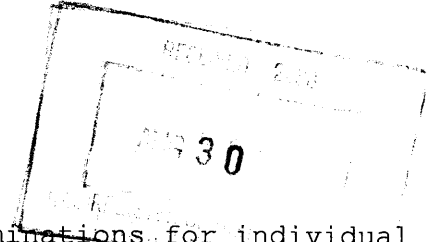


United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

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 any 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 Keokuk Young Women's Christian Association Building

other names/site number 56-01411 (Iowa State Inventory No.) _____

2. Location

street & number 425 Blondeau Street not for publication N/A
city or town Keokuk vicinity N/A
state Iowa code IA county Lee code 111 zip code 52632

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Howell J. Soike

Signature of certifying official

August 26, 2004
Date

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

State or 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 commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

=====
4. National Park Service Certification
=====

I, hereby certify that this property is:

Edson H. Beall 10/12/04

- 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): _____

for Signature of Keeper Date of Action

=====
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

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u> 1 </u>	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
_____	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
<u> 1 </u>	_____ Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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

=====

6. Function or Use

=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: SOCIAL	Sub: civic
<u>RECREATION AND CULTURE</u>	<u>auditorium</u>
<u>RECREATION AND CULTURE</u>	<u>sports facility</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: WORK IN PROGRESS	Sub: _____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

=====

7. Description

=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Beaux Arts
LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY MOVEMENTS

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	Concrete	_____
roof	Asphalt	_____
walls	Brick	_____
other		_____

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

=====

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 (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a 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)

SOCIAL HISTORY
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance 1913-1953

Significant Dates 1913

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Ratcliffe, Harry E.

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

=====
9. Major Bibliographical References
=====

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

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 #

Primary Location of Additional Data

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

Name of repository:

=====
10. Geographical Data
=====

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Table with 6 columns: Zone, Easting, Northing, Zone, Easting, Northing. Row 1: 1, 15, 637350, 4472790, 3, blank. Row 2: 2, blank, blank, blank, 4, blank.

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 Kent E. Barrett/Owner
e-mail address OneKCBear@aol.com

organization KC Enterprises I, LLC
date 4 March 2004

street & number 816 Grand Avenue telephone 319-601-9104
city or town Keokuk state IA zip code 52632

=====
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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name Kent E. Barrett
street & number 816 Grand Avenue telephone 319-601-9104
city or town Keokuk state IA zip code 52632

=====
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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Keokuk YWCA Building
Lee County, Iowa

The setting for the YWCA Building is near the center of downtown Keokuk, Iowa. A river town established in the early 1800's, Keokuk is situated in the southeastern tip of Iowa on a bend of the Mississippi just above the point where it is joined by the Des Moines River. In fact, the YWCA building is located just five blocks northeast of the first dam to span the mighty Mississippi. The largest privately funded construction project in world history (at that time), the dam (now known as U.S. Lock and Dam #19), began transmitting hydroelectric-generated power in July, 1913, just one month before the Keokuk YWCA opened its new building. The YWCA building stands at the southeast corner of Fifth and Blondeau Streets facing Blondeau, immediately northwest of the Keokuk City Hall and directly across Fifth Street to the southeast of the site of the former YMCA Building. The lot is approximately 8400 square feet or .19 acres and is dominated by the building. Blondeau Street runs parallel to Main Street, one block to the northeast. Clearly in the heart of the commercial district, the property is within two blocks of a number of important cultural and governmental buildings, including the restored Grand Theater, Meyer's Courtyard, the current Lee County Courthouse (former Federal Building and US Post Office built in 1910), Keokuk's City Hall, and the old Hotel Iowa (completed in 1913 at a cost of \$500,000 by the same engineers and contractors who constructed the Keokuk Power Plant, Lock and Dam and placed on the National Register in 1987). The former YMCA Building (demolished in 1975) sat directly across Fifth Street at the northsame corner of Fifth and Blondeau. The lot is rectangular with 100 feet of frontage on Blondeau Street and 84 feet on Fifth Street.

The building faces Blondeau (southwest) with center exterior stairs leading up from street level to the front door. The width of the structure is 96 feet and the depth is 69 feet, except for 38 feet of width and 20 feet of depth "taken out" of the north corner that provides the only space for off-street vehicle access. A concrete walking ramp along the northwest side of the building provides access to the exterior basement door at the rear near the north corner. Another concrete walking ramp runs along the rear (northeast side) of the building providing access to a rear door into the first floor. A loading ramp has also been installed at the rear (north corner) providing access from the street to the exterior basement door. An alley on the southeast provides space for a fire escape from the second floor, leaving space on the lot for minimal landscaping primarily just on the front (southwest side) of the building.

The YWCA Building is a substantial two story (with full basement) brick style building that is rectangular in shape (except for the cutout on the north corner) with a flat rolled asphalt/tar roof and significant architectural ornamentation. The foundation is poured concrete up to ground level (brick above) covered on the exterior with decorative concrete (designed to imitate stone) and the remainder of the building is constructed of red pressed brick with tile ornamentation. The architectural style is somewhat transitional, reflecting many features of Beaux-Arts Classicism combined with applied prairie details. The transition to Art Deco is evident on the exterior tile ornamentation is carried through the interior via the ornamentation of the fine wood moldings on the first and second floors

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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

Keokuk YWCA Building
Lee County, Iowa

The exterior is quite imposing due to its size and extent of ornamentation. The basement floor is approximately six feet below grade, while the first floor is about six feet above. This allows for 4-foot high windows which run along the west and north basement walls. The exterior of the poured concrete Keokuk foundation is decorative concrete (designed to imitate stone) along the southwest and northwest sides (which face Blondeau and Fifth Streets, respectively) and brick on the northeast and southeast. The center doorway on the front (southwest side) of the building is quite massive and the tile ornamentation extends to incorporate a large window above the landing between the first and second floors. Above this window is the substantial sign for the "Young Women's Christian Association" which dominates the top center of the building. Directly above this is a large flagpole extending from the roof that is similar to the flagpole which topped the former YMCA Building directly across Fifth Street. Above the basement level, the exterior is red pressed brick on all four sides and remains in very good condition. A series of 10 large windows (3.5 feet by 8 feet on the first floor and 3.5 feet by 6.5 feet on the second) span the front of the building and windows extend around all four sides so that in total the building boasts approximately 75 windows. The distinctive geometric tile ornamentation extends across the front and north sides of the building. Except for the center doorway/window/sign previously discussed, the ornamentation is found largely along the upper part of the façade, above the second story windows, and consists of a set of 19 geometrical designs with strong horizontal and vertical elements topped by a crown-type molding at the base of the decorative brick top which extends above the level of the flat roof.

