

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

3073

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

DEC 01 1988

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Army and Navy YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) other names/site number Armed Services YMCA

2. Location

street & number 50 Washington Square N/A not for publication city, town Newport N/A vicinity state Rhode Island code RI county Newport code 005 zip code 02840

3. Classification

Table with 3 columns: Ownership of Property, Category of Property, and Number of Resources within Property. Includes checkboxes for private/public ownership and building/district/site/structure/object categories. Totals: 1 contributing, 0 noncontributing, 1 total.

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet. Signature of certifying official: [Signature] Date: 22 Nov 1988 Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of commenting or other official: _____ Date: _____ State or Federal agency and bureau: _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this 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: [Signature] Date of Action: 12/29/88

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/civic

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/civic

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/
Beaux-Arts

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETEwalls BRICKSTONE/Limestoneroof ASPHALT (tar/gravel)other STONE/GraniteTERRA COTTA (ornament)

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Army and Navy Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) (1911, Louis E. Jallade, architect) building is a well-preserved, five-story, flat-roofed, Beaux-Arts style institutional building, built of structural concrete sheathed in pale buff masonry and brick with Renaissance-inspired detailing and polychrome terracotta decoration. Configured to fill an entire, approximately 9,500-square-foot, irregularly shaped city block bounded by Washington Square (south), Meeting Street (west), River Lane (north), and Farewell Street (east), the composition consists of four integrated masses visible from side elevation views. The building's interior facilities included reception and gathering rooms, recreational spaces and living accommodations for military service personnel and were in continuous use from 1911 to 1973. The YMCA commands a prominent location at the northeast corner of Washington Square, facing the north end of the Colony House of 1739-1741. Washington Square is the historic civic and commercial center of Newport and contains a number of notable eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth-century buildings facing a triangular-shaped park.

The four intersecting masses of the YMCA building form a right-angled triangle with a truncated point at the Washington Square end. The front section, a squarish, five-story, flat-roofed, three-sided block on Washington Square contains the five-bay entrance facade (south) and secondary facades on Meeting Street (west) with a polygonal bay, and on the interior of the building complex facing Farewell Street (east). A central narrower, five-story, flat-roofed block intersects the rear of the main block at an angle and runs along Meeting Street. At the back of the lot stands a four-story, low-pitch gable-roof gymnasium. A one-story section on Farewell Street with a roof terrace infills the U-shaped area formed by the three primary blocks. The building thus presents broken facades on Washington Square and Farewell Street and continuous facades on Meeting Street and River Lane. Hierarchy of ornamentation helps define the different sections of the building, where no two elevations are identical.

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The main block on Washington Square rises from a light grey ashlar granite basement to a molded water table and first floor of pale buff polished limestone with an elaborate sculptured frieze ornamented with reeding, dentils, and YMCA symbols. The second, third, and fourth floors are clad in pale buff glazed brick with slightly projecting, quoined end bays. A frieze of blue, yellow, white, and green terra-cotta panels and molding envelopes the fifth floor. In the end-bay panels, standing military figure flank shields ornamented with ships, cannonballs, anchors, and other nautical and military symbols. The remaining panels contain winged cherubs' heads set in a floral surround. Above the fifth floor the original, wide overhanging terra-cotta cornice has been removed leaving a plain brick band, and the recessed-paneled roof parapet has been sheathed in copper. Both these changes most likely occurred during 1938-39 renovations and may have been prompted by safety concerns due to deterioration of the cornice.

The entrance facade itself is symmetrical, having a central entrance set in a round-arch opening, flanked on either side by a similar round-arch window opening. All three intersect the limestone frieze and are surmounted by a small sculptural head. A modern glass entrance has replaced the original entrance treatment of double wood doors surmounted by a low broken, scrolled pediment with rectangular and fanlight transoms above. Original copper lanterns flanking the entrance remain. Both arched windows have fanlight transoms and decorative ironwork in a band outlining the arched opening and a flush-set balustrade. The east window retains its original multi-light french doors; the west window contains plate glass. Small, high, vertical openings with original, simple, heavy grills mark the end bays. Fenestration of the upper floors consists of a regular rhythm of six-over-six, double-hung, wood sash set in recessed openings with limestone lug sills and flared flush brick lintels with limestone keys, alternating with narrower four-over-four windows.

