

1314

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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Jersey City YMCA

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 654 Bergen Avenue N/A not for publication

city or town Jersey City N/A vicinity

state New Jersey code NJ county Hudson code 017 zip code 07304

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Assistant Commissioner for Natural & Historic Resources/DSHPO

State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

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

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Patrick Andrews

11/12/99

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

-0-

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

RECREATION & CULTURE/sports facility

SOCIAL/meeting hall

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

RECREATION & CULTURE/sports facility

SOCIAL/meeting hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19th & 20th CENTURY REVIVALS/

Classical Revival/Italian

Renaissance

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation limestone

walls brick

limestone

roof synthetic

other

Narrative Description

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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Jersey City YMCA, Hudson County, NJ

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Built in 1924, the Jersey City YMCA is a seven-story, nine-bay, Classical Revival/Italian Renaissance red brick building with limestone details that reflects the style popular for public architecture in the 1920s. The building is organized in two sections with the seven-story, red brick front section containing the public meeting spaces, offices, and dormitory rooms, and a stuccoed rear section containing the fitness rooms, pool, and multi-story gymnasium.

The YMCA fronts Bergen Avenue, a major thoroughfare in Jersey City, and the massing and design of the building denotes its status as a community landmark (see photograph 1). The monumentality of the building is emphasized by the use of brick and limestone pilasters and limestone beltcourses that accentuate the horizontality and verticality and give the illusion of a larger building. The first story is clad in ashlar limestone that continues as an apron band for the second story windows. The second story windows are surrounded by limestone pediments which alternate between pointed and rounded heads. Limestone was also utilized to break the monotony of the brick surface on the upper stories with a belt course above the third story, an interrupted belt course above the fifth story, quoins, pilasters that continue from the second story to the cornice, a denticulated cornice, and a parapet bearing the words "Young Men's Christian Association." Centrally located on the third story belt course is a limestone medallion with swag detail from which extends the flagpole.

The main entrance was altered during the mid-1950s renovations and contains double-leaf aluminum glazed doors with sidelights and transom set within a simple limestone recess (see photograph 2). Granite steps with a simple iron railing access the entrance. Flanking the entrance is a metal balustrade that continues across the main elevation bordering the front areaway.

Fenestration is provided by a variety of sash types, all of which date to the 1920s. The windows along the first story contain aluminum vertically oriented three-light sash with a large central pane. The second story sash are vertical two-light sash with a large upper pane. Above the second story the window openings are paired and contain aluminum 1/1 sash.

The organization and the primary details continue along the side elevations though to a lesser degree. The limestone cladding along the first story continues only along the first bay of the side elevations. Unlike on the main elevation, the windows on the side elevations are not paired, but are organized in single bays and contain the same aluminum 1/1 sash. The belt courses and cornice continue. The rear elevation is constructed of a reddish brown brick and is utilitarian in design without ornament.

The rear section of the building containing the pool and gymnasium is also utilitarian in design with simple stuccoed walls, flat roof, and 1/1 aluminum sash that are organized in single bays and are also grouped in threes and fours (see photographs 3, 4). The section containing the

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2

Jersey City YMCA, Hudson County, NJ

gymnasium is located toward the front with the pool section to the rear. The pool section is one story above a raised basement with arched window openings at the first story level.

The interior is organized by function with the public spaces located on the ground, first and second floors, and the private dormitory rooms on the floors above. The main vestibule leads to a T-shaped corridor that opens up to form a lobby with adjacent lounge area. The vestibule, corridor, lobby, and lounge contain features and finishes that primarily date to the mid-1950s with linoleum floors, drywall walls, modern suspended ceilings, and aluminum glazed doors (see photographs 5, 6). A series of small offices line the front wall of the building with features and finishes also dating to the 1950s. In the northern corner of the first floor is a large meeting room that retains its original finishes with terrazzo floor, oak tongue and groove wall paneling, plaster vaulted ceiling, and two original fireplaces with original mantles (see photographs 7, 8).

The gymnasium is located beyond the front section and is a tall two-story space with wood floor, painted brick walls, exposed concrete beam ceiling, and a cantilevered balcony running track (see photograph 9). Beyond the gymnasium is the pool that is accessed from the ground floor. The pool room retains all original finishes with an intricately tiled floor, tannish brick walls with a brown tile wainscot with geometric details, vaulted ceiling with terra cotta buff and tan colored tiles, and a balcony with iron balustrade (see photograph 10). The pool floor is also intricately tiled with small light blue square tiles with darker blue tile lane markers.

One elevator located along the northeast wall of the front section, and numerous stairs facilitate circulation through the building. The elevator doors throughout the building are unornamented steel doors with simple steel trim. All but one of the stairs are utilitarian in design with painted brick and drywall walls, exposed concrete beam ceilings, metal stair treads and risers, and a simple iron stair balustrade with wooden handrail. The one stairwell that was designed to be more elaborate is the stair near the eastern corner of the front section of the building that leads from the first to the ground floor. That stairwell features blue terra cotta tile walls, with metal stair treads and risers and a simple wooden wall-attached handrail.

The ground floor contains a series of larger public meeting and special purpose rooms, and locker rooms that are organized around a series of short corridors. These spaces were entirely renovated in the 1950s with linoleum floors, drywall walls, suspended ceilings, and modern doors. Located in an ell off the pool is a row of racquetball courts that were constructed in the 1950s. These courts contain wood floors and plaster walls and ceilings.

The second floor contains a series of meeting rooms and offices that were renovated in the 1950s with carpeted and linoleum floors, drywall walls, and suspended ceilings. In the northeast corner is one suite of offices organized along a short double-loaded corridor that remained essentially unaltered during the 1950s renovations (see photograph 12). The floors are carpeted, the ceilings exposed concrete, and wide wooden trimwork is located on the doors and the interior windows along the corridor. The offices contain a thin wooden picture rail and a

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 3

Jersey City YMCA, Hudson County, NJ

simple window trim that is recessed within the plaster opening. The baseboard is concrete and has been covered with vinyl. One original steel window is located at the end of this corridor.

In the southern corner of the second floor is the "Scott Room" which is a library featuring a brown brick and terra cotta tile fireplace flanked by cupboards with arched glazed doors (see photograph 11). This room contains a linoleum floor, plaster walls and ceiling with wood picture rail and narrow plaster cove molding, and the original concrete baseboard that has been covered with vinyl.

The third through seventh floors served the dormitory function and are U-shaped in plan with double-loaded corridors and centrally located bathrooms. There is a utilitarian designed stair in each leg of the "U." The corridors feature plaster walls, concrete baseboard with vinyl covering, concrete ceiling with exposed piping, modern wood doors, original wood door trim, and wood picture rail (see photograph 13). The dormitory rooms typically contain linoleum floors, plaster walls, concrete ceilings with exposed sprinkler piping, wooden picture rail and simple wooden window trim (see photograph 14). The baseboard is concrete that has been covered with vinyl.

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 N/A
(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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Social History

Period of Significance

1924-1949

Significant Dates

1924

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Jackson, John F.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

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

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Jersey City Public Library

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 1

Jersey City YMCA, Hudson County, NJ

SUMMARY

Built in 1924, the Jersey City YMCA stands as an architectural and community landmark in Jersey City, NJ and gains its significance in the areas of architecture and social history and thus meets National Register criteria A and C. With associations in most urban communities in the nation, the YMCA organization has achieved nationwide recognition in promoting its mission of improving the mind, body and spirit of its members, a goal that was established over a century-and-a-half ago. Designed with permanence and tradition in mind, YMCA buildings have achieved stature in communities throughout the country, and typically represent variations on the classical styles. The organization's approach to establishing new associations relied on fundraising and construction efforts drawn directly from the local community, a concept that instilled a sense of community ownership and pride and essentially guaranteed long-term prosperity. The Jersey City YMCA has served its community in a multitude of capacities for over seven decades and is one of the city's most locally significant buildings.

