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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

### 1. Name of Property

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>historic name</th>
<th>Williams Avenue YWCA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| other names/site number | “Colored” YWCA, Williams Avenue Branch, Williams Avenue Center, Billy Webb Elks Lodge #1050 |

**Name of Multiple Property Listing**: African American Resources in Portland, Oregon, 1865-1973  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>street &amp; number</th>
<th>6 N Tillamook St.</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>city or town</th>
<th>Portland</th>
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<tr>
<th>state</th>
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<th>code</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>county</th>
<th>Multnomah</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>zip code</th>
<th>97227</th>
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### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 **meets** does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance: **national** **statewide** **X** local

Applicable National Register Criteria: **X** A **B** **C** **D**

**Signature of certifying official/Title**: Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer **Date**

**Oregon State Historic Preservation Office**

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property **meets** does not meet the National Register criteria.

**Signature of commenting official** **Date**

**Title** **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- **entered in the National Register**  
- **determined eligible for the National Register**  
- **determined not eligible for the National Register**  
- **removed from the National Register**  
- **other (explain):**

**Signature of the Keeper** **Date of Action**
Williams Avenue YWCA                              Multnomah Co., OR
Name of Property                                  County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property  Category of Property  Number of Resources within Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)  (Check only one box.)  (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Ownership of Property</th>
<th>Category of Property</th>
<th>Number of Resources within Property</th>
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<td>Total</td>
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</table>

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions  Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)  (Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL \ meeting hall

RECREATION & CULTURE \ sports facility

RECREATION & CULTURE \ auditorium

7. Description

Architectural Classification  Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)  (Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH & 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS \ Colonial Revival

foundation: CONCRETE
walls: WOOD \ shingle
roof: ASPHALT \ shingle
other: N/A
Summary Paragraph

The Williams Avenue YWCA, currently the Billy Webb Elks Lodge #1050, is a one-and-a-half-story, 3,468-square-foot building located at the southwest corner of N Tillamook Street and N Williams Avenue in Portland's Eliot neighborhood. Its immediate setting is characterized by small-scale commercial buildings and dwellings constructed between the late nineteenth and late twentieth centuries. The subject building was constructed in 1926 in the Colonial Revival Style. It is generally rectangular in plan and features a side-gabled roof with three gabled dormers along the primary (north) façade. Above its concrete foundation, the exterior of the building is clad in wood shingles, with simple wood belt courses marking the first and second floor levels on all four elevations. Non-original concrete stairs and a concrete ramp lead to the main entry, which consists of paired doors beyond an arched opening surmounted by a parapet. With a few exceptions, the building's fenestration consists of double-hung, wood sash windows. Apart from the entry stairs and ramp, exterior modifications are limited to select window replacement, addition of shingle cladding at the attic, replacement of all doors, and partial truncation of the chimney. The interior of the building, which includes a lobby, lounge and bar area, kitchen, dining hall and auditorium, and various offices and meeting spaces, has been more substantially altered and retains relatively few original finishes. Despite modifications to the interior and exterior of the building, the resource retains integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association, and it retains integrity of materials, design, and workmanship with regard to its minimally-altered exterior. The building's exterior character-defining features include its one-and-a-half-story height, general massing plan, side gable roof with wall dormers on the primary façade, wood shingle cladding, external brick chimney, multi-light wood windows, and recessed primary entrance with Colonial Revival detailing. Character-defining features in the building's interior include the wood floors in the lounge and auditorium, the auditorium stage, and the basic configuration of the first floor.

Narrative Description

Site

The Williams Avenue YWCA or Billy Webb Elks Lodge #1050 is located at 6 N Tillamook St., on the southwest corner of N Tillamook Street and N Williams Avenue in Portland’s Eliot neighborhood. The building’s primary (north) façade extends along N Tillamook Street, while a secondary (east) elevation faces N Williams Avenue. N Williams Avenue is a busy, one-way street that serves as the boundary between North Portland and Northeast Portland. The building extends to within a few feet of the lot line on all four elevations, with vegetation limited to a large tree and plantings at the property’s east end (see Figure 4).

The immediate vicinity of the property is characterized by a mix of residences and one- to two-story commercial buildings. Most of the residences were constructed as single-family homes, though some have since been converted to multiple units. A community garden occupies the lot immediately south of the building, south of which are distinctive homes at 2037 N Williams Ave. (constructed 1893) and 2027 N Williams Ave. (constructed 1906). The 1943 building immediately west of 6 N Tillamook St. (2054 N Vancouver Ave.) is a one-story, wood structure that hosts a nonprofit educational center.

1 “Cornerstone to Be Laid: Ceremony Will be Held at New Y.W.C.A. Branch,” The Sunday Oregonian (Portland, OR), Mar. 21, 1926.
Exterior

General
The Billy Webb Elks Lodge #1050 is one-and-a-half-stories plus basement and has a generally rectangular plan. Above its concrete foundation, the Lodge is clad in wood shingles, with simple wood belt courses marking the first and second floor levels on all four elevations. The building’s side gable roof is clad with asphalt shingles. Both the roof and the siding were replaced in 2009 renovations but are compatible with the building’s historic appearance (compare Figure 8 and Photographs 1 through 3).

North Façade
The Lodge’s primary (north) façade features the building’s main entry, several large windows, and three dormers. The entry is accessed via a recessed porch with paired columns and posts supporting an arched opening with decorative keystone (see Photograph 2). This opening is surmounted by a parapet with a triangular louvered vent in the parapet’s peak. The entry itself consists of paired, flush doors with divided light transom (see Photograph 9). A fixed 4x2 wood window with wood surround is located on the west wall of the recessed porch (see Photograph 10). A single pendant light hangs from the arched opening. From the main entry, a concrete ramp installed in 2009 renovations extends westward, while concrete stairs extend eastward. An open rail extends the length of the ramp and the stairs, both of which are parallel to the face of the building (see Photographs 3 and 4).

Fenestration at the first story of the north façade consists of seven double-hung, wood sash windows in two configurations: four 6-over-9 windows with beveled wood surrounds flanking the main entry and three 12-over-12 windows with simple wood surrounds at the western end of the façade (corresponding to the auditorium). Two gabled dormers flanking the main entry feature arched, multi-light, double-hung wood sash. A third gabled dormer near the west end of the north elevation features a circular louvered vent flanked by semicircular shutters (see Photograph 3).

East Façade
The Lodge’s secondary (east) façade is marked by a brick chimney that extends to the gable peak and bisects the façade (see Photographs 5 and 6). A metal sign with neon lettering is attached to the Lodge’s east wall near its north end. Fenestration at the first story consists of four 6-over-9, double-hung, wood sash windows that match the 6-over-9 windows on the north façade. Two fixed windows are located at the attic. Three windows are located in the foundation wall: an 8-over-8, double hung, wood sash near the south end and two 3-over-1, double hung, wood sash windows north of the chimney. At the basement level, three concrete steps lead to a flush door immediately south of the chimney that is covered by a simple concrete canopy that extends from the foundation.

South Façade
The western half of the Lodge’s south façade is a windowless concrete wall (see Photograph 7). This half of the façade extends a few feet further southward than the rest of the building. A pathway extending along the eastern half of the south wall is accessed from the N Williams Avenue sidewalk via a flight of concrete stairs. A second set of stairs accesses an east-facing rear door at the end of the walkway. The first story windows on the south façade are boarded up but appear to still be present. Three double-hung windows at the basement level, including two 3-over-1, wood sash and one 1-over-1, wood sash, are not boarded up. These windows are separated from the rear walkway by an open metal rail.

West Façade
The Lodge’s west façade features three large windows that are the same size as the larger windows on the primary façade (see Photograph 8). The west façade windows, however, are of more recent vintage and are fixed, with false divided lights (i.e., internal “muntins” set between two panes of glass). A rectangular louvered vent is located at the upper half-story.
Interior

Main Floor
The Lodge’s main floor consists of an entry lobby (see Photograph 11), with a lounge to the left (east) and an auditorium to the right (west). The area immediately east of the main entry, formerly an office, has been converted to a bathroom. Separate flights of stairs leading to the basement and upper half-story are located at the south end of the vestibule.

The entry lobby and lounge have plaster walls with crown molding at the ceiling. The lobby floor consists of non-historic tile, while the lounge retains its historic wood floor. The lounge is a single open space, with a bar on the south end and chairs and tables occupying the remainder of the space (see Photograph 15). Windows on the north and east walls feature wood window surrounds. A fireplace marks the middle of the east wall.

The auditorium consists of a single, double-height space, with a wood stage that projects from the center of the south wall (see Photographs 13 and 14). The stage, which is elevated approximately 2’ from the auditorium floor, is accessed via sets of three wooden steps at either end of the stage. Two small storage rooms flank the rear of the stage. The auditorium walls feature a high wainscot and plate rail, and large windows with wood surrounds mark the west and north walls (see Photograph 12). The auditorium retains its original wood floor, while the ceiling is a modern acoustic tile ceiling dating from the building’s 2009 renovation.

The kitchen, which is currently being remodeled and retains no historic finishes, is accessed via the exterior door along the south wall of the building. An interior door to the kitchen was formerly located near the west end of the bar in the lounge; this location will once again include a door when the current kitchen remodel is completed in late 2019.

Upper Half-Story
The Lodge’s upper half-story consists of a large room above the lounge and a restroom above the main floor restroom. Original finishes in this part of the building include the wood window surrounds, single panel doors, door trim, and wide baseboards (see Photographs 16 and 17).

Basement
The building includes a partial basement that is located beneath the lounge, vestibule, and rear portion of the auditorium. The portion of the basement beneath the main entry consists of a former locker room and shower area. This area has tile flooring, while other areas of the basement feature concrete flooring. The portion beneath the lounge consists of a single, open room with windows along the east and south walls (see Photograph 18). The portion of the basement beneath the auditorium consists of multiple small mechanical rooms and storage rooms, and includes two metal fire doors (see Photograph 19). Portions of a wood staircase that formerly led from this area of the basement to the kitchen-side backstage area off the auditorium are visible.

Alterations and Integrity
The Billy Webb Elks Lodge #1050 retains good integrity, with the bulk of its modifications focused in the building interior. Known alterations to the lodge building are summarized below.

