

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

historic name Rockford Woman's Club

other names/site number _____

Name of Multiple Property Listing _____

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

2. Location

street & number 323 Park Ave. not for publication

city or town Rockford vicinity

state Illinois county Winnebago zip code 61101

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance: ___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria: ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D

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

Illinois Department of Natural Resources - SHPO
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 _____

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		site
		structure
		object
1		Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

- Recreation and Culture: Theater
- Social: Civic, Meeting Hall
- Commerce: Restaurant
- Domestic: Single Dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

- Recreation and Culture: Theater
- Social: Civic, Meeting Hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

- Late 19th and 20th Century Revival: Classical Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

- foundation: Concrete
- walls: Brick
- roof: Rubber membrane, Asphalt Single
- other: Concrete, Glass Block

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity).

Summary Paragraph

The Rockford Woman's Club, located at 323 Park Ave. in Rockford, IL, is a historic social club and theatre designed by the Chicago architectural firm of Tallmadge and Watson in 1918. The two-story Classical style building with attached theatre, is an eclectic design with overtones of the Italian Renaissance Revival style, but exudes a modern sensibility in its overall plan and form. Tallmadge and Watson dressed up the structure with Sullivanesque door surrounds, tympanums, and bas-reliefs. They also specified a variety of decorative brick patterns within the body of the building to give interest, as well as define the division of spaces. This truly is an example of a building design where form follows function. The 1938 addition by local architect, Jesse Barloga, did not break pattern. Barloga specified similar materials in keeping with the original design, but also added his own touch of modern style reflective of the trends at the time. This included glass block windows and an Art Deco inspired interior.

The building has anchored the corner of Park Ave. and N. Church St. in Rockford's downtown central business district for over 100 years and is a key component in the city's Cultural Corridor. The Woman's Club has been kept in good repair over the years and has good architectural integrity. It continues to serve in the same capacity as when it was built and the original building materials and workmanship are clearly visible.

Narrative Description

SETTING

The setting of the building is urban. It is located on the northwest side of Rockford's Central Business District, a few blocks west of the Rock River. The immediate boundaries of the Woman's Club are Park Ave. to the south, and N. Church St. to the west. There is a lot between the Woman's Club and the Mendelssohn Club to the north, and an alley to the east.

The building sits on a rectangular-shaped lot that measures roughly 21, 216 square feet. Public sidewalks run parallel to the streets on both the west and south side of the building. There is a public parkway located between the sidewalk and the street. Mature street trees can be found along both these sides. A bus-stop bench is located on the southwest corner of the parkway, facing N. Church St. A narrow sidewalk is between the building and the alley on the east side. The northeast corner of the lot is an asphalt-parking pad, large enough for two vehicles. There is also a dumpster and a large air conditioner compressor located on the pad. To the west of the pad, a wooden fence encloses a garden area on the inside northeast corner of the building. The north side of the property line abuts a grassy lot. Foundation plantings on Park Ave. and N. Church St. consist of a mix of evergreen and deciduous bushes with underplantings of vinca and ivy. The Park Ave. side also has some seasonal bulbs planted. The building has a deeper setback from Park Ave and this serves as the front of the building.

The overall area around the Rockford Woman's Club has an abundance of buildings used for cultural purposes, including the Mendelssohn Club Performing Arts Center campus to the north and the Coronado

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Theatre (314 N. Main St.) further south. Two large churches can be found on both the east and the west side of the Woman's Club. Emmanuel Episcopal Church (412 N. Church St.) is to the west. The church complex consists of the original red stone Fairfield Memorial Parish House constructed in 1892 and a 1958 modern addition, now used for worship. There is also a serene meditation garden on the north side of the church. The old First Presbyterian Church (406 N. Main St.) is on the east side of the Woman's Club. The rusticated limestone church was donated to the Mendelssohn Club in 2006 and is now part of the music organization's three-building campus. The campus also includes the old home of Belle Keith Emerson, purchased by the Mendelssohn Club in 2005. This sits to the northeast of the Woman's Club.

Heading south on N. Main St., there is the shuttered Times Theater (222-230 N. Main St.) and the vacant Elks Club (210 W. Jefferson St.). The Times Theatre was built in 1938 in the Art Moderne style and is a local landmark. The Elk's Club was designed by Lawrence Buck and constructed in 1912. It is individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and part of the West Downtown Rockford National Register Historic District. A little further south is The Nordlof Center with the JR Sullivan Theater (118 N. Main St.). It is owned by the Rockford Public Library and housed in a building that was once a S. H. Kress department store. Rockford's largest performing space, the BMO Harris Bank Center (300 Elm St.), is a few blocks south on Main St. Located north of the Woman's Club, on N. Main St., is Rockford's Museum Campus. The campus includes the Rockford Art Museum, Children's Discovery Museum (711 N. Main St.) and the Burpee Natural History Museum (737 N. Main St.). This section of N. Main St., stretching between the Museum Campus and the BMO Harris Bank Center, is sometimes referred to as Rockford's Cultural Corridor.

EXTERIOR

The two-story Rockford Woman's Club, as it stands now, was built in two phases. The original clubhouse and theatre was designed by the Chicago architectural firm of Tallmadge and Watson and constructed in 1918. The original building was a two-story clubhouse with a basement and an attached public theatre on the east end of the building. The theatre seating area is also two-story, but the fly loft, located on the far east end, is nearly four stories tall. The overall shape of the original plan was rectangular.

In 1938, the club added a one-story sunroom and expanded their basement-level restaurant, extending to the north. The addition was constructed on the northwest side of the building, and created the L-shaped plan we see today. The addition was designed by prominent Rockford architect, Jesse Barloga.

The entire building is tile construction with red face brick. Decorative trim is concrete and windows and doors are wooden. The portion of the building that serves as the theatre house has a wide, low-pitched gable roof. The roof of the theatre fly loft is flat, as is the portion of the building that serves as the clubhouse.

South Elevation

The south elevation of the building is on Park Avenue and would be considered the club's primary facade. It is set back from the street with landscaping and a sidewalk. The entrance bay to the theatre is nearly centrally located on the elevation and is stepped out from the rest of the building. There is a large concrete porch at the first-floor level, accessed by a wide set of concrete stairs from the street approach. A wrought iron railing surrounds the porch and runs up both sides and also down the center of the main stairs. Another set of stairs is found on the west side of the porch. The main entryway consists of a double arch doorway containing a set of double wooden doors in each arch. The doors are painted green and have

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brass hardware. The arched door surrounds are concrete block with a Celtic knot-inspired design. Each arched doorway has a concrete tympanum relief; one has a musical design with a harp and the other a theatrical design with a mask. Both have nature-inspired flourishes. There are large classical lanterns on either side of the entrance, as well as signs attached to the building that read *Rockford Theatre*.

Above the double-arched doorway, at the second-story level, is a prominent concrete planter box that is geometric and simple in its overall appearance. Three windows are located above the planter. These are one-over-one, double-hung wooden windows. A concrete block band serves as a cornice and denotes the roofline of the entrance and the rest of the building to the west of the entrance, but the protruding entry bay extends higher than the roofline to the west. This bay abuts the sidewall to the gabled roof over the auditorium. Brickwork in a basket weave pattern makes up this top section of the entry bay.

To the east of the entrance bay is the theatre portion of the building. This increases in height at the furthest east stage end, but there is a stepped transition in the building height correlating with the roofline of the auditorium. This section of the building has a gable roof that is only visible from a distance. The rest of the building sections have flat roofs.

The exterior theatre portion of the building blends nicely with the club portion in its use of materials and overall shapes, yet it has its own unique feel. Just to the east of the entrance bay, there is a small, six-lite, wooden casement window. The main wall area is comprised of three tall arches that extend from the first floor to the second-floor level. The first and third arches are brick-filled. The fill matches the brick pattern of the building but in the center of the fill is a square, outlined in brick with a basket weave patterned square in the middle. In the center of both of the squares is a small diamond-shaped brick detail. Each of the arches has a decorative wrought iron curved balconette.

The center arch on this wall has a set of metal stairs that lead to a metal stoop and a wooden double door on the first-floor level. Above the door, on level with the other arch infill designs, is a similar square design. The center arch's decorative square has a herringbone fill that sets it apart from the other arches. This section of the front elevation is slightly taller than the clubhouse and has a unique band of intricate brickwork in a diamond pattern frieze. The building again increases in height on the easternmost end of the south elevation, and this correlates with the fly loft of the theatre. Decorative features of the fly loft include brickwork in the shape of three large circles found near the roofline.

To the west of the theatre entrance, on the south elevation, the central concrete porch continues and there is a one-over-one wooden window with an aluminum storm on the first story level, and another above it on the second story level. Further west is another entryway. This entrance protrudes slightly from the face of the building. The doorway has an arched surround with the same Celtic knot design. The door is wooden and painted green and has an "office" sign on the front. The tympanum above the door is a concrete relief and has the words *ADALINE E. EMERSON MEMORIAL*. It is further embellished with an oak tree and acorn design. There are two more large classical lanterns on either side of this entry. At the second floor level, above the doorway, is a window with a wrought iron balconette. Below the window is a concrete bas-relief featuring an oval shield and laurels.

Another small window can be found to the west of this doorway, just above the descending side staircase. Although most of the other windows in the building are green painted wood and appear to be original, this window is taupe in color and it appears the window opening and window have been covered in vinyl. The window consists of two casements with a stationary pane above.

