APR 2 2 2010

Site Inventory Form

State Historical Society of Iowa
(April 2010)

ELIGIBLE

State Inventory No. 77-10696 ☒ New ☐ Supplemental
☐ Part of a district with known boundaries (enter inventory no.) _____
Relationship: ☐ Contributing ☐ Noncontributing
☐ Contributes to a potential district with yet unknown boundaries
National Register Status:(any that apply) ☐ Listed ☐ De-listed ☐ NHL ☐ DO
9-Digit SHPO Review & Compliance (R&C) Number _____
☐ Non-Extant (enter year) _____

1. Name of Property

historic name YMCA

other names/site number Central YMCA

2. Location

street & number 101 Locust Street
city or town Des Moines ☐ vicinity, county Polk
Legal Description: (If Rural) Township Name _____ Township No _____ Range No. _____ Section _____ Quarter _____ of Quarter _____
(If Urban) Subdivision Coliseum Place Block(s) _____ Lot(s) 1, 3, 4, 5

3. State/Federal Agency Certification [*Skip this Section*]

4. National Park Service Certification [*Skip this Section*]

5. Classification

Category of Property (Check only one box)
☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

	If Non-Eligible Property Enter number of:	*If Eligible Property, enter number of:* Contributing	Noncontributing
buildings	__	1	__
sites	__	__	__
structures	__	__	__
objects	__	__	__
Total	__	1	__

Name of related project report or multiple property study (Enter "N/A" if the property is not part of a multiple property examination)
Title _____ *Historical Architectural Data Base Number* _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
O1B-multiple dwelling
03C01-facility of volunteer or public service organization
_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
01D-transitory housing
03C01-facility of volunteer or public service organization
_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)
08-Modern movement
_____

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)
foundation
walls (visible material) 03-brick, 04A-granite, 04E-slate, 05F-stainless steel
roof _____
other _____

Narrative Description (☒ SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS, WHICH MUST BE COMPLETED)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" representing your opinion of eligibility after applying relevant National Register criteria)

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ More Research Recommended	A	Property is associated with significant events.
☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ More Research Recommended	B	Property is associated with the lives of significant persons
☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ More Research Recommended	C	Property has distinctive architectural characteristics
☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ More Research Recommended	D	Property yields significant information in archaeology or history

County Polk Address 101 Locust Street Site Number **77-10696**
City Des Moines District Number

Criteria Considerations

- ☐ A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B Removed from its original location.
- ☐ C A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D A cemetery
- ☐ E A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F A commemorative property.
- ☐ G Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

02-Architecture

04-Art

29-Social History

Significant Dates

Construction date

1957-60 ☐ check if circa or estimated date

Other dates, including renovation

Significant Person

(Complete if National Register Criterion B is marked above)

Architect/Builder

Architect

Wetherell & Harrison; William Wagner-Chief Architect
National Building Service of the YMCA, consultants

Builder

Weitz Construction

Narrative Statement of Significance (☒ SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS, WHICH MUST BE COMPLETED)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography ☒ See continuation sheet for citations of the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form

10. Geographic Data

UTM References *(OPTIONAL)*

	Zone	*Easting*	*Northing*		*Zone*	*Easting*	*Northing*
1				2			
3				4			

☐ See continuation sheet for additional UTM references or comments

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Shannon Schaefer (Intern)
organization State Historical Society of Iowa date 4/23/2010
street & number 600 E Locust St telephone 515-451-1464
city or town Des Moines state IA zip code 50319-0290

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION **(Submit the following items with the completed form)**

FOR ALL PROPERTIES

1 ***Map:*** showing the property's location in a town/city or township
2 ***Site plan:*** showing position of buildings and structures on the site in relation to public road(s)
3 ***Photographs:*** representative black and white photos. If the photos are taken as part of a survey for which the Society is to be curator of the negatives or color slides, a photo/catalog sheet needs to be included with the negatives/slides and the following needs to be provided below on this particular inventory site:

Roll/slide sheet #		Frame/slot #		Date Taken	
Roll/slide sheet #		Frame/slot #		Date Taken	
Roll/slide sheet #		Frame/slot #		Date Taken	

☒ See continuation sheet or attached *photo & slide catalog sheet* for list of photo roll or slide entries.
☒ Photos/illustrations without negatives are also in this site inventory file.

FOR CERTAIN KINDS OF PROPERTIES, INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING AS WELL

1. ***Farmstead & District:*** (List of structures and buildings, known or estimated year built, and contributing or noncontributing status)
2. ***Barn:***
   a. A sketch of the frame/truss configuration in the form of drawing a typical middle bent of the barn.
   b. A photograph of the loft showing the frame configuration along one side.
   c. A sketch floor plan of the interior space arrangements along with the barn's exterior dimensions in feet.

State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Use Only Below This Line

Concur with above survey opinion on National Register eligibility: ☒ *Yes* ☐ *No* ☐ *More Research Recommended*
☐ *This is a locally designated property or part of a locally designated district*

Comments:

Evaluated by (name/title): [signature], Architectural Historian *Date:* 5/7/2010

YMCA	Polk
Name of Property	County
101 Locust Street	Des Moines
Address	City

Narrative Description

The Central YMCA (built in 1957-60) is located in the eastern edge of downtown Des Moines, Iowa. Des Moines occupies the southwest quadrant of Polk County and is the capital city of Iowa. The YMCA property is bound on the east by the Des Moines River and Principal Riverwalk, which is currently under construction, on the north by Grand Avenue, and on the south by Locust Street. Immediately west of the building is a parking lot controlled by the YMCA and west of that is Second Avenue. Today, the immediate area around the YMCA is a combination of public space and residential buildings. As noted above, the Principal Riverwalk runs along the east side and also extends into the block immediately north of the YMCA. Brownstones on Grand and Civic Center Court Apartments are located to the northwest and west, respectively To the southwest is the Des Moines Civic Center and to the south is the former public library

The Central YMCA as completed in 1960 consisted of an 8-story residential block facing the Des Moines River with a lower section containing community rooms, gymnasium, auditorium, natatorium and other public facilities attached to the west. In 1980, the Aliber Youth Center, was added to the northwest corner of the building. The YMCA continues to serve its original function as a residential and educational facility for the citizens of Des Moines Designed by William Wagner of the Des Moines firm Wetherell & Harrison with the National Building Service of the YMCA serving as consultants, the Central YMCA is an important example of post-war Modernism

Exterior

The YMCA is a reinforced concrete building with a brick exterior. The original building is composed of two primary parts—on the east is the eight-story rectangular tower facing the Des Moines River. On the west is an attached lower section containing community rooms, gymnasium, auditorium, natatorium and other public facilities. An excellent example of post-war Modernism, the design uses simple geometric forms to emphasize volume, large expanses of brick, sparse ornamentation and flat roofs. In addition to the extensive use of pinkish-red variegated brick, other exterior materials include slate, granite and stainless steel. The Aliber Youth Center on the northwest corner represents the only major alteration to the exterior This wing was built in 1980 but was designed using an aesthetic similar to the original building and using brick comparable in coloration.

As the tallest element, the residential block along the river is the dominant portion of the building (Fig. 4). A row of eleven engaged columns of polished dark grey granite are located at the first floor of the east elevation (Fig. 5). In between each column are three windows. The grey granite columns are continued in the consecutive floors of the east elevation by vertical brick piers running uninterrupted to the roof of the building. These brick piers alternate with a bay containing a three-part metal window. Under each window is a panel in-filled with dark grey slate. (The west elevation of the residential block visible above the lower wing is arranged similarly.) The south and north ends of the residential section are large brick vertical blocks with no windows, containing interior stairs. A square tower containing elevators is attached on the west side in the center of the residential block (Fig. 8 & 9). This tower is topped with the large four-sided sign spelling out "YMCA" in red neon sans serif letters, which is visible from blocks away (Fig. 10).

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While the residential block is the tallest portion of the building, the western portion of the building occupies the largest footprint. Composed of volumetric forms of two to three stories, this portion of the building is constructed of the same brick and continues the modern aesthetic of the residential block The boys' entrance (marked with a large granite column and a wall of random granite ashlars) was originally on the north side of the building (it is now the primary entrance for the adult transitional housing for men) (Fig.11 & 12). Immediately over this entrance is the brick mural titled "Passing the Torch" (described in greater detail below) (Fig. 13) To the west of the entrance is a row of five one-story engaged polished granite columns in between which are windows (Fig. 12). The wall above is brick with no windows Further to the west is a recessed loading dock and beyond that the blank wall of the Aliber addition (Fig. 14).

The original adult entrance (now the primary public entrance for the athletic facility) was on the south elevation through a portico that spans from the southwestern corner of the building to the east end of the residential block (Fig 8). There is one set of stairs of dark granite that wraps around two sides of the southwest corner and a straight flight of stairs at the southeast corner. The portico is supported with polished dark granite columns (both freestanding and engaged) The roof of the portico serves as a balcony at the second story and has a stainless steel railing (Fig. 15, 17 & 18). The rear wall of this balcony is curved and is the location of the building's other exterior mural, containing three sections (this south façade mural will be discussed in further detail below) (Fig 6 & 7).

The west elevation of the building consists of the brick volumetric walls that make up the other functions of the YMCA besides the residential areas, such as the community rooms, gymnasium, auditorium, natatorium and other public facilities On the southwest side of the building is the Y's parking, with a raised portion of the building held up by concrete columns, allowing for some covered parking (Fig. 19 & 20)

The northwest side of the building is the Aliber Youth Center's plain brick square mass added to the YMCA in 1980 (Fig. 21). The Youth Center was a gift from the Aliber family foundation. This $300,000 gift was contingent on a matching amount raised by the Y's fund-raising.[1] The original Aliber family members were Russian immigrants, and their children had no offspring, so they set up this foundation as their legacy, which "sought to help young people through the YMCA's new youth center."[2] This center would give inner-city youths a place to play and gather, as well as before and after-school programs and activities.[3] The addition of the Aliber Youth Center is the one significant alteration to the exterior, however, its design is consistent with that of the original building and it does not detract from the building's design

The exterior is notable for two large murals by former Drake professor of art, Stan Hess.
The north elevation mural is titled "Passing the Torch" and depicts a profile of a youth's head, and he is holding a torch (Fig. 13). This torch is a triangle, which is the traditional Y.M.C.A.'s emblem, symbolic of light, truth, and guidance.[4] The mural on the south elevation, title unknown, is the largest of the two

[1] "YMCA is given $300,000 gift " Des Moines Register 23 Sept. 1980.
[2] "Youth Center Dedication set at YMCA." Des Moines Register 24 Oct 1980.
[3] Ibid.
[4] "Brick Murals for the New 'Y'" *Des Moines Sunday Register* 25 May 1958: 9.

murals, approximately 20 feet by 94 feet. Its composition of three panels expresses the "Trinity within man, that of 'the spirit, the mind, and the body,' which is symbolized in the red triangle of the Y M C.A."[5] One panel depicts three hands (black, white, and gold) symbolizing interracial, worldwide Christian fellowship. The center panel is of a youth who symbolizes enlightenment and mental alertness. The third panel is of a hand holding the Greek letters Chi Rho, which are the first two letters of the word "Christos"(Fig. 7).[6] The architect William Wagner of the Des Moines architectural firm, Wetherell & Harrison, correlated the architectural elements with the compositions of Hess' murals.[7]

Interior

The interior of the Des Moines riverfront YMCA, contains several functional areas, each with their own use. In the southeast corner of the interior, visitors are welcomed by the adult lobby made up of sturdy materials, such as polished granite at the reception desk, tile floors, brick walls and ceramic tile pillars, exuding the feeling of permanence and wealth.[8] Another interior space that exemplifies durability is the World Service Meeting Room, one of three committee dining rooms and contains one of Hess' interior murals.[9] This tempera mural illustrates the unfolding of a world globe and a teacher explaining to his pupils the brotherhood of the races (Fig. 29).[10] Hess also designed the mural made of ceramic tile located in the boys' clubroom featuring a young boy reading from the "Book of Life" (Fig. 27).[11] The book is open to the page that stresses the importance of developing the youth's spirit, mind and body.[12]

Another area in the Y containing a Hess mural is the room with the swimming pool. One of the walls is adorned with pictorial representations of interlocking fish (Fig. 32). The Y also houses two gymnasiums, as well as rooms for weight-lifting, boxing-wrestling, and courts for handball and squash (Fig. 26).[13] Just off the lobby area contains a cafeteria/coffee shop allowing for gathering and another location for dining (Fig. 28).[14]

The upper six floors of the eight story section of the residential building contains 198 residence rooms, furnished and decorated to give a good environment for young men to be housed and grow in, while settling in Des Moines.[15] Each room is nine feet by 12 feet with a ¾ bed, two chairs, desk/dresser, and phone.[16]

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[5] "Brick Murals for the New 'Y'" *Des Moines Sunday Register* 25 May 1958: 9.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] *Iowa Architect*. "Y.M.C.A. Des Moines" Architects Wetherell & Harrison, Des Moines. Official publication of Iowa Chapter Directory American Institute of Architects. January-February, Vol. VII. No. I, 1960
[9] "It's Here 'Finest Y Building in The Land!'" Des Moines Tribune, p. 11. 12 Jan. 1960.
[10] Ibid.
[11] "A Boy's 'Book of Life'." Des Moines Tribune 28 Dec. 1959.
[12] Ibid.
[13] "It's Here 'Finest Y Building in The Land!'" Des Moines Tribune, p. 11. 12 Jan. 1960
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid
[16] Ibid

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The chapel located on the second floor is dedicated "to God, for the purpose of meditation and prayer, for the strengthening of the spiritual life of people of all faiths. It was built in loving memory of H. Howard Crawford (former YMCA camp directory and boys' secretary) and Kenneth M May" (former member of the YMCA board of directors).[17] Designed by William Wagner as an interfaith chapel he wanted it to be acceptable to all three faiths, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Judaism.[18] In the front of the chapel stand Bibles from all three faiths The walls are covered with grey, green and purple slate. Stan Hess designed an interior "window" panel composed of a grid of wood fitted with colored Plexiglas in shades of green, blue, grey and yellow, giving the illusion of an outside, stained glass window (Fig. 30).[19]

All murals will be discussed in further detail below.