Treatment of the east and west elevations of the main block is similar to that of the entrance facade. The east elevation, which angles back into the center of the building, has a simpler fifth floor terra-cotta frieze. The west elevation frieze has cherub's head panels and windows rather than panels in the end bays; on the ground floor a one-story, projecting, polygonal, limestone bay with roof balustrade, sculptural frieze, and round-

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arch windows repeating the main facade motifs, provides an excellent aspect down Washington Square.

The central block extends along Meeting Street with two bays visible from Farewell Street on the opposite side. Here the design is considerably less formal, with brick sheathing ornamented by simple string courses and more restrained cornice and roof parapet. Six-over-six double-hung-sash windows are arranged in pairs, with hinged transoms above those on the lower floors, and two service entrances are located on Meeting Street.

The gymnasium block exhibits again a different and more utilitarian design treatment handled exclusively in brick. On the east and west elevations, three high round-arch windows, now infilled with translucent insulated plastic, light the gymnasium, with a row of five double-hung-sash windows below on the first story. The rear, north, elevation is essentially a solid wall punctuated by several asymmetrically and functionally located windows and topped with a low, pitched gable roof pediment. Ornamentation consists of molded limestone keys over the windows, stepped cornice, simple roof parapet, narrow string course and a wide, diamond pattern frieze band of raised brick on the south, east and north elevations. The band continues on the west elevation, but without the diamond pattern. The arched windows intersect both the string course and frieze. Rising from the northwest corner of the low-pitched gable roof is a brick cylindrical heating stack with corbeled cap.

The irregularity of the Farewell Street (east) elevation is unified at street level by the one-story section extending from Washington Street to join the plane of the gymnasium. The first floor cornice of the main entrance facade continues, minus the elaborate sculptural carving, as the roof cornice of this section. The main facade alternating window width pattern is also repeated here, though with larger openings. On the roof terrace above, a projecting infill pavilion with pilasters and cornice sheathed in copper provides access from the second floor to the tile-floored outdoor area.

On the interior of the YMCA building a central hall runs on the first floor from the entrance back to the rear gymnasium block, with a wide angled turn reflecting transition from the front to central blocks. Public spaces and administration offices flank the central hall, with the stairway and an adjacent

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triangular elevator located at the northeast corner of the main block. The plan of the upper four residential floors repeats the center block hall, while the front block corridor circles a central light-and-air shaft originating on the second floor. The utilitarian basement space housed the swimming pool--now covered over--, a bowling alley converted to a shooting gallery, barbershop, lockers and checkroom.

Intensive use of the YMCA building from opening day on soon demanded maintenance of building elements--the marble front steps required replacement by 1919--and furnishings, as well as modifications to better fulfill functional purposes. In 1938-39 a major renovation program was undertaken. These renovations most likely included removal of the roof cornice, change on the first floor, and perhaps improvements to utility systems. No plans of the original design or subsequent changes are known to exist. Early photographs and descriptions, however, provide some information as to the building's appearance. Treatment of interior finishes was largely plain and functional, with decorative embellishment restricted primarily to the space adjacent to the entrance. While changes have occurred to meet evolving needs, today the interior retains substantial integrity of plan and many important finishes.

Located on either side of the main entrance lobby were the reading and writing room (east) and the social room (west) which incorporates the projecting bay at the Meeting Street/Washington Street corner. Spacious and well-lit by large windows, these rooms served as the primary social spaces for YMCA activities. Both rooms retain original oak paneling and decorative plasterwork as bands trimming exposed ceiling beams and a capitals on support piers. Classically-inspired stencilled ceiling designs also remain under later coats of paint. The reading and writing room fireplace mantel of cast plaster remains in place, and above it a large, bronze bas relief designed by sculptor Bela Lyon Pratt, and cast by the Gorham Company, 1911. The relief shows two sitting male figures, one in Army and one in Navy uniform, against a stylized simple landscape of land and water with the inscription, "This building erected A.D. 1911 is dedicated to the use and comfort of the enlisted men of the Army and Navy. A mother's memorial to her sons Sheldon and Albert Emery." Currently, the reading and writing room is separated from the hall by an oak paneled wall containing various inscriptions and is entered through a door flanked by cast-iron

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columns with serpent or fish motif capitals and surmounted by a leaded fanlight transom. The opposite social room wall appears to have once had a similar treatment, but now displays a more modern character. Originally, definition between these rooms and the lobby may have been achieved by grilled screens. The later treatment seems to date from the 1938-39 renovations and may have involved relocation and reuse of elements from the entrance vestibule.