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The western bay on this south elevation has a large arched window on the first-floor level. The window has a pair of single-light French doors with a glass transom above. This is also a taupe color and most likely vinyl clad. The window also has a wrought iron balconette. The arched tympanum above the transom is another concrete relief. The design of the tympanum is a torch with floral embellishments. This particular design is used for several of the windows on the west elevation, too. The arched window also has another smaller window on the west side. It matches the one on the east side with a pair of casements and a stationary pane above. It is also taupe in color.

At the second floor level is a grouping of three windows divided with concrete mullions in a narrow twisted column design. On either side of this window are bas-reliefs created by sculpture Nancy Cox McCormack (8/15/1885 – 2/17/1967). McCormack, who was Chicago-based at the time, designed the two panels for the club. *Woman in the Home* features a woman with fruit in her arms and a child at her feet. *Woman in Civics* shows a woman carrying a bundle of books with an eagle beside her. (Figure 12)

West Elevation

The west elevation faces Church Street and the building is set close to the street. The design of the window on the western bay of the south elevation carries around the corner where two more tall arched window openings can be found. Just like the one on the previous elevation, these have French doors, a glass transom, and a concrete tympanum located on the first-floor level. They also have a balconette. They are the same taupe color. On this elevation, the second story has paired, one-over-one windows above each arched window.

Following the elevation north, there is a metal door with a glass transom in an arched opening at the first-floor level and a single one-over-one window at the second-floor level. The next bay to the north is an arched window opening at the first floor, but this has an oriel bay made up of multi-pane windows and stucco infill above the bay window roof and below the bay's supportive bracket. Although it looks like this bay window might have been retrofitted into the opening at first glance, it is actually original and part of the Tallmadge and Watson drawing. Above the oriel bay window is a single one-over-one window.

The next bay on this elevation is another entrance bay. Like other entrances, the door surround is arched. The doors are a pair of green painted wooden doors with clear glass lights. There is a glass transom above. Another set of classical lanterns flank the door. This door is currently used as the club's primary entrance for meetings and social events. Above the door, another one-over-one window continues the fenestration pattern of the second story.

On the northern side of the doorway is an arched window similar to the south of the entrance; however, this does not contain a bay. Instead, this window appears to be a double casement. It has the concrete tympanum featuring the torch. Under the window is a square brick panel detail in the face brick pattern.

There are several one-over-one single windows on both the first and second floor levels, before coming to the final entrance bay on the west elevation. The northern end of the west facade is part of the Barloga addition and the transition is practically seamless. Other than a change of material in the foundation and parapet, there is not a noticeable shift in design or materials. A concrete ramp with a wrought iron railing leads up to the entry. Unlike any of the other building entries, this one has wooden door molding with fluted pilasters on the sides and a dentil molding above the door. It has a double wooden door, brass hardware, and a glass transom. It is centered in an arched opening and above the door is a concrete

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tympantum with the torch design that matches those in the original part of the building. Most of the decoration on this entry is not visible from the street as a large semi-circular green awning obscures the top of the doorway. There are lanterns affixed to the wooden door trim and signs that read *RWC* attached to the brick wall on either side of the doorway. This entry is also bumped out from the wall but only on the first level. This entryway has a stone cap. Centered above the doorway are two, one-over-one windows like most of those found on the second story of this elevation.

North Elevation

The view of the north elevation has been altered from the original plan due to the Barloga addition. On this elevation, the basement level of the building is partially exposed. The western end of this elevation has a very large glass block window that spans the first and second floors. There is a large sign reading *ROCKFORD WOMAN'S CLUB BANQUET FACILITY*. There is a concrete band detail near the top of this section and a concrete block cornice. This space functions as the restaurant entry lobby and the large glass block window provides dramatic light for the curved staircase that goes down to the dining area in the lower level.

Moving to the east on this elevation is the partially exposed basement level of the main dining area of the restaurant, and above is the club's sunroom. Barloga actually raised the first floor level a few feet above the original building's first floor. You must go up a short flight of stairs to access the sunroom from other spaces in the original building. There are three glass block windows on the first-floor level and underneath, three glass block windows on the exposed basement level. Between the windows of the basement and first floor are what appear to be brick-shaped tiles in a terra cotta color. These have been installed in a stack bond. The glass block and stacked bond tile give this Barloga addition a more modern look than the original building. It is interesting to note that Barloga chose to keep the Church Street elevation of the addition, which is visible from the street, in the style of Tallmadge and Watson, but gave a more streamlined look to the north side. It is assumed the simple building materials would have been practical and less costly.

Moving east on the elevation, the Barloga addition continues only on the exposed basement level. This section is also part of the main dining room of the restaurant and has three more glass block windows. On the roof of the east side of this section is a deck with a metal railing in an Art-Deco style. A multi-pane French door located on the eastern wall of the sunroom exits onto the rooftop deck. There are two other windows on the north face of the original building that overlook the deck.

The next section of the north elevation is the theatre area. The theatre has three rectangular window openings on the first floor. Moving from west to east, the first two are bricked-filled. The third is a door. Above these three, on the second-floor level, there are three arched openings. Again moving from west to east, the first has a door with a metal fire escape descending to the east, with stairs against the building. The other two arched openings have been filled with brick. And finally, the last section on the north elevation represents the backstage and fly loft. It is relatively simple with a large decorative square brick design in the face of the wall, on the top left-hand side.

East Elevation

The east elevation faces an alley that runs between the Woman's Club and the old First Presbyterian Church. The only part of the building that meets the alley is the rear wall of the fly loft. There is a roll-top door in the middle of this section for loading and unloading equipment and an entry door located on the far south side.

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There is a view of the east side of the 1938 Barloga addition from this elevation. Here you can view the rooftop deck and it's Art Deco railing most clearly. A pair of multi-light French doors exits the sunroom to the rooftop deck. The doors are found in the middle of the east-facing wall. There are two large windows on either side of the doorway, both with glass block transoms.

INTERIOR

Theatre

The Rockford Woman's Club Theatre public entrance is found on the south side of the building. This entrance opens into a small foyer with a terra cotta tile floor. The box office windows are located on the east wall. The two windows have metal bars with an opening at the bottom for exchanging money and tickets. The two windows are framed with wooden trim. Inside, the box office remains relatively unchanged with a wooden counter and two drawers beneath.

Two sets of French doors lead into the carpeted theatre lobby. There are two staircases that lead to the balcony. They are located on the north and south side of the lobby. The staircases are enclosed, carpeted and gently curving. There is also a restroom off the north end of the lobby. The lobby has French doors on the west wall that lead to the clubhouse, and French doors on the east wall that open to the theatre.

The theatre seats 800 and consists of the main floor, lower and upper balcony. On the main floor there are three sections of seats with two aisles. Seats on the main floor of the theatre are made of red plastic and not original. The theatre has a Proscenium arch stage area. The stage is 60 feet wide with a curved apron and dressed with a midnight blue curtain. The fly system is located stage right. In front of the stage is an orchestra pit that measures 35 x 7 feet. Large lanterns hang from painted cast iron mounting brackets and are located on the sidewalls of the gently arched, recessed stage area. The theatre is equipped with house lights, strip lights, a Steinway piano and a professional sound system.

The lower balcony overhangs about half of the main floor and has a short wall in the front. The same red plastic seats found on the main floor have also replaced the seat in the lower balcony. The upper balcony is set off with a pipe railing. This section still has the original theatre seating, leather-covered wooden seats on a metal frame with the original hat racks underneath. There are exit doors on the right side of the house (south wall) and the left side of the house (north wall).

First Floor

Reception Room/ Rotunda

One of the most striking interior architectural features in the clubhouse can be found in the original Reception Room. Here the center of the ceiling is cut away in an oval shape and the space soars two stories high and terminates in an original skylight in the roof. An oval railing with metal balusters and a wooden handrail surrounds the opening on the second level. The room has wall-to-wall, floral-patterned carpet in tones of green and rose. The room is furnished with a couple of small settees and armchairs.

The Rotunda, as it is called today, is centrally located and has a number of rooms around its perimeter, including small office to the south; the Memorial Room (Adaline Talcott Emerson Room) in the southwest corner; the staircase to the second floor and a hallway that leads to the club's western entrance; and the Belle Keith Art Gallery to the north. The eastern wall has French doors that lead to the theatre lobby. It was designed so these doors could be opened and the lobby space enlarged if needed.

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Memorial Room

The Memorial Room, originally named for Adaline Talcott Emerson, has wallpapered plaster walls and a coffered ceiling. The crown molding and ceiling beams are painted white, but other trim, such as the baseboard and French door molding are dark-stained. This room has a large stone fireplace with a dark wood paneled wall behind. An oil portrait of Adaline Talcott Emerson hangs over the fireplace, and has been there since the club was built. Other impressive art from the club's collection is displayed in the room. The room has hardwood floors and an oriental area rug. There are French doors on the south and west walls and the pair of French doors that lead to the Rotunda are on the east wall.

Belle Keith Art Gallery

Another beautiful interior space is the Belle Keith Art Gallery. The large space measures roughly 28 x 43 feet. The walls in this room are dark-stained beadboard paneling and the floors are maple. It is assumed that the maple flooring was specified because the room originally functioned as both an art gallery and a ballroom. The focal point in the room is the large black marble fireplace with wooden surround and painted quarry tile hearth. Large ornate brass andirons sit in front of the opening. Four drop-pendants hang from the ceiling. The fixtures are gold-colored with an oak leaf design and the glass shades are white schoolhouse globes. The north wall in the Gallery has two sets of stairs that lead up to the Sunroom, added by architect Jesse Barloga in 1938.