The interior maintains the open floor plan originally designed for the YWCA, although some walls have been removed and counters and vaults added to the first floor in 1976 to accommodate the Lee County Courthouse in Keokuk. Immediately inside the front door is a decorative tile floor typical of the era of the building's construction. A short flight of steps leads to the central lobby area of the first floor with a broad brick fireplace along the back wall. Originally offices and a parlor and reading room filled the space to the northwest of the center lobby and the cafeteria and private dining room were on the southeast. Currently, both these areas are largely open divided from the central lobby by counters. Also vaults for storage of county records was installed in the north corner and along the center of the southeast wall. The original stairway to the basement remains intact along the back (northeast) wall. The ceiling is a more modern drop ceiling with built-in fluorescent lighting installed for the County Courthouse. An open staircase leads up to the second floor that, again, is dominated by a large brick fireplace. On the southeast the original auditorium, designed to seat up to 250 persons, remains with its raised stage, multi-level theater-type seating and dressing room. The west corner of the building contains the original club-room with a small adjoining room which was originally a kitchenette. A "rest-room" for relaxation is located to the northeast of the club-room at the north corner of the building. Adjacent to the southeast of the "rest-room" along the rear (northeast) wall are two small rooms that were available for overnight lodging. The basement originally housed the gymnasium with its sunken floor on the south end along with the locker rooms, showroom and Junior Club areas. In addition to the fireplaces on the first and second floors, the original wood moldings, which include geometric decorative trim similar to the exterior ornamentation, are in place on columns on both floors and original lighting fixtures remain on the second floor. The interior condition is relatively good on the first floor. The second floor is in fair condition with significant cosmetic repair required. Renovation of the basement is largely complete except for reinstallation of electric and plumbing.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 3

Keokuk YWCA Building
Lee County, Iowa

The exterior is still in very good condition; recent renovation work includes replacement of broken window glass, restoration of window frames (where required) and repainting (paint is limited to doorways and window trim). There has been only modest damage to the ornamental tile over the years. While not visible except from above, the roof has been leaking and is currently being replaced. The primary alterations to the building's exterior involve the doors and windows. Modern metal-framed doors were installed (presumably in 1975-1976) at the main front entrance and the rear entrance to the first floor. The basement doorway at the north corner was recently widened when the loading ramp was built. Also, storm windows were installed over the original windows throughout the first floor and the four third-floor windows on the north end of the front (west side) of the building along with one-third floor window on the north side have been replaced with single sheets of tinted glass. The window frames, brick facade and ornamental tile all appear to be free from any significant alteration.

The interior spaces are generally intact but in need of significant cosmetic restoration as well as electrical, plumbing and heating/cooling work. The first floor of the interior, however, was significantly modified to facilitate its use as a Lee County Courthouse beginning in 1976, including installation of modern drop ceilings in the northwest and southeast ends, some interior wall removal and installation of counters and the two large walk-in vaults. The basement had also been modified at some point with a drop ceiling and paneling attached to most of the walls (above the original three feet of brick along the bottom). Recent renovation work has removed the drop ceiling and paneling and installed a new double-thick, fire-rated drywall ceiling. The second floor is relatively free of interior alteration, but more in need of cosmetic restoration.

Overall, the building is extremely sound, retains most of its original exterior and a good deal of its interior character and is in respectable condition considering its age and the duration of its more recent lack of use.

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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

Keokuk YWCA Building
Lee County, Iowa

Statement of Significance

The YWCA Building meets National Register Criterion A locally as the home of a community-supported organization chartered to build character and meet the needs of women and girls of all ages and all backgrounds. The building also meets National Register Criterion C as one of the best representative examples of transitional architecture prominent during the early part of the twentieth century as well as a meaningful reflection of Keokuk's period of industrial growth and an example of early use of poured concrete. The period of significance is from 1913 to 1953 when the Keokuk YWCA was consolidated with the local YMCA.

The building was designed and constructed specifically to house the activities of the Young Women's Christian Association. For approximately half a century, the building was the home of the Keokuk YWCA. Along with the former YMCA building (which sat directly across the street until it was demolished in 1975), the YWCA Building dominated a portion of downtown Keokuk and, with the best facilities for recreational and cultural events, formed the hub of social activity in the community.

Architecturally, the YWCA Building is rooted in the Beaux Arts and Arts and Crafts styles, but reflects transition towards Art Deco. The YWCA Building was designed by Harry E. Ratcliffe, a prominent architect who practiced in Keokuk and the surrounding area in the early years of the twentieth century, and is an excellent representative example of local architecture of the time. Contextually, it relates to Keokuk's period of architectural enrichment that began around the turn of the century and continued through the industrial growth period which coincided with the construction of the great dam across the Mississippi. During this period, Keokuk's building boom created many of the physical attributes which characterize the town to the present day. While one of a number of buildings surviving from this period, the location, size and extent of ornamentation of the YWCA Building make it, arguably, the most prominent.

YWCA Movement

The Young Women's Christian Association has played an important role in American history by providing social services to women for a century and a half. Begun in 1855 in England to improve working conditions for women during the Industrial Revolution, the movement quickly jumped across the Atlantic Ocean when the Ladies Christian Association was established in 1858 in New York City. Pushed forward by the evangelical movement in Christian churches and increased women's educational opportunities, YWCA associations quickly spread across the country. The world YWCA was established in 1894 (currently headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland) and the YWCA of the USA was founded in 1906 (with offices currently in the Empire State Building). In fact, by the time the Keokuk Iowa's YWCA Building was under construction in 1913, there had been 29 association buildings remodeled or constructed since 1910 and another eight were in process. These structures spanned the continent from Los Angeles, California to Buffalo, New York and represented a combined estimated investment of approximately \$3.7 million. While the majority were in the Midwest and

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

Keokuk YWCA Building
Lee County, Iowa

Northeast, such locations as Seattle, Washington, St. Paul, Minnesota, Colorado Springs, Colorado, El Paso, Texas, and Birmingham, Alabama were also represented.¹