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY

The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) began as a worldwide fellowship of men and boys united by a common loyalty to Christianity and dedicated to serving the "Mind, Body and Spirit," the three ideals of the organization. Since the mid-nineteenth century, the YMCA has provided America's urban population with a variety of services and programs to fulfill these principles. Initially the associations, although motivated by religious concerns, differed little from the numerous voluntary societies that surfaced in American cities during the last century. Yet, unlike the many short-lived urban associations, the YMCA withstood the test and time and continues to flourish nearly a century-and-a-half after its emergence. Since its establishment, the organization has witnessed the expansion of services and programs to meet the ever-changing needs of the community and has played a role in the emerging profession of social work. The YMCA established a physical presence in large and small cities by constructing buildings for lodging, education and recreation. Designed in architectural styles that conveyed importance and permanence in the community, the YMCA buildings typically became neighborhood landmarks. Constructed in 1924, the Jersey City YMCA stands as a community landmark on Bergen Avenue, one of Jersey City's major thoroughfares, and gains its significance as an important social institution that played a role in the lives of thousands of Jersey City residents, and as an intact example of the type and style of construction popular for public architecture in the 1920s.

The Young Men's Christian Association was founded in London, England on June 6, 1844 by a group of twelve young dry good clerks who met to organize a society for "the improvement of the spiritual condition of young men engaged in the drapery and other trades, by the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

Jersey City YMCA, Hudson County, NJ

introduction of religious services among them.”¹ They gathered in the small bedroom of one of their members, 22 year old George Williams, a Somerset farm boy, who had come to London after getting his start in the drapery trade in the town of Bridgwater.² Williams was appalled by the conditions facing young men in London; hours and wages were inhumane with young men working fourteen to seventeen hours a day. The industrial revolution had brought vice and corruption along with power and wealth to the cities and Williams’ group sought to provide a spiritual outlet for the distressed workers.

Williams’ association grew in strength and in numbers. Within six months, seventy members were conducting services and the work required a full-time paid executive or “missionary.”³ In the first year, the association expanded its programs to include the mental as well as spiritual needs of young men through lecture offerings in science, history and archaeology. These courses proved immensely popular and were instrumental in spreading the organization’s influence.⁴

In December 1851, a month after the first YMCA in North America had been organized in Montreal, a group of young men, led by sea captain J.V. Sullivan, met in Boston to organize the first association in the United States. Within a few years, there were associations from coast to coast.⁵

In the 1850s, Jersey City was rapidly changing from a quiet village and place of escape for New Yorkers, to a thriving industrial center, teeming with immigrants seeking a sense of community.

T.W. Hinchman, a young flour merchant, called together a group of friends representing a variety of religious denominations, and organized the Jersey City YMCA, one of the first 30 in the United States, in 1854.⁶ Seeking to promote self-improvement, mutual assistance, and community service, these men invited others to rent rooms and join them as “servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The Association sought to serve young men in need throughout the Jersey City region, and as the organization grew in the ensuing decades, a series of small branches were opened. A branch of the YMCA was created exclusively for the Pennsylvania Railroad employees as a way of producing more loyal servants of the corporation. This branch served more than one thousand men who were employed with the railroad in Jersey City. The YMCA moved from place to place and continued to establish branch offices in the early twentieth century and had a

¹ “The ‘Y’ Has Grown from One Room to a World Movement in 100 Years,” *Serving with Youth Throughout the World, 1844-1944*. Booklet located in the ‘Organizations – YMCA’ file, New Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.

² “The ‘Y’ Has Grown...”

³ “The ‘Y’ Has Grown...”

⁴ “The ‘Y’ Has Grown...”

⁵ “The ‘Y’ Has Grown...”

⁶ “In October 1854...” *Adventurous years...1854-1954; Young Men’s Christian Association, Jersey City, NJ, 1954*, 2. Booklet located in the ‘Organizations – YMCA’ file, New Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

Jersey City YMCA, Hudson County, NJ

“headquarters” for its four hundred members, but the institution was still little more than a name in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Establishing permanence in the community became a great concern for Robert McBurney, an Irish immigrant who had in 1862 become general secretary of the New York Association. McBurney believed that the organization needed permanence and stability in the community to meet the association’s goals of fulfilling the social, physical, mental, and spiritual needs of men.⁷ Under his guidance, New York erected the first YMCA building which was designed to house all activities under one roof. Dedicated in 1869 and costing nearly \$500,000, a tremendous sum for Civil War times, the building became a model for cities throughout the world.⁸ With a modern building replacing the back street rooms, the association was better able to compete with the saloons and gambling halls as a source of entertainment.

In a 1924 report by the Financial Service Bureau of the International Committee of YMCAs, it was reported that Jersey City was the only city with a population of 300,000 in the country that could not boast its own YMCA.⁹ Four prominent businessmen resolved that Jersey City should have a modern building for its YMCA and they began a campaign to achieve that objective. Known in the Association as the “Big Four,” Thomas J. Stewart, James E. Pope, Col. Austin Colgate, and Henry Kohl led a campaign of 400 volunteers to raise the public interest and funds to build a state-of-the-art facility¹⁰

The initial plan developed by the “Big Four,” called for \$2 million to fund the construction of five buildings which were to be strategically located throughout the city. Such an expansive plan proved infeasible and the team developed a second plan for the construction of one central building proposed to cost \$500,000. When plans were developed and bids secured, it was discovered that the building would cost more than \$875,000, a result of the rapidly rising costs associated with the building trade. The men unanimously endorsed the plan to move forward regardless of the escalating costs.

The International YMCA committee, headquartered in New York, maintained a regular building bureau that specialized in YMCA architecture. Working with this committee and its architect, John F. Jackson, the Jersey City Branch had the plans and specifications drawn-up. Designed in the Classical Revival style, this building was destined to become a community landmark and was planned with permanency and tradition in mind.

⁷ “The ‘Y’ Has Grown...”

⁸ “The ‘Y’ Has Grown...” Baltimore had erected the first YMCA in the United States in 1859. It was a church-like structure designed to serve solely as a meeting hall with no gym or pool.

⁹ “From A By-word To An Example,” *Association Finance*, Published by the Financial Service Bureau of the International Committee of YMCAs, February 1924; 1. Copy located in the ‘Organizations – YMCA’ file, New Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.

¹⁰ “From A By-word,” 1.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

Jersey City YMCA, Hudson County, NJ

The initial \$500,000 was quickly raised by the "Big Four," who called on the city's most prominent and civic minded citizens for donations. The cornerstone was laid on June 26, 1923.¹¹ The community involvement in the construction of the building was expressed not only in the list of donors, but in the builders which were largely drawn from Jersey City.

In early 1924, when the building was under roof and the need for money to finish the building was urgent, a second campaign was organized by the Big Four which resulted in an additional \$346,000. It was reported,

"Never was this community so thoroughly stirred as it was in the last days of this second effort, and a wonderful demonstration was staged at the conclusion of the campaign, including the wildest celebration combined with a most devout Thanksgiving services, in the hall of the Scottish Rite Temple where the daily dinners were held, and a parade of all the workers and friends led by the wonderful Colgate band of 100 pieces and the Big Four."¹²

A four-day gala celebrated the grand opening in October of 1924. The Big Four were convinced that the central building was only a start, and that within reasonable time additional buildings could be provided in needy parts of the city. The success in sparking the community interest and enthusiasm during the fundraising campaign contributed to the early success of the chapter.