Sunroom

The sunroom is constructed slightly higher than the first-level rooms, so there are short sets of stairs to access the room in each of the doorways that lead to it from the north side of the Belle Keith Art Gallery. The sunroom has black asbestos, or possibly vinyl composition tile flooring and the ceiling is made up of acoustical panels. On the east wall is a set of multi-light French doors with a set of casement windows on each side. The door leads to the outdoor deck. The casement windows have radiators underneath with a trellis covering. Above the windows are large glass-block transoms. A large wall-mount air conditioning unit has been placed in the transom area above the French door. The north wall of the sunroom has three large glass block windows. There is another doorway on the east wall that goes down to the lower level. Three of the sunroom walls are white painted brick.

West Entrance and Hallway

Club members generally access the clubhouse from the west side of the building. Upon entering this door, there is a short flight of stairs to reach the first level. On the right is a window seat set in the Oriel Bay. A hallway to the east leads to the Rotunda/Reception Room, and a hallway to the north leads to the restaurant. Off this hallway are modernized restrooms and a Butler's Pantry. Floral tole chandeliers line this hallway giving it a relaxed and airy feel. At the end of the hallway is a short staircase that converges with the Sunroom's west exit staircase (Fig. 4). Here the flooring changes to dark diamond-cut terrazzo tile with gold lines between the tiles. As you enter the new space, the interior décor changes to Art Deco.

Lower Level

Main Dining Room

Public access to the restaurant/dining areas from the exterior is on the west elevation, off Church Street. Inside this door is a foyer retrofitted with a small elevator on the north side. A pair of single-light swinging doors open from the foyer to the restaurant landing. The landing has a floor-to-ceiling glass

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brick window on the north wall. You can also access the restaurant landing from the clubhouse entering from the hallway to the south.

A gently curved and sweeping staircase creates a dramatic descent to the dining area. The staircase has a resin railing, painted black, and set upon a plaster base. Details in the restaurant continue the Art Deco theme.

A large dining room is located at the base of the stairs. The north wall of the dining room has six, glass-block windows. On the eastern wall there are two sets of clear-light French doors with glass-block transoms, one on the north side of this wall and one on the south side. In between is a grouping of three windows with a glass block transom above. The doors open onto a small sunken courtyard. To the southwest, and behind the staircase, is an open area leading to restrooms and the elevator.

Bar

South of the main dining room is a small bar area that separates the large dining area from two smaller private dining rooms. The bar is semi-circular in shape. The lower part of the bar is beadboard, as is the wall behind the back bar. The floor in this space is modern tile. The professional kitchen is located on the backside of the bar. There are four booths located on the east wall of the bar area.

Smaller Dining Rooms

Two smaller and more casual dining spaces can be found on the south side of the lower level. The Olson Room occupies the southwest corner and the Brown Room is in the southeast corner. The Olson room has a black and white tile floor, and the Brown Room has a black tile floor. The rooms do not get any natural light and use mirrors on the wall to give a feeling of space and light. There are restrooms and a coat check area east of the bar space, between the main dining room and the Brown Room.

Second Floor

An L-shaped staircase leads from the Reception Room to the club's second floor. The stair rail at the top is comprised of oak balusters, railing and square newel posts. The newel posts have a decorative carved panel with a leaf design.

Resting Room/Rotunda Area

The central part of the second floor was historically called the Resting Room. It was designed in the form of a gallery with reading tables and writing desks. The center of the room is the open rotunda area with its oval railing. This overlooks the Reception space below.

Additional Second Floor Rooms

Several additional spaces can be found on the second floor and open off the Resting Room/ Rotunda Area. These including a manager's apartment located to the west of the Rotunda. The small apartment was occupied until 2006. It is currently vacant, but still remains furnished. The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Room is located on the east side. A reading room and Board Room are located on the south side.

CHANGES

The Rockford Woman's Club meets all the National Park Service's criteria for integrity. It remains in the same central location since its build date in 1918. The building still functions in the same capacity as

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which it was built, continuing to serve as home to the work of the Rockford Woman's Club. It continues to retain its integrity in regards to association and feeling, and the original architecturally - defining building materials and workmanship are clearly visible.

The building was expanded in 1938, with an addition designed by Rockford architect, Jesse Barloga. The new addition to the northwest end of the original building added a dedicated restaurant entrance on the northern end of the west elevation. The brickwork on the west elevation is nearly seamless and it blends well with the original building. The north side of the addition uses the same color and type of brick, but the windows are glass block. Besides the new restaurant entrance and lower level dining room addition, the Barloga remodel also added a sunroom to the first floor of the clubhouse. The changes associated with the Barloga building addition and remodel are considered historic, as they were made more than 50 years ago and within the period of significance. These changes occurred to accommodate the growing social club's needs and make the kitchen and dining area larger and more flexible.

The Tallmadge and Watson architectural drawings for the original clubhouse and theatre are found on microfilm in the Ryerson and Burnham Archives. There is a door on the west elevation of the clubhouse, which leads to the basement kitchen area and to the first floor. The Tallmadge and Watson plan specified a window instead of a door. It is possible that the final construction plans deviated from the architectural drawings. It is also possible it was a change made during the Barloga addition since the kitchen was remodeled at that time. The door is shown in an architectural drawing published in the newspaper (Fig. 13).

The original sketch of the front south elevation shows a more elaborate porch with a concrete balustrade (Fig. 7). A historic photo of the Woman's Club appeared in the October 1927 publication of *The Woman Citizen* (Fig. 12). The photo shows a porch similar to the original Tallmadge and Watson drawings. The current porch has a similar footprint to the original, but the brick piers, and concrete classical balustrade and rail is gone, replaced with wrought iron spindles and railing. Research did not indicate when the original porch was removed and replaced; however, a photo from a *Rockford Morning Star* article dated 5/3/1951 shows the porch very similar to today, so the replacement occurred prior to that date and within the period of significance (Fig. 14).

There have been some changes over the years to the exterior of the theatre. The original Tallmadge and Watson elevation sketch shows a grouping of three windows and a large concrete planter box below the windows along the south elevation. The windows and box are no longer there. The large arches in the theatre portion of the south elevation once had windows on the first and second floor of each arch. The windows have been filled with brick. This was done before 1951, as evidenced in the previously mentioned photograph in the 5-13-1951 *Morning Star* article. Although the windows have been filled, the original openings are still discernable. The door on the theatre's south elevation does not appear on the architectural drawings by Tallmadge and Watson, and was a late addition in 1998. It serves as a fire escape for the theatre.

Some interior remodeling and renovation occurred during the 1950s. Air conditioning was added to some clubhouse spaces in 1955, and added to the Food Shop in 1956. A renovation and interior remodeling project took place in 1957. This renovation made updates to modernize the theatre and included new wiring, lighting, flooring and paint. That same year, the Memorial Room received new draperies, paint and baseboard heaters.

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Nearly all of the major changes to the building occurred during the period of significance of 1918 – 1970. Later changes to the building have been relatively minor. In 1996, the club held a Designer's Showcase and had eleven interior designers spruce up the building's interior. The DAR room was given a federal theme. The ladies' room in the theatre was redecorated and painted faux finishes, a popular decorating trend at the time, were given to some of the club's interior walls.

In 1998, the club-operated Food Shop in the Woman's Club lower level closed after operating for 78 years. RWC voted at that time to lease the space to private restaurateurs. The owners of the new restaurant, Louis Cooper, left the décor intact, but did add a 12-seat bar to the lower level.

The most recent changes to the building have been in the form of routine maintenance and efforts to make the building more accessible. In 1990, the elevator was installed just inside the northwest restaurant entrance. In 1998, a roof enclosure was added over the skylight. Bathrooms were remodeled in 2000 to meet the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and in 2013 and 2018 roof repairs were completed.

The clubhouse was built with a variety of functions in mind. It was to be a beautiful public space serving the community as a supportive educational and entertainment venue. It was to be a space that honored the work of women and gave female community organizers a place to meet and conduct their work. The restaurant evolved into another community asset and a favorite local gathering place for many years. The architects who designed the spaces took each of these uses to heart and created a Classical Revival style building with a form that not only accommodated the various uses, but also was rich with art and subtle detail.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- 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.

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Social History

Entertainment/Recreation

Education

Period of Significance

1918 - 1970

Significant Dates

1918 – Construction of original building

1938 – Major addition and remodeling

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation (if applicable)

Architect/Builder

1918 original – Tallmadge and Watson:
architects

1938 addition – Jesse Barloga - architect

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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 Rockford Woman's Club (RWC) qualifies for the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A. Since 1918, the Rockford Woman's Club has served as the home base for the social organization of the same name. The group was formed in 1897 as an organization dedicated to philanthropy and promoting civic and cultural improvement in the city of Rockford. From the time of the club's creation, this united force of women has been instrumental in championing the arts, providing educational opportunities, and addressing a variety of important social issues. The building, which consists of a clubhouse, restaurant, and theatre has functioned as an ideal location for the group's work and has served as a community anchor in the areas of education, entertainment and recreation, and social reform. It is for these areas of significance that the building is locally important. The building has been the only dedicated home for the organization. The period of significance is 1918 to 1970, with 1918 being the construction date of the building and 1970 the 50-year cut-off for National Register eligibility. The Club continues to this day to be dedicated to the betterment of the Rockford community and is still housed at this location.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Formation of The Rockford Woman's Club

Rockford was established in 1837 and incorporated in 1839. In a little over a decade, early settlers harnessed the power of the Rock River and established a Water Power District in the heart of the city. The power source, coupled with the arrival of the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad in 1851, helped propel Rockford to a manufacturing center by the end of the twentieth century. In 1893, Rockford had 26 factories and the city manufactured a variety of goods including farm implements, textiles, and furniture.