Proceeding into the building beyond these major public spaces were: a billiard room on the left, now used as offices; the main desk/sundries counter, still in its original location; the staircase with original wrought iron balustrades; a restaurant; a lunch counter; and administrative offices. The exact location of the latter three functions is not known. However, an arched door opening, similar in treatment to the reading and writing room entrance, may indicate the position of the restaurant. These areas of the building are now used as offices.

The upper four residential floors are essentially intact both in plan and spare detailing. Dimensions of the approximately 114 rooms are either 10 x 14' or 7 x 10', with four- and five-panel oak doors. A single tiled lavatory and shower room serves each floor. The second floor also contained library, added sometime before 1918 and now used as living quarters, and the gymnasium. The gymnasium comprises the second through fourth floors of the rear building block and includes an elevated running track and a stage at the north end.

The Army and Navy YMCA is included within the boundaries of the Newport National Historic Landmark District designated by the National Park Service in 1968. The significance of the Landmark district was defined to include only those buildings constructed prior to about 1820. The Army and Navy YMCA is but one of a large number of architecturally and historically significant later buildings in the area which, within the context of the Newport National Historic Landmark District, deserve further recognition, and preservation.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

SOCIAL HISTORY

MILITARY

Period of Significance

1911-1938

Significant Dates

1911

1938

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Emery, Mrs. Thomas (Mary Muhlenberg Hopkins)

Architect/Builder

Jallade, Louis E., Architect
Norcross Brothers Company, Contractors

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Army and Navy Young Mens Christian Association (YMCA) building, Newport (1911, Louis E. Jallade, architect) stands as an important local expression of the Beaux-Arts architectural style which embodies distinctive design elements of that style executed with fine craftsmanship. Further, the building is an excellent example of the type of institutional buildings constructed by the YMCA. The YMCA building derives historical significance from its association with a major social reform movement in the twentieth century; with noted philanthropist Mrs. Thomas J. Emery, the building's benefactor; and with the impact of a military presence on Newport's history. From its opening in 1911 until 1973 the YMCA building performed a critical service for military enlisted men, particularly the Navy, in providing onshore residential, recreational and social facilities. The building's prominent location in Newport's civic center and the involvement of Newport's civilian society in YMCA volunteer activities helped foster and sustain an important link between the City of Newport and the armed services stationed there.

The YMCA originated in 1844 in London, England, as a "mutual improvement association," and the first community association in the United States was established in Boston in 1851. During the Civil War (1861-65), through a Christian Commission, and the Spanish-American War (1898), through the International Committee, the YMCA undertook to provide troop morale, entertainment and religious services to United States armed forces, while individual community YMCAs initiated activities, primarily evangelical, with military personnel at nearby posts. With the establishment of the Army and Navy Department of the International Committee in 1898 and passage of an act by the U.S. Congress in 1902 permitting the YMCA to erect and maintain "such buildings as their work for the promotion of the social and physical welfare of the garrisons may require," an extensive

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- 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 # _____

 See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property less than one (approximately 9,500 square feet)

UTM References

A

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 See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property conforms to the boundary of Tax Assessor's Plat 17, lot 191, roughly bounded by Washington Street, Meeting Street, River Lane, and Farewell Street.

 See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary selected encompasses the single parcel of land historically associated with the building and roughly follows the footprint of the building itself.

 See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Virginia A. Fitch, Architectural Historianorganization The Public Archaeology Lab., Inc. date February, 1988street & number 387 Lonsdale Avenue telephone 401-728-8780city or town Pawtucket state Rhode Island zip code 02860

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building program was initiated. The YMCA was recognized as a major social reform movement whose stated objective was to improve the spiritual, mental, social and physical condition of young men, particularly those living away from home. Generous praise for YMCA armed services activities from President McKinley, the Army and Navy Secretaries, and others encouraged building construction donations from wealthy philanthropists. By 1914 there were twenty-two Army and nine Navy YMCAs serving permanent posts as a "link between the military and home life of the enlisted men." Among these buildings was the Newport Army and Navy YMCA which, according to contemporary newspaper accounts, was the first facility constructed to serve both branches of the armed forces.