An appropriate description of the YWCA can be found in a talk given by Miss Esther Huckins, National Town Secretary for the local region at the Keokuk YWCA's 1929 annual meeting, where she defined the YWCA as:

*...a fellowship of women, older and young, who seek for themselves education in the fine art of living—
an abundant living. It is an organization with a purpose, big enough to challenge the best in all, a
Christian purpose, not in a narrow sense but in a broad, brotherly sense.²*

The services historically offered by the YWCA have been broad ranging, including boarding for female students, teachers and factory workers; vocational training, employment assistance, English-as-a-second-language courses; programs for armed services personnel (that led to the formation of the USOs); physical fitness facilities; and safe living and dining facilities for displaced women. Today, 326 Associations in all 50 states operate out of branch buildings, storefronts, skyscrapers, community centers, classrooms, houses and mobile vans in thousands of locations to “provide safety, shelter, day care, physical fitness programs, counseling, and social, health, educational, and job-related services to millions of women and girls and their communities annually.”³

YWCA in Keokuk

From the very beginning, the YWCA Building was a labor of love made reality through the generous support of prominent Keokukians. The Keokuk Young Womens Christian Association had been organized during January 1905 at the home of Mrs. John H. Craig as an outgrowth of a group of women who had gathered themselves together the previous year for Bible study. By 1911, it was obvious that the Association had outgrown its leased rooms between Fifth and Sixth Streets on Main and Mr. L.A. Hamill donated \$50 to start a building fund in June of that year. On April 15, 1912, Mr. Gerard Huiskamp purchased the lot at Fifth and Blondeau Streets for \$7,500 and donated it to the YWCA as a memorial to his wife. Mrs. Henry Christian Huiskamp donated \$4,000 and her daughter, Miss Lucretia Huiskamp, pledged \$1,000. Mr. Clyde Royal Joy (original owner of the Grand Anne Bed & Breakfast at 816 Grand Avenue which was placed on the National Register in 1997 and which is the centerpiece of the Park Place/Grand Avenue Residential District which was placed on the National Register in 2002) gave \$2,500 and Judge Logan, E.S. Baker, Hugh L. Cooper, L.A. Hamill, C.D. Streeter and Mrs. Henry W. Huiskamp each gave \$1,000. As a result of these early offerings, gifts from many others, and the tireless efforts of the fundraising workers, \$28,000 was raised in five days beginning April 15, 1912 (the day the Titanic sunk) and the building was begun. By May 14, 1913, \$20,000 was still needed to finish paying for the building

¹ “Growth and Progress of the Keokuk Y.W.C.A., *Daily Gate City*, 11 May, 1913

² “Much of Interest to Local Women Found in Y.W.C.A. Annual Reports”, *Daily Gate City*, 24 January, 1929

³ Lee, Antoinette J., “Supporting Working Women: YWCA Buildings in the National Register of Historic Places”, *OAH Magazine of History*, Fall 1997, ISSN 0882-228X, Organization of American Historians

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

Keokuk YWCA Building
Lee County, Iowa

then under construction and for the furnishings and another campaign was launched. ("The furnishing including the tinting of the walls cost \$8,919.30⁴)

On August 3, 1913, the YWCA moved into their new home free from debt and "[the building] has been 'open house' to Keokuk and to the stranger within our gates ever since. The building would do credit to a town twice the size of Keokuk."⁵ Response to the new building was immediate, as history records that during its first full month in operation (September 1913), 9,000 people visited, ten church societies held meetings, two large banquets were served and many other social functions were held.⁶

For many decades, the building was a primary focus of social life in town. Its location near the center of downtown and directly across Fifth Street from the YMCA building (constructed in 1899 and demolished 76 years later), its striking architecture and its well designed interior spaces made it not only a marvelous home for the YWCA, but also a prominent community gathering place. "Many study groups, clubs, various organizations, Blue Triangle and Girl Reserves meet regularly in the building. Others come frequently, but all are heartily welcome."⁷ The basement housed the gymnasium, lockers, showroom and Junior Club. Both the first and second floors are each dominated by a central gathering lobby with broad brick fireplace. The first floor also housed offices, a reading room, the cafeteria, and a private dining room. The second floor contained a fine club-room with kitchenette, rest-room for the weary, two sleeping rooms and the 250-seat auditorium, complete with stage, raised seating and adjoining green room. "It is altogether a most complete building, a place for reception and training in the most vital of all things 'How to live'...The association building is enjoyed by thousands of persons each year. In addition to those who enroll in the regular activities and clubs, there are others who drop in for a place to read or rest or chat with a friend. Transient people, motoring through the country, find it a pleasant safe place to rest, with appetizing meals served. The Association tries to make for all 'A home away from home.'"⁸

Perhaps the best description of the activities of the Keokuk Association which centered in their headquarters building can be found in the following excerpt from a 1935 history of the local chapter:

The Keokuk YWCA, through the Board of Directors, have made their association building one of the most attractive places in the city for girls to spend their idle time and it is hoped it will help to solve the problem of girls on the streets. It won't solve the problem perfectly, any more than the churches are solving perfectly the problem of sin in the world, but it will be an agent for much good.

⁴ "9,000 Visit the Building", *Daily Gate City*, 11 May, 1913

⁵ "YW Building is Open House to All Persons", *Daily Gate City*, Unknown Date

⁶ "9,000 Visit the Building", *Daily Gate City*, 11 May, 1913

⁷ "YW Building is Open House to All Persons", *Daily Gate City*, Unknown Date

⁸ "Y.W.C.A." (A History of the Keokuk YWCA), 1935, Located in YMCA/YWCA File at the Keokuk Public Library, 210 North Fifth Street, Keokuk, Iowa

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

Keokuk YWCA Building
Lee County, Iowa

In 1935, the organization is still striving to carry out the purposes for which it was organized, with a detailed character-building program varied to suit the needs of women and girls from the age of twelve to ninety.

There are six Reserve clubs which are built upon the principle of developing "Girl Initiative with Adult Guidance". A fine group of young women give of their services voluntarily to act as advisers to these clubs.