Rockford's population grew rapidly during this time. The 1880 census shows 13,129 citizens in the city, but by 1900 the population of Rockford was over 30,000, and it was the second largest city in Illinois. It was during this time of industrialization and rapid growth that the Rockford Woman's Club was established.

The first women's clubs in the United States were in New York City and Boston; Jane "Jennie June" Croly organized the first women's club in New York City in 1868, followed by Julia Ward Howe in Boston (Women's History Museum). The formation of these two clubs ushered in a new movement, one that allowed women who valued education to organize and become active participants in political and social change. "These women decided to ignore customary restrictions and insisted on developing their minds and communities by meeting regularly in order to learn about the great ideas of the past and contemporary urban problems together" (Women's History Museum).

Around the same time, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton founded the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) in New York City. The NWSA was organized for the specific cause of advocating for women's rights. In 1888, a convention of the International Council of Women by NWSA in Washington, D.C. brought together women's clubs, feminist associations, and social and political activists for the cause of advocating for equality for the sexes and the overall advancement of women. In the name of universal sisterhood, the Council aimed to "impress the important lesson that the position of women anywhere affects their position everywhere" (Graham).

On a national level there were multiple women's organizations operating simultaneously, and in the last decade of the nineteenth century there was a concerted effort to bring them together. That effort culminated in 1890, when the General Federation of Women's Clubs was organized. The state of Illinois organized its own chapter of the Federation of Women's Clubs in 1894. By 1910, the IL Federation had a membership of over 800,000.

Rockford mirrored the national trend in regards to consolidation. By the end of the 1890s, there were almost 20 women's social clubs in Rockford IL. The groups were primarily literary in nature, but some had also taken on community welfare projects as part of their mission. The Panic of 1893 had resulted in an economic depression for much of the decade and left many Rockfordians in need. There was a desire by these multiple organizations to band together in hopes of becoming more effective in addressing the city's social and economic needs. As a result, a group of women met in the home of Mrs. Seely Perry in early 1897 to discuss organizing the separate clubs into one group. After the initial planning session, a follow-up meeting took place on February 9th. At this gathering 90

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women, representing a number of local social clubs, met in a county courtroom and adopted a resolution for the groups to join forces. The resolution stated: "Resolved: That it is the sense of this meeting that the Women's Clubs of Rockford be federated into a Council of Women" (Johnson). The group was named the Federation of Woman's Clubs of Rockford; their first Constitution was adopted on February 16th and Mrs. Seely Perry was elected president.

Early Accomplishments

Some of the club's first projects were aimed towards helping the local community with the economic downturn. An early project for the club was planting community gardens in vacant lots throughout the city to feed the hungry. This coincided with a national Community Gardens Movement that began as a way to help unemployed workers and their families during the economic recession of the 1890s. One of the first cities in the United States to develop community gardens on vacant lots was Detroit. The mayor of that city, Hazen S. Pingree, started Detroit's program. The Detroit plan, sometimes referred to as Pingree Potato Patches, was successful enough that it was soon copied in many of the major cities in the U.S. (Vacant Lot Gardens).

The Federation followed in Detroit's footsteps when it started the Community Garden program in Rockford; in fact, the gardens they helped to establish were referred to as Pingree Potato Patches. In April of 1897 the Federation voted to inaugurate the Pingree Potato Patch Plan. Rockford Mayor Brown committed city help with plowing the garden lots (Daily Register-Gazette 4/28/1897).

That summer the program oversaw a total of 73 lots. The east side of the Rock River had 43 lots, amounting to 12 acres of land, and the west side had 25 lots with a total of seven acres. On average each recipient received a quarter of an acre (Rockford Republic 7/27/1897). The program continued for the next couple of years, but each year the number of people given plots decreased. This was actually seen as a success, as the mission of the program was to provide the impoverished a way to work and assist in their own support. Whereas the first year land and seed was furnished, following years many were able to rent or cultivate space around their own homes (Rockford Morning Star 5/6/1899). It was also near the end of this decade that economic conditions across the US and in Rockford began to improve.

The turn of the century was a time of rapid industrialization in the United States. Industrialization went hand in hand with urbanization as rural Americans took jobs in factories in the city. The promise of jobs brought a large amount of immigrants to the United States. These factors helped usher in the Progressive Era, a period of social activism and political reform that lasted into the 1920s.

In 1904, the Federation officially changed its name to the Rockford Woman's Club. At that time it organized into departments to help define its work. The club's first departments were Home Economics, Forestry, Legislative, Drama, and Art.

Over the years, the Club's programs often focused on the health and well being of children. "At the turn of the twentieth century planned public play spaces were uncommon. In the nation's booming cities, children played in streets, alleys, and vacant lots, largely unsupervised. Reformers were concerned that the lack of open space, play equipment, and adult supervision led to decreased physical activity, increased risk of traffic accidents, and exposure to unhealthy habits and criminal behavior" (Wesson). Nationally, organizations such as the Outdoor Recreation League and the Playground Association of America tried to remedy these problems by constructing thousands of municipal playgrounds across the United States. Locally the Club encouraged the Rockford Park Board to build playgrounds throughout the city. In 1912, they also advocated for a new Playground Director position. The club sponsored this part-time position for the first three years of its existence.

"By 1900, 34 of the then 45 states in the Nation had laws calling for compulsory education of all children under the age of 14. Reformers were well aware of the tremendous social inequality of the industrial era and saw the need to improve the outcomes of all students drawn into the educational system" (Rude). One of the ways was by providing a school lunch.

Philadelphia and Boston were the first major cities to implement a school lunch program in the United States. Philadelphia began by serving penny lunches at one school in 1894 and expanded it to eight additional schools throughout the city. In Boston, the Women's Educational and Industrial Union began serving hot lunches to high schools using a centrally located kitchen to prepare the meals, which were later transported to the participating schools.

In 1907, the Board of Education asked the members of the Woman's Club to create a school lunch program in Rockford. The women answered the call and organized and maintained the lunch program at the city high school, serving between 200 and 300 lunches daily. The members served as volunteer waitresses, and the club provided dishes and silver (Espy). The women oversaw the school lunch program for 18 years.

Relating to work in childcare and education, the Club was instrumental in introducing and advocating for a free kindergarten in Rockford. The Kindergarten Movement is credited to the practice and philosophy of German-born, Friedrich Froebel. The Club

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brought in guest speakers and hosted public meetings on the topic. They also started a traveling library in 1906 that visited all of the schools.

One of the enduring projects of the Club was a social service center that became known as Montague House. Montague House was established to help immigrants acclimate to American Society. In 1913, the Rockford Park District gave the Club use of a small stone building on South Main for classes. The club quickly outgrew the space and moved into a larger building they purchased at 604 Wall Street. The move allowed them to expand classes. In addition to cooking; classes in music, art, and athletics were offered.

During the first quarter of the twentieth century, the Rockford Woman's club also engaged in the advancement of women's rights. As early as 1904, the Club voted to uphold the State Federation's official position in supporting women's right to vote, regardless of whether or not they owned property. In 1909, Woman's Club members actively campaigned for the eight-hour workday for women. The Club helped organize the Rockford Business and Professional Woman's Club to focus on the changing role of women in the workplace.

Over the years, they brought in speakers such as Francis Squire Potter. Potter had worked in the Literature Department of the University of Minneapolis, but left the position in 1909 to become a correspondence secretary for the National American Woman Suffrage Association. When the club celebrated their twentieth anniversary in February of 1917 at the Second Congregational Church, the featured speaker was Louise Brockway Stanwood. Stanwood was a member of the Rockford club, former president of the State Federation of Women's Clubs and was at the time residing in Evanston and helping build a club in that city. Her remarks were reported in the Rockford Star, 2/7/1917: "...the popular idea conveyed through the press and magazines is that the 'feminist' movement is selfish or antagonistic to men, and this is not so; women's organizations are reaching out to find themselves struggling for their rights, their privileges and with a desire to be of use in the world's affairs."

One of the most influential Rockford Woman's Club members advocating for women's rights was Kate O'Connor. She was born in Rockford in 1863 to Irish immigrants. O'Connor served as Deputy to the County Clerk for Winnebago, had a private law practice, and worked as a realtor. A great example of her outspoken personality was exhibited in an article in the Rockford Morning Star. When asked for her advice for other women who wished to work in real estate, O'Connor replied:

"Drop your excess baggage.
Put on your shock absorbers.
Forget the lipstick.
Get a broker's license.
Take a through street.
Take a man's chance.
And step on the gas."

Women were given the right to vote in Illinois in 1913, considerably earlier than the passage of the 19th amendment. In 1916, Miss Spafford urged the members of the Woman's Club "...to vote and to show the men of the city and the state that women should appreciate the opportunity afforded to vote for the highest office is the gift of the people of the United States."

