

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED MAY 24 1978
DATE ENTERED NOV 29 1978

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Knights of Pythias Temple
AND/OR COMMON Chestnut Street Branch - Y.M.C.A.

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 928-932 West Chestnut St.
CITY, TOWN Louisville
STATE Kentucky
VICINITY OF 3 and 4
COUNTY Jefferson
CODE 021
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 3 and 4
CODE 111 ✓

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"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
			<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Y.M.C.A.
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Metropolitan Y.M.C.A.
STREET & NUMBER Second and Chestnut
CITY, TOWN Louisville
STATE Kentucky
VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Jefferson County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER Sixth & Jefferson Streets
CITY, TOWN Louisville, STATE Kentucky

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Landmark, Historic Landmarks and Preservation Districts Commission
DATE March, 1978
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Historic Landmarks and Preservation Districts Commission
CITY, TOWN Louisville, STATE Kentucky
FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Chestnut Street Y.M.C.A., located on the southeast corner of Chestnut and Tenth Streets, is a six-story structure of buff brick with limestone trim and entrances on both streets. It was built about 1915 as the Knights of Pythias headquarters. It is located on the western edge of the Central Business District. This area was a black residential neighborhood in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Located nearby are housing projects from the mid-twentieth century. (See Map 1)

The first story contains six bays on both west and north facades separated by columns of rusticated limestone. There are large, metal-framed windows in each bay, and the area beneath the windows has been filled with plain red brick. The Chestnut Street entrance is centered, and the Tenth Street entrance is between the fourth and fifth bays. The first story is separated from the brick upper stories by a triple course of stone with a slightly projecting cornice.

Fenestration on the upper stories of both west and north facades differs only in the number of windows and the manner of grouping them. Each facade has a shallow, recessed central section from the second through the sixth floors. This recessed panel contains, on the Tenth Street side, five groups of three windows each on each story, and on the Chestnut Street side, five groups of paired windows at each story. The corner bays contain two windows at each story on the Tenth Street facade and one window on the Chestnut Street facade. All windows on the second through the fifth story have limestone sills and flat limestone arches with voussoirs and keystones.

The sixth story is separated from the lower stories by a limestone course. The windows on this story have a semi-elliptical panel of art glass above each window grouping. Each of these panels contains the Knights of Pythias symbol. Above each group of windows is a round-arch of limestone with voussoirs and a large keystone. The spandrels between the arches are of limestone with bas relief scrolls and foliated motifs, the initials KP, and cartouches. The single windows in the sixth-story corner bays have heavy limestone cornices supported by carved volutes. Above each is a round window of art glass encircled by a bas relief stone molding in the egg and dart pattern. The art glass in one lunette and two of the round windows is missing. (See Photos 1 & 2)

A rusticated stone course and projecting cornice is above the sixth floor, dividing it from a parapet wall of painted brick. A comparison with an older photograph indicates that a larger, projecting cornice once was attached to this parapet wall, but it has been removed. (See Xerox 1)

On the east side of the building is a new one-story addition of stone-colored tile with stone trim. It is of contemporary design and is attached to the older structure by a glass section. The brick wall on the east side of the old building has been painted a pale gray color to blend with the color of the new addition.

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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Black History
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES	1914-15	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	Henry Wolters
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Chestnut Branch Y.M.C.A. Building, at Tenth and Chestnut Streets, was built in 1914-15 as the state headquarters for the black Knights of Pythias lodge in Kentucky and has long since been associated with the development of the black community in Louisville. The building was designed by Henry Wolters, an important late 19th and early 20th century architect responsible for numerous buildings in the South and Mid-West.

The order of Knights of Pythias, a white organization, was founded in 1864 in Washington, D.C. by Justus H. Rathbone. Its principles were "Friendship, Charity, and Benevolence," and its ritual was based on the ancient story of Damon and Pythias and their loyalty to each other. The first Knights of Pythias lodge in Louisville was organized in 1869.

Little information can be found about the Negro lodges of the Knights of Pythias. By 1893, two such lodges were listed in the Louisville city directory. In 1915, there were eleven Negro lodges listed, all meeting at 419 South Sixth Street. In 1916, thirteen chapters were listed, most of them at the new Pythian Building. There were numerous Pythian chapters in other Kentucky towns.