Exterior
- The horizontal wood siding at the attic has been covered with wood shingles.
- Along the front façade, the original stairs, which extended northward from the face of the building, were removed and the original base of the building, including four basement windows, were
obscured through the 2009 addition of a concrete accessible ramp extending westward from the main entry and concrete stairs extending eastward from the main entry.

- Two double-hung, divided-light, wood windows at the attic level of the east façade have been replaced with fixed, single-light windows.

- Three wood windows on the west façade, which presumably matched the remaining auditorium windows, were replaced in 2009 with fixed, double-paned windows with internal muntins.

- All doors, including the main entry doors, the basement door on the east façade, and the rear door on the south façade, have been replaced.

- The chimney, which formerly extended a few feet above the east gable, has been truncated.

The alterations to the building’s exterior are limited and are generally in keeping with the historic materials and character of the building. The majority of the building’s fenestration is intact, and replacement windows in the west façade are generally compatible with the historic multi-light sash windows. Wood shingle replacement siding is directly reminiscent of the historic cladding material, and although it has been used to cover the horizontal wood siding at the attic level, this is a minimal alteration that does not impact the overall feeling of the building. The footprint and side gable roof retain their original form, and the majority of the original brick chimney remains intact on the east façade. Overall, the exterior of the building retains integrity.

Interior
The building’s interior spaces have generally undergone extensive refinishing, much of it as part of a 2009 building renovation. The kitchen is also being remodeled as of 2019. Notable historic interior features that are intact include the wood floors in the lounge and auditorium; the auditorium stage; and the locker room, metal fire doors and showers in the basement. More broadly, the basic configuration of the first floor is intact, with a lounge and auditorium flanking the entry lobby.

In general, the building’s interior does not retain a high degree of integrity; the majority of finishes appear to date outside of the historic period.
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.)

- [X] 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 grave.
- [ ] D A cemetery.
- [ ] E A reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- [ ] F A commemorative property.
- [ ] G Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

- ETHNIC HERITAGE / BLACK
- SOCIAL HISTORY
- ENTERTAINMENT / RECREATION

Period of Significance
1926 - 1973

Significant Dates
- 1926, building constructed as the “Colored” YWCA
- 1942, building loaned to the USO
- 1946, building returned to YWCA use
- 1956, NAACP established offices in the building
- 1959, building purchased by the Billy Webb Elks

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

- N/A

Cultural Affiliation (if applicable)
- African American/Black

Architect/Builder
- DeYoung, James, Architect
- Roald, Knud, Architect
Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance is 1926 - 1973, beginning with the building’s construction for the African American branch of the Portland YWCA and ending with the conclusion of the Emanuel Hospital Urban Renewal Project. Although 6 N Tillamook St. remains owned, operated, and occupied by an African American fraternal society as of this writing, its role as a traditional gathering place for the city’s African American community changed in the late 1960s and early 1970s as more social organizations became integrated and as large-scale Urban Renewal programs resulted in the displacement of many African Americans from their homes in inner Northeast Portland. The Emanuel Hospital Urban Renewal Project was the last of these projects that directly and disproportionately impacted the city’s African American community.\(^2\) As described in the *African American Resources in Portland, Oregon, 1865-1973* Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPD), this project’s completion in 1973 marks the end of a period which substantially altered the character of the neighborhoods surrounding 6 N Tillamook St. 1973 is therefore an appropriate end date for the building’s period of significance.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

N/A

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations).

The African American or “Colored” Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) building, currently Billy Webb Elks Lodge #1050, is nominated under the *African American Resources in Portland, Oregon, 1865-1973* Multiple Property Document (MPD). The Williams Avenue YWCA building meets all of the general and property specific registration requirements established by the MPD, and is historically significant at the local level of significance, under Criterion A, in the areas of Social History, Entertainment/Recreation, and Ethnic Heritage/Black for its significance as a community gathering space and as host to a variety of African American social, political, educational, and civil rights groups in the period 1926 to 1973.\(^3\) At a time when many community groups and public spaces excluded people of color, the building at 6 N Tillamook St. offered a dedicated place for African American organizations to gather for socialization, recreation, and activism. The African American YWCA’s affiliation with the property stretches back to 1921, before the current building was constructed, and continued for more than thirty-five years. The Portland branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) located its offices in the basement of the building from 1956 through 1964, and the Oregon Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs, Urban League of Portland, and Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) also held gatherings in its meeting rooms, auditorium, and lounge space. After more than nine decades of continuous association with Portland’s African American community, 6 N Tillamook St. remains owned and occupied by a historically African American organization (the Billy Webb Elks of the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks of the World, or IBPOEW) as of late 2019. The period of significance is 1926 to 1973, beginning with the date of construction and ending with the conclusion of the Emanuel Hospital Urban Renewal Project, which permanently impacted the African American community in inner Northeast Portland and affected the setting of Billy Webb Elks Lodge #1050.

\(^2\) Jeana Woolley, “Reconciliation Project: The Emanuel Hospital Urban Renewal Project,” (Portland, OR: City of Portland Housing Bureau, 2012), 5. The completion of the Emanuel Hospital Project in 1973 also marks the end date of the period of significance for *African American Resources in Portland, Oregon, from 1865 to 1973* (Multiple Property Documentation Form).

\(^3\) Throughout this document, the term “African American” is used to refer to Black Americans and Americans of African descent. Antiquated terminology appears only in relevant quotations from primary sources, such as newspaper articles and court proceedings. The building at 6 N Tillamook St. was commonly known as the “Colored YWCA” in the years after its construction, but it is generally called by its other common period names, the “Williams Avenue YWCA” and the “Williams Avenue Center,” throughout the relevant portions of this historic context.
Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

Application of the African American Resources in Portland, Oregon, from 1865 to 1973 MPD

The Williams Avenue YWCA building meets all of the General Registration Requirements provided in the Multiple Property Document:


2. The nominated property retains integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association, and it retains integrity of materials, design, and workmanship with regard to its minimally-altered exterior, all of which demonstrate that the nominated property retains the required aspects of integrity for properties nominated under Criterion A through this MPD. Further, the building retains the key character defining features of this building, as illustrated in Section 7.

3. The nominated property belongs to the Period of Significance for its associated context and fits within the MPD’s period of significance of 1865-1973.

4. The nominated property is significant at the local level of significance, which aligns with the characterization that the majority of resources under this MPD will be eligible at the local level of significance.

5. The nominated property falls under the Civic and Social Organizations property type and meets the required property specific registration requirements. Further, this property is identified as the representative example for Criterion A in the property type, Civic and Social Organizations, as it is one of the oldest extant spaces in Portland constructed specifically for the African American community and has a direct association with multiple prominent African American organizations.4

The Williams Avenue YWCA building also meets all of the property specific registration requirements for the Civic and Social Organizations property type.

1. The nominated property is the place most closely associated with multiple prominent organizations during the time those organizations were demonstrably influential within Portland’s African American community. Those organizations include the YWCA, the NAACP, the OACW, the Urban League and CORE, groups that were “multi-faceted and served educational, political, charitable, and social functions within Portland’s African American community.”5

2. The nominated property draws its significance within the contexts Benevolent and Fraternal Societies and/or Civil Rights, which are identified as the contexts most likely for properties under this property type to be associated with.

3. The nominated property retains the required property type specific aspects of integrity for Criterion A (association, location, and feeling).

SUMMARY

The following narrative describes the history and significance of the former Williams Avenue YWCA building, constructed at the corner of N Tillamook Street and N Williams Avenue in the early twentieth century. The segregated YWCA branch had been organized in 1920 following an extended campaign by local African American women’s clubs, and it was initially housed in a temporary facility erected in 1921. Five years later, the temporary facility was removed, and the current Colonial Revival Style building, designed by local architects James DeYoung and Knud Roald, was constructed at the site. The building was operated by the

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4 Cathy Galbraith et al., African American Resources in Portland, Oregon, from 1865 to 1973 (Multiple Property Documentation Form), forthcoming.

5 Ibid.
African American branch of the Portland YWCA through 1959, with the exception of a four-year period during World War II in which it was loaned to the United Service Organization for use as a recreation center for African American servicemen. Following the integration of the Portland YWCA, the building was sold to the Billy Webb Elks Lodge #1050, a local branch of the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks of the World, who continue to own the building today.

A HISTORY OF WOMEN’S CLUBS IN PORTLAND AND OREGON

The origins of the building at 6 N Tillamook St. lie in the nationwide proliferation of women’s social clubs that occurred in the early twentieth century. Born of the turn-of-the-century women’s movement and Progressive sentiment, these groups were generally founded with a focus on moral issues, particularly those related to motherhood and domesticity. In accordance with the “racial uplift” ideology advanced by W. E. B. Du Bois and the New Negro movement of the early twentieth century, many African American women’s clubs espoused the notion that financially-stable African Americans had a moral responsibility for the welfare of others within their racial community. Inspired by the national trend, African American women in Portland formed more than a dozen philanthropic and social clubs in the first part of the twentieth century and participated in charitable and service work. In this way, Portland’s African American women’s clubs laid foundations for a strong tradition of philanthropy, education, and activism within the local community.6

World War I and the Hostess House

American involvement in World War I further catalyzed African American women’s community involvement, as wartime demands elicited patriotic volunteerism and altered both racial and gender politics. Within Portland, a variety of African American women’s clubs endeavored to contribute to the war effort. For example, the Colored Ladies Circle assembled and shipped more than 800 packages to African American soldiers at segregated training camps. Under the direction of local activist Beatrice M. Cannady, the group also organized a 900-member knitting campaign and donated hundreds of handmade textiles to the American Red Cross.7

Many African American women from the Portland area also volunteered or visited soldiers at the segregated Hostess House at Camp Lewis in western Washington State. Established by the national YWCA at the request of the War Department, fifty of these hospitality centers were established to accommodate female visitors to thirty-seven American military camps during World War I. Eventually, the Hostess Houses expanded their services to cater to all enlisted servicemen missing the “feminine comforts” of home, as well as to their female visitors, many of whom had traveled great distances to visit their brothers, husbands, or sweethearts.8

The Camp Lewis Hostess House opened to White visitors and servicemen in late 1917. In addition to accommodations for female guests to Camp Lewis, the space also featured a restaurant, smoking lounge, and reading room for soldiers and their callers.9 African American soldiers and women were not permitted to meet in the primary facility, but a separate and less well-appointed building was eventually designated for use as the “colored Hostess House” in 1918.10 African American women’s involvement with this Hostess House appears to have played a role in subsequent agitation for a dedicated branch of the YWCA in Portland, as a 1920 Oregonian article asserts that “the colored Y.W.C.A. is the outgrowth of the hostess house work which thrived during the war period in military camps. In Portland there is a very large and interested group of colored women who are anxious to do all in their power to make possible this branch.”11 Like the original Camp Lewis Hostess House, the Portland YWCA Central Association (then located in Downtown Portland at SW Broadway