Situated in the geographic center of Jersey City, the facility featured a host of modern amenities and was regarded as one of the most attractive and best-equipped Association facilities in the state. The original floor plans for the building that were published in *American Architecture* indicate the uses of the public spaces.¹³ Along the front wall of the basement, in the current day care room, was the cafeteria and kitchen. Beyond the cafeteria were six bowling alleys. The space between the alleys and the swimming pool served as the expansive locker room. The existing first floor lobby area served as the men's lobby, with the boy's division located along the southwest wall. Adjoining the men's lobby was a reading room, alcove, billiard room, and offices. The second floor held classrooms and clubrooms. The upper floors appear on the plans to resemble the present configuration.¹⁴

¹¹ "Laying the Corner Stone of the Young Men's Christian Association Building, Jersey City, NJ." Program from the laying of the corner stone festivities, June 26, 1923. Booklet located in the 'Organizations - YMCA' file, New Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.

¹² From A By-word, 1.

¹³ Copies from this journal are located in the 'Organizations - YMCA' file, New Jersey Room at the Jersey City Public Library indicate that drawings and floor plans were published in the October 11, 1922 and the October 5, 1926 issues of the *American Architect*.

¹⁴ Copies from this journal are located in the 'Organizations - YMCA' file, New Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library. Floor plans published in *the American Architect*, October 5, 1926, vol. 130, CXXX, p. 240.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

Jersey City YMCA, Hudson County, NJ

Sketches prepared by the architect depict a lavish classical interior of markedly different character than the existing.¹⁵ The existing main entrance has lost its original Corinthian-columned portico with iron balustrade that once shielded what appear to be bronze doors with an elaborate leaded transom. The first floor was elaborately finished with classical detailing including paneled walls, exposed beamed ceilings, molded plaster medallions and coffers, handsome iron chandeliers and sconces, and built-in wooden bookshelves. The typical dormitory room was fitted with a twin bed, small writing desk, tall chest of drawers, and easy chair.

Within a few years after opening, the Association boasted serving over 6,000 men, 212 of which were residents representing 26 states and 12 nations.¹⁶ Occupancy approached 100% of the total 220-room capacity. The average age was 24 years with the average length of residence 9 1/2 months.¹⁷ Known to the residents as "Bergenvue Village," the dormitory was a gathering place of the nations, and residents vied for the titles of Mayor of Bergenvue, Deputy Mayor, Village Clerk, Alderman and Commissioner. Fifteen Secretaries composed the paid staff.

In the first decade of operation, the Association offered a variety of programs serving a multitude of purposes including: fellowship, building world brotherhood, industrial relations, civic center, craftsmanship and outdoor life, training for leadership, personal influence, broadening friendship, vocational progress, mental growth, Christian idealism, capacity for team work, Christian influence, a home away from home, personal culture, and employment aid.¹⁸ The YMCA sought to meet the desires of its members and to afford them assistance in both formal and informal ways, in progressively promoting mental, physical, social and spiritual values blended into a unified Christian life.

The early focus on religion is evident in the *Third Milestone*, the third yearbook of the chapter, which states a primary goal as that of assisting the churches, "...an earnest attempt is made to assist the churches, not only through the regular facilities of the Association building itself, but also in offering a common meeting place and in endeavoring to aid in the enlistment and training of church leadership."¹⁹ In addition to religion, there is a clear focus in the *Third Milestone* on physical fitness and recreation.

¹⁵ "The Bergen Building of the Jersey City, N.J. Young Men's Christian Association, Illustrated. Presented by John F. Jackson, the Architect of the Building. Copy located in the 'Organizations - YMCA' file, New Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.

¹⁶ "The Third Milestone." Newsletter of the Jersey City YMCA. Copy located in the 'Organizations - YMCA' file, New Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.

¹⁷ "The Fourth Milestone," Newsletter of the Jersey City YMCA. Copy located in the 'Organizations - YMCA' file, New Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.

¹⁸ "The Seventh Milestone," Newsletter of the Jersey City YMCA. Copy located in the 'Organizations - YMCA' file, New Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.

¹⁹ "The Third Milestone."

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

Jersey City YMCA, Hudson County, NJ

Within the first decade, the Association expressed a need for additional space for handball courts and an exercise room. Ground was broken for the existing ell addition that housed five handball courts and a special exercise room. The two original handball courts were converted into squash courts.

While the Association had almost exclusively served youths in its early years, in its tenth year, the Senior Division, which was greatly diversified in terms of age, race, and religious affiliation had grown strong, reflecting the loyalty of the Association's members. The health and recreation division was increasingly popular, and boasted that, "through exercise and recreation our members obtain greater resistance in warding off disease, increased efficiency in their work and that zestful living which comes only when one is physically fit."²⁰ In the tenth milestone it was reported that the basketball team had won the state championship and the annual "Learn to Swim" campaign which provided every man and boy in the city an opportunity to learn to swim free of charge was once again a great success. Among the general activities that the Association offered in its tenth year were the men's club, social and cultural activities, religious work, educational classes, industrial service and job counseling. The education division had expanded to include over 300 men and women who pursued classes in everyday English, public speaking, shorthand, typewriting, nature study, bird lore, psychology, traffic management, bookkeeping, accounting, business law, show card writing, and Spanish. The Boy's Division, serving men up to the age of 18, offered a variety of diversions including hiking, model planes, checkers, stamp club, and boy's cabinet.

In the 1940s, the Jersey City Chamber of Commerce was actively encouraging businesses and individuals to relocate to Jersey City. In a publication of the Chamber of Commerce entitled "Why You Should Locate Your Factory or Residence in Jersey City," the YMCA is listed as one of the community's most notable assets.

Program offerings were expanded for the 2,000 members by mid-century to include physical activities (gymnasium classes, handball, volleyball, basketball, weight lifting, conditioning, special exercise apparatus, swimming, boxing, judo, squash, wrestling, health club) educational opportunities (executives club, supervisor's forums, industrial conferences, language offerings, bookkeeping and accounting, and technical courses such as mechanical drawing and blueprint reading), social activities (television, bowling, pool and billiards, chess club, checkers, movies, photography club, dancing, reading room), and religious activities (bible class, personal counseling and guidance, cooperation with churches).²¹ By the 1950s the senior division had expanded to include classes in conditioning, business, basketball, volleyball, handball, squash,

²⁰ "The Tenth Milestone," Newsletter of the Jersey City YMCA. Copy located in the 'Organizations - YMCA' file, New Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.

²¹ "For Vigorous Living," Brochure published by the Jersey City YMCA, c. 1958. Copy located in the 'Organizations - YMCA' file, New Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

Jersey City YMCA, Hudson County, NJ

boxing, wrestling, fencing, judo, weigh lifting, and swimming. A team of only seven staffed the programs.²²

Constant use and stringent maintenance economies necessitated a series of emergency repairs in the 1950s. These included roofing repairs, updated heat and hot water systems, and repairs to the perpetually leaking swimming pool.²³ These conditions led the Board of Directors to engage the services of the YMCA's National Council Building Bureau to draw up plans and estimates of costs for extensive renovations.

The long-awaited modernization of the 32-year-old YMCA building began in 1956. The scope of work was extensive and included renovation of the first floor vestibule and lobby, shower and locker rooms, swimming pool, gymnasium, and the construction of a new boxing room, massage room, hot room, whirlpool bath, with new exercise equipment and other amenities such as a coffee shop and air conditioned senior lounge. It was at this time that the ground floor cafeteria was transformed into a lounge and program area. One of the most popular amenities installed during the renovation was an outdoor shower on the ever-popular rooftop sunbathing area. A dedication celebration for the new facilities was held on October 15, 1957.