The YMCA appears to have retained very good structural integrity. The building sits in its original location and retains the original materials and workmanship on its exterior and interior.

Historical Significance of the Des Moines Y.M.C.A. on the Riverfront

The Y.M.C.A. (Young Men's Christian Association) began in London, England in 1844 by the 20-year old, George Williams.[20] He began inviting friends to his room in the evenings for Bible study, because he believed his fellow workers and himself deserved to have a place to go to after work besides "places of iniquity."[21] One of Williams' friends decided this group should be made into an official organization, and became known as the Young Men's Christian Association.[22] The number in attendance quickly increased. The organization even spread soon to the United States, starting with the first branch in Boston, Massachusetts.[23] In the U.S. the organization aimed at "young men who were new to the country's larger cities and guiding them to a church "[24] Many Y's opened across the U.S in the early 1850s focusing on religion. Some religious organizations felt the YMCA groups were taking the place of churches, so in the late 1800s and early 1900s an understanding was met between the two groups.[25] Local YMCA's helped to mold young boys into manhood not only through religious themes, but also through various programs offered, including physical and recreational activities, and education.[26] The Des Moines YMCA was one of the earlier local Y's in the U.S , organized in 1868.[27]

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[17] "Design for 3 Faiths at YMCA " Iowa Young Men's Christian Association Des Moines Tribune 4 June, 1960
[18] Ibid
[19] "Design for 3 Faiths at YMCA " Iowa Young Men's Christian Association Des Moines Tribune 4 June, 1960
[20] "The Des Moines Y.M.C.A.- One of Earliest in U.S." Des Moines Tribune 19 April 1958
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] "The Des Moines Y M C A - One of Earliest in U.S." Des Moines Tribune. 19 April 1958.
[27] Ibid.

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The first Des Moines YMCA was organized in the rear room of Coskery and Tannahill's dry good store, which was owned by George Osgood at 4th and Walnut.[28] Young men of the city were invited to gather for prayer, literary discussion, discuss missionary work, and assist the needy By the 1880's, the purpose of the YMCA organization extended from literary and religious meetings to physical activities for boys, night schooling and other ways to train young men's "body, mind and spirit."[29] As the Y continued to expand its number of activities and membership, additional facilities were constructed. The "Crocker Street Y" was founded in 1919 at 12th and Crocker Streets for young African-American men and boys and operated until the late 1950s. The second designated location for the Des Moines YMCA was at Fourth and Grand Avenue in 1891 [30] After some years at this location, the organization still needed space, pushing them to raise funds to build their next location at Fourth St. and Keosauqua Way (1333 Keosauqua Way).[31] Beginning in 1912, this location housed the Y for 48 years until the organization outgrew the building, and moved to their present location at First and Locust in 1960.[32] The new building was intended to help youth become solid and dependable citizens with adequate character foundations to face the intricate problems of the atomic and space age."[33]

On April 26, 1959, the cornerstone was laid at the southeast entrance on Locust Street by James W. Wallace, the immediate past president of the YMCA, Angus K. Campbell, chairman of the new building committee, and A.B. Lundahl, president of the YMCA (Fig. 22).[34] Some of the items placed in the cornerstone were a 1957 proof set of U.S. coins, April 1959 Issue of "Your Y.M.C.A.", a street map of Des Moines at the time, and other items that contained information about life at that time.[35]

Dedicated in January 1960, the land, building and equipment for the new Y reportedly cost $3.9 million.[36] At the dedication ceremony, James Hilton, president of Iowa State University, spoke to the youth in the audience and remarked "This beautiful and useful building which we are dedicating today, built by the citizens of Des Moines because they believe in you and the ideals and purposes for which the Y.M.C.A. stands, will provide for you and your friends the opportunity to develop spiritually, morally and physically."[37] Hilton also remarked how proud he was of the new Y, how "It represents the growing spirit among Iowans for establishing things that will have a lasting value in peace."[38] The new Des Moines YMCA not only helped current Des Moines residents and youth, but the organization also helped men who recently moved to Des Moines from other countries such as Hungary and South Africa.[39]

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[28] "100th Annual Meeting: Historic 'Y' Occasion." Iowa Young Men's Christian Association. Des Moines Tribune. 15 April 1969.
[29] Ibid
[30] Ibid.
[31] "Crocker 'Y' Ends 40 Yrs. Of Service" Des Moines Sunday Register. 31 May 1959.
[32] "Crocker 'Y' Ends 40 Yrs Of Service" Des Moines Sunday Register. 31 May 1959
[33] A.B. Lundal as quoted in *Your YMCA*, March 1959.
[34] "Cornerstone Laid at New Y Building" Des Moines Register. 27 April 1959.
[35] Ibid.
[36] "New 'Y' is Hailed as a 'Dream Come True'." Des Moines Register 17 Jan. 1960
[37] "New Y M C A. is Dedicated Before 1,500," *Des Moines Register* 17 January 1960.
[38] "Dedicate New Y.M C A Today" Des Moines Register. 17 Jan. 1960.
[39] "Y' Residence Houses Men From Many Lands." Your YMCA. Vol. IV, No. 4, 1957

In the fall of 1964, an old two-story garage located at the southeast corner of Second and Grand avenues was demolished. This enabled the YMCA to complete the masonry on the north half of the west wall. At the same time, the parking lot on the west side of the building along Second Avenue was resurfaced and outfitted with gates and lights.

In 1980, the YMCA added the youth center to the west side of the main building Named the Aliber Youth Center after the Foundation, which provided a portion of the funds for its construction, this wing provided a play area for inner-city youth as explained in the Narrative Description above.[40]

Architects and Artist

Architects

Frank E. Wetherell and Roland G. Harrison formed the partnership Wetherell & Harrison in 1925 Wetherell's firm however dates back to 1894 when Wetherell started his architectural practice in Oskaloosa. The firm evolved several times, becoming Smith & Wetherell around 1906, later Smith, Wetherell & Gage, Wetherell & Gage. William Wagner was an architect in the Wetherell & Harrison architectural firm at the time of the Des Moines YMCA commission. Wagner became the chief architect on the YMCA project.

William Wagner (1916-2001) was born in Porterville, California but grew up in Iowa.[41] In 1939, he graduated from Iowa State University's architecture program and later earned a Masters degree from Drake.[42] While Wagner is best known for his work as a preservation architect, his body of work also included the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library in West Branch, Iowa, and the Des Moines Riverfront YMCA. As a preservation architect he helped restore such important buildings in Iowa as Marshall and Dallas county courthouses as well as the governor's home at Terrace Hill.[43] John Wetherell said of Mr. Wagner that he "was bothered that many old buildings were torn down instead of restored" and "He was somewhat outspoken about the bastardization of a unique historic building."[44]

Breaking grounds in 1957, the YMCA is locally significant under National Register Criterion C as an example of architecturally significant post-war Modernism style. According to Paula Lupkin, the YMCA Building Bureau made the decision to adopt Modernism in the late 1940s.[45] Among the buildings that bear a resemblance to the Des Moines facility, include the YMCA in Binghamton, Oklahoma City (1952) and Racine, Wisconsin (c 1961).[46] The Des Moines YMCA board of directors decided to construct a modern and centrally located new building in 1946. They purchased the river front site in 1955 with the intention of building a new building at this location This style of Modernism would incorporate the

[40] "Youth Center Dedication set at YMCA." Des Moines Register. 24 Oct. 1980.
[41] "Wagner was a champion of preservation." The Des Moines Register. 25 Jan. 2001.
[42] Ibid
[43] Ibid
[44] Ibid
[45] Email correspondence with Dr. Paula Lupkin, 17 October 2007
[46] Ibid.

overall design of large geometric blocks, straight lines, flat roof, and use of building materials that are economical yet sturdy and durable.
Described by the *Des Moines Tribune* as having "a United Nations look."[47] The plan of the building was designed to be flexible so that as programs expanded, the physical space could be reconfigured. Materials were selected with ease of maintenance in mind. For example, the interior finishes included tile, brick, wood and slate and very little plastered wall space or painted walls.

In line with using durable materials Wagner also employed a new type of glazed brick called "Glazed Provincials."[48] In 1958 the Mason City Brick and Tile Company developed a brick with more variety of color for architects to use, but still retained the durable character of hard burned clay brick.[49] Wagner with other top architects helped the finalization of colors in this new line of bricks, and also was one of the first to utilize the glazed provincials in the Des Moines YMCA building.[50] The brick was manufactured in ten colors by the Des Moines Clay Company The tangerine colored brick from this line was used in the staircase off the main lobby.

William Wagner wanted to incorporate artwork in the YMCA building, and asked Stanley Hess to be the designer Wagner first met Mr. Hess in a printmaking class at Drake University, which Professor Hess taught.[51] Hess donated most of his time to the projects at the YMCA.

Artist

Stanley O Hess (1923-present) was born in Weatherford, Oklahoma.[52] He studied art at the University of Oklahoma with Mexican artist Emilio Amero and Leonard Good (who later served as Chair of the art department at Drake University).[53] Hess earned a BFA in commercial art from the University of Oklahoma in 1948 and a MFA in painting in 1950.[54] From 1950 to 1951 he was an instructor of art at William Woods College in Fulton, Missouri. Later in 1951, Hess joined the faculty at Drake University in Des Moines.[55] His work was published in *Time*, *Fortune* and *Newsweek*.[56] Hess was commissioned to create murals at the National Travelers Life Insurance Company Building, Iowa Power & Light (moved to the former Science Center in 1971), Des Moines YMCA, and the Mercy and Iowa Lutheran hospitals in Des Moines.[57] He created mosaic stations of the cross for St. Theresa's Church in Des Moines. Along with painting, Hess also designed a typeface called "Hessian".[58] His book, *The Modification of*

[47] Robert H. Spiegel, 'Finest Y Building in The Land!' *Des Moines Tribune* 12 Jan. 1960: 11
[48] "New Kind of Glazed Brick Manufactured in 10 Colors." Mason City Globe Gazette. 13 Sept. 1958.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid
[51] Phone Interview with Stan Hess by Paula Mohr 17 Oct. 2007
[52] "Leonard Good and Stanley Hess: An Emeritus Exhibition" Anderson Gallery, Drake University. Sept. 1997.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Stanley O. Hess, Instructor Drake Faculty Biography. 2 Oct. 1951
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Stanley O. Hess, Instructor. Drake Faculty Biography 11 Sept 1979
[58] Ibid.

Letterforms, published by the Art Direction Book Company in 1973, explained the principles of designing new typefaces.[59]

Stan Hess has a unique approach in creating his murals, which results in distinctive works of art. His work has been displayed in galleries, in the mass media, as well as permanent structures such as in the architecture of the YMCA in Des Moines, Iowa. Hess' works many times are described as "double images, which require at least a second viewing" and the artist says about his own works, "It is true that things are not always what they at first seem "[60] His murals, paintings, and drawings have been described as Modernist, surrealist, pop, 'Magic Realism' and optical illusions.[61] Whatever his art may be described as, it is an irreplaceable part of the art history of central Iowa that has combined with the architectural history of some of Des Moines' most prominent buildings.

In regards to the Des Moines Riverfront YMCA, Stan Hess had almost as a significant influence over the finished product as the architect. The collaboration of Wagner's architectural design and Hess' murals has made the YMCA not only an important architectural landmark but also an artistic one. The most recognizable murals that Hess created for the YMCA would be on the exteriors that all who pass by can enjoy. These murals are made out entirely of multi-colored brick creating images, out of Hess' research on the history of the Y.M.C.A., which symbolize the purpose and objectives of the organization.[62] Though not as widely seen as the exterior murals, the interior murals are just as impressive, spreading throughout different rooms of the building. Hess donated most of his time to complete these murals, but also the members of the Bricklayers Local Union No. 2 donated their time in constructing these masterpiece murals.[63]

Exterior Murals

North Façade Mural, Grand Ave – 16 feet high by 43 feet wide (Fig. 13)
This "Passing the Torch" mural portrays the head of a youth in profile holding a torch. The torch design is in the shape of the traditional triangle emblem of the Y.M.C.A., which symbolizes light, truth and guidance.[64]

South and East Façade Mural, Locust St. – 20 feet high by 94 feet wide (Fig. 7)
The largest of the two exterior murals, divided up into three sections, expresses the Trinity within man.[65] This idea, of the Trinity within man, is also denoted in the triangle symbol of the YMCA, standing for "the spirit, the mind and the body."[66] The central section depicts a "head of a youth, suggesting enlightenment and mental alertness."[67] The left section shows the boy's right hand joined with two other

[59] Press Release from Drake University: *The Modification of Letterforms* by Stan Hess. Drake University: Des Moines, IA. 15 Jan. 1973
[60] "Leonard Good and Stanley Hess: An Emeritus Exhibition." Anderson Gallery, Drake University. Sept. 1997.
[61] "'Images Within Images' by Stanley Hess " Drake University News clipping. Des Moines, IA: 1972
[62] "Brick Murals for New 'Y'." Des Moines Sunday Register, p. 9. 25 May 1958
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.

hands, "symbolic of inter-racial, world-wide Christian fellowship and teamwork."[68] In the right section of the mural, the boy's left hand holds the Greek letters CHI RHO (XP) meaning "Christ", and was "the emblem of early Christians, and now a part of the international emblem of the Y.M.C.A."[69]

Interior Murals

'Book of Life' Mural – 9 feet high by 14 feet wide (Fig. 27)
Located in the Lincoln room, which is a clubroom for boys on the second floor, this ceramic tile mural depicts a boy reading from the "Book of Life".[70] The design of the open book and the pedestal forms a "Y". The book is opened to a marked page that stresses the "importance of youth development in spirit, mind and body."[71]

World Service Meeting Room (Fig. 29)
This tempera oil mural on plaster illustrates the unfolding of a world globe and a teacher explaining to his pupils the brotherhood of the races.[72] It features a quote by Marcus Aurelius "Men Exist for the sake of one another. Teach them then or bear with them."[73] The mural was painted by Wagner, the architect, along with Hess' supervision and assistance.

