

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

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received AUG 20 1984
date entered SEP 20 1984

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

1. Name

historic The Oakland Y.W.C.A. Building

and/or common The Oakland Y.W.C.A. Building

2. Location

street & number 1515 Webster Street N/A not for publication

city, town Oakland N/A vicinity of Congressional District #8

state California code 06 county Alameda County 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 checked="" 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
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<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:

4. Owner of Property

name Oakland Young Women's Christian Association

street & number 1515 Webster Street

city, town Oakland N/A vicinity of state California 94612

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Alameda County Recorder's Office

street & number 1225 Fallon Street, Room 100

city, town Oakland state California

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date May 24, 1977 federal state county local

depository for survey records Oakland City Planning Department

city, town Oakland state California 94612

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>N/A</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Located in downtown, the Oakland YWCA building is five stories high, plus a full basement, and measures 110 feet by 108 feet, filling the entire lot except for a 10-foot alley at the rear. The building is well constructed of reinforced concrete with brick facing and glazed terra cotta architectural details which have been preserved. A row of iron cresting is set along the top cornice of the building. Above the front entrance is a set of triple and two single Palladian arch-headed windows, each with elaborate glazed terra cotta moldings around the window; these arch windows are accentuated with a balustrade. On the top floors and on the sides of the building, the window surrounds are striated with brick. The first floor originally contained an open courtyard encircled by an arcade; this was later roofed over to create an atrium, but the original architectural features still exist. The central atrium, being the focal point of the first floor, is characterized as resembling Santa Maria della Pace in Rome by Bramante. Adjacent to the atrium is a beautifully carved fireplace and inglenook. Aside from the enclosure of the courtyard, original design integrity remains high.

The facades are designed in a two-part vertical composition with a ground floor base, a three-story shaft, and a one-story attic. Surface materials are rusticated grey-beige pressed brick on the base, brick-bordered stucco with terra cotta trim on the shaft and brick with terra cotta trim on the attic. The terra cotta closely matches the brick color, except around some of the shaft and attic windows, where it is richly polychromed.

The main entry is recessed behind three openings separated by rusticated brick piers in the center of the symmetrical Webster Street side. Terra cotta panels above the openings read "YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION" in relief lettering. The entry is approached by grey-veined white marble steps within the openings, the sides and tops of which are surfaced with pinkish-beige marble. The entry floor is terrazzo with a marble border. The rear wall contains a center entry flanked by small-paned windows with oak sashes, all set in oak architraves with decorated oak transom panels. The original entry doors have been replaced with glazed anodized aluminum.

The bottom two floors of the shaft are combined on the Webster Street side into a tall single story accommodating an auditorium and marked by three large arcaded windows above the three entry openings in the base with single-arched windows on each side. The windows are framed by polychromed terra cotta pilasters with crocketed capitals below polychromed terra cotta archivolts and spandrels. A terra cotta hood molding runs across the top of each of the three window groups with a turned terra cotta balustrade at the bottom between the pilasters. The polychromed terra cotta depicts nuts and foliage with ribbons and bosses. The windows are small-paned with two-third fanlights at the tops. The attached early photograph indicates that the balustrade in front of the center windows was originally a balcony supported by consoles. The top floor of the shaft consists of a band of square small-paned casement windows below a sheet metal molded cornice.

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The regularly-fenestrated attic story has polychromed terra cotta panels decorated with ribbons, foliage, and fruit framing the sides and tops of the windows. The top row of the panels acts as a frieze below a shallow sheet metal cornice with brick parapet. The original small-paned top floor windows have been replaced with aluminum. A simple wrought metal balcony with small urn finials runs in front of the windows on top of the main cornice.

The 15th Street side is similar to the Webster Street side but is symmetrically divided into three irregular bays, articulated by brick borders in the shaft. A small recessed semicircular arched side entry is at the far left of the center bay base. The bottom two floors of the shaft are combined into a single floor in the end bays, accommodating the auditorium on the right and a gymnasium on the left. Each of the end bays has a large small-paned window framed by polychromed terra cotta pilasters with unusual festooned console capitals below a hood molding with polychromed frieze. The large window in the somewhat wider left bay is flanked by two smaller windows.

A cornerstone at the left bottom of the Webster Street side reads "DEDICATED TO NOBLER WOMANHOOD".

The main feature of the interior is a large central two-level atrium with a low-pitched pyramidal small-paned skylight. The bottom level is arcaded with modified Corinthian pilasters below an entablature with the motto "THE HEAVENS DECLARE THE GLORY OF GOD, AND THE FIRMAMENT SHOWETH HIS HANDIWORK. DAY UNTO DAY UTTERETH SPEECH, AND NIGHT UNTO NIGHT SHOWETH KNOWLEDGE - PSALM 19, V. 1,2." in the frieze. The second level alternates modified Corinthian columns with pilastered piers below a bracketed entablature. A broadly-projecting open framework with carved broadly-projecting brackets runs above the entablature. Oak French and paneled doors lead to the spaces surrounding the atrium. At the bottom level in the immediate left corner as one enters is a large fireplace with a wide decorated frieze on a painted wood mantel. Oak alcove seats are adjacent to the fireplace. In the right corner is a branching oak staircase with turned balusters and paneled newels.