It was also at this time, a century after the Jersey City association was formed, that policy-making and administrative committees were organized evidencing new leadership strength and program expansion. These included a Constitution Revision Committee, Program and Strategy Committee, Public Relations Committee, Adult Program Committee, Membership Committee, and Building Renovation Committee.

In response to the turbulence in civil rights during the mid-century, the association began rethinking its policies toward a more inclusive approach to membership. In 1950, the Board of Directors voted to discontinue the YMCAs "Colored" department that had been initiated in 1919 and voted for the so-called "open door" policy, which sought to integrate membership and programs without regard to color. African Americans began to use their local branches to train leaders for their cause. For the first time women and girls were allowed to join the YMCA clubs as fully participating "associate" members. Association literature from the 1950s highlights coed and family programs such as splash parties in the pool, Friday night family swim, coed tennis, and a coed outing club.²⁴

While women were allowed to participate in YMCA activities and classes, they were granted only associate membership status. In the summer of 1975, the national YMCA endorsed the

²² "Jersey City YMCA to Mark 100th Year at Fete November 4," *Hudson Dispatch*, Union City, NJ, Thursday, October 28, 1954. Copy located in the 'Organizations - YMCA' file, New Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.

²³ "In October 1854..." 8.

²⁴ "Modernization and Renovation to Start Soon," *Direct Y'er*, Newsletter of the Jersey City YMCA, Summer 1956, Vol. I, No. 3. Copy located in the 'Organizations - YMCA' file, New Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

Jersey City YMCA, Hudson County, NJ

"family" concept for local associations, but did not require the change. In January 1976, the board of directors of the Jersey City Association held meetings to discuss the transformation into a "family YMCA" expanding membership to include women and girls, with an emphasis on activities for the whole family.²⁵ Two years later the first women moved into the dormitories and were granted full access to all facilities. To accommodate mothers, the YMCA offered a full-day daycare program as well as baby sitting services to allow women to take part in the various activities.

In the 1980s, with funding from local corporations, the YMCA offered programs aimed at helping troubled teens. The programs offered individual counseling, and individual and group activities, promoting the value of a wholesome recreational setting in quelling emotional disturbances. The program dealt with teenagers with emotional problems who had been released from correctional institutions and psychiatric hospitals and were seeking a new direction and focus.

In the 1990s, amidst rumors of a possible closing and city bailout, a federal bankruptcy court judge approved the city's plan to spend \$50,000 to keep the YMCA running until a new management company could take over the embattled facility. That company has assumed control and an upcoming renovation is in the planning stages.

Architectural Significance

Designed in the Classical Revival/Italian Renaissance style, the Jersey City YMCA conveys the sense of permanence and tradition that was intended by the organization and is representative of the style that was popular for civic and institutional buildings in the decade preceding the Great Depression. With its rusticated limestone faced ground floor and classically framed windows punctuating the second floor, the building bears a resemblance to architecture of the Italian Renaissance period. The interior spaces, such as the swimming pool with its tile-vaulted ceiling and the library with its arts and crafts details, also contribute to the building's architectural merit. The building stands in good condition with a high degree of integrity and thus is significant in the area of architecture.

Social History Significance

With associations in most urban and many suburban communities in the country, the YMCA continues its mission which was established a century-and-a-half ago, to improve the mind, body and spirit of its members. The success of the organization is realized in its ability to constantly adapt its programs to meet evolving trends and needs in its community. The secularization of the YMCA in the late twentieth century reflects the decline of religious

²⁵ "Jersey City YMCA to Discuss Change," *The Jersey Journal*, January 29, 1976. Copy located in the 'Organizations - YMCA' file, New Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

Jersey City YMCA, Hudson County, NJ

influence in mainstream civic culture. The increasing professionalism of their staff parallels the rise of social work and the fall of volunteerism. In recent decades, the corporate sponsorship of their programs reflects the clout of big business. The Jersey City YMCA has served the community for over seven decades as a residential, recreational and cultural landmark, and thus is significant in the area of social history.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

Jersey City YMCA, Hudson County, NJ

REFERENCES

- "The Bergen Building of the Jersey City, N.J. Young Men's Christian Association, Illustrated." Presented by John F. Jackson, the Architect of the Building. Copy located in the 'Organizations - YMCA' file, New Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.
- "For Vigorous Living." Brochure published by the Jersey City YMCA, c. 1958. Copy located in the 'Organizations - YMCA' file, New Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.
- "The Fourth Milestone." Newsletter of the Jersey City YMCA. Copy located in the 'Organizations - YMCA' file, New Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.
- "From A By-word To An Example." *Association Finance*. Published by the Financial Service Bureau of the International Committee of YMCA's. (February 1924), 1. Copy located in the 'Organizations - YMCA' file, New Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.
- "Jersey City YMCA to Discuss Change." *The Jersey Journal*. January 29, 1976. Copy located in the 'Organizations - YMCA' file, New Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.
- "Jersey City YMCA to Mark 100th Year at Fete November 4." *Hudson Dispatch*. Union City, NJ, Thursday, October 28, 1954. Copy located in the 'Organizations - YMCA' file, New Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.
- Modernization and Renovation to Start Soon." *Direct Y'er*. Newsletter of the Jersey City YMCA. Summer 1956, Vol. I, No. 3. Copy located in the 'Organizations - YMCA' file, New Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.
- "In October 1854..." *Adventurous years...1854-1954; Young Men's Christian Association, Jersey City, NJ*. (Jersey City, 1954). Booklet located in the 'Organizations - YMCA' file, New Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.
- "Laying the Corner Stone of the Young Men's Christian Association Building, Jersey City, NJ." Program from the laying of the corner stone festivities, June 26, 1923. Booklet located in the 'Organizations - YMCA' file, New Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.
- "The Seventh Milestone." Newsletter of the Jersey City YMCA. Copy located in the 'Organizations - YMCA' file, New Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.
- "The Tenth Milestone." Newsletter of the Jersey City YMCA. Copy located in the 'Organizations - YMCA' file, New Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 2

Jersey City YMCA, Hudson County, NJ

"The Third Milestone." Newsletter of the Jersey City YMCA. Copy located in the 'Organizations - YMCA' file, New Jersey Room, Jersey City Public Library.

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

Jersey City YMCA
Name of Property

Hudson County, NJ
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 3 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

Jersey City Quadrangle

1

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4	5	0	8	0	2	0
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Zone Easting Northing

3

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Zone Easting Northing

4

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Cynthia Rose Hamilton / Associate

organization Powers & Company, Inc. date 3/12/99

street & number 2230 Mt. Vernon St. telephone 215-236-9006

city or town Philadelphia state PA zip code 19130

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

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

Property Owner

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

name Mr. Stephen M. Green

street & number New Hope Housing, Inc., 196 Church St. telephone _____

city or town New Haven, state NJ zip code 06511

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

Jersey City YMCA, Hudson County, NJ

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property consists of the land and all the buildings and structures on the land. The legal description is as follows:

First Tract

Beginning at a point on the southerly side of Fairview Avenue, 100' easterly from a corner formed by the intersection of the easterly side of Bergen Avenue and the southerly side of Fairview Avenue; thence running easterly and along the southerly side of Fairview Avenue, 23' to a point; thence running southerly and parallel with Bergen Avenue, 100' to a point; thence running westerly and parallel with the first course run, 23' to a point; thence running northerly and parallel with the second course run, 100' to the place of beginning.

Also all that certain lot described as follows: Beginning at a point on the southerly side of Fairview Avenue, distant thereon 123' easterly from a corner formed by the intersection of the easterly side of Bergen Avenue and the southerly side of Fairview Avenue; thence running easterly and along the southerly side of Fairview Avenue, 5' to a point; thence running southerly and parallel with Bergen Avenue, 100' to a point; thence running westerly and parallel with the first course run, 5' to a point; thence running northerly and parallel with the second course run, 100' to the place of beginning.