Swimming Pool Room – 16 feet square (Fig. 32)
On one wall of the swimming pool room there is another Hess designed mural of interlocking "kissing fish" out of colored ceramic tile [74] This square design is repeated along the wall four times, rotated each time

Chapel Window – floor to ceiling window panels of varying sizes (Fig. 30)
Wagner asked Hess to design one of the walls of windows in the multi-faith chapel on the second floor of the YMCA. At first Hess designed 5-7 windows with various pictorial symbols to represent God.[75] He was then asked to change his design because it was believed the windows placed too much emphasis on Christianity and did not include the other faiths of the chapel. Hess was hesitant to change, but finally redesigned the windows to be an abstract design of three different colors of plexi-glass layered to create multiple colors.[76] These "windows" are actually panels in front of a double wall, with concealed lighting between the two walls to give the illusion of outside light.[77]

The Hess murals that cover the Y.M.C.A. architecture gained international notice Reported in the Des Moines copy of the monthly newsletter, "Your YMCA", for members of the organization, the

[68] "Brick Murals for New 'Y'." Des Moines Sunday Register, p 9 25 May 1958
[69] Ibid.
[70] "A Boy's 'Book of Life'" Des Moines Tribune 28 Dec 1959.
[71] Ibid
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] "Look What's Been Added to the River-Front Skyline." Des Moines Tribune. 11 April 1959
[75] Phone Interview with Stan Hess by Paula Mohr. 17 Oct 2007
[76] Ibid
[77] "Design for 3 Faiths At Y.M.C.A. Chapel." Des Moines Tribune. 4 June 1960.

new murals sparked interest across the U.S. and foreign countries.[78] The YMCA World Alliance office in Geneva, Switzerland requested from the Des Moines YMCA photographs and information regarding these new murals, to publish in their "World Communique" magazine, which is distributed to 77 countries.[79] The murals, especially the Locust Street mural, (Fig. 7), were also published in the Annual Report of the National Council YMCA Board that is mailed to YMCAs in the U.S. and Canada.[80] The finished murals did not go unnoticed in 1960 by locals or other Y's across the world. The purpose of the Y organization is to link mankind through the goodness of people, as well as the expansion of the mind, body, and spirit through various means. Through the creative murals of Stan Hess, the purpose of the Y organization was communicated to viewers, and it also expanded viewers' minds artistically. The YMCA is a unique organization, and made its mark in Des Moines through its architecture as well as the murals. This building of art became a part of Des Moines' architectural and art history, which should be preserved just as a rare piece of artwork is preserved for future generations to appreciate. If the building cannot be maintained, at least the walls should be dissembled to safeguard the murals for the works of art they are.

Considering the thoughts of Architect, Mr. Wagner, tearing down the Des Moines Y.M.C.A. on the Riverfront would be a "bastardization of a unique historic building."[81]

[78] "New Building Murals Attract International Attention." Your YMCA: An Influence for Good in Des Moines. Vol. VI, No. 3. Nov. 1959.
[79] Ibid.
[80] "New Building Murals Attract International Attention." Your YMCA: An Influence for Good in Des Moines. Vol. VI, No. 3. Nov. 1959
[81] "Wagner was a champion of preservation." The Des Moines Register. 25 Jan. 2001

YMCA	Polk
Name of Property	County
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Fig. 1: Map: YMCA-Des Moines, IA

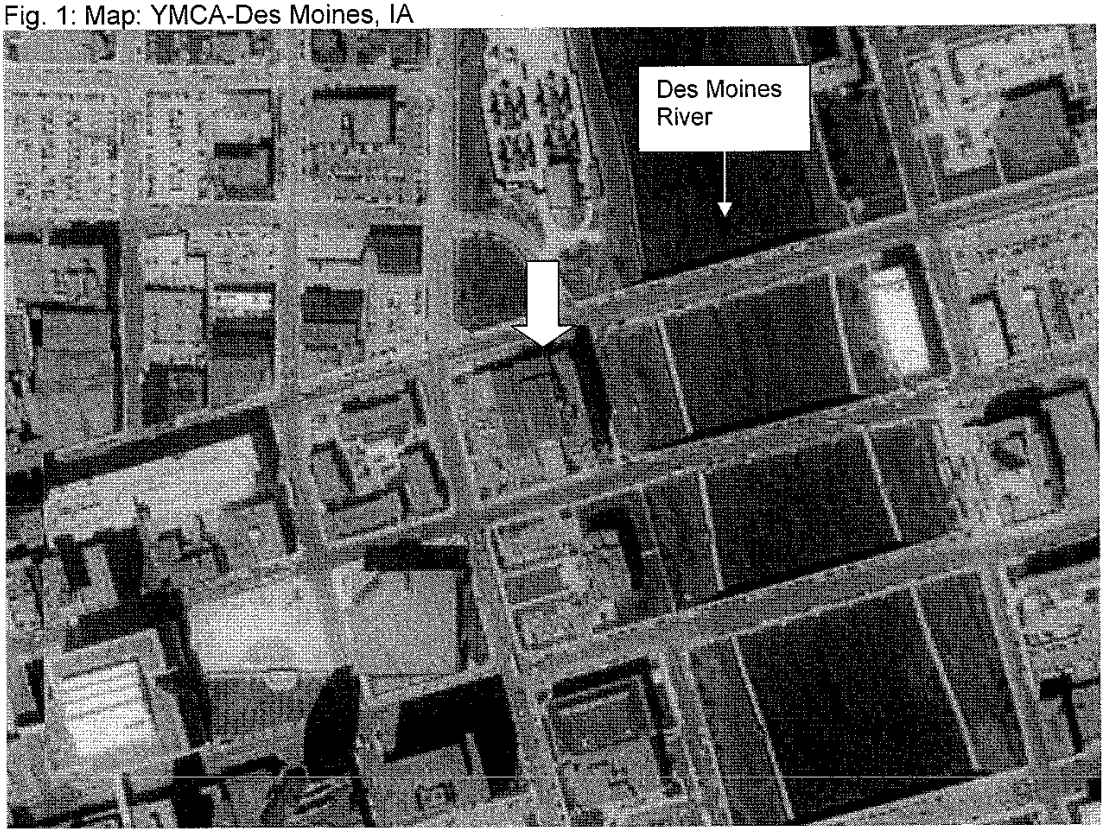

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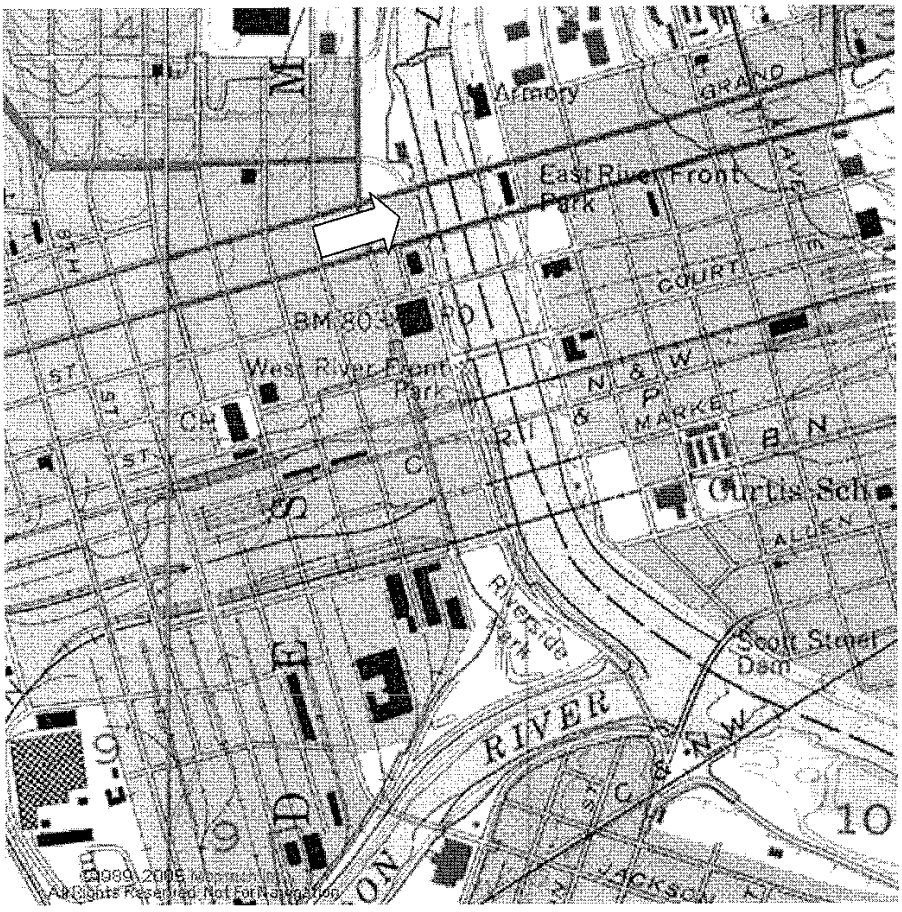
Fig. 2: Site Plan (source: MapTech)



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The following photographs created on April 8, 2010 were taken by Shannon Noelle Schaefer, for the State Historical Society of Iowa to complete the Site Inventory form for site 77-10696 (see note below). All others are either scanned records, as indicated, or photographed in 2007 by Paula Mohr.

Note: These photographs were created by Shannon N. Schaefer as of April 8, 2010. Use of these images in any form without written permission from the photographer is strictly prohibited, with the exception for the initial purpose of the photographs to aid the Iowa Site Inventory form for site number 77-10696.

Fig. 3: East and South Façade-YMCA, view from Locust Street looking Northwest, October 2007