Over the years, Miss Jessie I. Spafford was one of the most influential leaders of the Woman's Club. Miss Spafford was elected president in 1907 and served in that capacity for nearly 43 years. A strong leader, Spafford initiated several projects that became the bedrock of the organization. She also was the woman at the helm when the RWC was constructed.

A Permanent Home

When Spafford was elected president, the club had nearly 1000 members.

During the early years the club would meet at various places including churches, the YWCA and the high school auditorium. It was difficult to administer the organization without a dedicated facility for a central office and committee meeting space. Recognizing the need to have their own building, earnest discussions of constructing a permanent home began in 1915. Several parcels were discussed for the possible building site, but the location was quickly determined when a gift of land and money was given to the club.

The daughters of Mrs. Ralph Emerson and their children donated a property at the corner of Park Avenue and Church Street to the club and Mrs. William A. Talcott and Mrs. Walt Talcott gave the adjoining property on Park Avenue. In addition to the property, the Emerson family pledged two-fifths of the cost of the building, not to exceed \$24,000 (Rockford Register-Gazette 10-5-15).

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Miss Jessie I. Spafford announced in December of 1916 that the Chicago firm of Tallmadge and Watson had been selected as the architects for the clubhouse. Tallmadge and Watson were well known for their Prairie School designed homes in the Chicago area. The cost of the clubhouse was expected to be \$60,000.

Thomas Tallmadge designed the building in 1917. Tallmadge was born in Washington D.C. but grew up in Evanston, Illinois. He received his bachelors in architecture from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1898 and returned to Chicago to study under Daniel Burnham. In 1905, Tallmadge opened his own firm with Vernon Watson, Chief Draftsman for Burnham. In 1909, Tallmadge and Watson designed the First Methodist Church in Evanston, Illinois. This was the first of 30 churches designed by the firm. The Rockford Woman's Club is the only Tallmadge designed building in Rockford.

The Woman's Club members desired a female artist to help with the club's design and enlisted Nancy Cox-McCormack to create art pieces for the building. McCormack was from Nashville and studied sculpture at the Art Institute of Chicago. The prominent sculptor was known for her figural work, including busts of Ezra Pound and Benito Mussolini. For her RWC commission, McCormack created two concrete bas-relief panels. One panel is *Woman in Civics* and the other is *Woman in the Home*. The panels have a prominent position on the building's south façade. (figure 12)

The Club's home was completed in the early fall of 1918. The theater celebrated its opening performance in September of 1918, presenting the Chicago Operatic Company (Daily Register Gazette 9/28/18). The first official meeting for the Woman's Club in their new home was scheduled for October 8, 1918. A formal dedication and reception for the community was planned for October as well, but both events were cancelled due to the 1918 flu pandemic, when public meeting restrictions were imposed by the city. The club was allowed to open up their permanent home on November 1, 1918. (Rockford Republic 12/31/18)

Mrs. B.B. Treat of Rockford designed the interior. Historic newspaper accounts described the building as "homey, not stiff or formal." Some details of the interior description included furniture selection, color palettes, and floor coverings.

The newspaper described the Memorial Room, a parlor in the southwest corner of the main floor, as having an oriental gray and blue rug. There were rose and gold velour couches and gold gauze window coverings with gray-blue taffeta drapes. An oil portrait of Adaline Talcott Emerson hung over the fireplace.

Off of the Reception Room was the Belle Keith Art Gallery The room was used for the study and preservation of art and was a specific request of one of the donors, Mrs. Emerson. Not only did the new building have a dedicated art gallery, but it also included a workshop for the Rockford Art Guild in the building's basement. Over the years the club brought in artists to demonstrate their talents. One such guest was Lorado Taft, who came to demonstrate clay modeling shortly after the club opened (Rockford Register 11/16/18).

The new clubhouse included reading space on the second floor. As stated earlier, many early women's clubs were started as literary groups, and the reading area gave the members a dedicated space for this activity. Another room on the second floor was provided for the Rockford chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), a request by benefactor, Mrs. Talcott.

Music, theatre, and education were important components of the Rockford Woman's Club mission. Before the clubhouse was built, the group would rent facilities like the Shrine Temple for community concerts and Second Congregational Church for guest speakers. One of the more unique features of the new clubhouse was the 800-seat Rockford Theatre. This provided ample space for community lectures and performances, and gave them the space to host these kinds of events themselves.

The new club also had space for cooking and dining. Early plans included opening a Tea Room in the basement. The Tea Room was named The Tumble Inn and for the first couple of years the lower level area was used for luncheons and afternoon teas with the ability to arrange dinner parties when desired.

1918 -1929

The construction of the RWC coincided with the end of World War I (WWI). Several groups who had engaged in homefront service operated out of the new Clubhouse: the Rockford Woman's Club, the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), and the Rockford Art Guild (RAG).

When the DAR moved their headquarters into the building they had a membership of about 200. During 1918, they purchased liberty bonds, pledged money for rebuilding a French town, and donated funds to two southern schools.

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The Woman's Club found ways to support the troops during WWI. Locally, they supported Rockford's Camp Grant. Camp Grant was a U.S. Army facility located on the southern outskirts of town. The camp operated from 1917 until 1946. The club members opened a soldiers' club for the men stationed at the camp and maintained the social center until the war ended. Especially popular were the home-cooked meals provided to the soldiers on Friday and Saturday nights (Rockford Republic 12/31/18).

At the end of 1918, the club held an exhibit of the Camp Grant soldiers' art in their new building. The show was a collaborative effort with the Rockford Art Guild and featured posters, cartoons and pen sketches (Daily Register Gazette 12/27/18). The soldier's exhibit was followed by another exhibition of government war posters during the first two weeks of January 1919 (Morning Star 1/1/19). In 1919, the RWC hosted a celebration to welcome returning soldiers.

Another active area of social reform for women's groups during the first quarter of the twentieth century was prison reform. Before the clubhouse was built, the Club convinced the county to create the position of probation officer. A Woman's Club member filled the position and was appointed and paid by the club a starting salary of \$10 a month starting in 1900. A club member continued to hold the position until 1907, when the job was taken over by the county. One particular area of interest for the women was the protection of vulnerable female prisoners. In 1919, the Woman's Club worked with the city Public Health Official to secure a suitable matron for the city jail.

The 1920s was a decade of change in the United States. In 1920, the 18th amendment passed prohibiting the sale and consumption of alcohol and the same year the 19th amendment was passed, giving women the right to vote. It should be noted that although the 19th amendment was passed in 1920, it would be many more years before equitable voting practices would be initiated for women of color. Overall, the right to vote gave rise to the thought that women could be major contributors in reform politics.

In 1920, the original Tea Room space, became the Food Shop. The Food Shop was open to the public for lunches and proceeds from the restaurant helped fund the Club's philanthropic work. The Food Shop quickly became a very popular dining option for the downtown area and a good source of revenue for the Club.

In 1920, the Woman's Club purchased a Lithuanian church on Island Ave. to serve as an annex to the Montague House. To supplement their work with the Montague House, the Club opened the Economy Shop in 1921. The Economy Shop accepted community donations of furniture and clothing. The shop was located at 515 W. State and was open six days a week. Club volunteers managed the thrift store. Within a year, the Economy Shop was showing a profit and that money was directed to the Club's philanthropic projects (Rockford Republic 1/1/22).

The members of the Woman's Club quickly became community players as they realized more work could be accomplished by partnering with other groups. They joined forces with the Catholic Women's League in 1919 to ensure milk sold in Rockford was pasteurized. In 1921, the Club maintained a public milk program providing milk at a discounted price to needy families. They distributed the milk from grocery stores and fire stations in cooperation with Union Dairy and during the 1922 school year they expanded the program to give milk to undernourished school children every day (Rockford Register-Republic 1/1/22). The club also continued their work with the school lunch program and was serving 1100 teachers and students daily in 1922.

In 1920 the Woman's Club joined forces with several other organizations including the Elks Club, the Rotary, the Lions Club and the Kiwanis and created the Rockford Social Service Federation (Register Star 1962). This organization later became the Rockford Community Chest, and eventually the United Way. The fund created a singular source of money for community charitable work.

On the political front, the Woman's Club helped organize the Winnebago County League of Women Voters in 1922. This group promoted educational resources and provided educational opportunities for women voters. Over the years, the clubhouse was the location for many candidate forums and speaker presentations. The building provided a worthy site for such activities with its large auditorium, meeting rooms, and restaurant.

During the 1920s, the Club sponsored exhibits by local architects. The architects displayed drawings of their current projects in the Belle Keith Gallery. The Club also provided entertainment and recreation for the community throughout the 1920s by bringing many world famous speakers and performers to their Rockford Theatre. Guest included Anna Pavlova and the Russian Ballet; Ruth Denis and Ted Shawn, pioneers of American modern dance; John McCormack, an Irish American tenor; Madame Schuman Heineck, an Austrian-born operatic contralto; and American social commentator and humorist, Will Rogers. The organization had a resident stock company from 1920 to 1928, and would also schedule road shows out of New York. The Rockford Woman's Club is believed to be one of only women's clubs in the country at the time that maintained a commercial theater.

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The decade that started out with overall growth and prosperity ended on an ominous note. The stock market crash in late 1929 ushered in a completely different decade as America entered what is now know as The Great Depression.