Second Tract

Beginning in the southerly line of Fairview Avenue at a point 128' from the intersection of the easterly side of Bergen Avenue and the southerly side of Fairview Avenue and thence running easterly along the southerly line of Fairview Avenue with the easterly line of Bergen Avenue; thence southerly and at right angles to Fairview Avenue 100'; thence easterly and parallel with Fairview Avenue 72'; thence northerly and parallel with the line first run 100' to said southerly line of Fairview Avenue; thence westerly along said southerly line of Fairview Avenue 72' to the place of beginning.

Third Tract

Beginning at a point on the southwesterly side of Fairview Avenue, distant 200' southeasterly from Bergen Road; thence running southwesterly at right angles to said Fairview Avenue 100'; thence southeasterly parallel with Fairview Avenue 50'; thence northeasterly at right angles to Fairview Avenue 100' to the southwesterly side of Fairview Avenue; thence along said Avenue northwesterly 50' to the place of beginning.

Fourth Tract

Being 32' in front on Monticello Avenue and 51' 5" in width in the rear and 101' 9" in depth on the northerly side and 100' in depth on the side opposite, being known as lot 127 in Block D on a map commonly called Map of Colden and Monticello made March 1, 1859, by Garret S. Van Horn, surveyor, and file in the Office of the Clerk (now Register) of said County of Hudson, said

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 2

Jersey City YMCA, Hudson County, NJ

map being entitled Map of Property of E.B. Wakeman, William White, B. Votterlein, I. Gould and others at Monticello and Colden, Town of Bergen, Hudson County, New Jersey, March 1, 1859 and also a strip 1' in width of the adjoining lot numbered 126 extending along the whole northerly side of said last mentioned lot numbered 126 from Monticello Avenue to the rear thereof.

Also known as 654 Bergen Avenue, Jersey City, Hudson County, New Jersey. Being known and designated as lot numbers: C1, 10B, 12B, 14B, 16B, 18B, 20B, and 127, Block No. 1911 as shown on the tax maps of the City of New Jersey.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property includes the entire parcel of that with the buildings that comprises 654 Bergen Avenue in Jersey City, NJ.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number Photos Page 1

Jersey City YMCA, Hudson County, NJ

**JERSEY CITY YMCA
PHOTOGRAPH KEY**

Jersey City YMCA
654 Bergen Avenue
Jersey City, Hudson County, NJ
Robert M. Powers, photographer
November 1998
Powers & Company, Inc.

<u>Photo #</u>	<u>Description of View</u>
1	Main (Northwest) Elevation, Looking Southeast
2	Main Entrance Detail
3	Rear Elevation with Gymnasium, Looking West
4	Side (Northeast) Elevation, Looking South
5	1 st Floor Entry Vestibule, Original Heating Grille
6	1 st Floor Lobby, Looking Southeast
7	1 st Floor, Meeting Room along South Wall, Looking South
8	Fireplace Detail, 1 st Floor Meeting Room along South Wall, Looking SW
9	Gymnasium, 1 st Floor, Looking Northwest
10	Pool, Ground Floor, Looking Southeast
11	"Scott Room," 2 nd Floor, Looking Southeast
12	2 nd Floor Corridor near Southeast Corner, Looking Southeast
13	Typical Dormitory Corridor
14	Typical Dormitory Room

FAIRVIEW AVE

MONTICELLO AVE

JENNETT AVE

BERGEN AVE

Jersey City YMCA
Boundary Map

YMCA
Jersey City
Hudson County, NJ



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- SMALL LINES S
- REMOVED A
- PROPOSED S
- ADDRESS
- REMOVED S
- SPACE WITH
- PROPERTY L

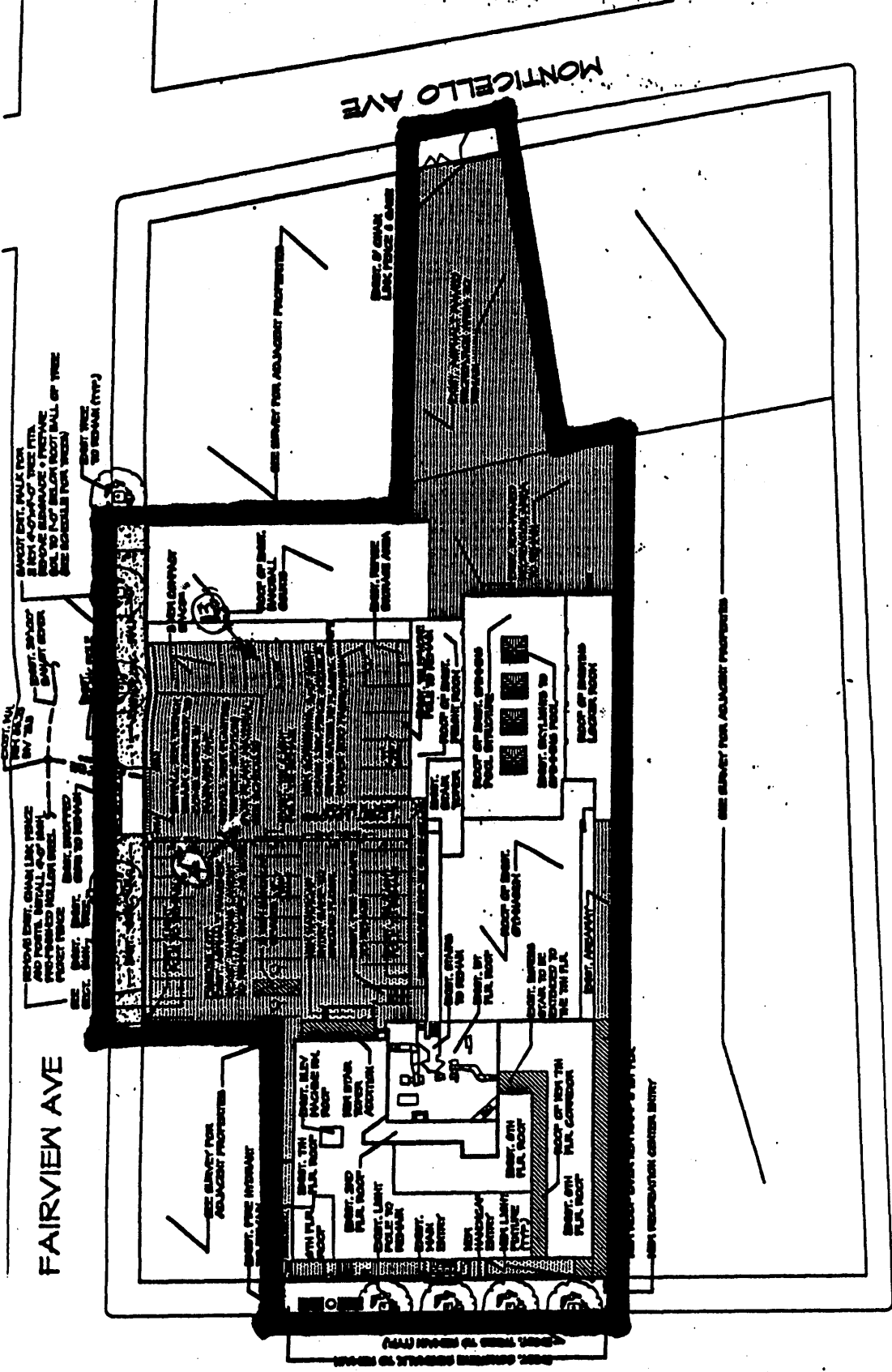
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REHABILITATI**
OF
Y.M.C.A. BUILDING
AT
100 BERGEN AVE
JERSEY CITY, N.J.