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Address	City

Fig. 4: East Façade, Along the Des Moines River, April 2010

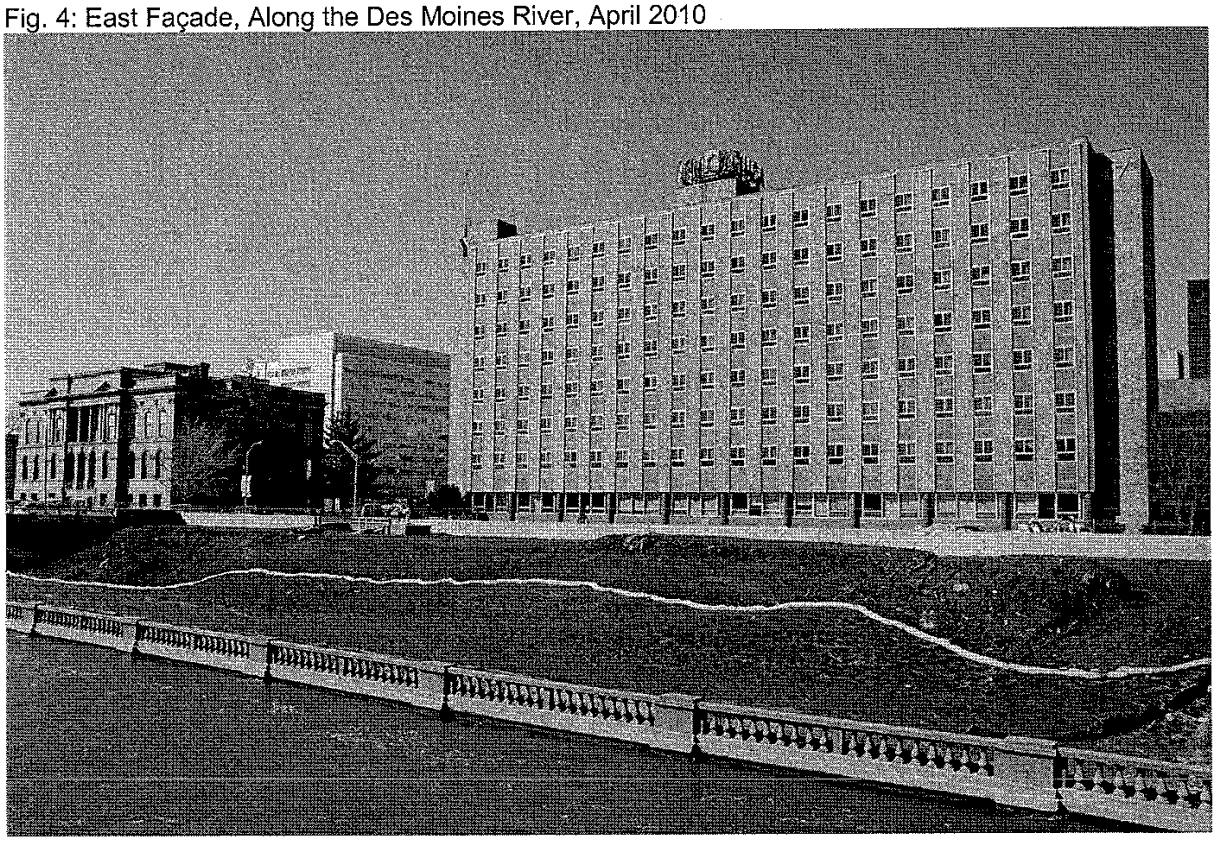

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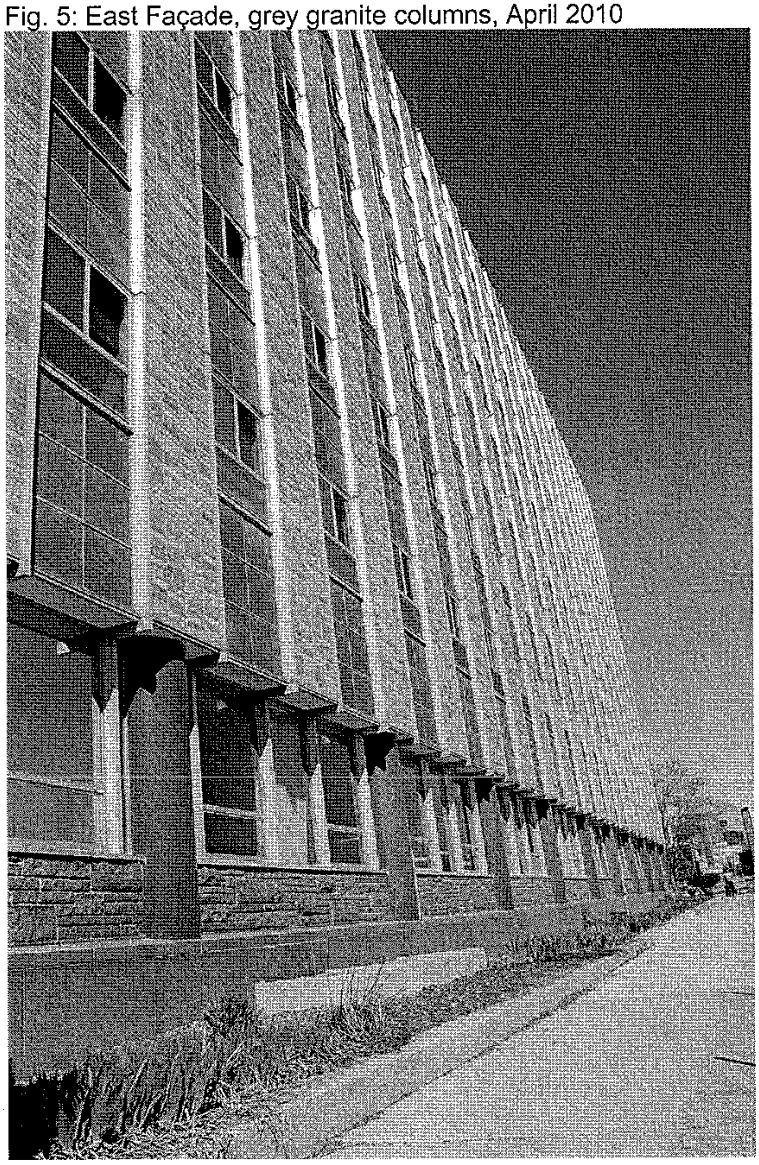
Fig. 5: East Façade, grey granite columns, April 2010



YMCA	Polk
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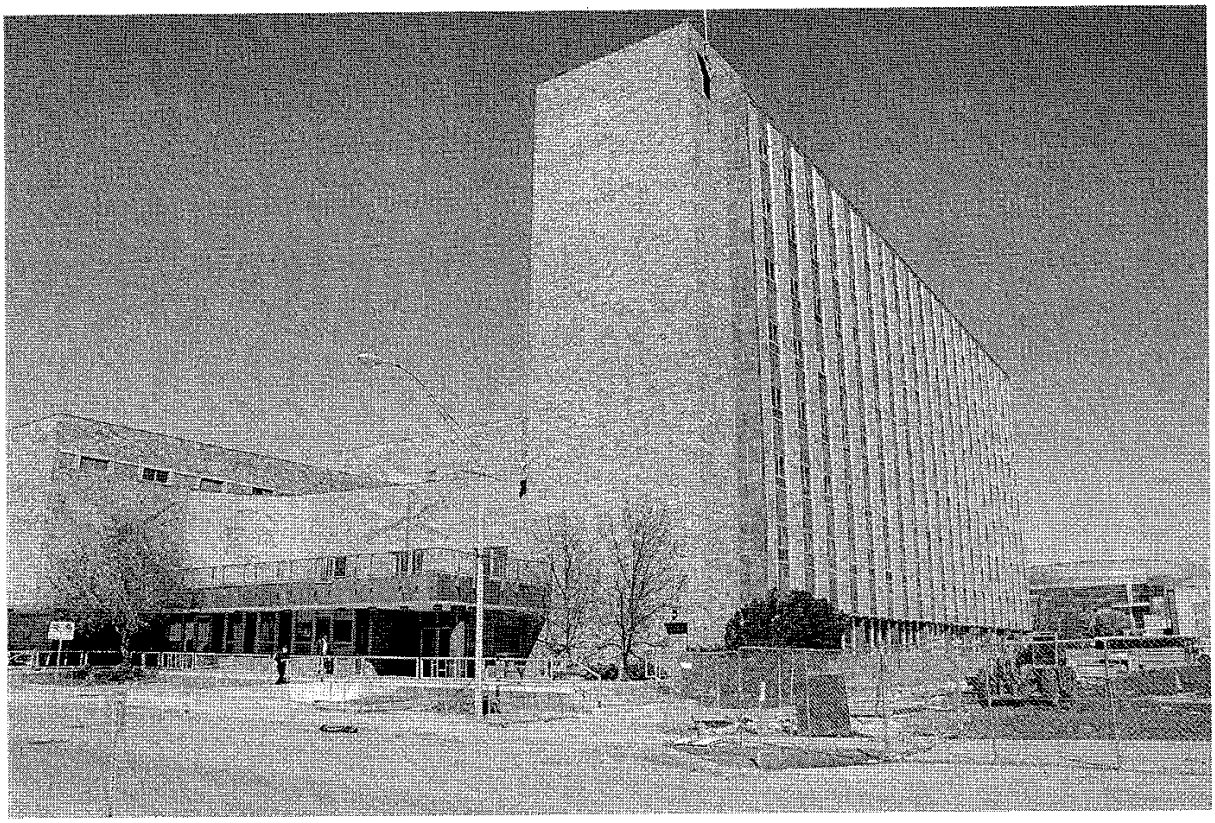
Fig. 6: YMCA, looking NW, April 2010



YMCA	Polk
Name of Property	County
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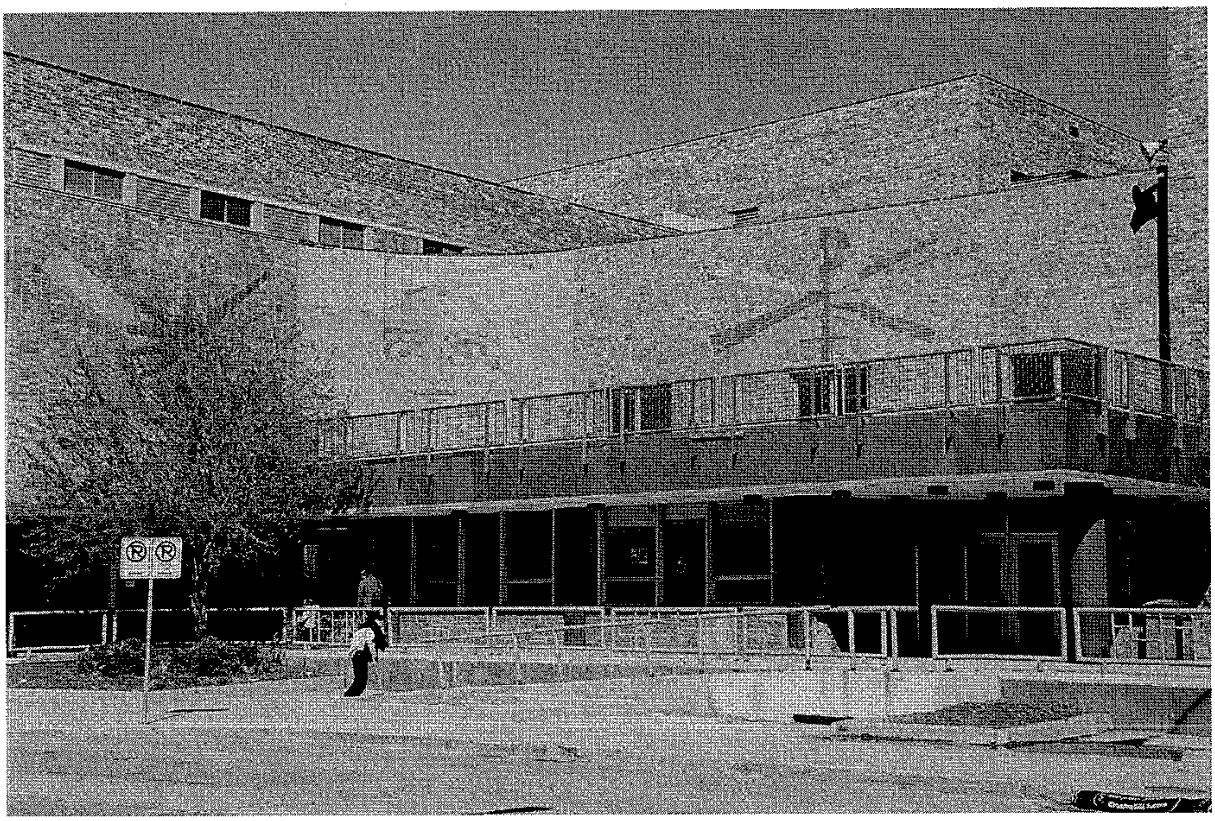
Fig 7: YMCA, detail of South side mural on Locust Street, looking NW, April 2010



YMCA	Polk
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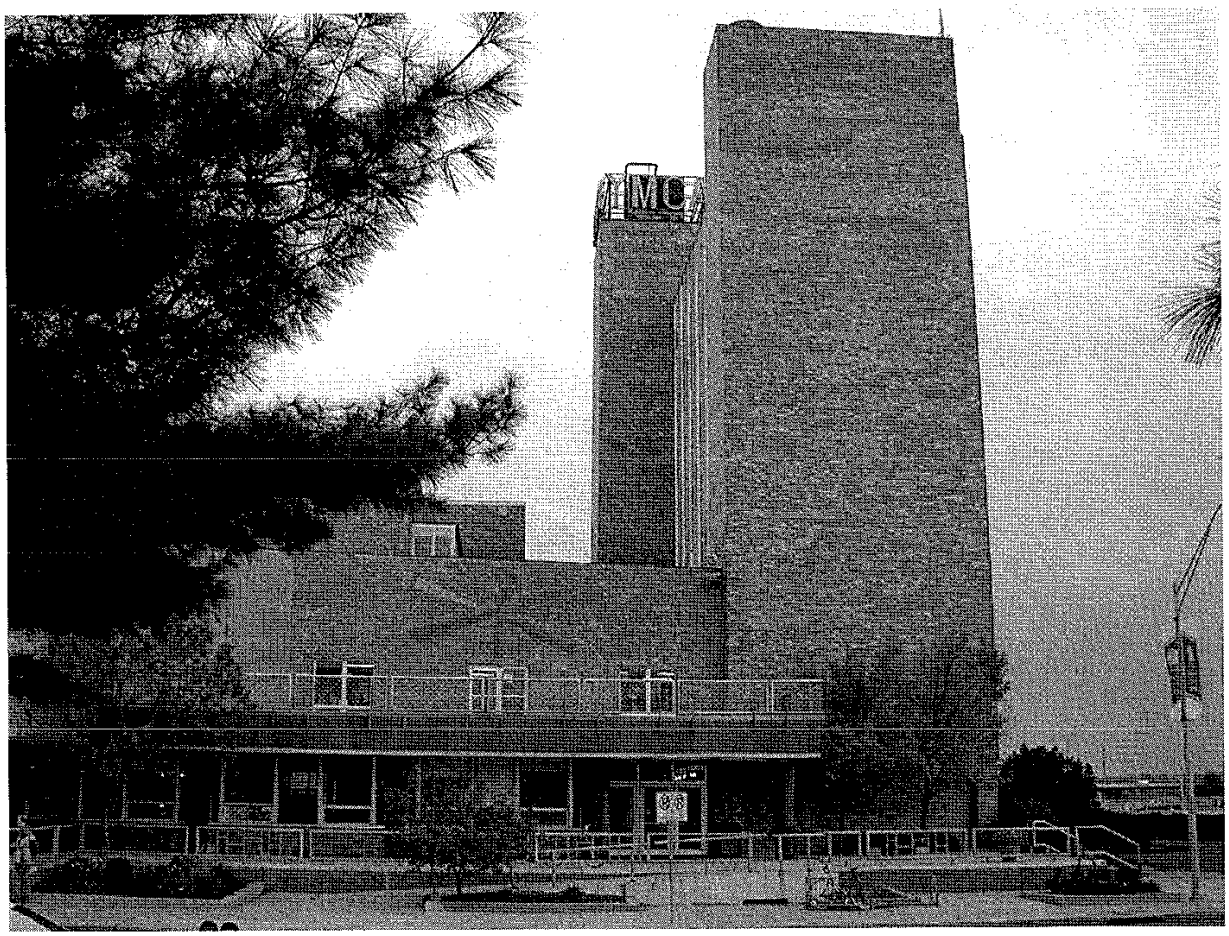
Fig. 8: YMCA, looking N, Locust St. view, central square tower containing elevators, October 2007