1930 – 1940

It took a couple of years for the Depression to fully take hold in Rockford, but charitable organizations were beginning to see the effects as early as the winter of 1929. According to a newspaper article in January of 1930, demands upon the “Public Welfare” in December of 1929 increased 28% over December of the year before.

Rockford manufacturing industries suffered during the 1930s, and by March 1933 an estimated 30% of Rockford families were on full relief, a figure that would only increase over time (Sutrina 405). Depression relief came from the private sector and Rockford’s Community Fund. During this time, the Woman’s Club organized activities in an attempt to raise money for the Community Fund (Daily Register-Gazette 1/22/1930). Despite their efforts, eventually the Community Fund would not be enough to meet the Rockford community’s growing economic needs and the city eventually turned to the IL Emergency Relief Commission for additional help (Sutrina 406).

The Woman’s Club tended to their many ongoing projects during this decade. The club also continued their social activities. Bridge and tea parties were popular gatherings during the decade. The clubhouse provided a welcome retreat during the Depression Era as not only a place where the members and their guests could socialize, but also as a place where the membership and the Rockford community could go to hear a variety of educational lectures. The 1933/34-season line-up shows the diversity of speakers. The list of notable guests, just a sampling of the many, included Amelia Earhart, Dorothy Thompson, Rosita Forbes, and Professor Harry Gideonse. At the time, Earhart was the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic. Dorothy Thompson (wife of Sinclair Lewis) was a writer and journalist. She gave a lecture entitled “Hitler and the New Germany.” Rosita Forbes was an explorer and writer and the first non-Muslim woman to visit Libya. She also was known for interviewing leading figures in the Middle East. Ms. Forbes presented a lecture, “Eight Republics in Search of a Future.” Mr. Gideonse was an economist and presented a program entitled, “Economic Policy of the U.S.”

The Food Shop continued to do well and by the late 1930s had become so popular that the club began talking about expansion. The women knew it was not a good time to build, but in 1937 Mrs. E.P. Lathrop gifted the club property on Church Street. The Woman’s Club was given 25 feet adjacent to the existing building, and the remaining property was gifted to the Mendelssohn Club, the RWC’s neighbor to the north. The Mendelssohn Club, a musical society established in 1884, often collaborated with the Woman’s Club to sponsor concerts and presentations. Like the Woman’s Club, the Mendelssohn Club remains active today.

In 1938, Jesse Barloga was contracted to design an addition for the Woman’s Club. Barloga was born in Pecatonica, Illinois in 1888 and studied architecture at the University of Illinois. After an apprenticeship with local architect, Frank Carpenter, Barloga opened his own practice in Rockford in 1910. Barloga worked in a variety of styles from Classical Revival to Art Déco. During his career Barloga designed over 200 buildings, commercial and residential. His Valencia Apartments, a Spanish Mission Style building, is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and his Art Deco Style Register Star Building is an iconic downtown commercial building in Rockford. The local Brown’s Hills Historic District contains several examples of Barloga’s residential designs. Barloga’s addition to the RWC expanded the Food Shop adding a dedicated street-level entrance and a new dining room on the lower level. The kitchen was expanded and four new ovens were added. The Club also added a main-floor sunroom, adjacent to the Belle Keith Art Gallery. Membership stood at 700 when the addition was erected, and the club’s Jr. Department had 200 members.

1940 – 1949

The Club’s list of varied and interesting speakers continued into the 1940s. On October 22, 1940, famed interior designer Dorothy Draper appeared at the club. Also that year, scientific publisher Dr. Gerald Wendt showed the women some of the newest materials on the market like Lucite, nylon, and synthetic fabrics.

In 1941 membership increased from 750 to almost 880.

On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked American military installations in the Pacific. The most devastating strike was to the Hawaiian naval base at Pearl Harbor. Over 2,400 people lost their lives. This marked the U.S. entry into WWII (“Take a Closer Look”).

Rockford’s Camp Grant was reactivated in 1941 when America entered the war, and the camp functioned as an Army Medical Service training center. It was also used for basic training. During the war it was used as a Prisoner of War detention center and employed nearly 6,000 civilians.

Once again, club members found themselves in a position to help the war effort. The Woman’s Club offered use of their building to various groups helping to support US allies. At the end of 1941, The British War Relief Society opened it’s headquarters on the

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second floor of the RWC with the mission to aid English war victims (Rockford Morning Star 12/18/41). The organization shipped 3.5 tons of used clothing to British civilians. The clubhouse was also used by a group of over 300 knitters who worked to create socks for British soldiers and civilians.

The woman of the club hosted dances and dinners for the soldiers during the war as well as events to celebrate major holidays. They held fundraisers and gathered gifts for soldiers in the Camp Grant hospital. The Food Shop was a tremendous asset for the dances and celebrations, as all of the dinners took place in the new dining room addition. The Belle Keith gallery was often the location of the dances and parties, and of course the many rooms of the clubhouse served as planning headquarters. The DAR also organized fundraising events at the RWC.

During the war years, the Food Shop continued to be an important gathering place for the Rockford community and employed a manager as well as 25 regular employees. In a 1943 *Rockford Morning Star* newspaper article, the Food Shop manager reported "more people are buying hot luncheons than ever before." In her interview she stated, "a number of people are eating their heavy meal downtown at noon in order to save on meat and canned-good points" (McCarren). This was a reference to wartime food rationing. During the war, the Food Shop was forced to become creative with some of its menu planning, offering fewer sweets and creating dishes with the meat cuts that were available. The Club had to discontinue its Camp Grant Service Club Cookie Jar project when sugar rationing was instituted.

In 1947, the Club's Public Health and Child Welfare Department helped organize the local chapter of the Cancer Society. The Cancer Society had an information center in the Rockford Gas and Electric Building (Rockford Morning Star 3/4/1948).

1950 – 1959

"The 1930s and 1940s in the United States were decades of both crisis and national purpose. The Great Depression and World War II formed the historical circumstances under which women would play unprecedented roles in the federal government, steward their families through the challenges of material want, enter the workforce in record numbers, and help the nation win World War II" (Nichols-Smith).

In 1950 women comprised 29% of the workforce; this was just the beginning of women staking their professional claim. During the 1950s new women's organizations emerged across the nation that reflected the diversity of the American woman. In 1949, the American Business Women's Association was established to "promote the professional, educational, cultural and social advancement of women." (Scott/Thatcher 278) During this time, another type of women's club emerged called wives' auxiliaries, "These groups, determined by a husband's occupation rather than a wife's interests, provided women with a means of associating with women who faced similar challenges in supporting their husbands' work" (Scott, Thatcher 276).

An increasing number of women in the workforce and new types of organizations affected the overall membership of traditional women's clubs around the nation. The National Federation peaked at 830,000 members in 1955, but what followed was a steady decline (Wilson). This was not true in Rockford as the local club was thriving in the 1950s despite the national trend. There were more social and civic club choices for women in Rockford, but the Rockford Woman's Club continued to be the largest club in the community.

The decade brought a change of leadership to the Woman's Club. Jesse Spafford retired as president in 1950 after 43 years of service, however she continued to be a driving force in the organization. The entertainment that was featured during this decade was an interesting and diverse collection, which included American poet, Ogden Nash; Mark Twain impersonator, Hal Holbrook (twice that decade); English actor, Arthur Treacher; and composer, Meredith Willson. Educational, and possibly controversial lecturers included Dr. Ashley Montagu, an anthropologist who questioned the validity of the concept of race; Dr. Ralph E. Lapp, an American physicist and part of the Manhattan Project; and Dr Joyce Brothers.

In 1956, the Woman's Club was able to pay off their mortgage on the building, and celebrated outright ownership of both the RWC and the Montague House. The Food Shop continued to be a destination for lunch and income from the restaurant supported the Club's philanthropic endeavors. In 1956, the club voted to add air conditioning to the Shop. At that time the Food Shop was open year round for morning coffee, public afternoon lunches, and afternoon coffee. The Food Shop served an average 200 customers a day for lunch. Those numbers would swell to nearly 400, when the club held its meetings. The Food Shop set high goals in 1957 to raise additional funds for a building remodel (Rockford Morning Star 8/4/1957). The Club succeeded in its fundraising goal, and completed a \$30,000 remodel in 1957. The remodel focused primarily on modernizing the theater with new wiring, lighting, flooring and paint. The clubhouse remodel was mostly in the way of new furnishings (Carlson).

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1960 - 1970

During the 1960s, the role of the professional woman continued to evolve nationwide. By 1960, women made up 34.5% of the American workforce and the Women's Movement was gaining strength. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* was published in 1963. In her book, Friedan discussed the unhappiness and dissatisfaction of the American housewife. Three years later, October 1966, the National Organization for Women (NOW) was established. Friedan served as the first president of NOW, which led the Women's Movement in the 1960's. NOW is still very active today.

The primary philanthropic project for the Club in the 1960s was establishing a Senior Activity Center in Rockford. In 1961 the Club purchased property at 982 N. Main and opened the Senior Citizen Activity Center. The center was so popular that an addition was built in 1968. They maintained the building and services for 25 years. Over the years, as more senior facilities were built and demand diminished, the Woman's Club invited the Literacy Council to take up residence at 982 N. Main. The Literacy Council is still active in that location today.