In the clubs the girls are given opportunities to make new friends; develop new skills; find clean, wholesome recreation; learn the arts of cooperation, living with others, building of proper attitudes, becoming leaders; to grow spiritually; camping experiences are provided for the girls during the summer.

Through the Friendship and Amica Clubs, Industrial girls and Business and Professional girls and women find their places in the organization of the association. Some of these young women, as well as some of the school girls, enroll in the Health Education Department for swimming (carried on in the Y.M.C.A. pool), tennis, basket ball, volley ball and other forms of physical recreation.

Other clubs offer courses in Bible Study, Religious Leadership Training, studies of other countries, discussions of current events, comparing of experiences in garden making.

The Service Department offers the hospitality of reading and rest rooms to the general public; operates an Employment Bureau and a Room Registry Service by which strangers are referred to suitable rooms outside the building, acts as local representative of the National Travelers Aid; and lends the use of its club rooms to other organizations.

The Cafeteria under the direction of Mrs. Ruby Walzem serves appetizing meals daily to individuals who desire good home cooking; also caters to groups and organizations who desire a cheery, home-like place for dinner programs and social get-togethers.⁹

The building served the needs of the Association and the community for over a half-century. On May 1, 1953, the Keokuk YMCA and YWCA were formally consolidated. Even then the combined organization continued to operate from both buildings on either side of Fifth Street. The purpose of the consolidation was to eliminate overlapping or duplicating activities and to combine resources to provide an expanded program to meet the recreational needs of all youths in the community. On January 8, 1975, a more modern facility was dedicated across from Keokuk High School to house the operations of the combined organization (known as the YM-YWCA) and in March 1975, the former YMCA building was demolished. The YWCA building was spared, however, and was deeded by the YWCA to the City of Keokuk in June of 1975. In July, the City of Keokuk

⁹ "Y.W.C.A." (A History of the Keokuk YWCA), 1935, Located in YMCA/YWCA File at the Keokuk Public Library, 210 North Fifth Street, Keokuk, Iowa

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

Keokuk YWCA Building
Lee County, Iowa

exchanged the YWCA Building for the deteriorating old courthouse and sheriff's house which were owned by Lee County. These latter structures were demolished early in 1976 to provide parking lot space for the city. Lee County remodeled the first floor of the YWCA Building which served as the Lee County Courthouse at Keokuk beginning in 1976. In November 1994, after the remodeling of the current County Courthouse at the southwest corner of Seventh and Blondeau Streets was complete, the YWCA Building was auctioned to the highest bidder and fell into private hands for the first time in its history.

Architecture

Built during 1912 and 1913, the building serves to recall Keokuk's period of architectural enrichment that coincided with its industrial growth period of the early part of the twentieth century. During this period the building stock of the city changed in significant ways and the pace of new building was unprecedented. The spirit of the times and the unparalleled optimism for the future of this small river town was captured in the following colorful excerpt from an April 21, 1913 article in the local paper:

And one great feature of the whole forward movement in the matter of building and progress is that there is nothing spasmodic about it but presages a steady, prosperous growth, and enlargement, builded on a foundation of stone as strong and immovable as the great water power dam which rears its massive crest in front of us. And this growth is not surprising. The city is bound to grow. It can no more resist the force than a ship with sails unfurled can remain still against the strong breath of a stiff gale.

Keokuk has something tangible to offer now in addition to her former many natural attractions—and advantages. The great water power is an engine of progressive strength. It is furnishing the additional power to push Keokuk's progress along substantial lines, and the city could not stand still if it would with all this additional power behind it to push it along.¹⁰

From an architectural standpoint, the YWCA Building is a transitional building rooted in the Beaux Arts style, but moving towards Art Deco. The YWCA Building dominates the streetscape and incorporates the heavy ashlar stone base (actually concrete made to look like ashlar), massive and symmetrical facade, ornate decorative trim, and grand staircases typical of the Beaux Arts Classicism style. This late form of Neoclassicism was named after the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, where many prominent turn-of-the-century American architects studied. "Grandiose" is the label often applied to this architectural style which combines Greek and Roman models with Renaissance forms. Beaux Arts Classicism was widespread from 1880-1930 and was employed in many well-known colossal public buildings, such as the New York City and Boston Public Libraries and Grand Central and Pennsylvania Stations in New York City. The YWCA Building does not, however, have the colossal columns or pilasters or round-headed arches that are also characteristic of Beaux Arts Classicism. In fact, the shape and massing of the building along with the distinctive geometric tile ornamentation which extends across the upper part of the facades facing both Fifth and Blondeau Streets, reflect movement from the Arts and Crafts

¹⁰ "Fine Building Progress Anticipated This Year", *Daily Gate City*, 21 April, 1912

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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

Keokuk YWCA Building
Lee County, Iowa

to the Art Deco architectural style, which became popular between the two World Wars and took its name from the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs in Paris. Emerging out of the conflict of knowledge, techniques, thoughts and ideas which marked the early part of the twentieth century, Art Deco combined modern art movements with ancient geometrical design styles. The YWCA Building's ornamental design elements continue from the exterior facades through the interior with similar geometric designs built into the beautiful wood moldings which grace the first and second floors. Having been completed during 1913, shortly before the outbreak of World War I, the YWCA Building is more transitional, reflecting Beaux-Arts Classicism architecture with applied detailing which also suggests the Art Deco style which would become popular in another decade.

The architect for the YWCA Building was Harry E. Ratcliffe, who was widely-known in his day and who came to Keokuk shortly after the turn of the century. One of the most prominent of Mr. Ratcliffe's buildings was the Masonic Building (currently Meyers Courtyard) at the corner of Seventh and Blondeau (just two blocks northwest of the YWCA), which was completed at a cost of \$80,000 in 1914. During this same time period, Mr. Ratcliffe was favored by the school district in Keokuk. The George Washington Elementary School built at the corner of Ninth and Concert in 1910 (no longer standing) and the Garfield (17th and Fulton) and Jefferson (23rd & Exchange) Elementaries completed in 1915 were all designed by Mr. Ratcliffe. The Keokuk Baptist Church built at the corner of Eighth and Blondeau (one block northwest of the YWCA) and the Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church at 10th and Main were both designed by Mr. Ratcliffe in 1907. A number of other commercial and residential buildings in Keokuk and surrounding communities (Hamilton, Carthage, Kahoka, New London, Bushnell and Nauvoo) owe their distinctive designs to the popular architect. For example, the First National Bank of Nauvoo built a new building at the corner of 13th and Mulholland in 1913 which features some of the same architectural design elements as the YWCA and which currently houses the town's Tourist Information Center. During the construction of the great dam at Keokuk in 1913, Ratcliffe was hired by the United States Government to design a two-story office building at the U.S. locks and a two-story residence for the superintendent at the U.S. dry dock in Keokuk.