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7 Nikki Brown, Private Politics and Public Voices: Black Women’s Activism from World War I to the New Deal (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 11.
and SW Taylor Street) was open only to White women; it was not until 1946 that the national organization would officially integrate.12 In early-twentieth-century Portland, African American women who desired to join the YWCA had no other option but to establish a segregated branch.13

The Oregon Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs
The desire for a YWCA for African Americans in Portland was also related to the increasing popularity and influence of local women’s groups following World War I. In January 1917, fourteen African American women’s clubs organized to form the Oregon Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs, later known as the Oregon Association of Colored Women’s Clubs (OACW).14 Although the individual clubs’ involvement remained concentrated at the local level, the formation of a statewide federation marked a step toward greater collaboration as well as broader economic, political, and social influence. Within Portland, club women established kindergartens, nurseries, reading rooms, youth clubs, camp programs, and homes for orphaned or dependent children, the elderly, and young working women. Popular fundraising events included debates, plays, music recitals, picnics, raffles, and charity balls, which served to demonstrate the club women’s prestige and refinement even as they accomplished philanthropic goals. In conjunction with other African American community institutions, many women’s clubs were also involved in advocating for suffrage and fighting discriminatory public accommodations practices. Borrowed from the National Association of Colored Women, the Oregon Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs’ motto was “Lifting as We Climb,” reflecting its members’ commitment to both personal and community development.15

THE WILLIAMS AVENUE BRANCH OF THE YWCA: THE EARLY YEARS
Influenced by the tradition of women’s social clubs and benevolent societies as well as the spirit of volunteerism and domestic care embodied in the Hostess House, African American women began the process of establishing a “colored branch” of the Portland YWCA in 1918. The growing population of Portland’s African American community was another driving force behind the movement, as women of color who moved to the city following World War I faced a difficult and discriminatory search for lodging and employment.16

On November 13, 1918, Cynthia Ann Jenkins wrote to the National Office of the YWCA in New York to request guidance in organizing a segregated Portland branch.17 By early 1920, the movement for a Portland African American YWCA had gained sufficient financial capability and public support to make significant progress toward its goal. On February 27, 1920, a formal recommendation for the establishment of the “Colored YWCA” was made and a committee of management was formed with University of Washington graduate Mabel Byrd as executive secretary.18 One month later, an informational meeting and fundraiser kickoff were held at Mount Olivet Baptist Church (31 NW Broadway), at which the General Secretary and

14 “Colored Women Form State Federation of Clubs,” The Sunday Oregonian (Portland, OR), Jan. 21, 1917. The fourteen founding clubs were the Colored Women’s Council, the Roxanna Club, the Rosebud Study Club, the Clover Leaf Club, the Montavilla Industrial Club, the Ladies of the Twentieth Century Club, the Lucy Thurman W.C.T.U., Colored Women’s Republican Club, the Swastika Club, Salem Colored Women’s Club, Pendleton Art Club, Women’s Civic Club, Alpha Delphian Club and Hermonie Club.
18 YWCA Board of Directors Meeting Minutes (Feb. 27, 1920), Portland YWCA Archives (Lewis and Clark College, Portland, OR); “Y.W. Assists Colored Branch of Organization,” The Oregon Daily Journal (Portland, OR), July 3, 1921. The management committee included Mrs. Alice P. Benjamin, Mrs. G. V. Grayson, Mrs. Katherine Gray, Miss Adelia Prichard, Mrs. I. M. Walker, and Miss Amelia Ferry.
Industrial Secretary of the Portland YWCA Central Association both delivered an address. The meeting attendees voted unanimously to move forward with plans for an African American YWCA branch, deciding to begin a $5,000 funding drive on March 29, 1920. Bylaws were adopted on May 10, 1920, and the search for a space to construct facilities commenced.

**Acquisition of the Williams Avenue Property and Construction of the Portable Facility**

The location of the proposed YWCA was severely constrained by the restrictions placed on African American settlement in Portland at the time. Racial discrimination in real estate sales and mortgage lending had largely concentrated the African American community within the Albina neighborhood of northeast Portland by the early twentieth century. Even in these areas, African American real estate buyers could encounter opposition from White Portlanders, as was made evident in the case of siting the Williams Avenue YWCA.

Multnomah County records indicate that 6 N Tillamook St, the site of the future Williams Avenue YWCA, was purchased by Phillip and Eleanora Wildi of Astoria, Oregon, on July 6, 1920. At this time, the group lacked sufficient funding and support to construct a permanent building, so plans were made for the erection of a temporary, portable structure on the site. A permit application for construction of new facilities was filed within the year, but in summer 1921, a group of White Portlanders led by G. B. Sherbert filed an official protest against the YWCA’s permit request. According to an *Oregonian* article published at the time, the group “not only objected to the [proposed] gymnasium building but to the construction of any building by negroes.”

In response, Portland City Attorney Frank S. Grant filed an opinion with the City Council stating that the City had no authority to deny a permit on the basis of the applicants’ race. Citing the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments, Grant wrote:

> To grant the prayer of the petitioners would be solely on the grounds of color…it may be claimed that acquisitions of property by colored persons depreciate property owned in the neighborhood of white persons. But property may be acquired by undesirable white neighbors or put to disagreeable though lawful uses with like results. The council is therefore advised that it has no authority to enact an ordinance prohibiting colored people from constructing a building on a piece of ground solely on the ground that they are colored people, and therefore the prayer of the petitioners must be denied.

Thereafter, construction of the portable clubhouse proceeded as planned, and the Williams Avenue YWCA (also called the “Colored YWCA” or the “Williams Avenue Branch”) celebrated its opening with an evening party and open house on October 16, 1921. The temporary building measured 17’ x 40’ and featured an “attractive rustic finish and furnishing of old hickory and Japanese grass.” An *Oregonian* article from opening day quotes the branch’s executive secretary, Mabel Byrd, as she established the significant benefit of the organization to Portland’s African American community:

> The YWCA is the largest women’s organization in the world, and is the connecting link between the church and the home, standing for the four-sided development of the girl—mental, social,
physical and spiritual . . . With this idea in view, and for the purpose of developing race leadership and the social side of the colored girl, an appeal has been made to Mrs. Christie [the General Secretary of the Portland YWCA Central Association], who used her best efforts to bring about the result.27

From the outset, the new portable facility was heavily scheduled with events and activities for all members of Portland’s African American community. Weekly programming initially included classes in English, sewing, religion, theater, swimming, and other athletic activities. “Work classes” for girls were held two afternoons a week through the branch employment bureau, and a mothers’ club and community club also met in the space. Vesper services were held Sunday afternoons.28 Over time, additional clubs and activities were added for young African American men and boys, who did not have a comparable facility available to them.29 By 1923, 65 girls, 90 adult women, and 35 boys were registered members of the Williams Avenue YWCA, and class offerings had expanded to include a range of athletics, swimming, and art classes.30 Also in 1923, Mabel Byrd left Portland to work for the Harlem and Brooklyn YWCAs, and she was replaced as branch Executive Secretary by Marjorie “Margie” Danley.31 By the mid-1920s, the Oregonian reported that the Williams Avenue YWCA “had a membership of more than 100 and was enjoyed by more than 5000 colored persons in its various activities.”32

Construction of Permanent YWCA Facilities at Williams Avenue

The activities and membership of the Williams Avenue YWCA quickly grew beyond the capacity of their small portable facility, and by 1926, funding had been secured to erect a permanent building at the site. $12,000 toward the total budget of $12,500 was donated by Mary Collins (née Laffey), a White philanthropist and chairwoman of the YWCA Committee of Color, who intended her gift to be made anonymously.33 However, rumors that the donation had been contributed by the Ku Klux Klan led the YWCA to reveal Collins’s identity.34 Additional funds for constructing and furnishing the new building were collected from various African American women’s clubs, including a $500 pledge made by the Oregon Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs.35 $1,100 total was contributed by women affiliated with the branch, and a small sum was also raised by a benefit party hosted by a group of African American men.36

27 Ibid.
29 “Negroes Should Be Asset, Says Mabel Bird [sic],” Mar. 4, 1923. Interest in a Y.M.C.A. branch for African American men had existed in early twentieth-century Portland, but the effort was largely discontinued because many community leaders refused the injustice of a segregated facility.
30 Ibid.
32 “Cornerstone to Be Laid: Ceremony Will be Held at New Y.W.C.A. Branch,” The Sunday Oregonian (Portland, OR), Mar. 21, 1926. The latter figure is likely an exaggeration, as fewer than 2,500 African Americans resided in Portland at the time.
33 Murdock, “The Persistence of Black Women,” 190; Martha Gies, “Two Ladies Named Collins,” Eliot Neighborhood Association, July 21, 2009, https://eliotneighborhood.org/2009/07/21/two-ladies-named-collins/. Mary Collins was married to Everett Stanton Collins, who had made his fortune in the timber industry, and she directed her family’s considerable wealth toward a number of charitable causes. In addition to her commitments with the YWCA, Goodwill Industries, Willamette University, and Camp Fire, Mary Collins founded the Collins Foundation in 1947 and served as its first director. She became chairwoman of the YWCA Committee of Color beginning in 1922.
36 “Negro Y.W.C.A. Ready: Dedication Next Sunday of Williams Avenue Branch, New Building Gift of Mrs. E. S. Collins, to Be Scene of General Program,” The Morning Oregonian (Portland, OR), June 11, 1926.
Plans for the permanent YWCA building, which would later become Billy Webb Elks Lodge #1050, were commissioned from local architecture firm DeYoung & Roald. Partners James DeYoung and Knud Roald were simultaneously engaged in design of the New Heathman Hotel at 712 SW Salmon St. in downtown Portland, and they were also supervising architects for the Rapp & Rapp-designed Portland Publix Theatre (now the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall) at 1037 SW Broadway. In a decade-long partnership begun in 1919, the pair also designed several churches within the Portland metropolitan area, the Hamilton Arms and Rex Arms Apartments, the Clark County Poor Farm in Vancouver, Washington, and numerous commercial buildings and private residences in the greater Portland area. Contemporary announcements from the Oregonian reveal that in the same month ground was broken on the new Williams Avenue YWCA, DeYoung & Roald were also awarded contracts for a $100,000 apartment complex, a $100,000 mixed-use office building, and a $25,000 single-family home. This suggests that the $12,500 YWCA contract was a comparatively small project for the increasingly high-profile firm.