The black Knights of Pythias lodges in Louisville were at their strongest in the early years of the twentieth century. They served as social organizations and sources of entertainment. Since their members were generally the better educated, most prominent and successful leaders of the black community, the groups also served as role models for black youths. Their lavishly uniformed marching band and drill team competed with similar groups from other cities. In 1925, the national convention of Negro Pythian chapters was held in Louisville. One newspaper stated that 25,000 Pythians were expected to attend and that 40 bands would be part of a huge parade in downtown Louisville.

In 1914, construction of the Pythian Building at Tenth and Chestnut Streets was begun. The cornerstone was laid on Thanksgiving Day, 1914. The property on Chestnut Street had been acquired in 1910 by the Grand Lodge of the Knights of Pythias of Kentucky. In 1911, the Pythian Mutual Industrial Association of Kentucky was incorporated, and in 1912, the site of the building was transferred to the Association. The incorporators of the Association were members of Knights of Pythias lodges across the state, including J. L. V. Washington and S. W. Gunn of Louisville. Mr. Washington was, for many years, a prominent member of the Louisville Knights of Pythias and the first president of the Pythian Mutual Industrial Association. Another prominent member of the Association was W. H. Wright, one of the founders of the Mammoth Life Insurance Company.

No newspaper accounts of the building's completion have been found, but it was most likely finished in 1915. It was said to have cost \$130,000. The structure was a multi-use building. A drugstore, a movie theatre, and a restaurant were located on the ground floor. Part of the building contained hotel rooms, available for daily or monthly

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Dozier, Richard. "The Black Architectural Experience in America." American Institute of Architects Journal, July, 1976.

Department of Architecture, Tuskegee Institute, Tuskegee, Alabama.

Letter and information, 9 November 1977.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .4 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A 16 607840 4234010
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Block 13-H, Lot 194, Second City District
 City of Louisville

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Mary Jean Kinsman, Research Assistant
 Elizabeth F. Jones, Research Director

ORGANIZATION Historic Landmarks & Preservation Districts Commission DATE 23 March 1978
 STREET & NUMBER 727 West Main Street TELEPHONE 587-3501
 CITY OR TOWN Louisville STATE Kentucky

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 *Cedric W. Newton*

TITLE DATE 5/19/78

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION	KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
ATTEST: <i>Bill Labourer</i>	DATE <u>11/29/78</u>
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	DATE <u>NOV 28, 1978</u>

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Chestnut Street
CONTINUATION SHEET Branch Y.M.C.A. ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

rental by men only. Lodge meeting rooms were on the second floor.

Advertisements in The Louisville Leader indicate that several doctors and dentists had offices in the Pythian Building. A tailor shop, a photographer's studio, and an ice cream parlor were also located there. The sixth story, at one time, had a ballroom, and there was a roof garden, both of which could be rented for private dances and parties.

The architect of the Pythian Building was Henry Wolters (1845-1921), who worked in Louisville for many years. An architect's drawing of the building, signed by Henry Wolters, is extant. Comparison of this drawing to the present building shows that the two are the same. Wolters was born and educated in Germany and graduated in 1869 from the Royal Academy of Architecture in Berlin. He came to Chicago and then settled in Louisville about 1872. Among the buildings in Louisville which he designed were the Tyler Block (1874), the Kentucky Wagon Works (1887), Norton Hall, part of the old Baptist Theological Seminary on Broadway (1892), the 1892 Kaufman-Straus store on Fourth Street, and the Center Building (1911-12). None of the above survives. He also designed the Bamberger-Bloom Building on Main Street in 1892. It is now known as the Bernheim Building at 626 West Main Street. Wolters had numerous commissions in other states, including the Government Depot, Jeffersonville, Indiana, and the Evansville Courthouse (1887). He designed cotton exchanges in New Orleans (1883) and Memphis (1884), and railroad depots in Montgomery and Birmingham, Alabama (1886) and in Memphis (1887). Several residences in Louisville have been attributed to Wolters, and he designed a large residence in New Orleans for a Mr. J. Harris. Churches in Louisville which were designed by him include the Chestnut Street Baptist Church (1884) and the Fourth Street Baptist Church (1887). At the time of his death in 1921, Wolters was the senior member of the Engineers and Architects' Club.

An article was published in the American Institute of Architects Journal in July, 1976, in which the author attributed the design of the Louisville Pythian Temple to John A. Lankford, one of the country's early professionally-trained black architects. However, none of the author's sources contains any references to Lankford as the architect of this building. Thus, on the basis of the above-mentioned architectural elevation, the design of the Pythian Building must be attributed to Henry Wolters.

