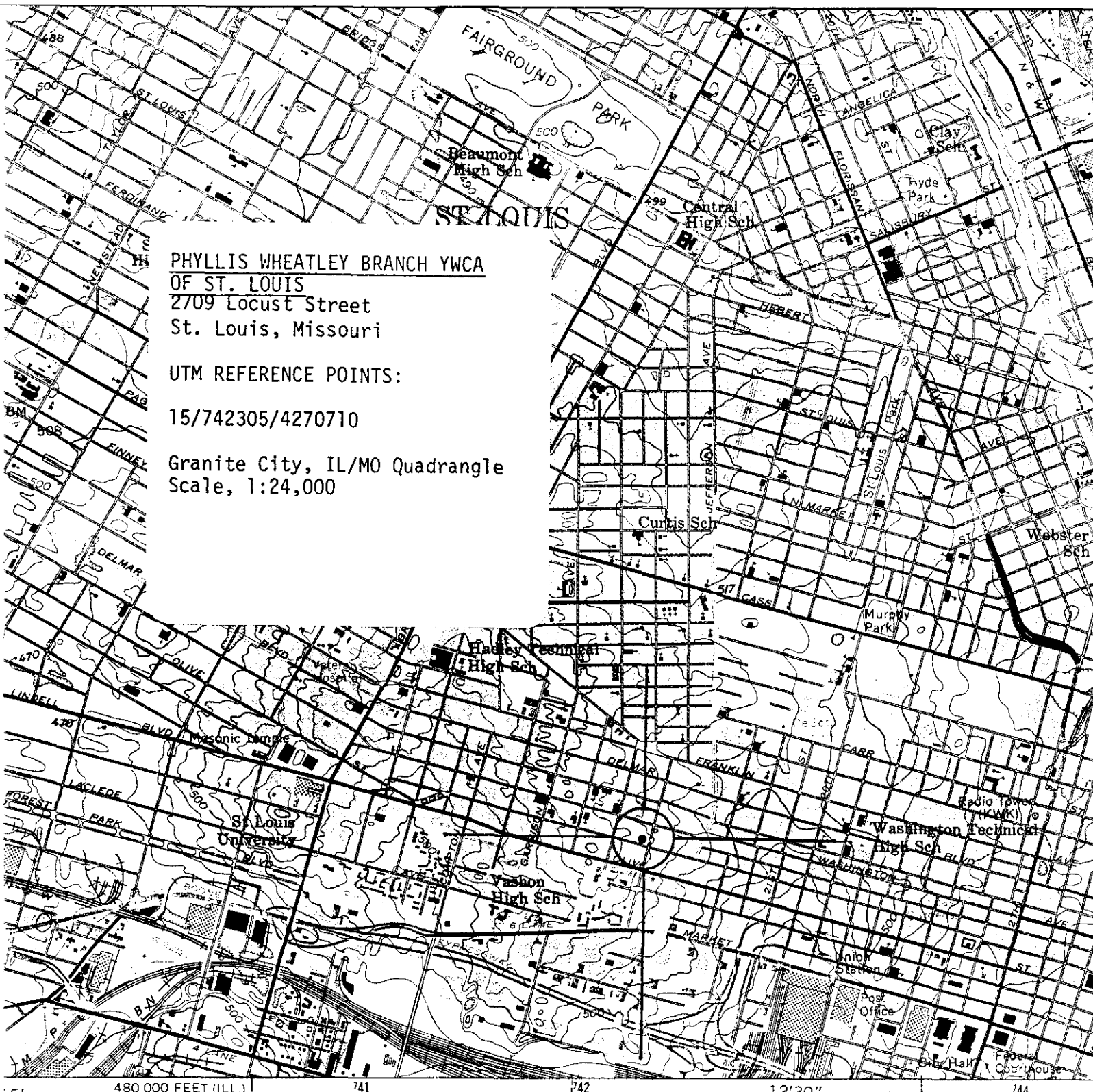
24 October 1983
314/751-4096
Missouri 65102

**PHYLLIS WHEATLEY BRANCH YWCA
OF ST. LOUIS**
2709 Locust Street
St. Louis, Missouri

UTM REFERENCE POINTS:

15/742305/4270710

Granite City, IL/MO Quadrangle
Scale, 1:24,000

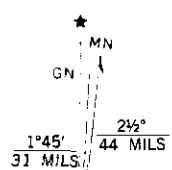


Mapped by the Geological Survey
Revised by the Army Map Service
Published for civil use by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and USC&GS

Topography from planetable surveys by the Geological Survey 1930 and 1933. Planimetric detail revised from aerial photographs taken 1952. Field check 1954

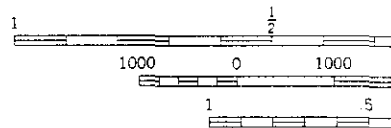
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
100,000-foot grids based on Illinois coordinate system, west zone and Missouri coordinate system, east zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 15, shown in blue

Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983
move the projection lines 2 meters south and



UTM GRID AND 1982 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map



CON
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NATIONAL C

THIS MAP COMPLE
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SUR
STATE GEOLOG
AND THE DIVIS
MISSOURI DEPARTMENT C
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGI

PHYLLIS WHEATLEY BRANCH YWCA
OF ST. LOUIS

2709 Locust Street
St. Louis, Missouri

#1 of 2 Southern (principal)
elevation.

Photographer: Mary M. Stiritz

Date: October 1983

Negative: Landmarks Association
of St. Louis, Inc.

Camera facing northeast.



PHYLLIS WHEATLEY BRANCH YWCA
OF ST. LOUIS

2709 Locust Street
St. Louis, Missouri

#2 of 2 Detail of southern
elevation; main entrance.

Photographer: Mary M. Stiritz
Date: October 1983
Negative: Landmarks Association
of St. Louis, Inc.

Camera facing north.