The cornerstone for the new Williams Avenue YWCA was laid on the site of the former portable facility on Sunday, March 21, 1926, at a ceremony attended by approximately 500 people. Described by local newspapers as “Georgian colonial” in style, the new community center featured stained shingle cladding and was to be “treated as much like a residence as possible,” ensuring that it was compatible with the predominantly residential character of the surrounding neighborhood. The first floor was designed with a centrally-located entrance hall and office space. To the east of the hall was a lounge space for lodge meetings and teas, while the western wing of the building contained an auditorium, a small gymnasium, and a fully-equipped, plumbed kitchen. The basement was partitioned into two separate spaces, one for the women’s shower and locker rooms and one for the men’s facilities. The men’s space also featured an outside entrance. The upper level included additional club rooms and classrooms as well as a women’s restroom.

The new Williams Avenue YWCA was completed in late spring of the same year, and the building was dedicated in a ceremony on Sunday, June 13, 1926. The guest of honor was Bishop J. W. Martin of Los Angeles, who headed the western region of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Accompanied by local pastors Reverend John F. Moreland of First African Methodist Episcopal Church, Reverend E. L. Jamieson of the Bethel African American Methodist Episcopal Church, and Reverend G. G. Gardner of the Shiloh Baptist Church, Bishop Martin presided over the ceremony and preached a dedicatory sermon. Cynthia Ann Jenkins, who had made the initial request for an African American YWCA nearly a decade previously, and Williams Avenue YWCA Executive Secretary Margie Danley also spoke at the dedication.

37 Richard Ellison Ritz, Architects of Oregon: A Biographical Dictionary of Architects Deceased – 19th and 20th Centuries (Portland, OR: Lair Hill Publishing, 2002), 101. James W. DeYoung was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1885 and came to Portland in 1907. He trained as a draftsman under Doyle & Patterson and worked for the horticultural firm of J. B. Pilkington and the contracting firm L. R. Bailey and Company before establishing DeYoung & Roald in 1919. Norwegian-born Knud Roald trained at the University of Trondheim and the University of Dresden before immigrating to the United States in 1911. He worked as a draftsman for J. J. Hefty in Portland and was also employed by L. R. Bailey and Company before partnering with DeYoung.

38 Gail E. H. Evans and T. Allan Comp, “New Heathman Hotel,” National Register of Historic Places Inventory/Nomination Form (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1984), 8.4-8.5. DeYoung & Roald-designed churches include the Fremont Methodist Episcopal Church, the Beaverton Congregational Church, the Ellis Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church in Portland, and the Seventh Church of Christ Scientist in Portland.

39 “New Buildings Planned: Marshfield and North Bend to Get Large Structures,” The Sunday Oregonian (Portland, OR), Mar. 14, 1926. The $25,000 dwelling to be constructed in Westover Terraces was commissioned by prominent Portland lawyer Milton Klepper.


43 “Y.W.C.A. Branch Opens: Building Devoted to Work among Negroes, Dedicatory Sermon Preached by Bishop J.W. Martin of Los Angeles,” The Morning Oregonian (Portland, OR), June 14, 1926. This article described the building as “the gift of Mrs. E. S. Collins” and did not recognize the African American women’s clubs’ financial or material contributions.
The new building was put to use immediately, beginning with an open house following the ceremony. Boys’ clubs met on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons that week, and the YWCA’s high school girls group gave a reception on Thursday night. The Blue Triangle Club (a name derived from the inverted-triangle logo of the YMCA at the time) met on Friday, and the grade school girls’ group met the following day. In the coming decades, a great variety of African American social, educational, and political groups would also make use of the space now available to them at the Williams Avenue YWCA building.

THE WILLIAMS AVENUE YWCA IN THE 1930s
After several years of popular programming and adequate funding, the Great Depression led to a severe reduction in the Williams Avenue YWCA’s resources. Nationally, YWCA groups coped by reducing staff and cutting programs. These strategies had a disproportionate impact on African American associations, which were already underfunded in comparison to their white counterparts. African American membership declined nationally during the Depression years, even as the national organization became increasingly progressive on the issue of race relations.

Although its World War I-era proclamation, “Everything that is done by the Y.W.C.A. for white women is done also for colored women,” seemed to advertise a modicum of equality within the organization, the YWCA remained segregated and relatively silent on issues of race until the 1930s. At this time, however, national leadership began to challenge segregation and urged members to openly denounce lynching and other racial violence. YWCA leadership also shifted away from organizational policies rooted in segregation toward those that favored desegregation, if not active integration. Within Portland, the early 1930s saw the advent of a “Race Relations Day Program” organized at the YWCA Central Association in Downtown Portland, including an interracial vesper service “designed to promote inter-racial understanding and a more spiritual brotherhood of man.” In 1932, the annual meeting of the Williams Avenue YWCA was also an interracial event that featured guests and clerical speakers representing both the African American and the White community of Portland.

THE WILLIAMS AVENUE YWCA DURING WORLD WAR II AND THE EARLY POSTWAR YEARS
With the United States’ entrance into World War II in 1941, Portland’s African American population grew rapidly as individuals from across the country came to the Pacific Northwest in search of wartime employment at the Kaiser shipyards. A large number of women, both White and African American, also entered the workforce for the first time. There was a marked difference in the wartime job prospects of White and African American women, however, as African American workers were typically assigned the most menial, labor-intensive, and uncomfortable tasks. The stress of wartime briefly increased the prominence of the Williams Avenue YWCA, as it became a source of both spiritual and social support for Portland’s increasingly large African American community.

The Williams Avenue United Service Organization (USO)

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46 Ibid., 7.
48 Nancy Marie Robertson, Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 4.
50 “Racial Topics Are Given: Speakers Discuss Problems at Banquet Meeting,” The Morning Oregonian (Portland, OR), Mar. 1, 1932.
Despite the intensified role of African American women’s groups in Portland, the building at 6 N Tillamook St. would not be occupied by YWCA activities for much of the war. In late 1942, the Williams Avenue YWCA Committee of Management decided to rent their facility to the United Service Organization (USO) as a recreation center for African American servicemen. YWCA activities were hastily relocated to the Central Association building in Downtown and to members’ private homes, and the United War Chest advanced $6,000 to the Portland USO for the purpose of “remodeling, installing showers and otherwise making the building more suitable for the boys’ use.” An additional $5,000 grant from the United War Chest was used for the construction of barracks beside the main building (extant at 2054 N Vancouver Avenue). The new barracks contained sleeping units for 50 men, but because of the overwhelming volume of USO visitors, 20 beds were later added to the barracks and an additional 30 were set up in the former YWCA auditorium.

On November 5, 1942, the Williams Avenue YWCA building officially reopened as the “Negro USO Center” with William Burdette Hockaday as its director. Ida McClendon, who was also the managing editor of the People’s Observer, a local African American newspaper, served as Hockaday’s assistant program director. The nine-member board of management appointed by the Portland USO Council also featured several prominent members of the local African American community, including physician Dr. DeNorval Unthank and Reverend George Campbell of the Church of the Nazarene.

Throughout the war, the Williams Avenue USO hosted a variety of social and recreational activities for visiting African American servicemen and provided a respite from the stress of wartime military responsibilities. The day after the new USO’s official opening, nearly 140 African American soldiers stationed in Pendleton arrived in 58 vehicles, bivouacking along N Tillamook Street and attending back-to-back dances on Friday and Saturday nights. Other groups visited from the Portland Army Air Base, Camp Hathaway, Camp Bonneville, Camp Kirkpatrick, and Camp Adair, and they enjoyed Friday evening game nights, informal Saturday night dances, and Sunday vespers services. Tuesday evenings were buffet dinners or formal dances, while Wednesday nights were regularly reserved for skating parties at the Vancouver Barracks, Camp Hathaway, or the Portland Army Air Base. A 1943 Oregonian article estimated that the Williams Avenue USO accommodated between 3,000 and 5,000 servicemen every month.

Imperative to the USO’s services were the women volunteers who staffed the Williams Avenue USO and hosted recreational activities. Organized into four service committees, the women arranged, staffed, and attended social events; mended uniforms and sewed on service stripes; provided musical entertainment; and prepared meals and refreshments. Young women between 16 and 21 years of age were required to provide written permission from their mothers before joining the “junior hostesses” group, and many of their mothers also volunteered as chaperones for the various dances and parties held at the USO and nearby training camps.

William Hockaday was eventually replaced as director of the Williams Avenue USO by Nathaniel George, who had previously directed the Los Angeles and Monterey YMCAs. He was followed by Kenneth Smith, who was nominated for the 1946 Portland Negro First Citizen award in recognition of his wartime service to the

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52 Margaret Thompson, “Uncle Sam’s Homesick Colored Boys Find Haven on Williams Avenue,” The Sunday Oregonian (Portland, OR), Oct. 19, 1943.
53 Ibid.
54 “USO Greets Negro Troops: 140 Reach City from Pendleton,” The Oregonian (Portland, OR), Nov. 7, 1942.
55 “Negro Center to Open Soon: USO Quarters Ready for Use,” The Oregonian (Portland, OR), Oct. 27, 1942; Galbraith et al., Cornerstones of Community, 72. The board also included Gertrude Eakin, Geneva Turner, Ralph Flowers, Lula Gragg, John C. Meehan, and Mrs. Ferdinand Smith.
57 Thompson, “Uncle Sam’s Homesick Colored Boys Find Haven on Williams Avenue,” Oct. 19, 1943.
58 “USO Centers Attract Many,” The Sunday Oregonian (Portland, OR), Aug. 8, 1943.
59 Thompson, “Uncle Sam’s Homesick Colored Boys Find Haven on Williams Avenue,” Oct. 19, 1943.
60 Ibid.
The Williams Avenue USO would continue to serve African American servicemen in the Pacific Northwest through the end of World War II, providing an important place of entertainment, recreation, and respite for soldiers and maintaining Portland African Americans’ strong association with the building despite the temporary displacement of the YWCA.