The Knights of Pythias lodges in Louisville became inactive during the Depression. The building continued to be used for offices, apartments, and a portion of the structure housed the Davis Trade School for Negroes after World War II.

In 1953, the Chestnut Street Branch Y.M.C.A. purchased the Pythian Building, which was next to their headquarters, for \$85,000. The Chestnut Street Y.M.C.A. was organized in 1893 as a branch for Negro men under the sponsorship of the local Y.M.C.A. Its first headquarters was on West Walnut Street. Active in the early years of this Y.M.C.A. branch were Albert Mack and Thomas F. Blue, Y.M.C.A. treasurer in the early twentieth

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Chestnut Street

CONTINUATION SHEET Branch Y.M.C.A. ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

century. Mr. Blue was also the first librarian of the Western Colored Branch, Louisville Free Public Library. In 1906, the Y.M.C.A. bought the former John P. Byrne house at 920 West Chestnut Street, the site of the present new addition. Apparently the name "Chestnut Street Branch Y.M.C.A." was adopted upon the move to that structure. The Byrne house, an elegant nineteenth-century mansion, was the home of the Chestnut Street Y.M.C.A. until it was closed in 1932 during the Depression. In 1946, the Branch was reorganized, and in 1953, the Pythian Building was purchased.

The Division headquarters for the Negro Boy Scout troops in Louisville was, for many years, located in the Y.M.C.A. building at 920 West Chestnut. The Division was organized in 1919 and was known as the Douglass Division, named for Frederick Douglass. When the Y.M.C.A. moved to the Pythian Building, the Douglass Division also moved there and occupied the old theatre on the first floor.

Today, the Chestnut Street Y.M.C.A. is the only inner-city branch offering an extensive youth program. It serves over 10,000 young people, as well as adults, in the immediate area. In 1976, the Chestnut Street Branch participated in the capital funds drive sponsored by the Metropolitan Y.M.C.A. The money raised was used to finance a new addition just east of the old building and connected to it. The addition, designed by the architectural firm of Louis and Henry, was completed in 1977.

The Chestnut Street Y.M.C.A. Building has been an important part of Louisville's black community for over sixty years--first as the state headquarters of the Knights of Pythias and then as a branch of the Y.M.C.A. which fulfills a significant role in the area it serves. The structure has played a significant role in the development of black history in the City of Louisville.

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Chestnut Street
CONTINUATION SHEET Branch Y.M.C.A. ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 2

- Elevation of the Pythian Building, Louisville, Kentucky, signed "Henry Wolters, Architect." Owned by Walter Barnes, Managing Director, Chestnut Street Y.M.C.A.
- "Henry Wolters Dies; Famed As Architect." The (Louisville) Courier-Journal, 30 August 1921.
- Jefferson County (Ky.) Corporation Book 20, p. 470 (1911).
- Jefferson County (Ky.) Deed Book 3116, p. 61 (1954); Book 1581, p. 458 (1935); Book 826, p. 114 (1915); Book 824, p. 625 (1915); Book 777, p. 592 (1912); Book 714, p. 182 (1910).
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- Louisville City Directories, 1890-1916.
- "Negro Pythians March in Parade." The (Louisville) Courier-Journal, 19 August 1925.
- Powell, Jacob W. Bird's Eye View of the General Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Boston: The Lavalley Press, 1918.
- "Six Story Pythian Building Bought for \$85,000 for Negro Y.M.C.A." The (Louisville) Courier-Journal, 23 July 1953, sec. 2, p. 1.
- Spears, H. Temple and Barnes, Walter. Chestnut Street Y.M.C.A. Interview, 19 October 1977.
- The Louisville Leader, 1917-1921.
- "25,000 Knights of Pythias to Swoop Down on Louisville." The Louisville Leader, 15 August 1925.
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- Wright, George C. Department of History, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky. Letter and information, 30 January 1978.
- Y.M.C.A. Minute Books and Scrapbooks, 1896-1907. Manuscript Collection, The Filson Club, 118 West Breckinridge Street, Louisville, Kentucky.