YMCA	Polk
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Fig 9: YMCA, detail of neon sign on top of roof, looking NE, October 2007

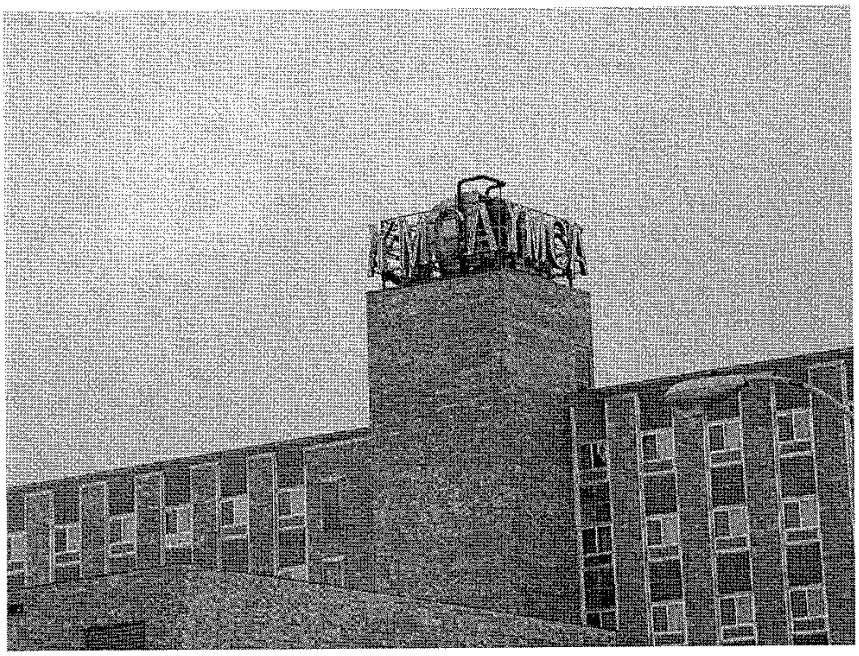

Fig. 10: YMCA neon sign, April 2010

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Fig. 11: NE corner façade, "Residence" entrance with the "Passing the Torch" mural, April 2010

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101 Locust Street	Des Moines
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Fig. 12: North Façade, Residence Entrance, April 2010

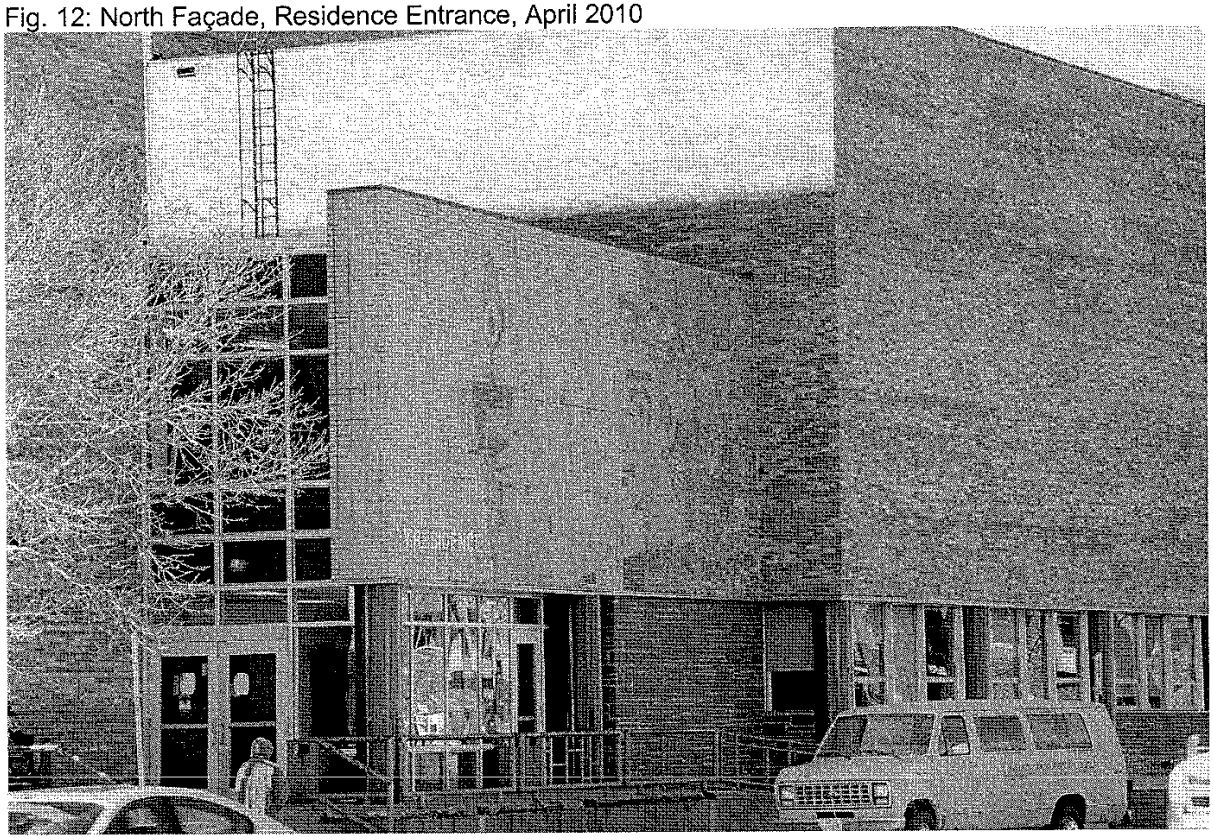

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Fig. 13: YMCA Residence, North Façade "Passing the Torch" Mural, April 2010

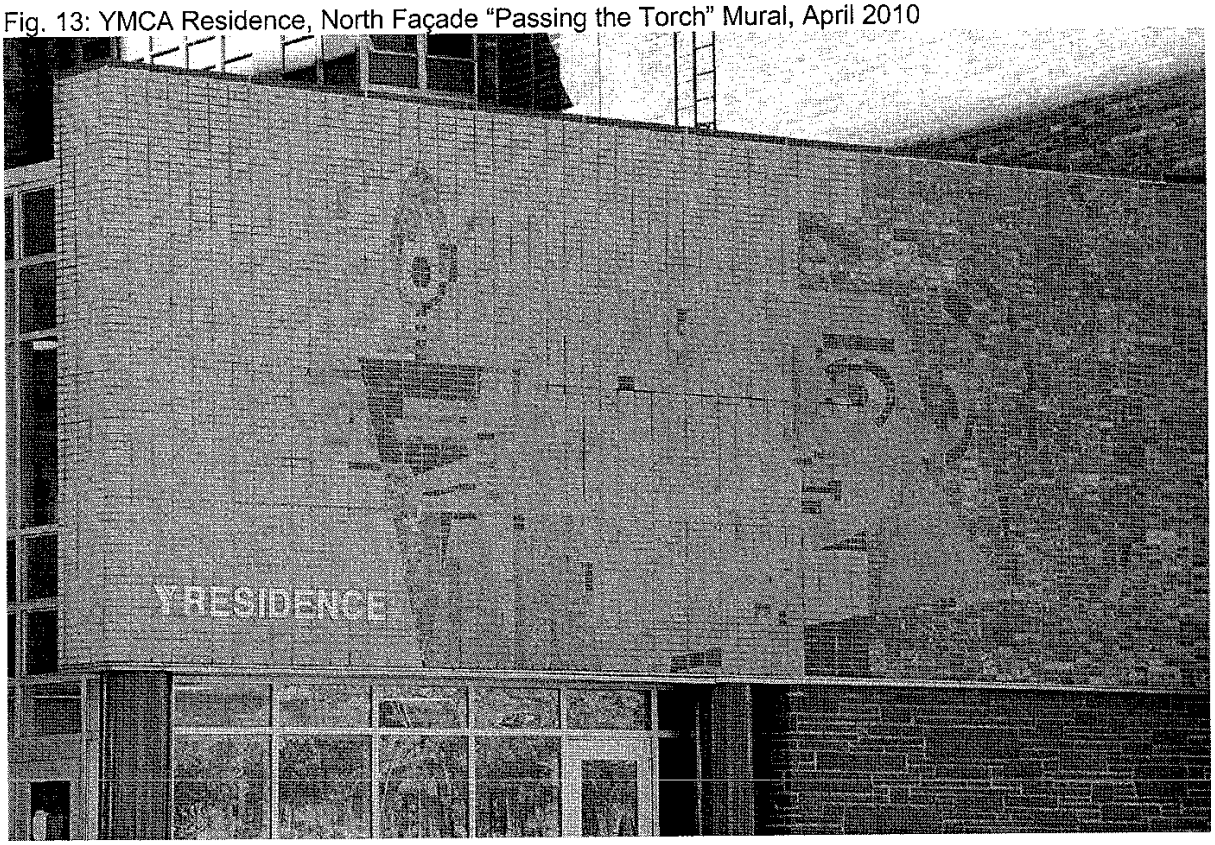

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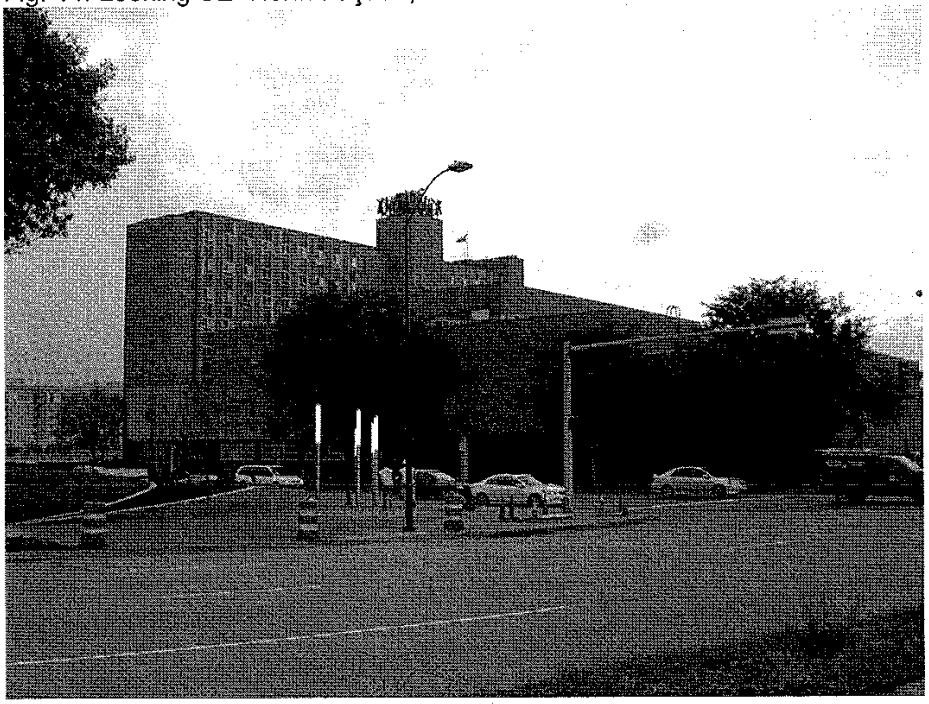
Fig. 14: Looking SE- North Façade, October 2007