Both the military and the YMCA had firmly established roots in Newport well before the 1911 construction of the new Army and Navy YMCA facility. A community YMCA had been organized during the nineteenth century, and interest in creating a resting place for military and naval personnel in the city resulted in establishment of a YMCA in 1903. It occupied two floors of a building on Thames Street between Church and Mary Streets. A fire caused the closing of this facility within a few years.

Newport's strategic location in lower Narragansett Bay had fostered the establishment of military installations from the eighteenth century onward. The Revolutionary War fort at Fort Adams was enlarged in 1799 and again amplified during the War of 1812 (Fort Adams National Historic Landmark District, Newport County, Newport, RI). In the early twentieth century, sizable Army contingents were stationed at Fort Adams, and at Fort Greble on nearby Dutch Island. The port city's naval and maritime associations were equally strong, with a legacy which included the achievements of the Newport brothers, Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry, hero of the War of 1812, and Commodore Matthew Perry, who opened the ports of Japan for trade in the 1850s. During the Civil War, the Naval Academy at Annapolis was temporarily located in Newport. Naval presence in Newport expanded considerably in the 1880s. The Naval Torpedo Station was established on Goat Island; Coasters' Harbor Island became the site of the Naval Training Station; and in 1884 the Naval War College, which trained many great naval strategists and leaders, was founded.

During the latter half of the nineteenth century Newport had also become a summer haven for the nation's socially prominent

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and well-to-do. Palatial summer cottages were constructed along Bellevue Avenue and Ocean Drive (Bellevue Avenue and Ocean Drive National Historic Landmark Districts). The influx of summer residents and vacationers helped to stabilize the city's uneven maritime economic base well into the twentieth century.

Relations between the Army, the Navy, and Newport's high society were governed by the mutual respect of two parallel hierarchies, each with its own rules of advancement. Parties and activities on shore provided gay social diversion for army officers and naval officers while the fleet was based in Narragansett Bay; the military presence meant that distinguished armed service personnel and foreign dignitaries visited Newport regularly. The Newport Social Index of 1908 listed not only summer residents, but also "personnel of diplomatic corps" and "officers of the Army and Navy." Enlisted men were not, however, generally included in this circle. Newport's elite contributed to the well being of enlisted men, and also their city, largely through YMCA service and gifts.

Following the fire at the military YMCA's temporary quarters, construction of a permanent Army and Navy YMCA in Washington Square to serve enlisted men and military transients was made possible by Mrs. Thomas J. Emery (Mary Muhlenberg Hopkins, 1844-1927). Mrs. Emery, a resident of Cincinnati, Ohio, summered in Middletown at Mariemont estate, a large shingled "cottage" well known for its surrounding garden designed by the Olmsted firm. The house still stands, but the landscape has been altered by twentieth-century residential development. Following her marriage, both she and her husband, a successful real estate developer and candle manufacturer, directed much of their wealth and energy to philanthropic purposes. They had two sons, Sheldon and Albert Emery, both of whom died young. Inheriting her husband's fortune upon his death in 1906, Mrs. Emery largely dedicated her life to philanthropic work, including buildings and programs for children, medicine, the arts, education and religious institutions across the country and in Europe. She also created the much-studied model community for workers, Mariemont, near Cincinnati, with John Nolen, landscape architect, and a team of architects. Her anonymous donation of \$250,000 for land purchase and building of the YMCA was her major philanthropic contribution of Newport. The secret benefactor's name was not revealed until the dedication ceremony.

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The prominent and centralized site on Washington Square selected for construction contained six eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century buildings which were all demolished. This pattern of change was to characterize the civic and commercial development of the Washington Square area in the early twentieth century. Today it contains a mix of some of Newport's finest buildings from all periods.