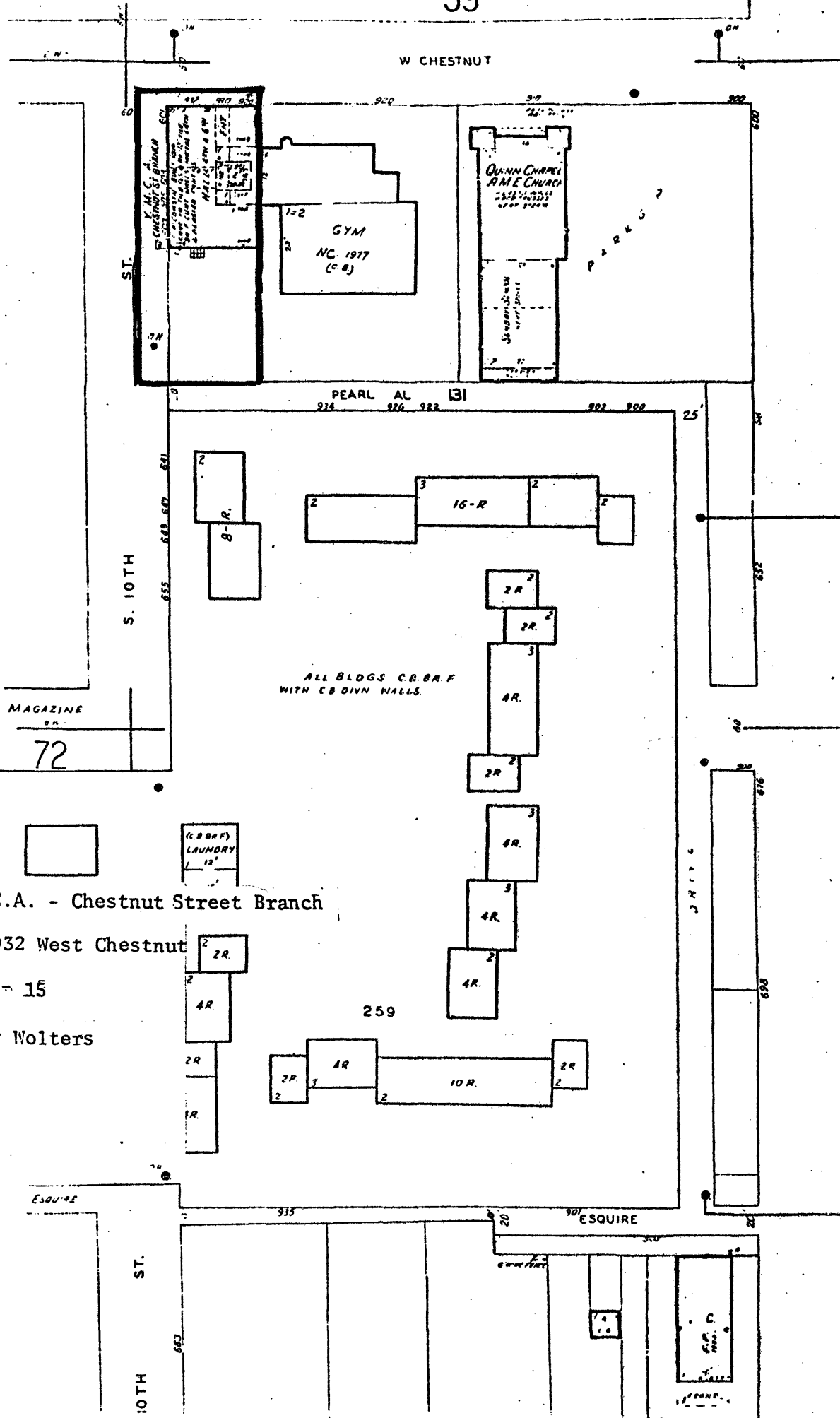
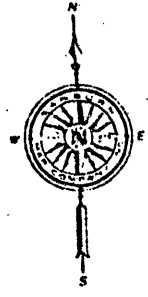
23

LOUISVILLE KY VOL 1

73

59

ENTIRE SHEET WITHIN WEST DOWNTOWN RENEWAL AREA



MAGAZINE
72

(C.B.R.F.)
LAUNDRY
12'

LANDMARK: Y.M.C.A. - Chestnut Street Branch

ADDRESS: 928-932 West Chestnut

DATE: 1914 - 15

ARCHITECT: Henry Wolters



Chestnut Street Branch Y.M.C.A.
928-932 West Chestnut
Louisville, Jefferson, Kentucky
Sanborn Map Company
Map 1. Sanborn Map showing site
of Chestnut Street Branch Y.M.C.A.

1" = 100'

NOV 29 1978