The YWCA Building also reflects an unusual historic method of construction in that poured concrete instead of stone was used for the foundation. The poured concrete walls extend several feet above the basement floor (to approximately ground level) and then brick is employed above. While concrete in some form was used in the U.S. as early as the 1800's, economies of scale, transportation improvements and local construction habits did not evolve to make poured concrete foundations generally practical until the late 1920's. In line with this chronology, the world's first ready mix concrete truck was patented in 1927 and the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association was founded in 1930. In many areas, poured concrete foundations didn't become prevalent until after World War II when the American suburban subdivision was born. This transition from stone to poured concrete foundations was sufficiently predictable that the degree of its use in foundations is considered an exceptionally reliable way to determine the age of a site or general area. Accordingly, a building like the YWCA constructed in 1912-13 would presumably not have had a poured concrete foundation were it not constructed at the same time as the Keokuk Power Plant, Lock and Dam, just a few blocks away. Nine-

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 10

Keokuk YWCA Building
Lee County, Iowa

tenths of a mile long and 53 feet high, the dam along with its 5-block long, 15-story "sky-scraper" power-house, was considered at the time to be the greatest power plant in the world and one of the wonders of the United States. The dam began generating power on July 1, 1913 and the formal opening celebration was held on August 26, just 23 days after the YWCA moved into their new building.

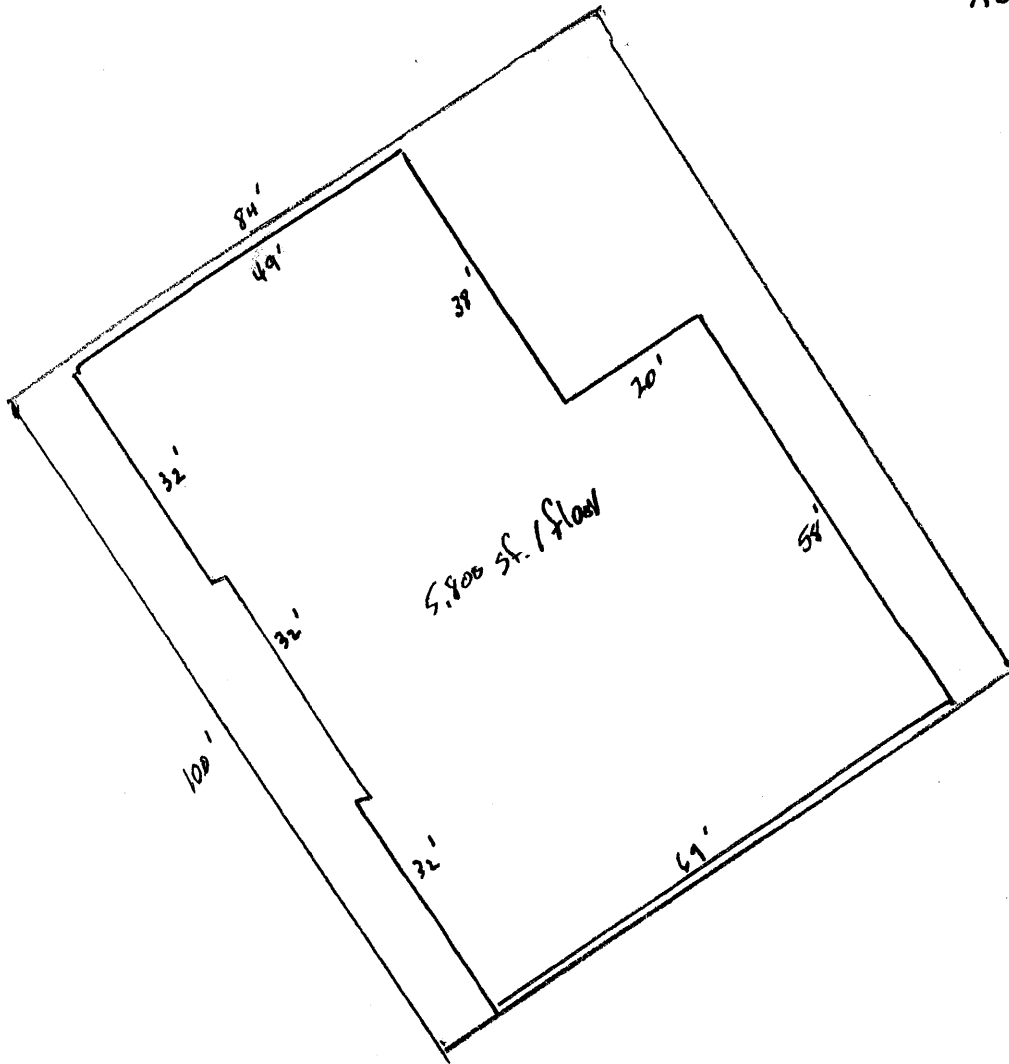
The exterior of the Keokuk YWCA Building is largely unchanged from its original state, although more modern metal and glass doors and storm windows were added on the main floor in the mid-1970's. The interior spaces still retain much of the original layout and features, including the central first and second floor fireplaces and wood trim as well as the third floor theatre, complete with stage, raised seating and dressing room. The first floor layout has been modified via some alteration of walls and installation of counters, drop ceilings and two large walk-in safes to retrofit the building as a county courthouse in 1975-1976. The basement has also undergone modifications over the years, including a drop ceiling and installation of paneling over much of the walls (above the bottom three feet which still have the original brick). The building has now been largely empty for many years. The exterior is in good condition (with the exception of some broken windows) and substantially true to its original look and feel. The interior is in need of more renovation, but still boasts the beautiful broad brick fireplaces, original decorative wood beams, columns and moldings and the second floor rooms (including the auditorium) have received little alteration from the original and are just in need of restoration. The stage, raised seating, green room, beautiful wood and glass club-room doors and original lighting fixtures are all still in place.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 11