The staircase as well as the upper floors are of hardwood. The newel post forms a nice ending to a flight of stairs, with its balusters and handrail leading to the next landing. The second floor houses Ehmann Hall, a gymnasium, and several offices. Ehmann Hall has a full balcony, fully-fitted stage, and dressing room. The basement houses an indoor swimming pool complete with dressing rooms and showers. The original wood showers and partitions in basement and entrance were replaced by glazed tile partitions and tile floor was installed.

The second level auditorium has a heavy beamed ceiling with large foliate consoles under the beam ends. A small balcony extends across the rear.

The gymnasium has a tall unfinished redwood wainscot below a redwood entablature with blank frieze. Portions of the lower walls are open behind square redwood columns with molded caps. The interior walls above the wainscot appear to have originally contained a gallery behind square redwood columns, now painted, but the gallery has been closed off.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) Women's History
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1914 **Builder/Architect** Julia Morgan, Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Oakland YWCA building, built in 1914, is significant for its historic associations with the development of social services at the community level as well as initiating an international Christian women's movement. The Oakland YWCA building, the first of 17 YWCAs nationwide designed by the renowned architect Julia Morgan, houses an organization quick to respond to community needs. The building is an excellent example of Julia Morgan's designs for women's organizations in its adaptation of the Renaissance architectural forms. Miss Morgan remains an important figure not only in the field of architecture but also as one of America's first feminists as she opened the door to the field of civil engineering and architecture for generations of women to come. The YWCA was the first social service agency in the City of Oakland, founded in 1877 by a group of women from the community's local churches who banded together calling themselves The Ladies Evangelical Philanthropic Society. Their purpose was "to gather children together to teach them helpful things. To visit jails and hold prayer and Bible readings with the women." In 1913, a Capital Fund drive, headed by H. C. Capwell, raised \$200,000 toward the construction of the 1515 Webster building in Oakland.

Building permit #33095 was issued October 7, 1913 for this structure, known as the Oakland Young Women's Christian Association. The permit identifies the owner as the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), the architect as Julia Morgan, and the builder as D. Z. Farquharson. The cost is shown as \$178,000. Additional building permits issued for the building show alterations in 1919 to construct the swimming pool at a cost of \$16,000 and in 1927 to alter dormitories and classrooms into individual bedrooms at a cost of \$14,000.

The Oakland YWCA began in 1877 as the Ladies Evangelical Philanthropic Society, a group of ladies from local churches, "To establish a sheltering home for girls without home or friends. To gather children together to teach them helpful things. To visit jails and hold prayer and Bible readings with the women. To interest themselves in 'girls' who are on the 'wrong road' and leading others on. To make our name loved and respected, in Oakland because of the good we do for women and girls." As well as being the first social service agency in Oakland, the following year the group affiliated with the fledgling national "Y" movement, becoming the first YWCA in California.

In 1913, H. C. Capwell led a campaign to raise \$200,000 for construction of the subject building. The cornerstone was laid in May 1914. In 1916, a girls sewing school opened under YWCA auspices in an East Oakland settlement; later, the Travelers Aid Service, Campfire Girls, the Philomathian Club for Negro Women, a unit of the Business and Professional Women, the International Institute, and the Oakland Industrial Recreation Association were formed. The primary service during these decades, however, was to serve as a "home away from home" for young women who were coming to urban centers from rural homes and small towns to enter the job market for the first time.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Y.W.C.A. Fact Sheet, 1983

Sims, Mary S. The Y.W.C.A. - An Unfolding Purpose. Women's Press, New York (1950)

Hull, Cynthia Personal communication. 1983

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property .27

Quadrangle name Oakland West

Quadrangle scale 1 : 24000

UTM References

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Building occupies its original 120' x 150' lot at the northwest corner of 15th and Webster Streets.

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

state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
state		code	county		code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anabelle Garcia, Member/Volunteer

organization Y.W.C.A.

date (OHP Staff Revision, 4/84)
October 4, 1983

street & number 1515 Webster Street

telephone (415) 451-7900

city or town Oakland

state California 94612

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

Marian Mitchell-Wilson

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

date 8/13/84

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 9-20-84

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Registration

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The challenges of World War II, including a large influx of wartime workers who flocked to Oakland for work in the shipyards and other industries, were met by the YWCA. Immediately following Pearl Harbor in 1941, the Oakland YWCA opened a 24-hour "Back Door Canteen" to feed defense workers, set up a dormitory for WACs, and throughout the war years operated Youth Harvest Camps in which agricultural work was carried out by teenagers replacing adult workers.

In the decades since the war, work has centered on community service with additional programs for the handicapped, ethnic groups, adolescents, and family planning. Today's YWCA continues to offer a wide range of recreational and educational services to a coed, all-ages, public. The swimming pool (the first located in an Oakland public building) continues to offer lessons and low-cost recreational swimming year-round.