YMCA	Polk
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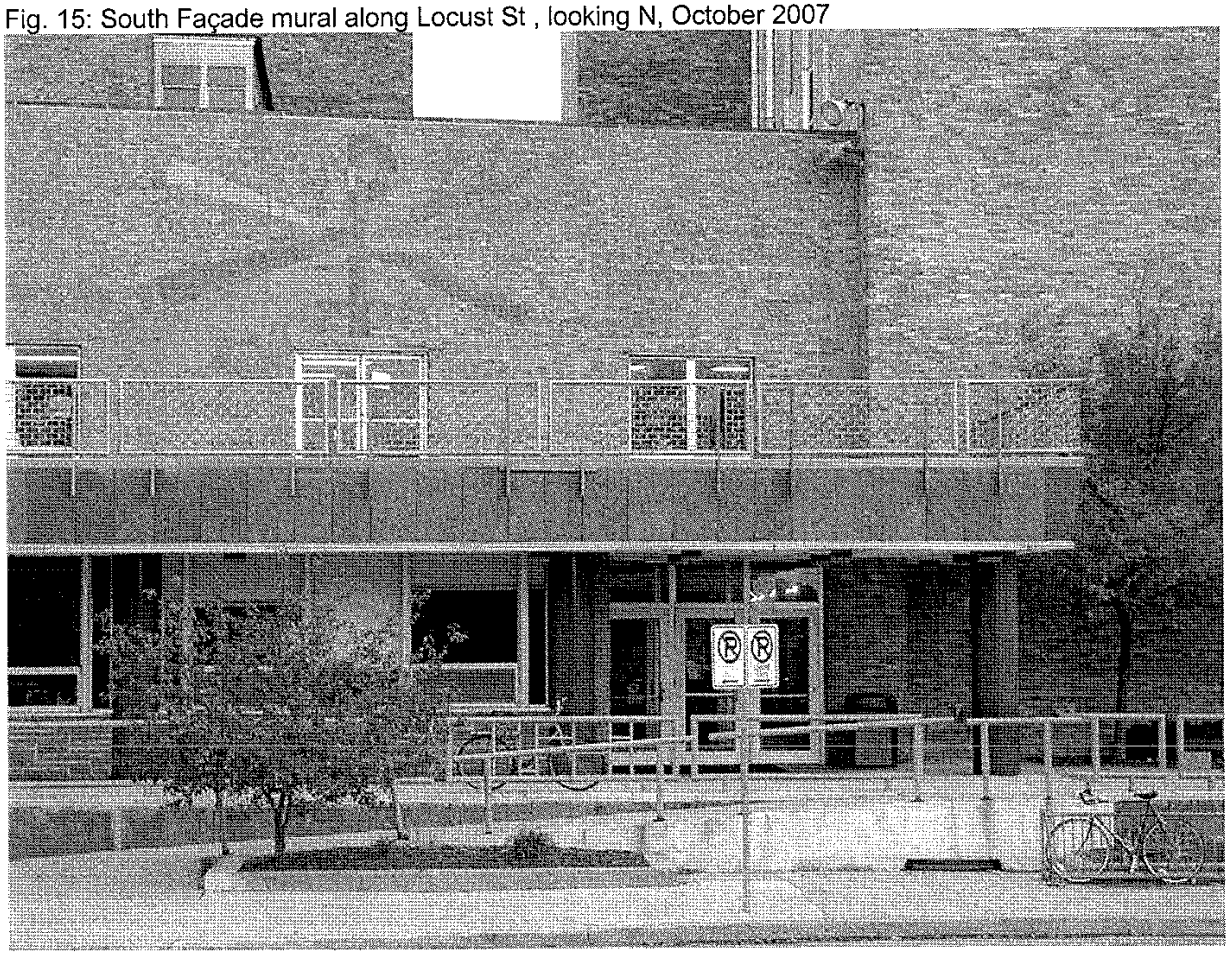
Fig. 15: South Façade mural along Locust St , looking N, October 2007



YMCA	Polk
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Fig. 16: South entrance door, April 2010

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Fig. 17: South Façade, Balcony and entrance, April 2010

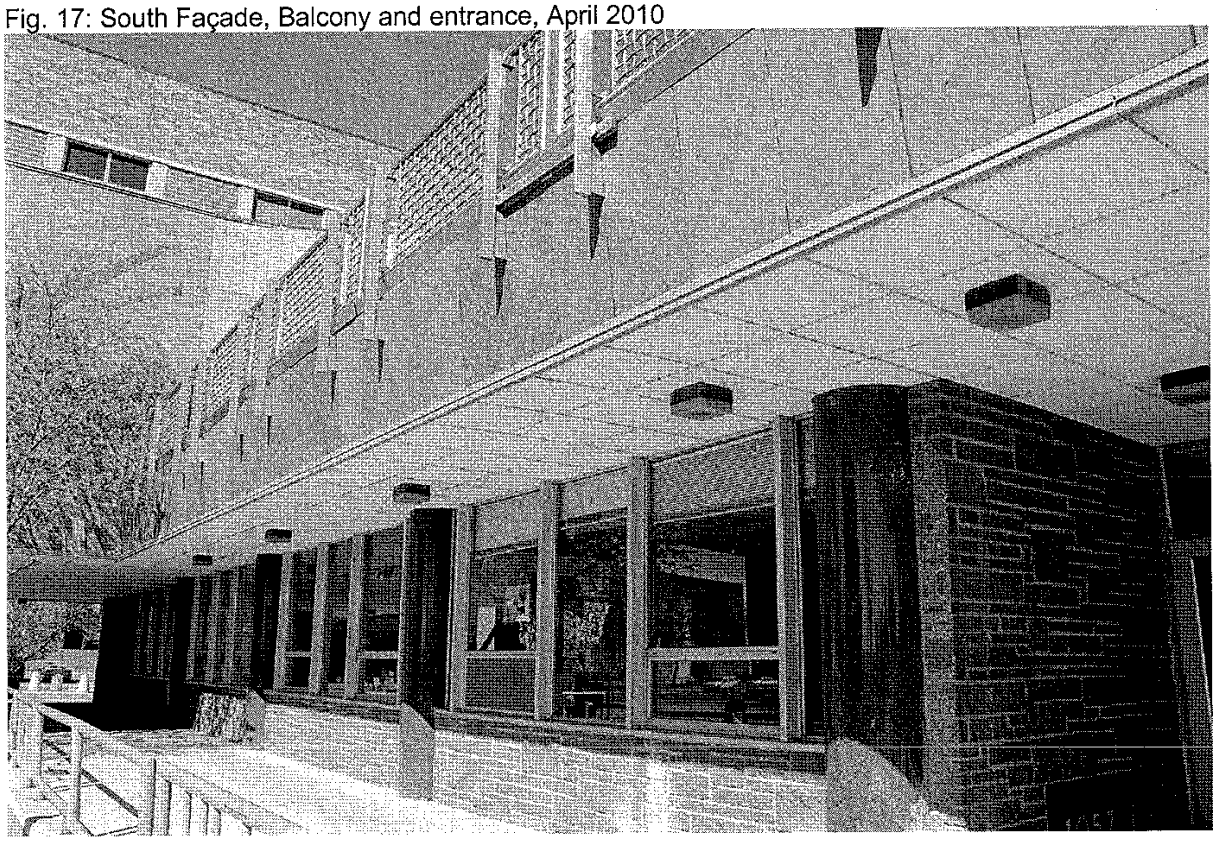

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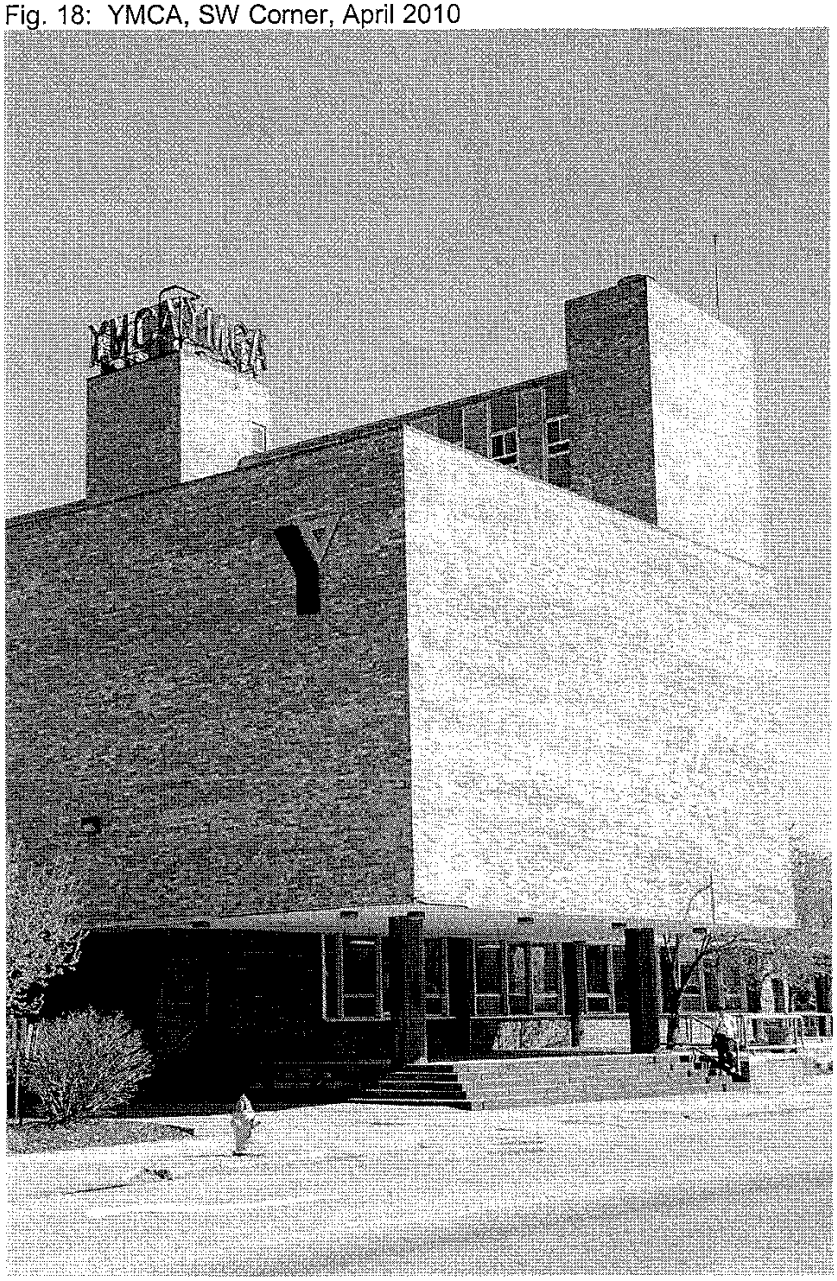
Fig. 18: YMCA, SW Corner, April 2010



YMCA
Name of Property

Polk
County

101 Locust Street
Address

Des Moines
City

Fig. 19: YMCA West Façade and parking lot, looking NE, April 2010

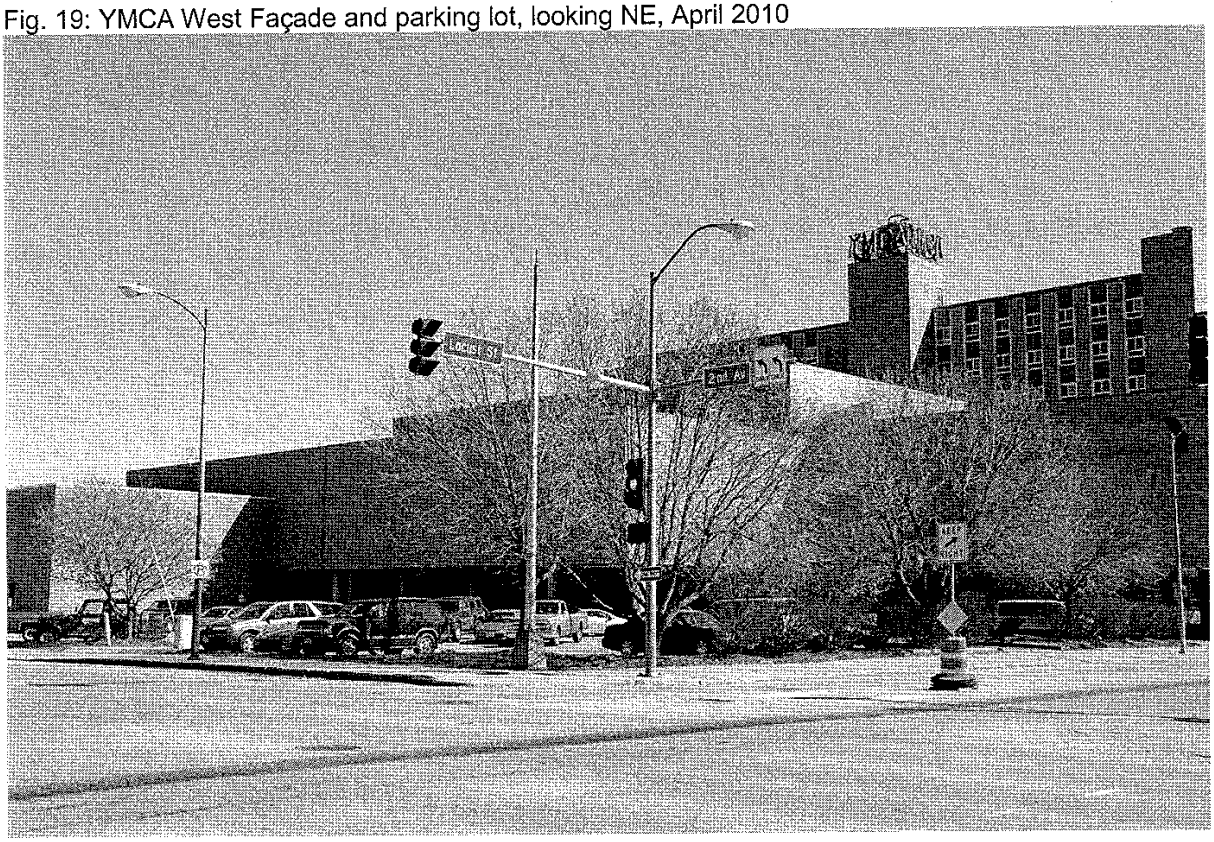


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Fig. 20: YMCA, looking E, April 2010

YMCA	Polk
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Fig. 21: YMCA showing West side of the Aliber Youth Center addition built in 1980, looking NE, April 2010