COBLE & BERGMAN
ARCHITECTS
NEW YORK, N.Y.

SITE/ROOF PL

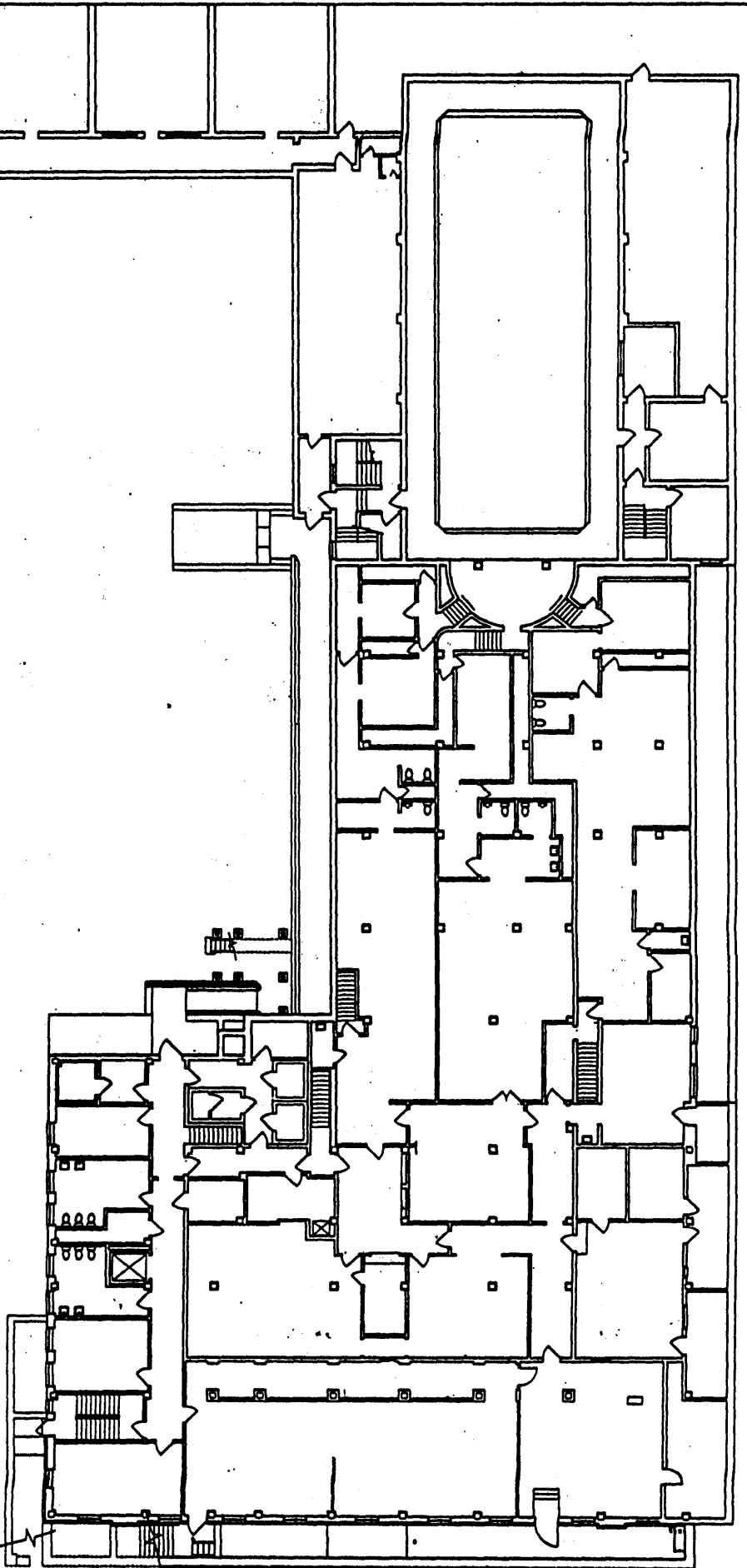
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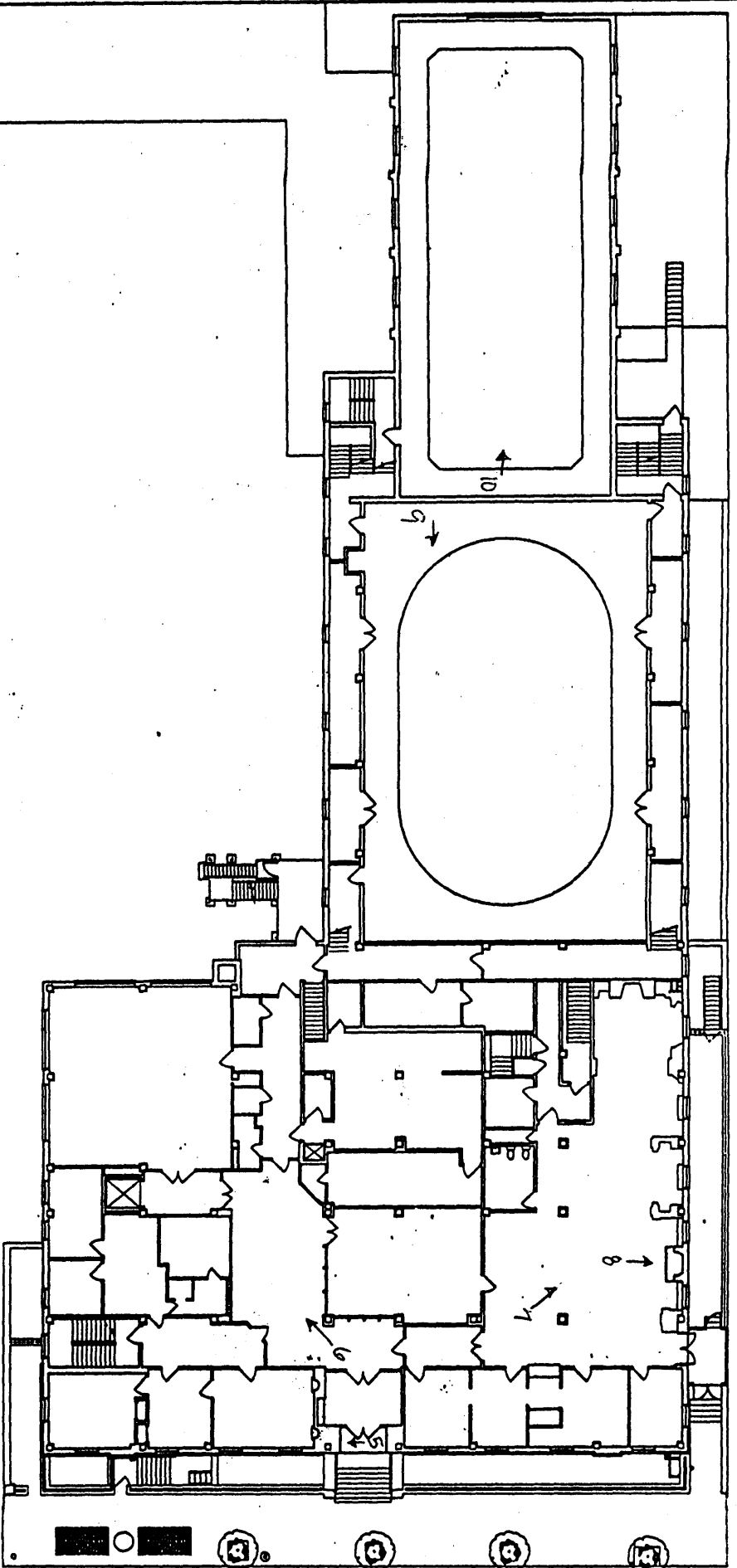
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Ground Floor N