Keokuk YWCA Building
Lee County, Iowa



Site Plan

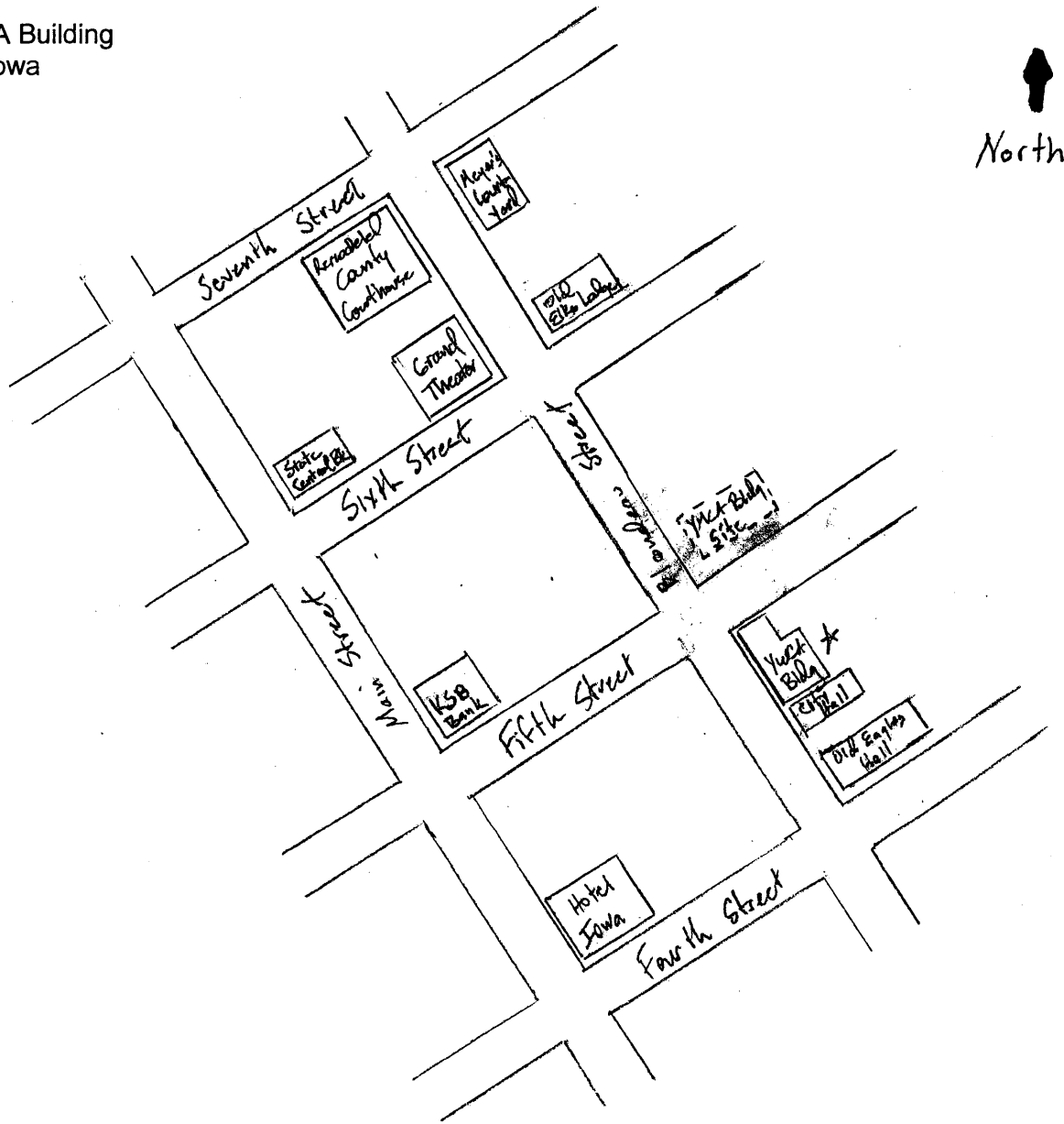
Source: Lee County Assessor's Office, Property Report Card: 004+04-45-21-25-436-0010,
Located at South Lee County Courthouse, 25 North Seventh Street, Keokuk, Iowa

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 12

Keokuk YWCA Building
Lee County, Iowa



Area Map

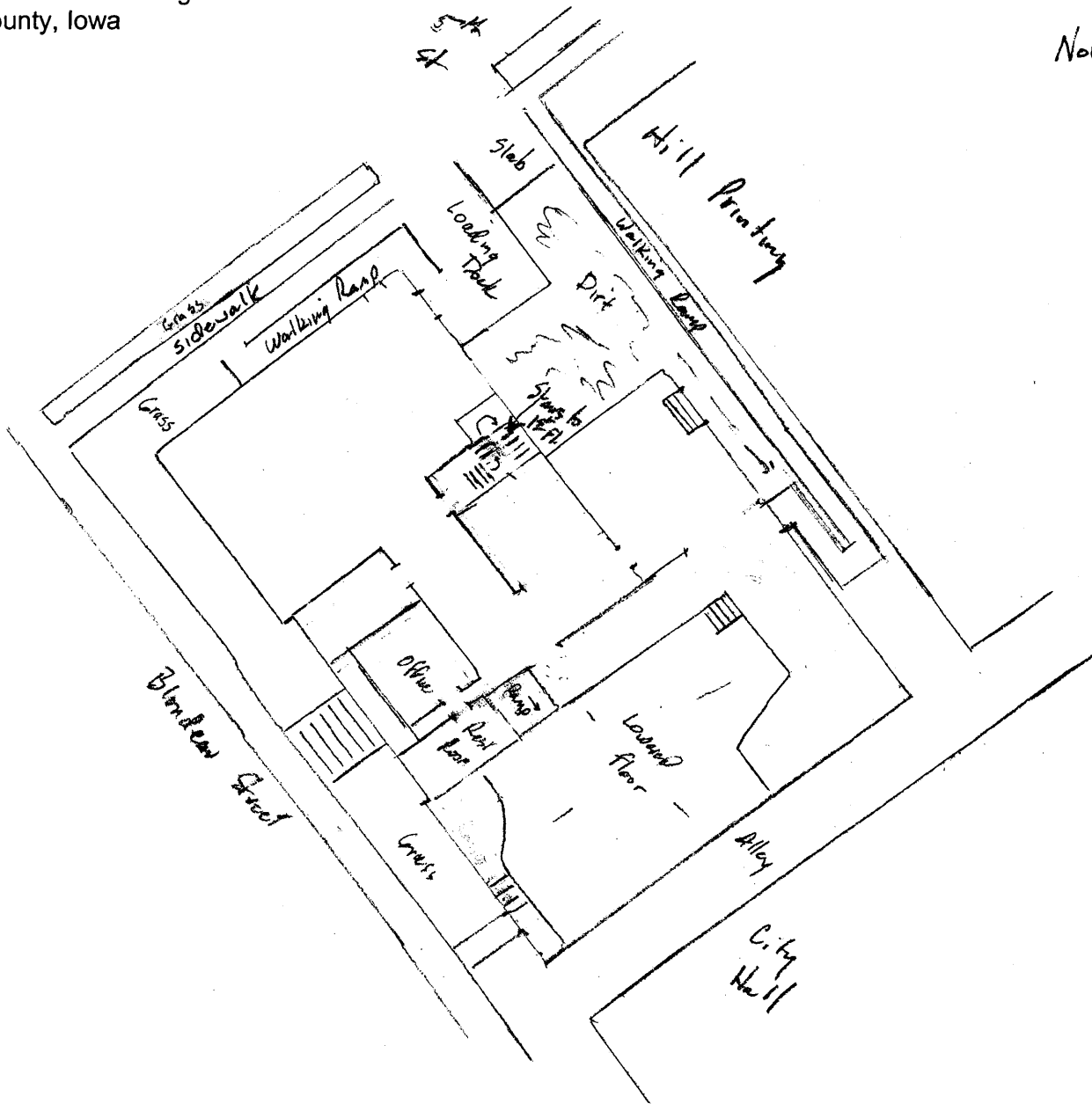
Source: Personal Observation of Kent E. Barrett, March, 2004