Julia Morgan, well-known California architect of the early 20th century, is particularly noted for her design of San Simeon and 17 YWCA buildings, the first of which was Oakland's building at 1515 Webster Street. In 1912, she designed the YWCA summer retreat, Asilomar, at Pacific Grove -- a commission probably brought about by the friendship and mutual respect of Morgan and Phoebe Hearst, for whom Morgan had long been "family architect". According to a thesis on the Oakland "Y" by Michael Warning, Hearst was a strong supporter of the YWCA and thus the relationship of Morgan to the YWCA's increasing building needs was natural. As the only contemporary female architect of exceptional talent and growing prestige, Morgan was a particularly appropriate designer.

Morgan's design for the building, true to her Beaux-Arts architectural training in Paris, recalled historicist modes, especially themes of the Renaissance. The central court is said to be an almost exact replica of Bramante's Santa Maria della Pace in Rome (Warning) and originally contained a fountain. The design also included lounge rooms with fireplaces, a cafeteria, offices, gymnasium, showers, lock rooms, and a 300-seat auditorium. The fourth floor housed hotel facilities, while the top floor was devoted to classrooms and studios where domestic science, music, art, and other skills were taught. Another important Morgan design which also served as a women's meeting facility is the Berkeley City Club.

A partner with Julia Morgan in the creation of this building was Grace Merriam Fisher, president at the time of the Oakland YWCA and an outstanding women in her own right. Warning's thesis describes this partnership and summarizes the value of the Oakland YWCA building's design as "an example of architecture in which economic requirements, while being adequately met, were not put above the satisfaction of the human psyche."

In 1980-81, considerable restoration work was carried out on the building under a publicly-funded program and with the artistic direction of Karl Kardel, Bay Area painting consultant (YWCA News, December 1980).

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In respect to its architectural significance, the Oakland YWCA building must be judged both in terms of its contribution to the local architectural heritage and in terms of its relation to the oeuvre of Julia Morgan, one of the country's outstanding woman architect of the first half of the 20th century. Locally, the building is a fine and especially civil structure, a modified Italian Renaissance palace, that contributes a dignified presence to the urban scene. Its richly polychromed terra cotta detail accents important parts of the composition and is complemented by the rusticated brick. The interior is equally well handled; the atrium court is one of the city's finest public spaces. In respect to Morgan's other work, the Oakland YWCA is one of the finest of the group of "Y's" Morgan designed in the teens and twenties when she was the architect for the Western Region. Of the Bay Area "Y's" located in the urban centers of Oakland, Berkeley, and San Jose, only the Oakland YWCA survives, and of these it was the most architecturally significant. Other "Y" buildings that Morgan designed for the southern part of the state, notably in Pasadena and Riverside, are in a Mediterranean Revival mode and not quite comparable. The Oakland "Y" is certainly one of her major works.

The Oakland YWCA building has from the start been the hub of athletic and cultural activities; it offered the first indoor swimming pool in a public building and uncounted thousands from Bay Area communities have received instructions there. A complete auditorium with balcony and fully fitted stage and dressing rooms, a well-equipped gymnasium, and a low-priced cafeteria met other community needs.

The YWCA is a major part of Oakland's rich history. The YWCA served as a means of transition of young women from foreign or rural backgrounds to commercial or domestic life in the city. For more than 100 years, the YWCA has been serving women throughout their lives as they seek social and economic equity.

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Michael Warning, Promotion and Construction of the Oakland Young Women's Christian Association Center, 1976. A Master's Thesis Located at the Oakland Library's Oakland History Room.

"Julia Morgan, Pioneer Architect," YWCA News, November, 1975, page 4.

"Lobby and Mezzanine Restoration Under Way," YWCA News, December, 1980, p. 1.

John Beach, Architectural Drawings by Julia Morgan: Beaux-Arts Assignments and other Buildings. Oakland, The Oakland Museum, Art Department, 1976.

David Gebhard, Roger Montgomery, Robert Winter, John Woodbridge and Sally Woodbridge, A Guide to Architecture in San Francisco and Northern California. Salt Lake City, Peregrine Smith, Inc, 1973.

ASSESSOR'S MAP 8

Map of Oakland and vicinity showing plan of Streets as established and proposed; compiled from official surveys and records of the County as per W.F. Boardman City and County Surveyor (Bk. 17 Pg. 14)
Scale 1 in = 40 ft.

624
2136
Page 2

APR 5-20-22 AM

624

17TH Street

Street

60'

391
388
387
385
381

372
369
367
357
351

150

150

80.5'

80.5'

1636
1632

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1600

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1603
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1529
1525
1523
1521

1515

80.5'

80.5'

Franklin Street

Street

Webster Street

622

N 26° 15' E

37.43

50

70

238.91

N 26° 15' E

25.30

86.72

27.70

73

71

50

50

100

75.0

396
392
390
386
384
380
376

15TH Street

372
366

Street

59.75'

The Oakland Y. W. C. A. Building
Oakland, California (Alameda County)

624

1515 Webster Street

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