Integration Efforts and the Williams Avenue Center for the YWCA

During the period in which 6 N Tillamook St. was dedicated to USO use, the African American YWCA’s programming was temporarily relocated to members’ homes in Northeast Portland and to the Central Association at SW Broadway and SW Taylor Street in Downtown Portland—a facility formerly reserved for White YWCA members only. During this period, the national YWCA proposed discontinuing the segregated branch structure of the Portland YWCA and “carrying on work through centers, in whatever areas of the city the need seems most imperative.”

Integration efforts were not altogether successful, nor were they universally welcomed by YWCA members. The onus of integration was placed on the organization’s African American members, many of whom resented the loss of their YWCA and saw little utility in any services located in downtown Portland, where African Americans were increasingly unwelcome. Dura Rice, who had been named executive secretary of the Williams Avenue Branch in 1943, noted, “There has been some resentment in the Negro community, and the feeling that ‘We no longer have a YWCA.’” Although the White leadership of the Portland YWCA Central Association was actively promoting desegregation, the ultimate goal of their exertions seems unclear. A year after integration efforts had begun, there existed no written policy for the treatment of minority groups within YWCA, and many committees and activities hosted by the downtown YWCA remained segregated.

The immediate result of the Portland YWCA’s integration efforts was a dramatic decline in African American membership, with the total number of African American constituents falling by more than 70 percent between 1942 and 1945. When the Williams Avenue building was returned to the YWCA in May 1946, it was an integrated “center” with a white woman, Gertrude Eakin, as its director. Marjorie Jackson, an African American woman who had previously served as the Portland YWCA’s resources consultant on interracial matters, was soon installed as associate director. Her leadership brought renewed energy to the branch, officially rechristened “Williams Avenue Center,” and she continued to promote interracial activities at this location. Despite the national organization’s visions of integration, however, the Williams Avenue Center remained predominantly associated with Portland’s African American community.

The Williams Avenue Center during the Vanport Flood

Due to extensive migration spurred by employment in the Portland area’s wartime shipyards, Portland’s postwar African American population was nearly five times that of the pre-war city. Because of stringent redlining practices that precluded African Americans from settling elsewhere in the city, many of those who had immigrated to Portland were forced to remain in temporary wartime housing constructed for Kaiser Shipyard employees in 1942. The City of Vanport, erected in less than four months across 650 acres of Columbia River floodplain approximately five miles north of the Williams Avenue Center, was the largest

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61 “Negro Youth on Honor List,” The Sunday Oregonian (Portland, OR), Mar. 9, 1947.
62 Board of Director’s Minutes, YWCA Archives (Lewis and Clark College, Portland, OR), Apr. 11, 1944.
63 “Y Branch Greets New Secretary,” The Sunday Oregonian (Portland, OR), Jan. 24, 1943.
66 Ibid., 193.
67 “YWCA Names Mrs. Jackson to Associate Director Post,” The Sunday Oregonian (Portland, OR), June 2, 1946.
federal housing project in the country at the time of its construction and one of the few areas open to African Americans who sought to remain in Portland after the war had ended and the shipyards had closed.\(^69\)

On Memorial Day in 1948, following unusually heavy spring rains, the railroad dike on the west end of Vanport broke and the Columbia River destroyed the homes of more than 18,000 people. This event disproportionately impacted African Americans, as more than 5,000 (approximately 25% of the Portland African American population at the time) had made their homes in Vanport.\(^70\) Refugees sought shelter across the city, and the Williams Avenue Center played an important role in housing and feeding community members in this time of desperate need. In the days following the flood, the building provided sleeping accommodations for 100 people and served more than 500 meals per day with the help of community volunteers and supplies provided by the American Red Cross.\(^71\) By mid-June, the number of refugees housed in the building had climbed to 230.\(^72\) One month after the flood, Williams Avenue Center Executive Director Essie Maguire wrote:

> People began to come almost at once to the Williams Avenue YWCA . . . Four members of our staff lost everything they had. These were three colored janitors and one man who lived at Vanport for want of a better place . . . It was amazing the way the whole community organized itself for the emergency. One wishes it might come oftener, through less tragic means.  \(^73\)

Rehousing the thousands of people displaced by the Vanport flood amounted to a racial crisis, as redlining and racist zoning practices restricted the area in which African Americans could resettle. Many took up residence in inner Northeast Portland, in the Eliot neighborhood and in other neighborhoods in close proximity to the Williams Avenue Center. In this way, the building’s location became even more significant to the postwar African American community in Portland.\(^74\)

THE WILLIAMS AVENUE CENTER AND PORTLAND CIVIL RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS

The building at 6 N Tillamook St. is particularly significant for its role as a meeting place for civil rights organizations during the social upheaval of the 1950s and 1960s. The Portland branch of the NAACP began to meet in the building shortly after its construction,\(^75\) and in 1956, it established its first official headquarters in the Williams Avenue Center’s basement.\(^76\) The Urban League of Portland and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) also held gatherings at the 6 N Tillamook building in the 1940s and 1950s. As a well-established, centrally-located community center with a strong and positive reputation in the African American community, the Williams Avenue Center was a natural choice for these groups’ regular meetings and special events.

The Portland Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

Portland’s chapter of the NAACP was organized in late 1913, four years after the national organization was founded. It was formally recognized by the National Association and received its charter on September 1, 1914, making it the oldest continuously operating arm of the NAACP west of the Mississippi. The organization immediately began to involve itself in legislation, court cases, and battles to remedy discriminatory laws.

Prior to construction of the permanent Williams Avenue YWCA building, the Portland NAACP held its meetings in various African American churches. A 1926 editorial in the African American newspaper *The Advocate*, possibly written by NAACP founding officer and *Advocate* assistant editor Beatrice Cannady,

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\(^71\) Kimberly S. Moreland et al., *History of Portland’s African American Community*, 79.


\(^73\) Essie L. Maguire correspondence dated June 24, 1948, as quoted in Kimberly S. Moreland et al., *History of Portland’s African American Community*, 79.


\(^75\) “Local N.A.A.C.P.,” *The Advocate* (Portland, OR), Nov. 6, 1926.

criticized the relocation of meetings to the “Colored YWCA,” calling it a “jim-crow place.”\(^77\) However, at a time when Portland’s African American community had limited choice in gathering spaces, the Williams Avenue building provided a much-needed, centralized location for NAACP programming. Notable speakers and events hosted by the NAACP at the Williams Avenue Center include:

- A public address delivered by William Pickens, a noted essayist and NAACP field secretary, in 1928.\(^78\)
- Plans for a protest over lynchings in Georgia in 1946.\(^79\)
- A visit from John Nevin Sayre, national chairman of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, in early 1949.\(^80\)
- A 1949 showing of the film “Our Bill of Rights” accompanied by a panel of speakers including Marie Smith, president of the Portland NAACP; Reverend Francis Hayashi of the Epworth Methodist Church in Southeast Portland; L. W. Seggel, principal of Holladay School in Northeast Portland; and Renee Bozarth, program director for KWJJ-FM radio station.\(^81\)
- A visit from Saal Lesser, community consultant for the Anti-Defamation League in Oregon, Idaho, and Montana, in 1950.\(^82\)
- A public forum entitled “Civil Rights, the Duty of Each Citizen,” which explained the proposed civil rights ordinance in development by the City of Portland in 1950. Speakers included Kenneth Kraemer, an attorney and Democratic candidate for Oregon State Representative; John S. Holley, neighborhood secretary of the Urban League of Portland; and Shirley A. Field, an attorney and member of the executive board of the Young Republican Federation of Oregon.\(^83\)
- A community discussion of the proposed Oregon Public Accommodations Bill, moderated by Oregon State Representatives and NAACP members Phil Roth and Monroe Sweetland in early 1953.\(^84\)
- Meetings to organize opposition to the 1953 appointment of State Senator Warren Gill to the post of U.S. Attorney in Portland.\(^85\)
- Annual ladies’ “Freedom Fulfillment Teas” beginning in 1956.\(^86\)
- Speeches from the 1956 congressional candidates from Oregon’s third district, focusing on the candidates’ views on civil rights.\(^87\)
- A visit from Jack Tanner, Tacoma attorney and president of the Northwest area conference of the NAACP, in 1957.\(^88\)

\(^77\) “Local N.A.A.C.P.,” *The Advocate* (Portland, OR), Nov. 6, 1926.
\(^84\) “Civil Rights Chance Seen: Sweetland, Roth Talk to NAACP,” *The Oregonian* (Portland, OR), Feb. 16, 1953.
\(^88\) “NAACP Books Tacoma Lawyer,” *The Oregonian* (Portland, OR), Nov. 16, 1957.
A court system primer delivered by District Court Judge Richard J. Burke in 1961.89

The NAACP’s regular weekly meetings at the Williams Avenue building covered general chapter business as well as focused topics including the value of organized opposition, state support for children’s education, minority housing accessibility, discrimination within Portland labor unions, and relocation problems facing those displaced by urban renewal programs in inner Northeast Portland.90 When the Williams Avenue YWCA was converted to the African American USO during World War II, the NAACP temporarily relocated many of its events to the Multnomah County Central Library in downtown Portland.91 However, occasional meetings were still held in the building throughout the early 1940s.92

The NAACP resumed regular activities in the Williams Avenue YWCA shortly after the USO removed itself in May 1946.93 The organization’s association with the building only intensified through the 1950s, and in 1956, the first permanent offices of the NAACP in Portland were opened in the Williams Avenue Center’s basement.94 The organization continued to hold events in the building for the duration of YWCA ownership and did not relocate its offices until 1964, five years after the property had been sold to Billy Webb Elks Lodge #1050.95 The eight years in which the Portland NAACP had its offices at 6 N Tillamook St. marked a significant period of activism for the national organization, bookended by the landmark Brown v. Board of Education case of 1954 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In Portland, the local NAACP branch was celebrating recent victories including the Public Accommodations Bill passed by the Oregon Legislative Assembly in 1953 and the 1955 repeal of the anti-mixed marriage law. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the local organization focused on ending discriminatory housing practices and integrating Portland public schools. Due in part to their activism, the Oregon legislature adopted its first fair housing legislation in 1957.96