Jersey City YUCA

Jersey City
Hudson County, NJ



1st Floor N

YMCA
 Jersey City
 Hudson County, NJ

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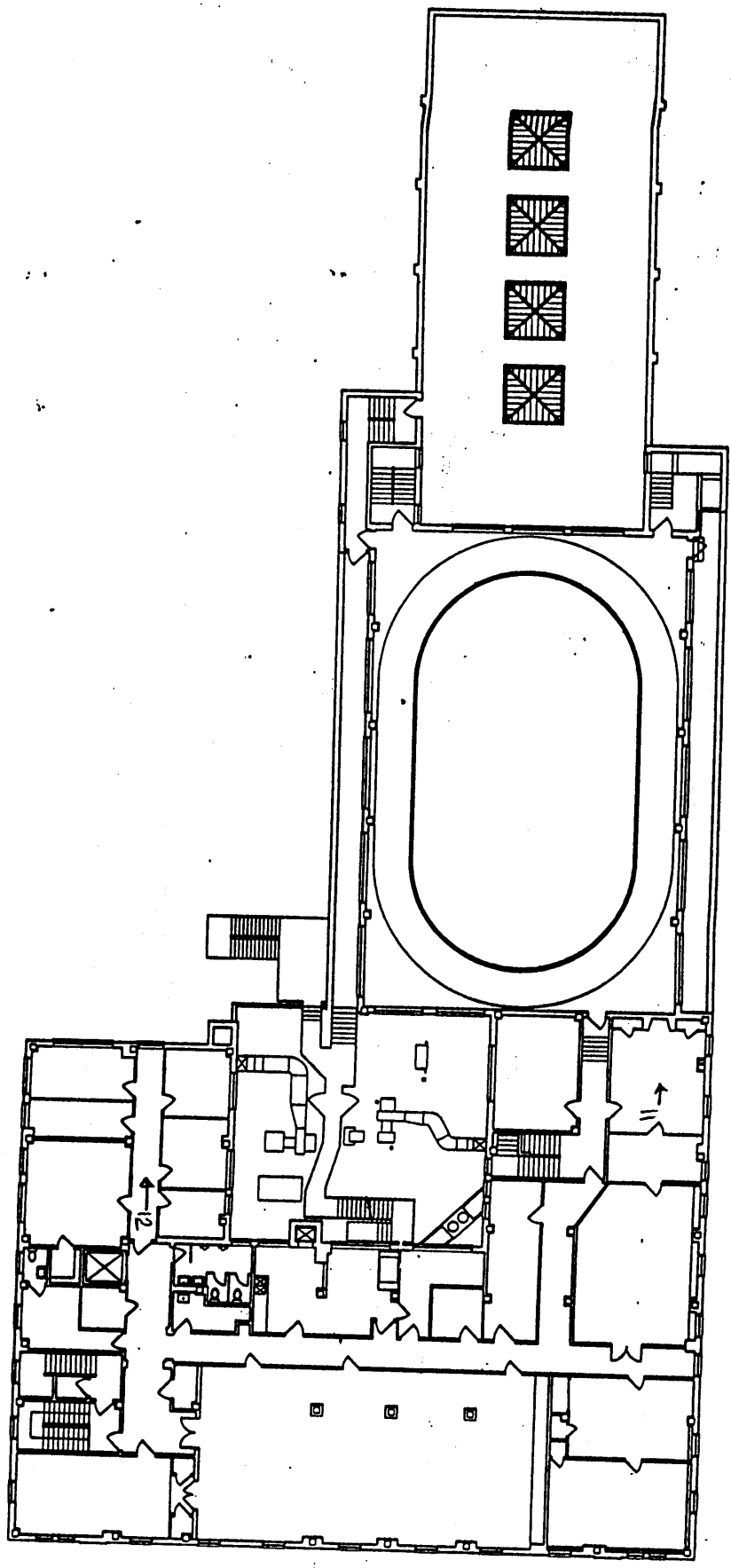
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 DESIGNED BY: 9607

ENRICH CENTER
 506 EIGHTH
 NEW
 PHILADELPHIA
 PENNSYLVANIA



YMCA
Jersey City
Hudson County, NJ



2nd floor

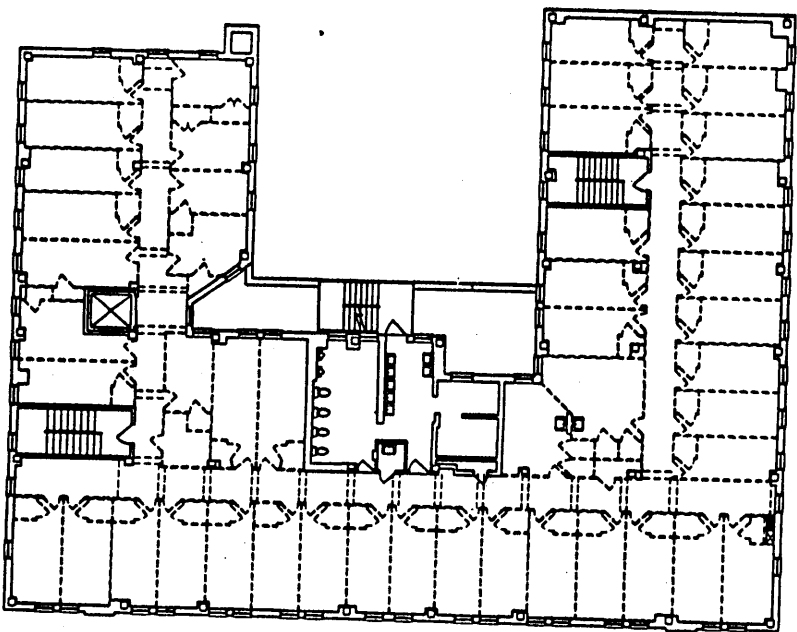
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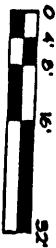
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YMCA
 Jersey City
 Hudson County, NJ



3rd Floor



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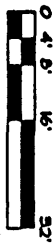
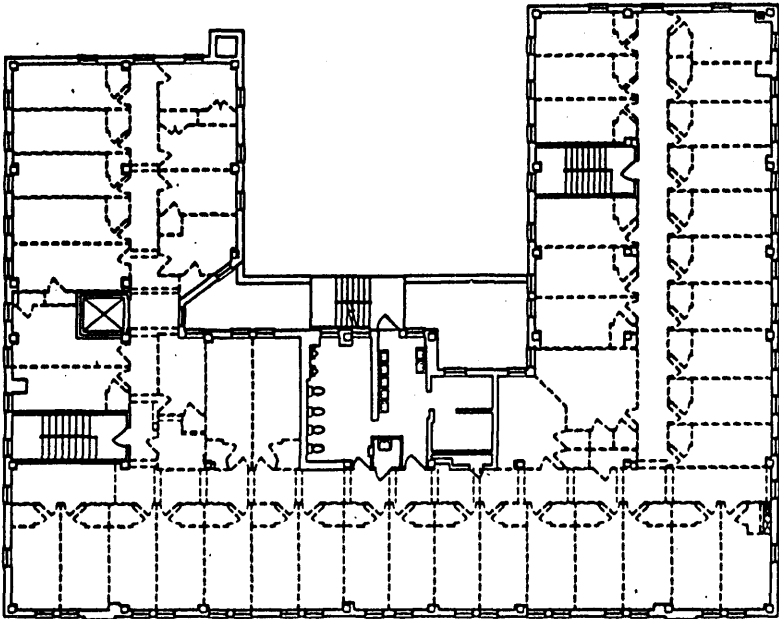
DESIGNED BY: **STANTEC ARCHITECTURE P.C.**
 505 EIGHTH AVENUE, SUITE 1800
 NEW YORK, NY 10018
 PHONE: 212.677.2480 FAX: 212.677.2480