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 13

Keokuk YWCA Building
Lee County, Iowa



Basement Floorplan and Site Improvements (Not to Scale)

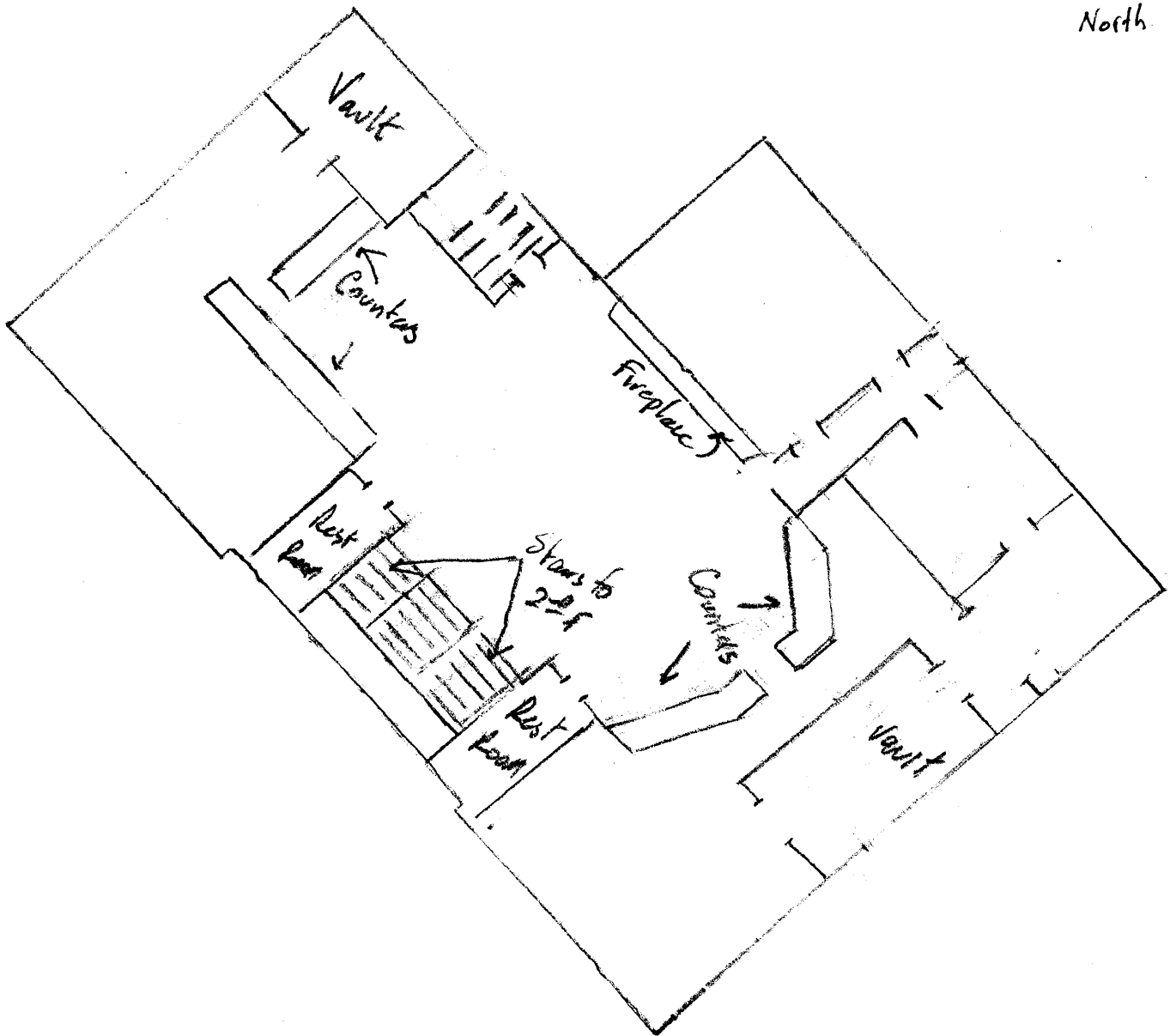
Source: Personal observation of Kent E. Barrett; March, 2004

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 14

Keokuk YWCA Building
Lee County, Iowa



Floorplan-First Floor (Not to Scale)