The Urban League of Portland

The Williams Avenue Center was also host to a number of meetings and public forums advanced by the Urban League of Portland in the late 1940s and 1950s. Established in 1945, the Urban League initially focused on employment challenges facing African American shipyard workers who remained in Portland after the end of the war. The organization fought for greater access to the building trades and desegregated unions, placing many African Americans in positions that were traditionally reserved for White applicants only. The Urban League also challenged housing discrimination and joined the fight for a public accommodations bill.97

Although its offices were located in Southwest Portland until the 1970s,98 the Urban League used the Williams Avenue Center as a central location for various informative events and recruitment parties. The building’s auditorium was occasionally used to show films such as “Commencement,” which was distributed by President Eisenhower’s committee on government contracts. The 1956 viewing was accompanied by a panel discussion of the economic challenges facing nonwhite families, moderated by the Urban League’s Industrial Relations Director, E. Shelton Hill, and attended by James Bagan, manager of the Portland office of the Oregon

89 “Judge to Speak,” The Oregonian (Portland, OR), Mar. 18, 1961.
91 Galbraith et al., Cornerstones of Community, 27.
92 “Negro Group to Meet,” The Sunday Oregonian (Portland, OR), Mar. 21, 1943; “Meetings,” The Oregonian (Portland, OR), Feb. 12, 1946.
96 For additional information on NAACP activity during the 1950s and 1960s, see Context VII of the African American Resources in Portland, Oregon, from 1865 to 1973 Multiple Property Documentation Form (forthcoming).
97 Galbraith et al., Cornerstones of Community, 67-68.
98 Ibid., 68.
Employment Department; Joe Golik, assistant director of the Oregon Apprenticeship and Training Council; William Webber, vice president of local firm Tektronix, Inc.; and Mark A. Smith, administrator of the Fair Employment Practices division of the Oregon Bureau of Labor. Other events involved collaboration with the Seattle Urban League, public summaries of National Urban League conferences, and local award ceremonies.

**The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)**

Founded in Chicago in 1942, CORE advanced the use of nonviolent direct action to fight racial discrimination. The Portland branch was established in the late 1950s, and it too made use of the Williams Avenue Center for special events. LeRoy Carter, CORE’s field organizer, spoke at 6 N Tillamook St. as well as the downtown YWCA and Reed College in February 1957, when the local chapter was still in its infancy. Portland CORE went on to peacefully protest the arrest of the Alabama Freedom Walkers in 1963 and to otherwise agitate for an end to racial discrimination within the Portland community.

**BILLY WEBB ELKS LODGE #1050**

The building at 6 N Tillamook St., purpose-built for the Williams Avenue Branch of the YWCA, gradually lost funding and support from the Portland YWCA Central Association in the 1950s. Despite a “Williams Avenue YWCA Study Committee” report in 1956 that emphasized the need for a youth-focused community center in Northeast Portland, the center closed in late 1959. This decision was likely influenced by the cost of the new downtown YWCA headquarters, completed at SW 10th Avenue and SW Main Street in late 1958; the passage of the Oregon Public Accommodations Bill in 1953; and continued efforts by the national organization to integrate activities (nationally, the YWCA had officially integrated in 1946). In 1959, the Williams Avenue Center was sold to the Billy Webb Elks Lodge #1050, an African American fraternal organization and member of the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks of the World (IBPOEW).

**The Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks of the World (IBPOEW)**

Modeled after the Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks (BPOE), the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks of the World (IBPOEW) was founded in Cincinnati, Ohio, by Benjamin Franklin Howard and Arthur J. Riggs in 1897. Riggs, a Pullman Porter who had been born into slavery, obtained a copy of the BPOE ritual and held the first meeting of the Alpha Lodge #1 in late 1898. The BPOE vehemently disputed the IBPOEW’s use of their ritual and the “Elks” name, attempting to litigate as well as physically intimidating the founders. Threatened with lynching and forced out of his job, Riggs was eventually compelled to change his name and move his family into hiding in Springfield, Ohio. Not until 1918 did overt animosity from the BPOE toward the IBPOEW officially cease.

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100 “Urban Units Swap Ideas,” *The Oregonian* (Portland, OR), May 29, 1951.


The IBPOEW took on a broad range of program elements within the African American community, extending well beyond social fellowship, benevolence, and charity to endorse patriotism, citizenship programs, and economic and business objectives as well. These aims appealed to a growing African American professional class, and between 1898 and 1906, one hundred new lodges were established in more than twenty states, including Oregon.108

**African American Fraternal Lodges in Portland**

The proliferation of African American fraternal organizations in turn-of-the-century Portland is related to the relative social isolation of the community and the need to create structures for social and economic support. Fraternal organizations played important roles in the lives of the city’s African American men, and many groups possessed auxiliary organizations for women. These multi-faceted societies served educational, political, charitable, and social functions within Portland’s African American community.

Most fraternal organizations in the prewar era had strict criteria for admittance. Among other qualifications, the Enterprise Lodge of Masons required that its members be “free born,” literate, able to pay their dues in cash, and of good rapport within the community. All lodges required that men be “settled,” or having a stable place of residence. Annual dues provided financial support for ill or disabled members at a time when few African Americans had access to health care. Lodges also provided a cemetery plot and conducted funerary services for a deceased member, and if necessary, they contributed financially to the care of his widow and children. Members of women’s auxiliaries performed charity work and provided nursing care to members who were ailing. This was a particularly important service, as many African American Portlanders lacked access to hospitals or the funds for in-home care. Above all, lodge members were expected to uphold a certain moral standard and place of honor within the Portland African American community.109

Established in 1883, the Odd Fellows Lodge #2554 was the first African American fraternal society in Portland. It was followed by the Enterprise Lodge of Masons, the Knights of Pythias’s Syracuse Lodge, and the African American Oregon Fraternal Association. The city’s first African American Elks organization, Rose City Elks Lodge #111, was organized in 1906 by a Pullman porter named Sam Washington.110 The lodge claimed some of the most prominent members of Portland’s African American community among its brothers, and membership was a coveted status symbol as well as an added security in case of illness or death.111 A sister organization to the Rose City Elks, the Dahlia Temple #202, was founded as a women’s auxiliary unit.

Financial difficulties in the 1930s were compounded by an ill-fated building campaign, and the Rose City Elks Lodge #111 failed and disbanded during the Great Depression. The Dahlia Temple #202 remained solvent, but as an auxiliary unit to the men’s lodge, it risked losing its charter if the Elks were not reestablished in Portland. Determined to remain viable under the auspices of the national organization, members of the Dahlia Temple #202 led efforts to reestablish a men’s lodge in Portland in the late 1930s.112

**Billy Webb Elks Lodge Order #1050**

Initiated by the efforts of the Dahlia Temple #202, the Billy Webb Elks Lodge Order #1050 was established on August 2, 1940.113 The new lodge took its name from a late member of the Rose City Elks, a local musician and bandleader who directed a popular African American orchestra in the early 1920s. Billy N. Webb and his band performed around the state and on steamships that traveled up and down the West Coast, and he gained regional fame as well as a respected position within the local African American community. Webb died

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111 Ibid.; Galbraith et al., Cornerstones of Community, 51.
113 “New Portland Elk Lodge is Set Up,” The Northwest Enterprise (Portland, OR), April 2, 1940.
in 1925, long before the establishment of his namesake lodge, but was remembered for his talents and commitment to the IBPOEW.¹¹⁴

For nearly two decades after their establishment, the Billy Webb Elks met at Fraternal Hall at 1412 Williams Ave., which was shared among several fraternal organizations. Through the 1940s and 1950s, lodge membership grew rapidly as a result of Portland’s increased African American population and its own preeminent reputation within the community. By the 1950s, members had come to a consensus that the lodge required its own dedicated space in which to hold meetings and its growing calendar of social events.¹¹⁵ This desire became a necessity when it was learned that Fraternal Hall would be demolished for construction of the Veterans Memorial Coliseum in 1958.¹¹⁶

In 1959, the Billy Webb Elks purchased the Williams Avenue Center from the YWCA.¹¹⁷ The terms of sale offered a purchase of price of $15,000 with a down payment followed by scheduled monthly payments through 1960. Due to financial challenges on the part of the Elks, an extension plan was granted in June 1961. Lodge member Ulysses H. Leverett and his wife, Beatrice Smith-Leverett, took on principal ownership of the property at this time, until the contract between the Elks and the Leveretts was rewritten in 1962 and the couple were made grantees.¹¹⁸

In their new home at 6 N Tillamook St., the lodge held their weekly meetings and annual socials; sponsored talent shows, oratory contexts, and scholarship competitions for local African American youth; and hosted notable guests including IBPOEW Grand Exalted Ruler Hobson B. Reynolds in 1963 and Oregon Governor Tom McCall in 1967.¹¹⁹ 6 N Tillamook St. has functioned as the Billy Webb Elks’ dedicated administrative building and meeting space for six decades, in which time the organization’s membership has fluctuated and its role in the community has evolved to include musical performances and special events.¹²⁰ The Elks continue to hold meetings and social events in the building as of this writing.

SUMMARY

Eligibility under the African American Resources in Portland, Oregon, 1865-1973 MPD

The Billy Webb Elks Lodge #1050, formerly the Williams Avenue YWCA, the “Colored YWCA,” or the Williams Avenue Center, meets the general and property-specific registration requirements set forth in Section F of the African American Resources in Portland, Oregon, 1865-1973 MPD. The property is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Ethnic Heritage/Black for its “association with the history of African American cultural history as it developed in Portland, Oregon,” during the 1865 to 1973 period of significance of the MPD, and it retains a high degree of integrity with regard to its own 1926 to 1973 period of significance.¹²¹ As a civic/social organization, a property type identified and described by the MPD’s property-specific registration requirements, the property also “illustrates how a single property was often used by many different kinds of

¹¹⁴ Galbraith et al., Cornerstones of Community, 46.
¹¹⁷ Ibid.
¹²¹ Cathy Galbraith et al., African American Resources in Portland, Oregon from 1865 to 1973 (Multiple Property Documentation Form), forthcoming.
organizations," and played a major role "in the civic and social life of Portland’s African American community during the period of significance" of the MPD.\textsuperscript{122}

**Significance under Criterion A**

The former Williams Avenue YWCA is locally significant under Criterion A in the areas of Social History, Entertainment/Recreation, and Ethnic Heritage/Black. At a time when many community groups and public spaces were not accessible to people of color, the building at 6 N Tillamook St. offered a dedicated place for African American organizations to gather for socialization, recreation, and activism. The Williams Avenue YWCA’s affiliation with the property stretches across four decades, beginning even before the permanent building was constructed. The organization’s active membership and diverse schedule of activities illustrates the importance of the Williams Avenue YWCA in the first part of the twentieth century, both as a social body for African American women and as a community institution that provided recreational and educational opportunities for a broad range of African American Portlanders. During World War II, the Williams Avenue YWCA was loaned to the USO for use by African American soldiers and largely staffed by local African American volunteers, thereby maintaining its significance within the immediate community despite the absence of active YWCA programming. The Portland branch of the NAACP located its offices in the basement of the building from 1956 through 1964, and the OACW, Urban League of Portland, and CORE also made regular use of the meeting rooms and lounge space during the period of significance. When the YWCA left the building in 1959, 6 N Tillamook St. was purchased by an African American fraternal lodge, the Billy Webb Elks of the IBPOEW, who have continued to maintain the building as important social center for Portland’s African American community. The Williams Avenue YWCA’s long and diverse association with these many organizations illustrates its immense significance within Portland’s African American community in the period from 1926 through 1973.