Mrs. Emery's architect for the Army and Navy YMCA was Louis E. Jallade (1876?-1957) of New York. Preliminary research indicates that Jallade was also responsible for the design of the YMCA buildings at 124th Street, New York (c. 1920), Hackensack, New Jersey (c. 1929) and the Navy YMCA in Philadelphia (1926-28; NR listed). The Newport YMCA of 1911 may be one of his earliest works. Jallade also designed the first unit (and possibly subsequent one) of an innovative phased-construction library building at Skidmore College in 1940. Construction for the Newport YMCA was performed by Norcross Brothers Company, contractors, of Worcester, Massachusetts. The design of the YMCA building is a handsome and functionally successful example of the Beaux-Arts style rendered in pale buff masonry, brick, and polychrome terra-cotta. It meets an apparently unwritten standard for high quality design in YMCA buildings of this period. This standard was set in 1902 by the Brooklyn Navy Branch YMCA, New York, donated by Miss Helen Gould, daughter of Jay Gould. Army and Navy YMCAs were intended to be attractive and comfortable, to be as "homey" as possible. Extending back behind its elegant main block, the Newport YMCA makes optimal use of an awkwardly shaped area. Although large in size, the fragmenting of the building mass along Farewell Street reduces the overall sense of a massive structure. It is one of the few early twentieth-century public buildings in Newport to use pale construction materials in this manner, along with Saint Joseph's Catholic Church, Broadway (1911, Murphy, Hindle, and Wright, architects) and the small Telephone Exchange Building on Spring Street of about the same time. Later public buildings of the 1920s and 1930s constructed nearby used red brick and Georgian Revival or Neoclassical styling. The other artisan known to have been associated with the project was the sculptor, Bela Lyon Pratt (1867-1917), designer of the dedication bas-relief in the reading and writing room. Pratt studied at Yale University with Saint Gardens, and at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. His works are displayed at Yale, the Boston Public Library, the Massachusetts State House, the Congressional Library, and numerous other

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locations. Berkeley Chapel in Middletown contains his medallion of Bishop Clark.

The Army and Navy YMCA doors opened November 17, 1911. For the next sixty-odd years the YMCA provided a "home-away-from-home" for hundreds of thousands of enlisted men passing through Newport. An indication of the volume of traffic is contained in the fact that by 1919 the marble entrance steps needed replacement. That same year, 5,753 men passed through the door in a single twenty-four hour period. Cots were set up routinely to supplement the 114 rooms, and during summer months when the fleet was in hundreds slept on the floor; many others had to be turned away to sleep outdoors. By 1920 the YMCA International Committee established a uniform membership policy for all Army and Navy YMCAs in recognition of the migrant nature of their constituency; accordingly any uniformed enlisted man who used YMCA facilities was considered a member. In Newport, YMCA participation was heavy during both peace and war time. Despite regular maintenance, the building required a renovation in 1938-39. Attendance records were set in 1944, to be exceeded by 143,965, or a total of 1,469,971 attendees, in 1951.

Amenities and services offered by the YMCA were similar to those offered at YMCAs elsewhere. Supplementing the basic banking, lodging, meals, hygiene, church service, and recreation activities, were the numerous social events funded and organized by the local Women's Auxiliary including concerts, movies, and regular afternoon cocoa and cracker hours.

During and after construction numerous people, primarily through the Women's Auxiliary, donated funds to furnish and endow the building. Among them were Mrs. Theodore Kane Gibbs (physical work department and endowment), Mrs. John Nicholas Brown (game room), Mrs. Elizabeth M. Page, Mrs. Emeline Olin, and Mrs. Henry F. Eldridge (all endowment), and Mrs. Hugh D. Auchincloss (social activities). The renovations of 1938-39 were funded with a contribution from Mrs. Arthur Emmons, a summer resident and longtime supporter.

The work of the Newport Army and Navy YMCA continued through both World War I and II and into the late twentieth century. During World War II the YMCA was a member of the United Services Organization (USO) (founded 1941). With dissolution of the USO in 1946, the YMCA again became the sole service agency working on

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behalf of the armed services, formally changing the name of the Army and Navy Department to the Armed Services Department. By the 1960s declining financial support, increased mobility of the armed forces, and growing proportions of overseas assignments forced the closing of a number of Armed Services YMCAs. These factors, along with relocation of seven Navy fleet unit staffs and thirty-nine naval ships out of Newport, resulted in closing of the YMCA on December 31, 1973. The building remained vacant for a number of years. It was recently reopened, pending sale to private non-profit organizations who intend to continue its function of sheltering the needy.

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