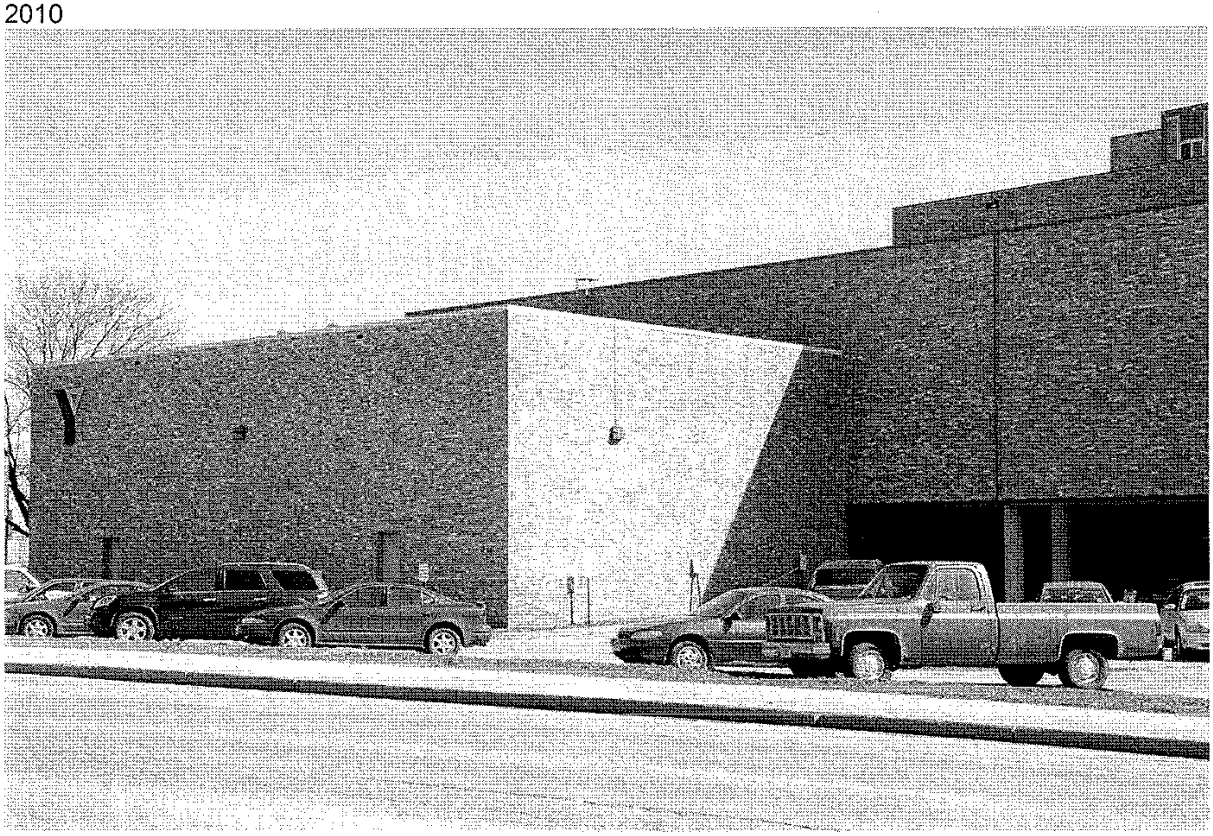

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Fig. 22: 1957 Cornerstone, South side entrance, April 2010

YMCA	Polk
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Fig. 23: Study for YMCA, c. 1955, Wetherell & Harrison Architects (State Historical Society of Iowa, scanned image)

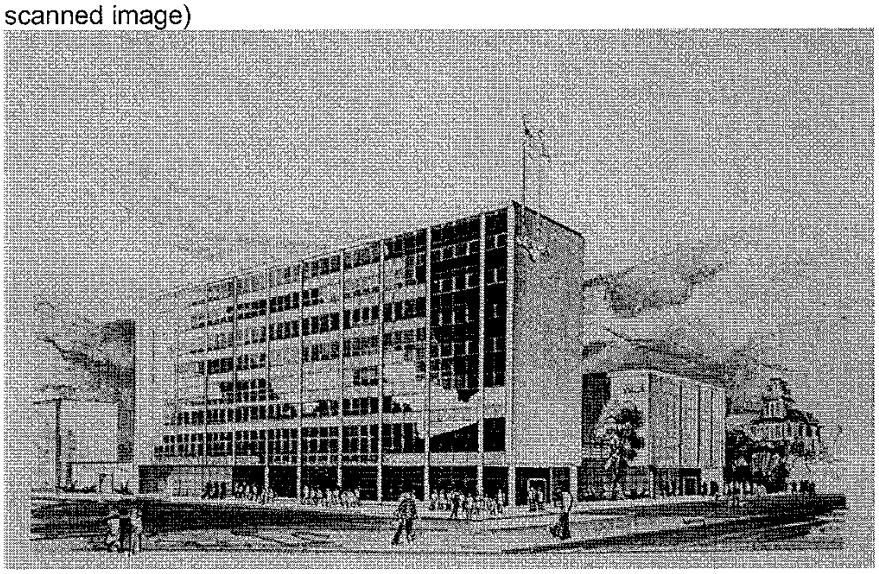

Fig. 24: YMCA during construction, looking west, December 1958 (State Historical Society of Iowa, scanned image)

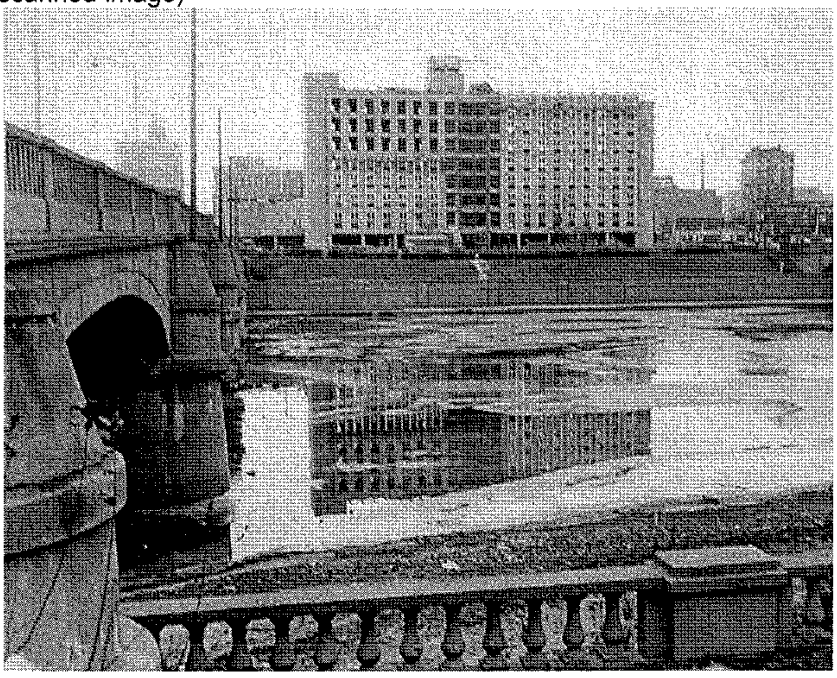

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Fig. 25: Study for YMCA, c 1955, Wetherell & Harrison Architects (State Historical Society of Iowa, scanned image)

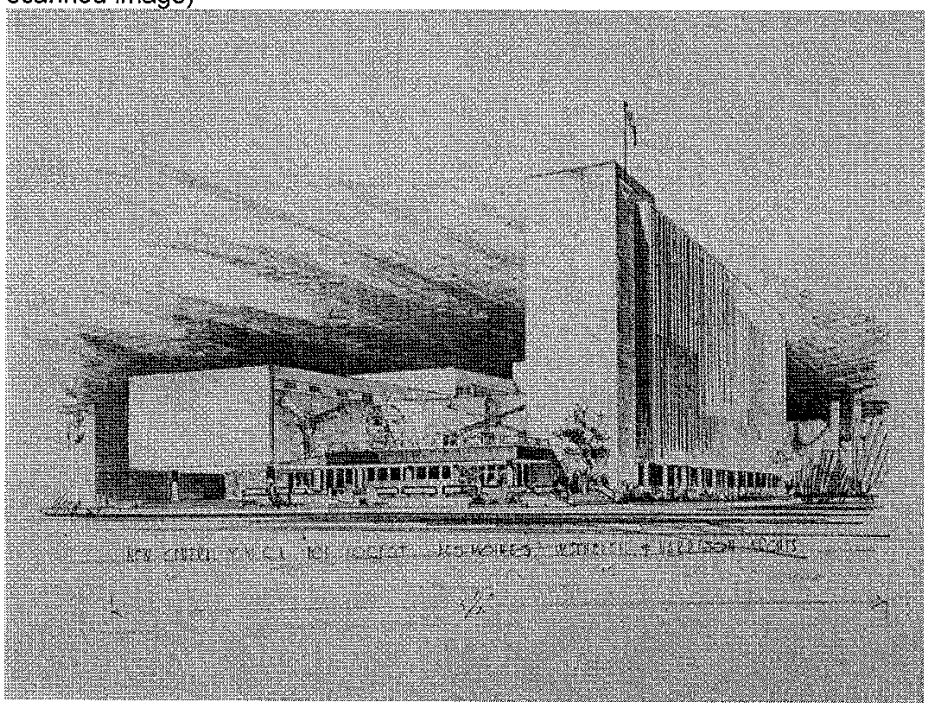

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Fig. 26: Gymnasium, c. 1960 (Weitz Collection State Historical Society of Iowa, scanned image)

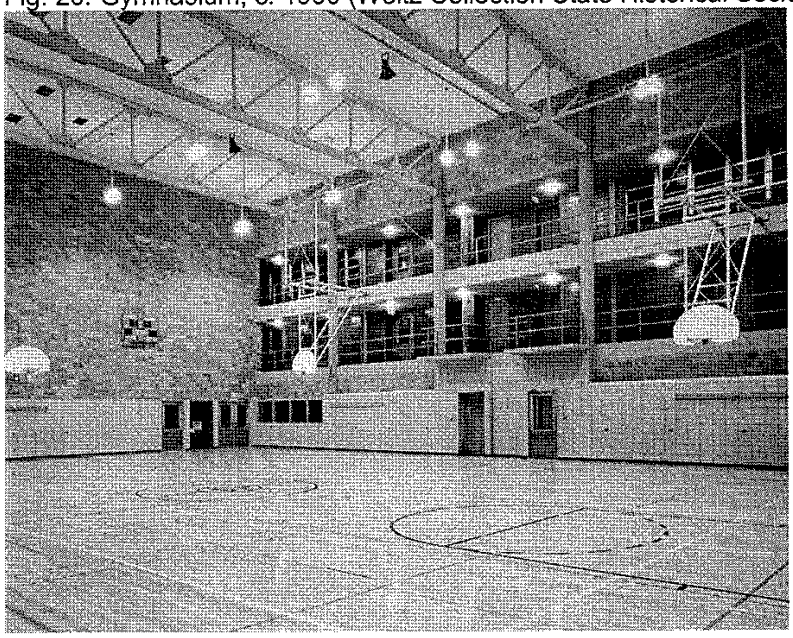

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Fig. 27: "Book of Life" Mural, boys' clubroom, c.1960 (Weitz Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, scanned image)

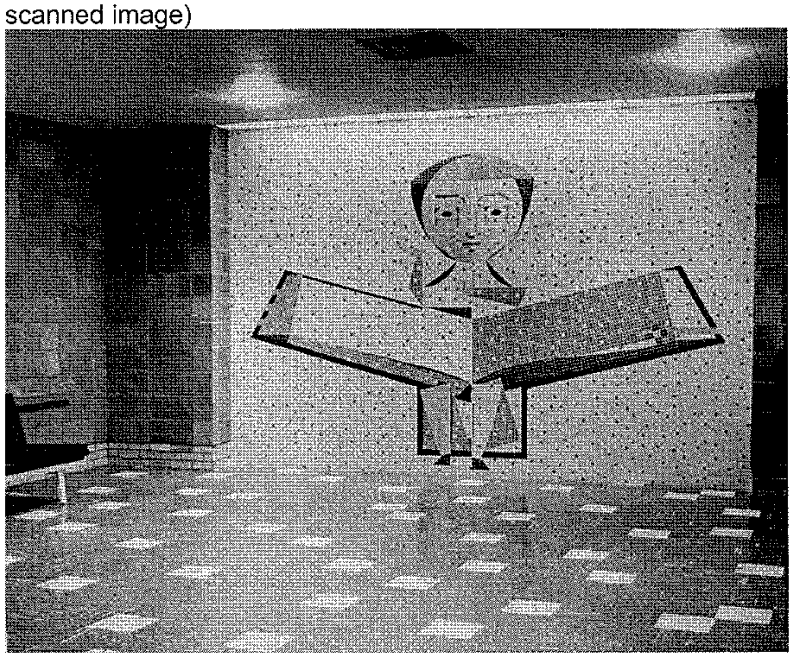

Fig. 28: Cafeteria, c. 1960 (Weitz Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, scanned image)

