

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

SEP 7 1983

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

1. Name

historic Phyllis Wheatley YWCA

and/or common Phyllis Wheatley YWCA

2. Location

street & number 901 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W. not for publication

city, town Washington vicinity of Walter E. Fauntroy, D.C.
congressional district Delegate

state District of Columbia code 11 county District of Columbia code 001

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 checked="" 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
	<u>n/a</u> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other: <u>Institution</u>

4. Owner of Property

name YWCA

street & number 901 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W.

city, town Washington vicinity of state District of Columbia

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder of Deeds

street & number 6th and D Streets, N.W.

city, town Washington vicinity of state District of Columbia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title District of Columbia's Inventory of Historic Sites has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date June 27, 1974 federal state county local

depository for survey records D.C. Historic Preservation Office

city, town Washington vicinity of state D.C.

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input 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 Phyllis Wheatley Young Women's Christian Association is a four story brick building located on the northwest corner of the intersection of Rhode Island Avenue and Ninth Street, N.W. The building was designed by the New York firm of Shroeder and Parish and was dedicated in 1920. The building was designed in the Colonial Revival style, a style popular in this country during the 1920's and 1930's.

The building is somewhat T shaped with a six bay front facade and a projecting rear wing which houses the auditorium. The building is set on a granite base and is constructed of brick laid in Flemish bond with random glazed headers and stretchers. The first floor is distinguished from the upper three stories by means of its facade treatment. In addition to a water course, the brick courses project out in a regular pattern, and the first story is terminated by a heavy molded cornice. The fenestration of the first floor consists of nine over one light windows with voussoired brick lintels. The entrance portico is also derivative of Colonial Revival and contains two stone Doric pilasters flanking the door and supporting a moulded pediment. Carved in the frieze over the door is the legend: "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly." The upper three stories are differentiated by vertical brick lintels. The building is terminated by a finely executed corbeled brick cornice. The rear wing which projects out from approximately the center of the rear facade is only two stories in height with similar cornice and with large multipaned windows with solid fanlights.

The interior is very utilitarian and consists of a number of large public meeting areas which can accommodate a variety of uses from hot lunch programs to day school facilities. There are a number of dormitory type rooms on the upper floors.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) Black history

Specific dates 1920

Builder/Architect

Shroeder and Parish

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Joint Committee on Landmarks has designated the Phyllis Wheatley Young Women's Christian Association a Category II Landmark of importance which contributes significantly to the cultural heritage and visual beauty of the District of Columbia. The Phyllis Wheatley YWCA is the oldest "Y" in the city. It was organized by black women active in the community in 1905.* This "Y" has, throughout its history, provided services to the general community. For example, during World War II, it became a USO center for black servicemen who were denied entrance to segregated USO centers. It has continued in strength through the years, providing care for the poor, for war refugees, housing and related services. It has also taken stands on racial issues, such as opposing the erection of the "Old Mammy" statue.

The Phyllis Weatley YWCA was organized in May of 1905 by members of the booklover's club, a black women's literary group. It is the oldest YWCA in the District of Columbia. Its first location was the old Miner Institution Building at 4 Half Street and Maryland Avenue, S.W. It was next moved to 429 T Street, N.W. The present "Y" at 9th Street and Rhode Island Avenue, N.W. was financed through help from the War Work Council which announced in May of 1918 that the Council had appropriated funds so that the "Y" could be a "demonstration building in Washington for colored work."

The site was selected by Mrs. Boyce representing the local Y, Mrs. Winn, the national YWCA, and Mrs. Sarah Dickerson of the War Council. Since the building had not been started by the end of the War in 1918, the proposition carried over as a war measure, and on December 19, 1920, the new building was dedicated. In March of 1923, articles of incorporation were changed to carry the name "Phyllis Wheatley YWCA." (Phyllis Wheatley was a black poetess who arrived in Boston in 1761 on the slave ship Senegal, and later became quite well-known for her poetry.)

Many well-known black women have been associated with the "Y" throughout its history. Among them are Julia West Hamilton who was president of the "Y"; Mary Church Terrell who was an early president of the National Association of Colored Women; Dorothy Height who was president of the National Council of Negro Women; and Mrs. Walter Washington who has been active in the "Y" serving as director of the Young Adults division and serving on the "Y"'s Board of Directors.

During the First World War, the Wheatley YWCA provided traveller's aid to blacks who came north to Washington; the travelers were met at Union Station and attempts were made to provide both shelter and food. The "Y" opposed a bill in Congress to authorize an "Old Mammy Statue," questioning the honoring of the southern "Mammy" while segregation, lynching, and inequality of treatment continued. The eloquent plea stated what "despite the sufferings of the slave, the Old Mammy had the natural maternal instinct of a woman, but why so selfish, individually thinking of the compulsory services of your foster

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation Form No. 10-900a

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approximately .36 acre

Quadrangle name Washington west, D.C.-MD-VA.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	8	3	2	4	7	2	0	4	3	0	7	4	6	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification The Phyllis Wheatley YWCA stands on lot 816 in Square 364 in the northwest quadrant of the District of Columbia. This irregularly-shaped lot has a 104.7 foot frontage on Rhode Island Avenue, N.W., a 102.75 foot frontage on 9th Street, N.W. and is 15,519 square feet in area.

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

state	code	county	code
N/A			

state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Suzanne Ganschietz, Architectural Historian

organization DCRA, Historic Preservation Office

date Oct. 1979 and June 1983

street & number 1133 North Capitol Street, N.E.

telephone 535-1294

city or town Washington,

state D.C.

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

Carol B. Thompson

title Director
Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs

date AUG 31 1983

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 10/6/83

for Delores Byers
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
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Continuation sheet

Item number

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mother, while lynching her son?" During the Second World War, the Wheatley "Y" provided USO services for black soldiers who were denied entrance at white USO centers on the basis of race. The "Y" has, throughout its history, provided educational activities, recreation, housing, employment and such community services as a hot dinner program for underprivileged children.

The building was designed by the New York firm of Shroeder and Parish who designed the YWCA Building in New York in which were placed the longest steel trusses to be used at that time. Other educational buildings designed by the firm include the Household Arts and Thompson Building at Barnard College and Guyot Hall at Princeton University. The building was dedicated on December 19, 1920. The "Y" building is typical of the Colonial Revival institutional architecture so prevalent in the District and the United States during the 1920's and 1930's. It is constructed of red brick with a corbeled brick cornice, is four stories above a raised basement, and at present provides rooms for more than twenty-five women.

*It was organized by black women in 1095 and has continued as an active force in the community because of the many prominent and dedicated black women who have been associated with it.

No information was presented at the public hearing on this property that relates to its period of significane, 1920-1930. Neither the applicant nor the staff has been able to find any information from that period.

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Withey, Henry F. and Elsie Rathburn. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects Deceased. Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls, Inc. 1940

Brawley, Benjamin. The Negro in Literature and Art in the United States. New York; Duffield and Company, 1930.

A. Brief History of the Phyllis Wheatley Branch, YWCA". Mimiographed paper in YWCA Archives.

"Milestones: A History of the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA" compiled by members of the Y., published 1930.

Other information and Annual Reports provided by Ms. Mary E. Gregory, Executive Director.