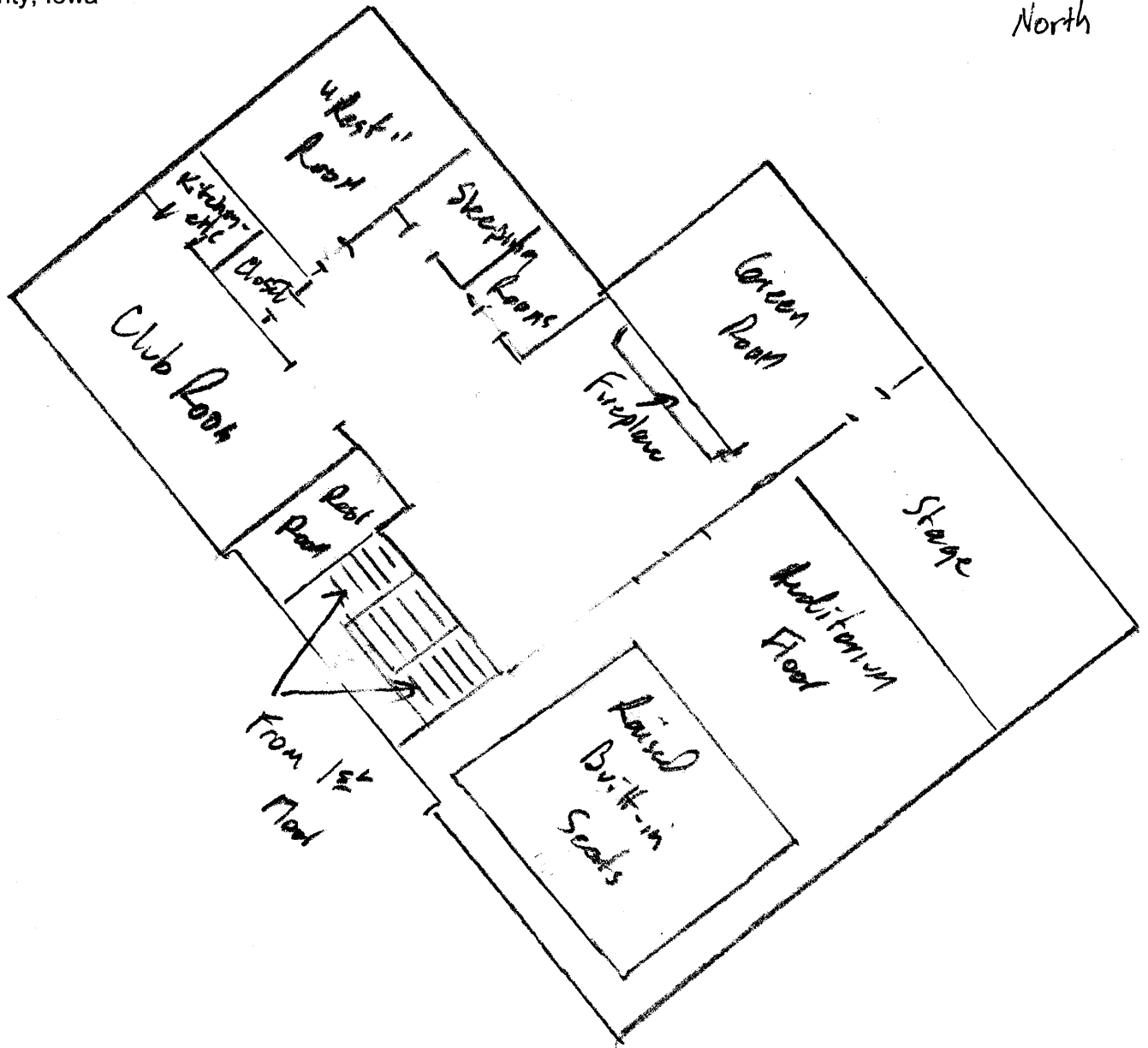
Source: Personal Observation of Kent E. Barrett; March, 2004

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 15

Keokuk YWCA Building
Lee County, Iowa



Floorplan-Second Floor (Not to Scale)

Source: Personal Observation of Kent E. Barrett; March, 2004

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 16

Keokuk YWCA Building
Lee County, Iowa

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 17

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"Trinity Church to be a Beauty, *Daily Gate City*, 15 January, 1907

"Y.M.-Y.W. Merger is Nearing Completion, *Daily Gate City*, 31 March, 1953

"Y.M.C.A. is Older Than its Sister", *Daily Gate City*, Unknown Date

"YW Building is Open House to All Persons", *Daily Gate City*, Unknown Date.

Y.W.C.A." (A History of the Keokuk YWCA), 1935, Located in YMCA/YWCA File at the Keokuk Public Library, 210 North Fifth Street, Keokuk, Iowa

YWCA of the USA Homepage on the World Wide Web, <http://www.ywca.org>

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 18

Keokuk YWCA Building
Lee County, Iowa

Verbal Boundary Description

The front 84 feet of lots 7 and 8 in block 38 and an alley for the use of the owners of Lots 7, 8, and 9, described as the Rear 84 feet of the Westerly 5 feet of Lot 9 and the Easterly 7 feet of Lot 8, all in Block 38, in the Original City of Keokuk, Lee County, Iowa.

Verbal Boundary Justification

The boundaries correspond to the legal parcel historically associated with the YWCA Building.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number Photos Page 19

YWCA Building
Keokuk, IA

Index to Photographs

Name of Photographer: Kent E. Barrett
Date of Photographs: March 4, 2004
Location of Original Negatives: 816 Grand Avenue, Keokuk, IA
Description of Views:

Photo number 1: Front (southwest) and side (northwest) of building. View to east.

Photo number 2: Close-up of front above main entrance. View to northeast.

Photo number 3: Side (northwest) and rear (northeast) of building. View to southeast.

Photo number 4: Close-up of loading dock at north corner of building. View to south.

Photo number 5: Front stairs leading from entry to first floor. View to northeast.

Photo number 6: First floor from top of stairs with wall of vault in north corner at left and door to stairwell to basement at right. View to north.

Photo number 7: Stairs leading from landing to second floor. View to northeast.

Photo number 8: Second floor with doorways to (clockwise from left): bathroom, club-room, closet, "rest-room", sleeping room, sleeping room. View to northwest.

Photo number 9: Second floor theatre. View to northeast.

Photo number 10: Southeast end of basement with ramp leading to lower floor area. View to east.