1970 - Present

By 1970, the number of women in the American workforce was 41.6%. During this time, many women's clubs across the nation closed their doors; however, this was not the case in Rockford. In the 1970s the local Woman's Club hit a peak membership of 1200. This stood in stark contrast to the dwindling memberships other clubs were seeing nationwide. The Club continued to be relevant and influential in the last three decades of the twentieth century. The Food Shop was in operation until 1998, and then transitioned to a privately run restaurant for a short time.

Today the membership stands at about 150, but they continue their work in the community. They have consistently held lecture series throughout the last 20 years, featuring local and national speakers. They have rented the theater to local art organizations and festivals to supplement their income. They also rent the clubhouse for community and private events, such as wedding receptions.

Many of their ongoing philanthropic activities are reminiscent of their past work. Similar to the Economy Shop that the organization ran in the 1920s, "Sharing our Closet" was a later program which provided low-income women with professional clothing. In a pattern that was established early in the history of the club, the membership took the leading role in organizing and getting the program off the ground, and then passed over its administration when another suitable organization was found to take the helm, "Sharing our Closet" was recently handed over to the Auxiliary Thrift Shop at Mercy Hospital.

Another current project of the Club, consistent with their early civic projects working with the Rockford School District, is "Keep your Culture, Change your Life." With this program members provide one-on-one tutoring for refugee children to help develop language skills. Members also mentor refugee mothers to help with assimilation and aid in establishing a home and finding services that may be needed. This program is similar to their Montague House work during the early part of the twentieth century, aiding immigrants coming to Rockford. This was the 94th year of their creative writing awards, another program in which the club works with the Rockford School District.

The club continues to provide for the needs of the disenfranchised. The Spafford Department, established in 1947, is today focusing on ensuring female veterans have access to VA benefits. They are also working to aid homeless veterans. The Emerson Lathrop Department is helping to support Remedies, a local agency which provides services for victims of domestic violence or drug abuse. The Perry Department, established in 1960, has created the "Women's Restorative Project." Their goal is to find stable temporary housing for women after Drug rehab or release from jail.

The Rockford Woman's Club As a Third Place

Ray Oldenburg coined the term and urban planning concept "third place" in his 1989 book, *The Great Good Place*. "Third place" refers to a space where people spend time between home (first place) and work (second place). "They are locations where we exchange ideas, have a good time, and build relationship" (Butler and Diaz).

Throughout the period of significance, the RWC has played an important role in the Rockford community as a "third place." The Rockford Theatre was a primary stage for educational lectures. Speakers over years included noted authors, poets, politicians, feminists, travelers, economists, scientists, and more. Also during these years, the Club hosted local and world-famous dancers, musicians, and stage productions in the theatre.

When the Club opened the Food Shop in the lower level in 1920, the space became an important community-meeting place. Initially driven by the Community Garden and Kitchen Movement, the Food Shop would evolve into a favorite downtown lunch spot, a deli for busy working women, a meeting location for other community organizations, and a post-event gathering space after speakers and performances. The facility held community meetings, parties, and public and private social affairs. Attesting to its popularity is the

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fact that the Club expanded their building in the late 1930s primarily to expand their restaurant. The Food Shop operated in this location for 78 years.

The RWC meeting rooms served the Woman's Club well, but they also housed other organizations in the community. The women had the flexibility to open up doors in the theatre lobby to expand the space into the clubhouse portion when needed. The Club used the large Belle Keith Art Gallery for tea parties, bridge tournaments, and social events. It also was opened to the community as a whole for fundraiser dances. Over the years the Gallery has hosted exhibits by local and International artists. And of course, the building is where the women of the Rockford Woman's Club have met to organize, strategize, and carry out their civic work. The RWC fits Oldenburg's description well. It has been an anchor of community life and facilitated and fostered broader, more creative interaction.

Conclusion

The Rockford Woman's Club is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. It is locally significant to the community for the contributing role it has played in community education. The Woman's Club and other community groups used the theatre and building to host community forums and lectures on an array of diverse and pertinent topics. Furthermore, the women of the club made education one of their primary missions, planning for classes to help immigrants assimilate and encouraging early childhood education by advocating for a kindergarten program through the Rockford Public Schools.

The Rockford Woman's Club is also locally significant for the role it has played in the area of entertainment and recreation, hosting local and internationally renowned performers in its theatre. When it was built, it was one of the few women's clubs in the country to operate a commercial theater.

Finally, the club has served as the primary home of the Rockford Woman's Club, a group of women who have been dedicated to philanthropy and promoting civic and cultural improvement in the city of Rockford since the organization was formed in 1897. When the RWC was built in 1918, the clubhouse, theatre, and restaurant at 323 Park Ave. gave the organization a permanent home and a sense of identity. It became the home base for their committee work, and thus played a significant contributing role in Rockford's social history. Throughout the years, the women's work has been a reflection of larger social movements in our country including civic activism in the areas of women's rights, urban planning, and prison reform. Their philanthropic work has focused on promoting the welfare of others, both to those underserved in the community and the community as a whole in times of economic hardship. The Rockford Woman's Club is home to an amazing group of Rockford women who have championed the arts, provided educational opportunities, and addressed a variety of important social issues in the Rockford community.

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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:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

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10. Geographical Data

Acreege 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: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	<u>42.274681</u>	<u>-89.093172</u>	3	_____	_____
	Latitude	Longitude		Latitude	Longitude
2	_____	_____	4	_____	_____
	Latitude	Longitude		Latitude	Longitude

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

Legal Discription: GEO HASKELLS ADD SLY 30 FT LOT 3 + ALL LOTS 4 + 005 BLOCK 052

Verbal: The immediate boundaries of the Woman's Club are Park Avenue to the south, and Church Street to the west. The northern boundary runs between the Rockford Woman's Club and the Mendelssohn Club, and the eastern boundary is the alley.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

This is the property historically associated with the Rockford Woman's Club.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Valerie Olafson and Pam Hein date 8/21/2020
organization _____ telephone 815-988-1940 (Valerie)
street & number 422 S. 1st St. email vjolafson@gmail.com
city or town Rockford state IL zip code 61104

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **GIS Location Map (Google Earth or BING)**
- **Local Location 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).

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Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 pixels, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Rockford Woman's Club

City or Vicinity: Rockford

County: Winnebago **State:** IL

Photographer: Valerie Olafson & Pam Hein

Date Photographed: Summer and Fall 2019

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

- Photo 1 of 12: Park Avenue façade; looking N
- Photo 2 of 12: Church Street Façade; looking NE
- Photo 3 of 12: Church Street façade; looking E
- Photo 4 of 12: North façade; looking S
- Photo 5 of 12: North façade detail (addition); looking SW
- Photo 6 of 12: rear of Theater; looking NW
- Photo 7 of 12: Theater interior; looking E
- Photo 8 of 12: Interior lobby and hall; looking W
- Photo 9 of 12: Gallery; looking E
- Photo 10 of 12: Memorial Room; looking NW
- Photo 11 of 12: Addition lobby; looking S
- Photo 12 of 12: Dining Room, lower level; looking E

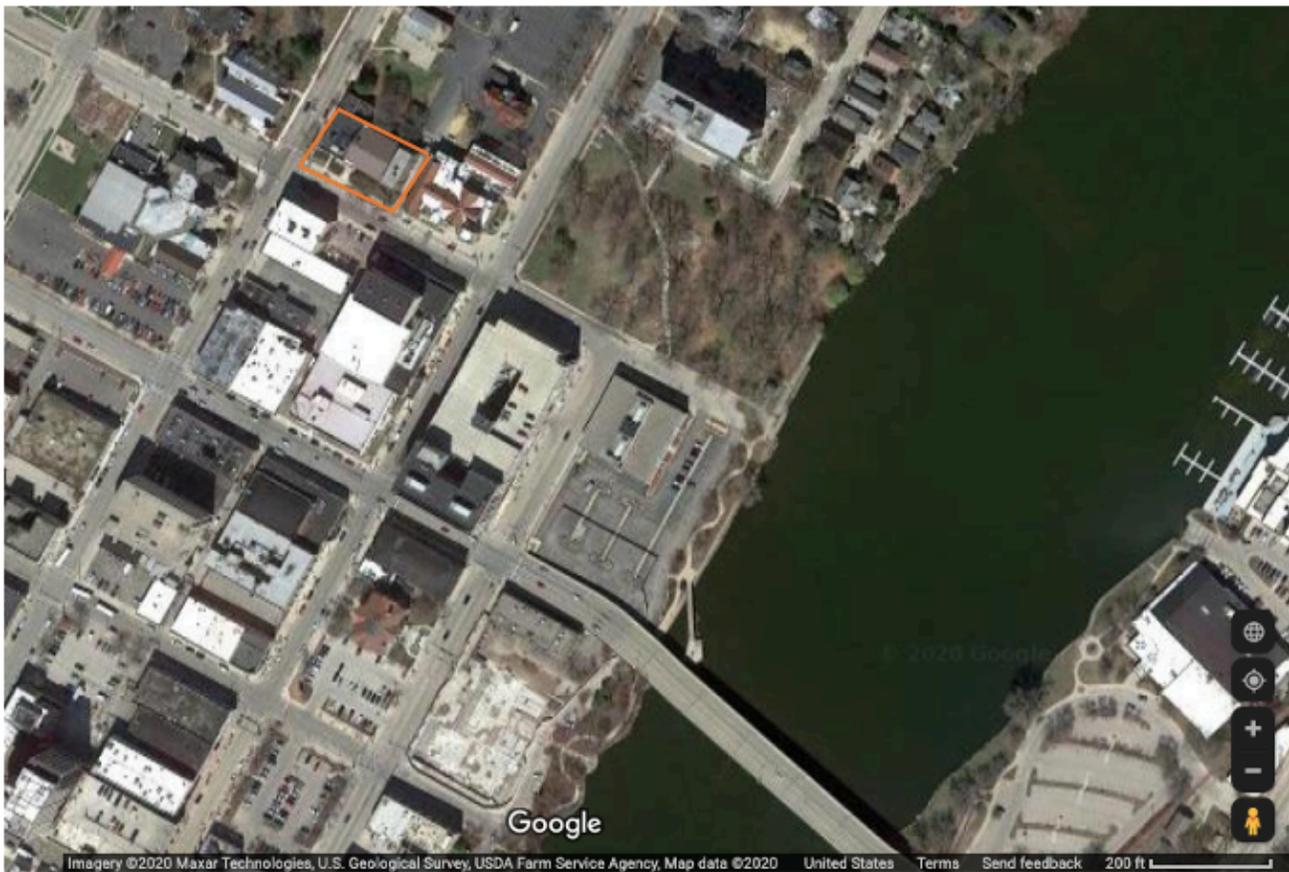
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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. 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.