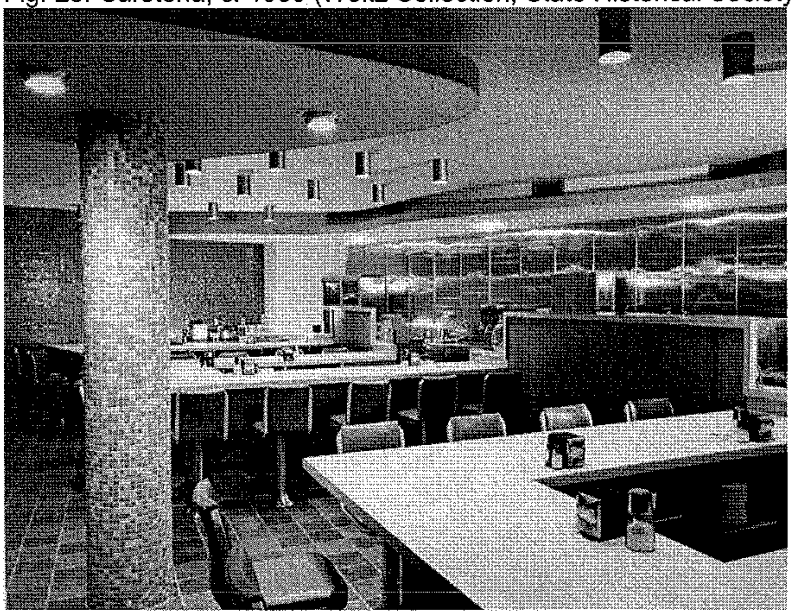

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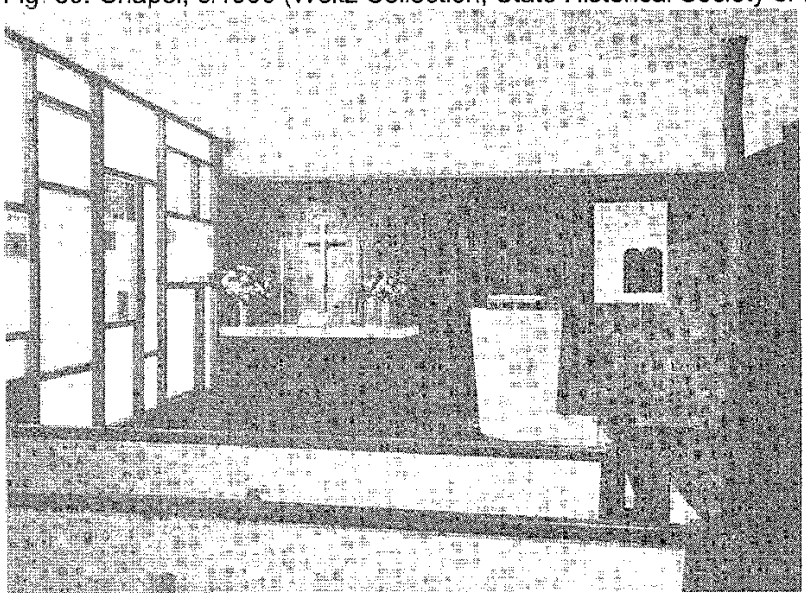
Fig. 29: World Service, Dining Room, c. 1960 (Weitz Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, scanned image)

Fig. 30: Chapel, c.1960 (Weitz Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, scanned image)



YMCA	Polk
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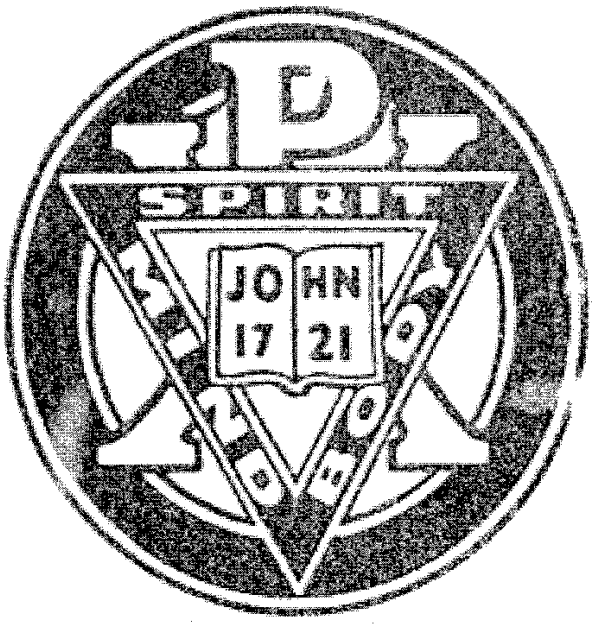
Fig. 31: Spirit, Mind and Body Symbol of the Y.M.C.A., 1959 (scanned image)



YMCA	Polk
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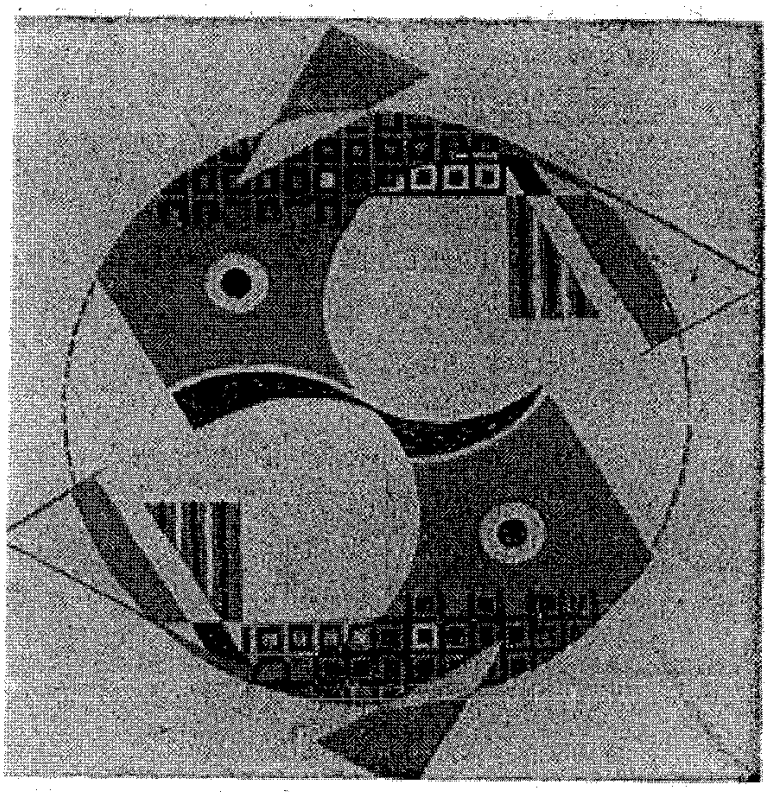
Fig 32: Color Ceramic Tile Mural of interlocking fish, Swimming Pool Room 1959 (scanned image)



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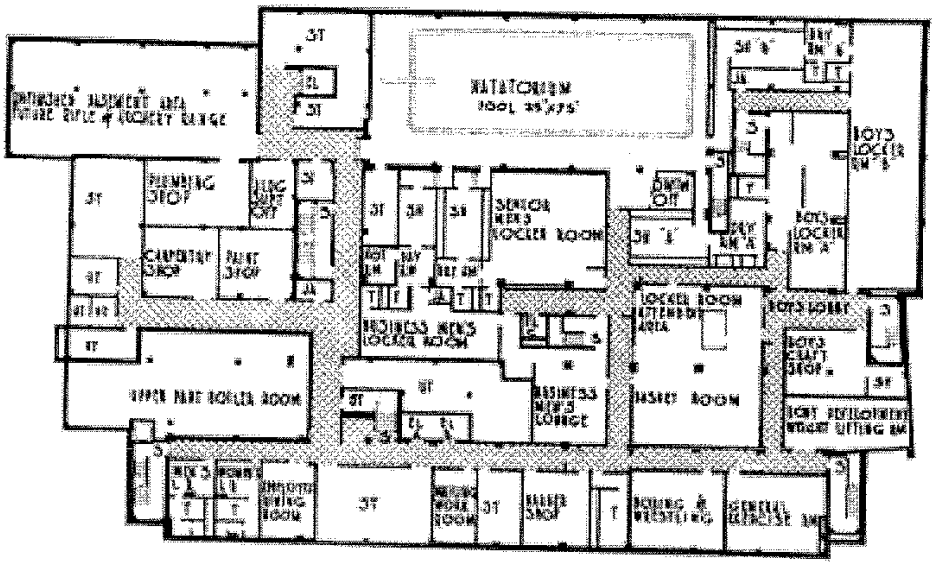

Fig. 33: YMCA Floor Plan-Basement Floor (scanned image)

YMCA	Polk
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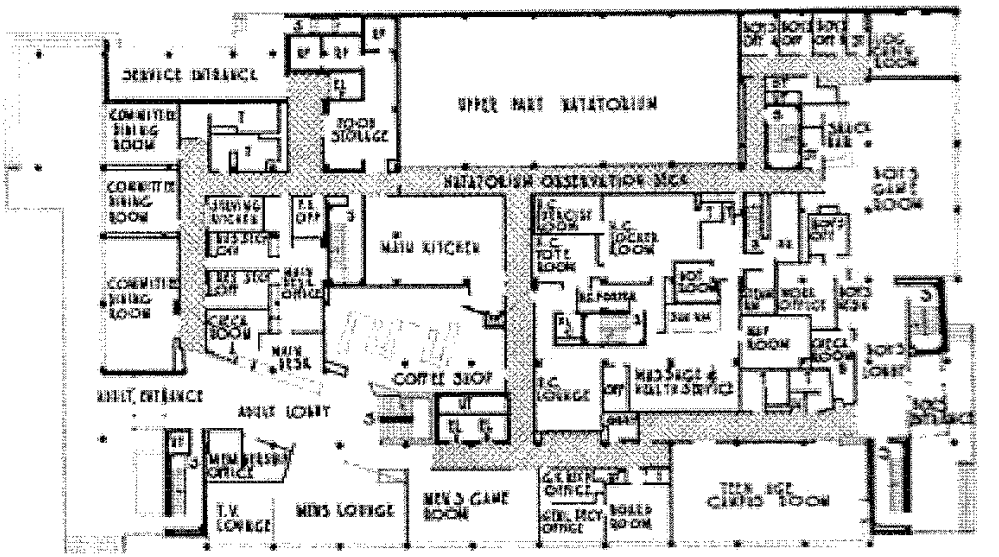

FIRST FLOOR PLAN

Fig 34: YMCA Floor Plan- First Floor (scanned image)

YMCA	Polk
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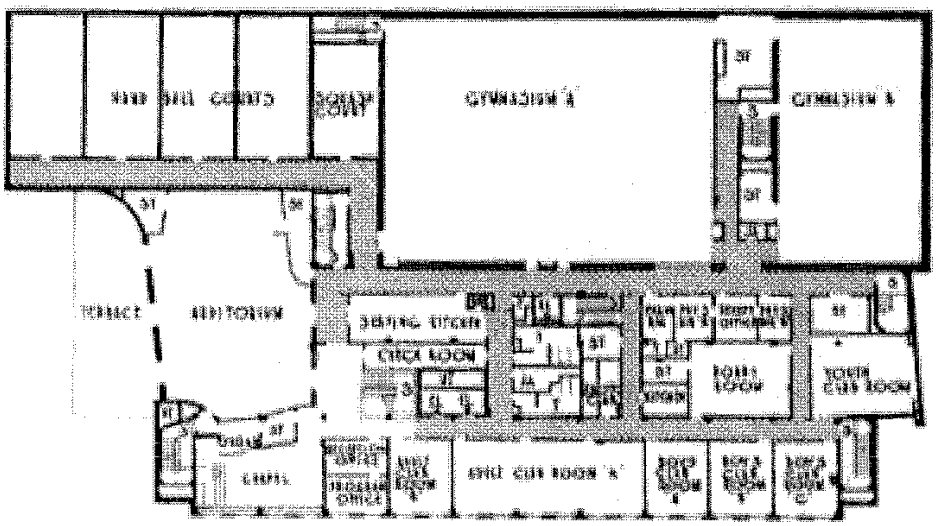

SECOND FLOOR PLAN

Fig. 35: YMCA Floor Plan- Second Floor (scanned image)

YMCA	Polk
Name of Property	County
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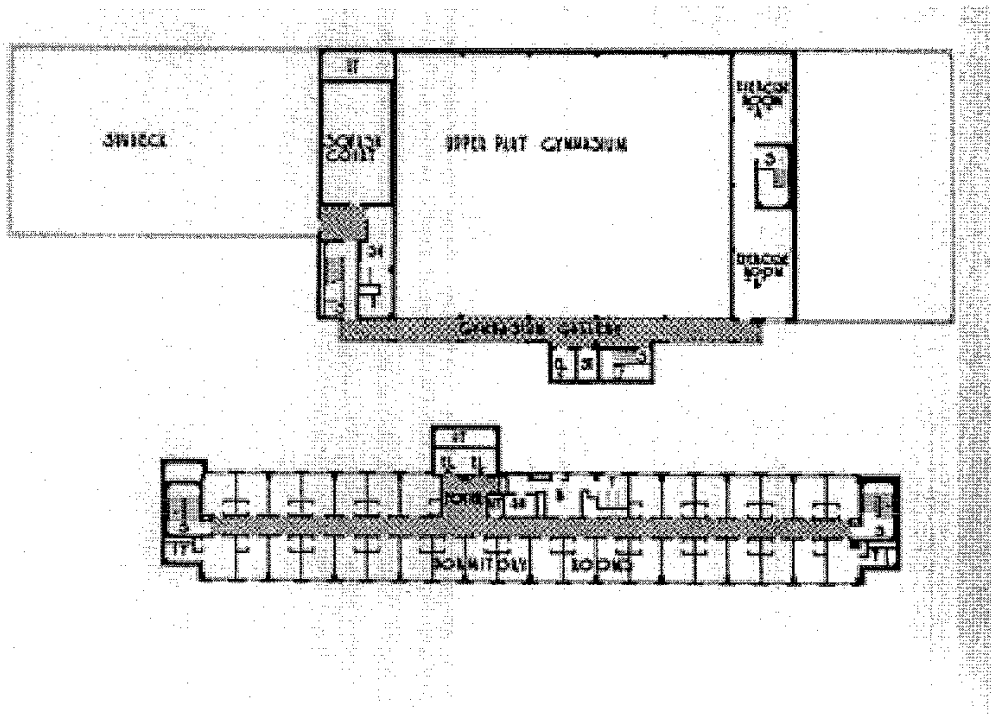
Address	City



THIRD FLOOR PLAN
Typical Residence Floor Plan—third through eighth floors providing 198 rooms

Fig. 36: YMCA Floor Plan- Third Floor (scanned image)

YMCA	Polk
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Fig. 37: View looking NW, c 1960 (Weitz Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, scanned image)