PROJECT NAME: **JERSEY CITY YMCA REHABILITATION**
 THE CONTRACT BUILDERS: **ED KORN, 5th STREET PLACE, PHILADELPHIA, PA 19103**

DATE: **11/05/97**
THIRD FLOOR PLAN

YMCA
 Jersey City
 Hudson County, NJ

4th Floor



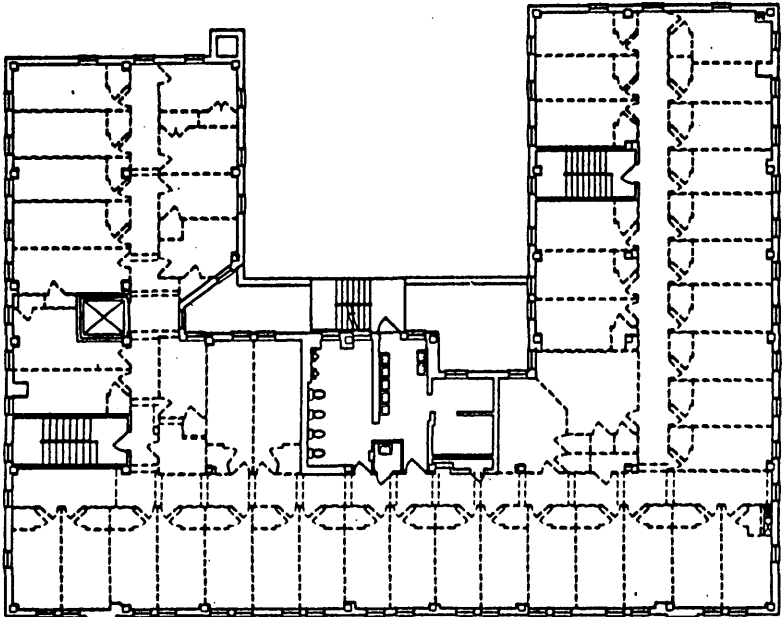
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PROJECT TITLE
 JERSEY CITY YMCA
 REHABILITATION
 70 NORTH 9TH STREET
 NEW YORK, NY 10018

ARCHITECT
 TYPICAL(4-6)
 FLOOR PLAN

DATE: 11/15/94
 DRAWING NO. 4-6

YMCA
 Jersey City
 Hudson County, NJ



5th Floor

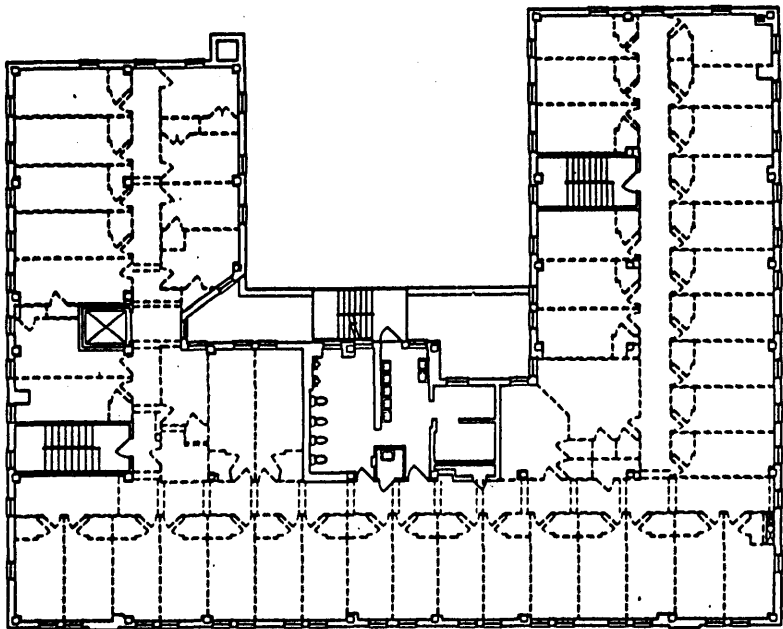


REV	DESCRIPTION	DATE

PREPARED BY: **THOMAS COLBY ARCHITECTS, P.C.**
 ORGANIZATION & REGISTRATION: **ALL ARCHITECTS**
 5705 FREDERICK ROAD, SUITE 1000
 NEW YORK, NY 10018
 Phone: 212/877-2400 Fax: 212/877-2400

PROJECT NAME: **JERSEY CITY YMCA REHABILITATION**
 THE COMMUNITY BUILDERS
 40 NORTH 9TH STREET
 NEW ARDEN, VA 22080

**TYPICAL(4-6)
 FLOOR PLAN**



6th Floor

YMCA
 Jersey City
 Hudson County, NJ



REV.	DESCRIPTION	DATE

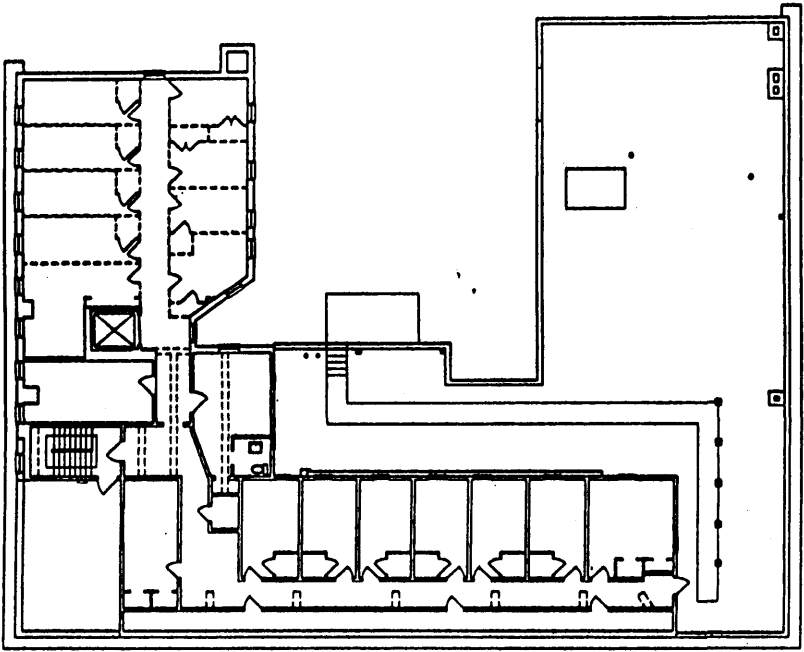
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 26 COCKLE STREET
 NEWARK, N.J. 07102

PROJECT NO.: 4-6

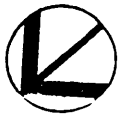
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**TYPICAL(4-6)
 FLOOR PLAN**

YMCA
 Jersey City
 Hudson County, NJ



1st floor



REV	DESCRIPTION	DATE

PREPARED BY: **STANLEY A. ROSENBERG, INC.**
 505 EIGHTH AVENUE, SUITE 1800
 NEW YORK, NY 10018
 PHONE: 212.507.2400 FAX: 212.507.2400

PROJECT NO.
 JERSEY CITY YMCA
 REHABILITATION
 THE COMPANY BUILDERS
 80 NORTH 7TH STREET
 PHILADELPHIA, PA 19106

DATE PLOTTED 11/05/97
DATE 3/6/97
SCALE 1/8"=1'-0"

**PENTHOUSE
 FLOOR PLAN**