**Integrity**

The *African American Resources in Portland, Oregon, from 1865 to 1973* Multiple Property Documentation Form describes basic integrity requirements for institutional buildings that are significant for their association with Portland’s African American community. As noted in the MPDF, for such buildings that are significant under Criteria A or B, integrity of association, location, and feeling are of a comparatively higher importance than design, setting, materials, and workmanship. Physical alterations will be less likely to render these properties ineligible than they would properties that are considered architecturally significant (Criterion C). The Williams Avenue YWCA, however, retains all seven components of integrity.

The Williams Avenue YWCA is extant in its original location at 6 N Tillamook St. in the Eliot neighborhood of Portland, Oregon, and so retains integrity of *location*. Topographical features and the position of roads and sidewalks have not been altered since the building’s construction, and the majority of the building’s neighboring resources were constructed within the period of significance. The immediate vicinity has maintained a composition of single-family dwellings, small apartment buildings, and light industrial facilities similar to that depicted on Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps from 1950.\textsuperscript{123} Overall, the resource’s integrity of *setting* remains high.

As described in Section 7, the exterior of the Williams Avenue YWCA also retains a relatively high degree of physical integrity. The majority of siding and fenestration are intact, and the footprint and roof form are original to the building. Major alterations are limited: all doors and five windows have been exchanged for modern units, and the original entry stairs were replaced with a concrete accessible ramp in 2008/2009 renovations. The horizontal wood siding at the attic level has been covered with wood shingles, and the chimney on the east elevation has been truncated. These limited alterations are generally in keeping with the historic materials and character of the building, and so 6 N Tillamook St. maintains integrity of *materials*, *workmanship*, and *design* with regard to its exterior appearance. In contrast, the building’s interior has been repeatedly altered

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid.

since the end of the period of significance, and it does not retain a high degree of integrity of materials, workmanship, or design.

The building at 6 N Tillamook St. remains owned, operated, and occupied by the Billy Webb Elks Lodge #1050 of the IBPOEW, which purchased the building during its period of significance. As an African American benevolent society, the Billy Webb Elks’ involvement represents a continuation of the building’s traditional association with African American social organizations. In this way, the building retains integrity of feeling and association.

Comparative Analysis
The Williams Avenue YWCA or Billy Webb Elks Lodge #1050 is uniquely significant for the length and multifaceted nature of its association with Portland’s African American community. It is one of the oldest extant buildings purpose-built to serve the needs of African American Portlanders, and it is possibly the only extant resource in Portland associated with early twentieth-century African American women’s clubs. The building that was home to the Portland YWCA Central Association in 1946 (the year the national organization was formally integrated) was demolished in 1959. Other buildings associated with the organization, including the YWCA of Greater Portland’s building at SW 10th Avenue and SW Main Street (used as the Portland YWCA’s headquarters from 1959 through 2011) and the St. John’s Branch building at 8010 N Charleston Ave. in North Portland, may hold significance with regard to the citywide organization, but they do not possess a particularly strong association with Portland’s African American community and so are not comparable in significance to the former Williams Avenue YWCA building at 6 N Tillamook St.

The Williams Avenue YWCA or Billy Webb Elks Lodge #1050 is also one of the only extant resources associated with African American benevolent and fraternal organizations in Portland. Two other resources associated with African American fraternities are identified in the African American Resources in Portland, Oregon, from 1865 to 1973 (Multiple Property Documentation Form), including the Hibernian Hall (now the Wonder Ballroom) at 128 NE Russell St., where the Enterprise Lodge of Masons met in the 1920s, and its neighbor at 116 NE Russell St., which once housed the Prince Hall Masonic Lodge. In both cases, the association was relatively brief in comparison to the relationship between the Billy Webb Elks Lodge #1050 and 6 N Tillamook St. The subject property is also unique for the diversity of its association with African American organizations, which included the “Colored” YWCA, the OACW, the NAACP, the Urban League of Portland, CORE, and the IBPOEW. No other extant building in Portland maintains a comparable level of significance with regard to African American social history and entertainment/recreation.

Acknowledgements
Significant contributions to this nomination were made by the late Raymond Burell III (1962-2019), an African American historian and author of “The Historic Site of the Billy Webb Elks Lodge Hall, Portland, Oregon” (unpublished). Mr. Burell’s extensive research on the history of the Williams Avenue YWCA/Billy Webb Elks Lodge #1050 provided a foundation for this document.

124 Cathy Galbraith et al., African American Resources in Portland, Oregon from 1865 to 1973 (Multiple Property Documentation Form), forthcoming.
The building that housed the YWCA Central Association from 1908 through 1959 was located at SW Broadway and SW Taylor Street. The organization relocated in 1959 to a building at SW 10th Avenue and SW Main Street.
126 Cathy Galbraith et al., African American Resources in Portland, Oregon from 1865 to 1973 (Multiple Property Documentation Form), forthcoming.
127 The Hibernian Hall was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2006, but the nomination makes no mention of the Enterprise Lodge of Masons. The association is referenced in both Cornerstones of Community (Cathy Galbraith et al.) and the African American Resources in Portland, Oregon from 1865 to 1973 Multiple Property Documentation Form, but the extent of the relationship has not been determined.
9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)


- “Civil Rights Chance Seen: Sweetland, Roth Talk to NAACP.” *The Oregonian* (Portland, OR), Feb. 16, 1953.


- “CORE Agent to Appear Here in Behalf of Racial Issues.” *The Oregonian* (Portland, OR), Feb. 19, 1957.
Williams Avenue YWCA  
Name of Property

Multnomah Co., OR  
County and State

“Cornerstone to Be Laid: Ceremony Will be Held at New Y.W.C.A. Branch.” The Sunday Oregonian (Portland, OR), Mar. 21, 1926.

“Elks Group to Reward Student Orator.” The Oregonian (Portland, OR), May 22, 1968.

“Elks Lodge Rummage Sale Set.” The Oregonian (Portland, OR), May 12, 1965.

“Elks to Hold Talent Event.” The Oregonian (Portland, OR), Apr. 11, 1961.

“Elks to Stage Speech Contest.” The Oregonian (Portland, OR), May 24, 1963.


“Freedom Awards Presented to Three for Efforts in Cause of Democracy.” The Oregonian (Portland, OR), June 27, 1952.


Galbraith, Cathy, Brandon Spencer-Hartle, Caitlyn Ewers, Kerrie Franey, and Matthew Davis. African American Resources in Portland, Oregon from 1865 to 1973 (Multiple Property Documentation Form). Forthcoming.


“Housing Theme.” The Sunday Oregonian (Portland, OR), June 21, 1953.
Williams Avenue YWCA

Name of Property

Multnomah Co., OR

County and State


“Judge to Speak.” The Oregonian (Portland, OR), Mar. 18, 1961.


“Local N.A.A.C.P.” The Advocate (Portland, OR), Nov. 6, 1926.


“Lynch Protest Due.” The Oregonian (Portland, OR), Aug. 17, 1946.


“Meetings.” The Oregonian (Portland, OR), Feb. 12, 1946.


Williams Avenue YWCA  

**Name of Property**  
Multnomah Co., OR  

**County and State**

“NAACP Books Tacoma Lawyer.” *The Oregonian* (Portland, OR), Nov. 16, 1957.

“Negro Center to Open Soon: USO Quarters Ready for Use.” *The Oregonian* (Portland, OR), Oct. 27, 1942.


“Negro Group to Meet.” *The Oregonian* (Portland, OR), Mar. 21, 1943.

“Negro Leader Coming: Williams Pickens to Speak before Colored People’s Association.” *The Sunday Oregonian* (Portland, OR), Mar. 25, 1928.


“Negroes Should Be Asset, Says Mabel Bird [sic]: Association Secretary Tells of Work Being Done in Portland.” *The Sunday Oregonian* (Portland, OR), Mar. 4, 1923.


“New Portland Elk Lodge is Set Up.” *The Northwest Enterprise* (Portland, OR), April 2, 1940.


“Portland Chapter of NAACP Cancels Plan to Picket Unions in Demand for Dock Jobs.” *The Oregonian* (Portland, OR), Sept. 6, 1963.

“Presto Change.” *Cayton’s Weekly* (Seattle, WA), Aug. 31, 1918.


“Prize Essays to Be Printed.” *The Oregonian* (Portland, OR), Dec. 6, 1952.


Williams Avenue YWCA
Multnomah Co., OR

“Relief Agencies, Neighbors Feed and House Refugees.” *The Oregonian* (Portland, OR), June 1, 1948.


Thompson, Margaret. “Uncle Sam’s Homesick Colored Boys Find Haven on Williams Avenue.” *The Sunday Oregonian* (Portland, OR), Oct. 19, 1943.


“USO Greets Negro Troops: 140 Reach City from Pendleton.” *The Oregonian* (Portland, OR), Nov. 7, 1942.


“Urban Units Swap Ideas.” *The Oregonian* (Portland, OR), May 29, 1951.


“YWCA Names Mrs. Jackson to Associate Director Post.” *The Sunday Oregonian* (Portland, OR), June 2, 1946.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service / National Register of Historic Places Registration Form
NPS Form 10-900                 OMB No. 1024-0018                     (Expires 5/31/2020)

Williams Avenue YWCA  Multnomah Co., OR
Name of Property                   County and State

Archives

Billy Webb Elks Lodge Building Records (Portland, OR)

Davies Family Research Library (Oregon Historical Society, Portland, OR)

Multnomah County Property Records (Multnomah County Recorder’s Office, Portland, OR)

Portland YWCA Archives (Lewis and Clark College, Portland, OR)

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 #
recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #

Primary location of additional data:

X State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository: ____________________________________________

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A
10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Less than one
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage; enter "Less than one" if the acreage is .99 or less)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84: N/A
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1  45.537905°  -122.667029°  
Latitude   Longitude

2  
Latitude   Longitude

3  
Latitude   Longitude

4  
Latitude   Longitude

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The historic boundary of the Williams Avenue YWCA corresponds with the boundary of tax lot R102546, lot 20, in block 32 of the Albina District in Portland, Oregon. The northern boundary of the property is marked by a sidewalk adjacent to N Tillamook Street, and the eastern boundary is marked by a sidewalk along N Williams Avenue. The boundary area encompasses approximately 0.11 acres or 5,000 square feet.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The tax lot is the historic boundary for the property, with which the building has been associated since its construction in 1926.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title  Matthew Davis and Caitlyn Ewers  date  October 14, 2019
organization  Architectural Resources Group, Inc.  telephone  971-256-5324
street & number  720 SW Washington St., Suite 300  email  c.ewers@arg-pnw.com; m.davis@arg-pnw.com
city or town  Portland  state  Oregon  zip code  97205

Additional Documentation
Submit the following items with the completed form:

- Regional Location Map
- Local Location Map
- Tax Lot Map
- Site Plan
- Floor Plans (As Applicable)
- Photo Location Map (Include for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map and insert immediately after the photo log and before the list of figures).
Williams Avenue YWCA
Multnomah Co., OR

Name of Property: Williams Avenue YWCA
City or Vicinity: Portland
County: Multnomah
State: Oregon

Photograph Log:

Name of Property: Williams Avenue YWCA

City or Vicinity: Portland
County: Multnomah
State: Oregon

Photographer: Jason Allen, State Historic Preservation Office (Photographs 17 and 18); Matthew Davis, Architectural Resources Group (Photographs 1 through 16, 19)

Date Photographed: February 13, 2018 (Photographs 17 and 18); June 28, 2019 (Photographs 1 through 16, 19)

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photograph 1 of 19: OR_MultnomahCounty_WilliamsAvenueYWCA_0001
View of north elevation, looking southwest.

Photograph 2 of 19: OR_MultnomahCounty_WilliamsAvenueYWCA_0002
View of main entrance, looking south.

Photograph 3 of 19: OR_MultnomahCounty_WilliamsAvenueYWCA_0003
View of north elevation, looking southeast.

Photograph 4 of 19: OR_MultnomahCounty_WilliamsAvenueYWCA_0004
View of stairs and ramp along north elevation, looking west.

Photograph 5 of 19: OR_MultnomahCounty_WilliamsAvenueYWCA_0005
View of east and north elevations, looking southwest.

Photograph 6 of 19: OR_MultnomahCounty_WilliamsAvenueYWCA_0006
View of east elevation, looking west.

Photograph 7 of 19: OR_MultnomahCounty_WilliamsAvenueYWCA_0007
View of south elevation, looking northwest.

Photograph 8 of 19: OR_MultnomahCounty_WilliamsAvenueYWCA_0008
View of west elevation, looking southeast.

Photograph 9 of 19: OR_MultnomahCounty_WilliamsAvenueYWCA_0009
View of main entrance doors, looking south.

Photograph 10 of 19: OR_MultnomahCounty_WilliamsAvenueYWCA_0010
View of window at main entrance, looking southwest.

Photograph 11 of 19: OR_MultnomahCounty_WilliamsAvenueYWCA_0011
View of entry lobby, looking west.
Williams Avenue YWCA  
Multnomah Co., OR

Name of Property  
County and State

Photograph 12 of 19:  
OR_Multnomah County_Williams Avenue YWCA_0012  
View of auditorium, looking northeast.

Photograph 13 of 19:  
OR_Multnomah County_Williams Avenue YWCA_0013  
View of auditorium, looking southwest.

Photograph 14 of 19:  
OR_Multnomah County_Williams Avenue YWCA_0014  
View of auditorium stage, looking south.

Photograph 15 of 19:  
OR_Multnomah County_Williams Avenue YWCA_0015  
View of lounge, looking southeast.

Photograph 16 of 19:  
OR_Multnomah County_Williams Avenue YWCA_0016  
View of storage area in upper half-story, looking west.

Photograph 17 of 19:  
OR_Multnomah County_Williams Avenue YWCA_0017  
View of storage area in upper half-story, looking northeast.

Photograph 18 of 19:  
OR_Multnomah County_Williams Avenue YWCA_0018  
View of storage area in basement, looking west.

Photograph 19 of 19:  
OR_Multnomah County_Williams Avenue YWCA_0019  
View of metal door in basement, looking north.

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement:  Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.
Williams Avenue YWCA
Name of Property

Multnomah Co., OR
County and State

Photograph Location Maps

First Story

Upper Half-Story

Basement
List of Figures
(Resize, compact, and paste images of maps and historic documents in this section. Place captions, with figure numbers above each image. Orient maps so that north is at the top of the page, all document should be inserted with the top toward the top of the page.)

Figure 1: Regional Location Map
Figure 2: Local Location Map
Figure 3: Tax Lot Map
Figure 4: Site Plan
Figure 5: First Story Floor Plan
Figure 6: Second Story Floor Plan
Figure 7: Basement Floor Plan
Figure 8: 6 N Tillamook St., facing southwest, date unknown (pre-1943)
Figure 9: 6 N Tillamook St., facing southwest, date and source unknown (pre-1943)
Figure 10: “Building Begins on Branch Y.W.C.A: Williams Avenue Structure to Replace Portable, Many Features Planned,” The Sunday Oregonian (Portland, OR), Jan. 24, 1926.
Figure 11: “New Headquarters of NAACP Workers,” The Oregonian (Portland, OR), Mar. 29, 1956.
Williams Avenue YWCA
Name of Property
Multnomah Co., OR
County and State
African American Resources in Portland, Oregon, 1865-1973
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 1: Regional Location Map (45.537905°, -122.667029°)
Figure 2: Local Location Map (45.537905°, -122.667029°)
Williams Avenue YWCA
Multnomah Co., OR

African American Resources in Portland, Oregon, 1865-1973

Figure 3: Tax Lot Map
Williams Avenue YWCA
Name of Property
Multnomah Co., OR

African American Resources in Portland, Oregon, 1865-1973
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 4: Site Plan

N Tillamook Street

6 N Tillamook St.
tax lot boundary / proposed boundary

primary entrance

path

secondary entrances

ramp

park strip

paved sidewalk

park strip

paved sidewalk

N Williams Avenue

paved sidewalk

park strip

paved sidewalk

N

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Williams Avenue YWCA
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Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 5: First Story Floor Plan (Neil Kelly Design Build Remodeling, “Kitchen Remodel for Billy Webb Elks Lodge,” February 26, 2018)
Figure 6: Second Story Floor Plan (Neil Kelly Design Build Remodeling, “Kitchen Remodel for Billy Webb Elks Lodge,” February 26, 2018). Note that this is adapted from a roof plan, as the second floor plan from the Neil Kelly set could not be located at the time of nomination.
Figure 7: Basement Floor Plan (Neil Kelly Design Build Remodeling, "Kitchen Remodel for Billy Webb Elks Lodge," February 26, 2018)
Williams Avenue YWCA
Name of Property
Multnomah Co., OR
County and State
African American Resources in Portland, Oregon, 1865-1973
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 8: 6 N Tillamook St., facing southwest, date unknown. Pre-1943, given the absence of 2054 N Vancouver Ave. to the west. (Oregon Historical Society, Org Lot 679, Oregon Black History Project photo collection box 1 folder 12; Negative OrHi 87975.)
Figure 9: 6 N Tillamook St., facing southwest, date and source unknown. Pre-1943, given the absence of 2054 N Vancouver Ave. to the west.
Figure 10: “Building Begins on Branch Y.W.C.A: Williams Avenue Structure to Replace Portable, Many Features Planned,” The Sunday Oregonian (Portland, OR), Jan. 24, 1926.

Above—Sketch of new building for association department, DeYoung & Roald, architects. Below—Old building which housed the branch since October, 1924, now being razed.
Williams Avenue YWCA
Name of Property
Multnomah Co., OR

County and State
African American Resources in Portland, Oregon, 1865-1973

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 11: “New Headquarters of NAACP Workers,” The Oregonian (Portland, OR), Mar. 29, 1956.

It was moving day Tuesday for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People as this group of volunteers moved office equipment into the YWCA basement at 2055 N. Williams avenue—their first Portland office. From left: Herman Baker, Rev. W. Louis Smith, Edgar Williams, Phil Reynolds, Mrs. James Lee, Mrs. W. H. Marple, Miss Ruth Hafner.
Photograph 1 of 19: View of north elevation, looking southwest.

Photograph 2 of 19: View of main entrance, looking south.
Williams Avenue YWCA
Multnomah County, OR

Photograph 3 of 19: View of north elevation, looking southeast.

Photograph 4 of 19: View of stairs and ramp along north elevation, looking west.
Photograph 5 of 19:  View of east and north elevations, looking southwest.

Photograph 6 of 19:  View of east elevation, looking west.
Photograph 7 of 19: View of south elevation, looking northwest.

Photograph 8 of 19: View of west elevation, looking southeast.
Williams Avenue YWCA
Multnomah County, OR

Photograph 9 of 19: View of main entrance doors, looking south.

Photograph 10 of 19: View of window at main entrance, looking southwest.
Photograph 11 of 19: View of entry lobby, looking west.

Photograph 12 of 19: View of auditorium, looking northeast.
Photograph 13 of 19: View of auditorium, looking southwest.

Photograph 14 of 19: View of auditorium stage, looking south.
Williams Avenue YWCA
Multnomah County, OR

Photograph 15 of 19: View of lounge, looking southeast.

Photograph 16 of 19: View of storage area in upper half-story, looking west.
Photograph 17 of 19: View of storage area in upper half-story, looking northeast.

Photograph 18 of 19: View of storage area in basement, looking west.
Photograph 19 of 19: View of metal door in basement, looking north.