Local location map:



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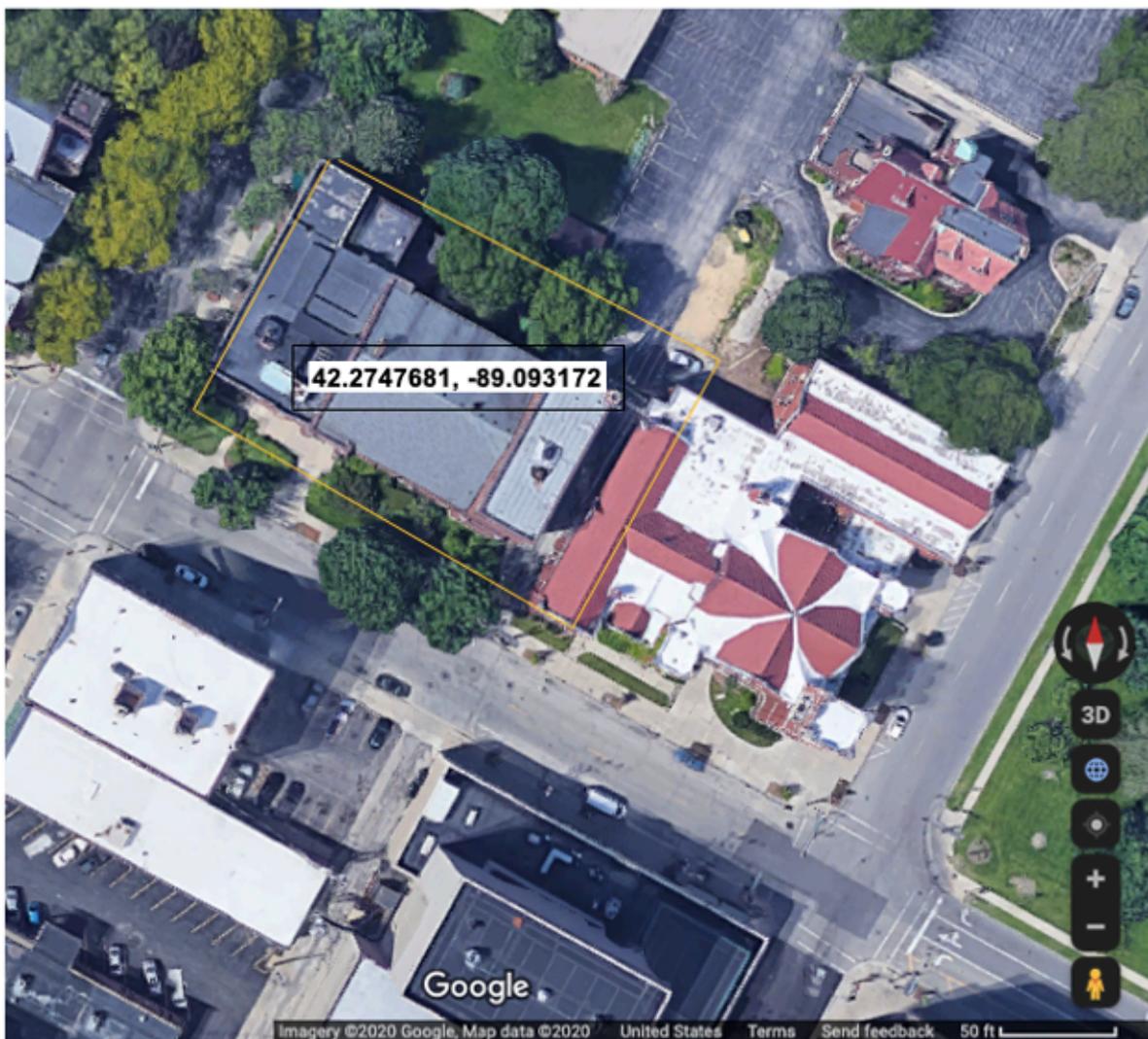
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List of Figures

(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 pa

Figure 1: GIS Map with coordinates



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Figure 2: Building Phases from Aerial View



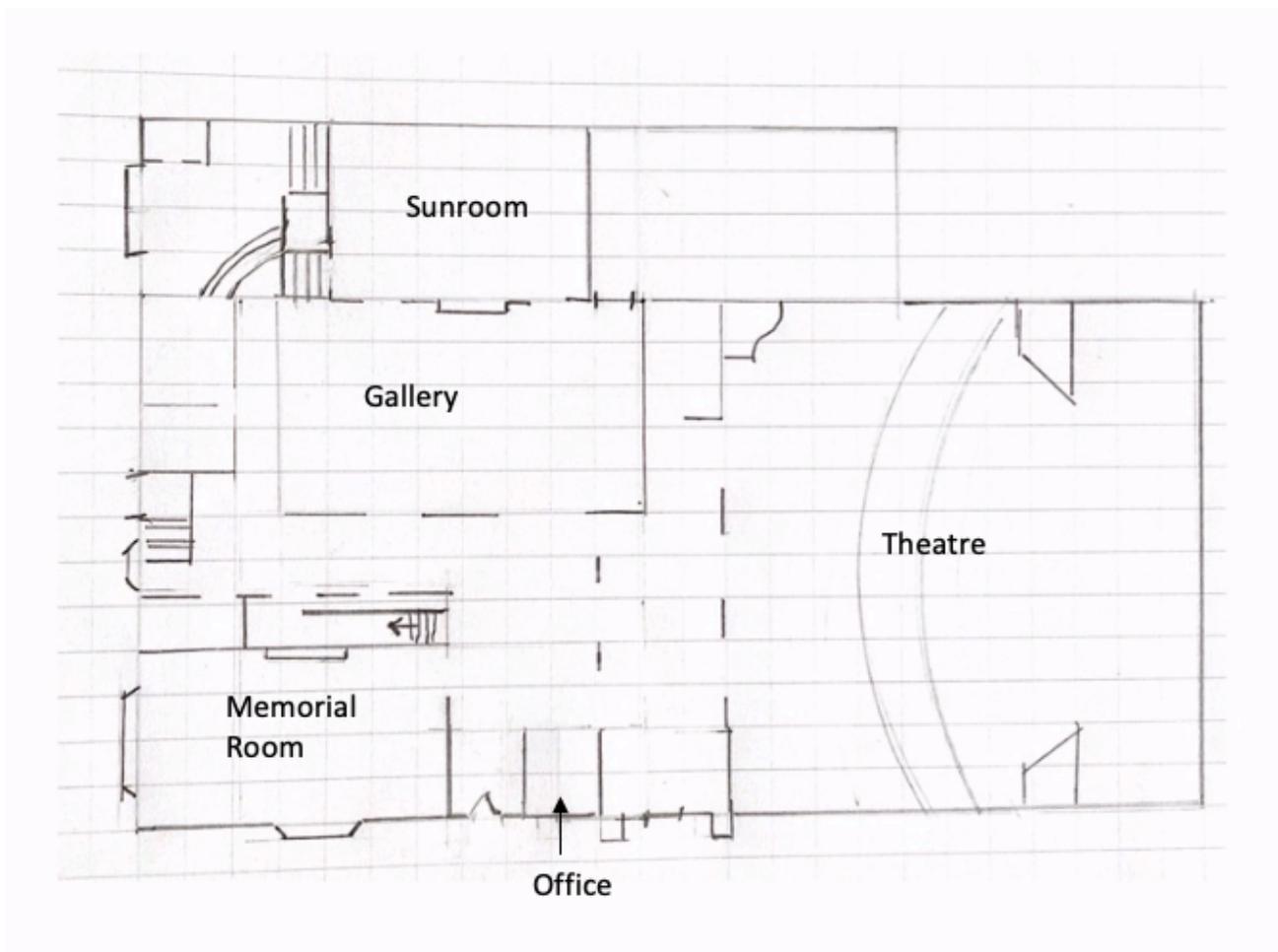
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Figure 3: Current Floor Plan: First Level



RWC 1st Floor (not to scale)



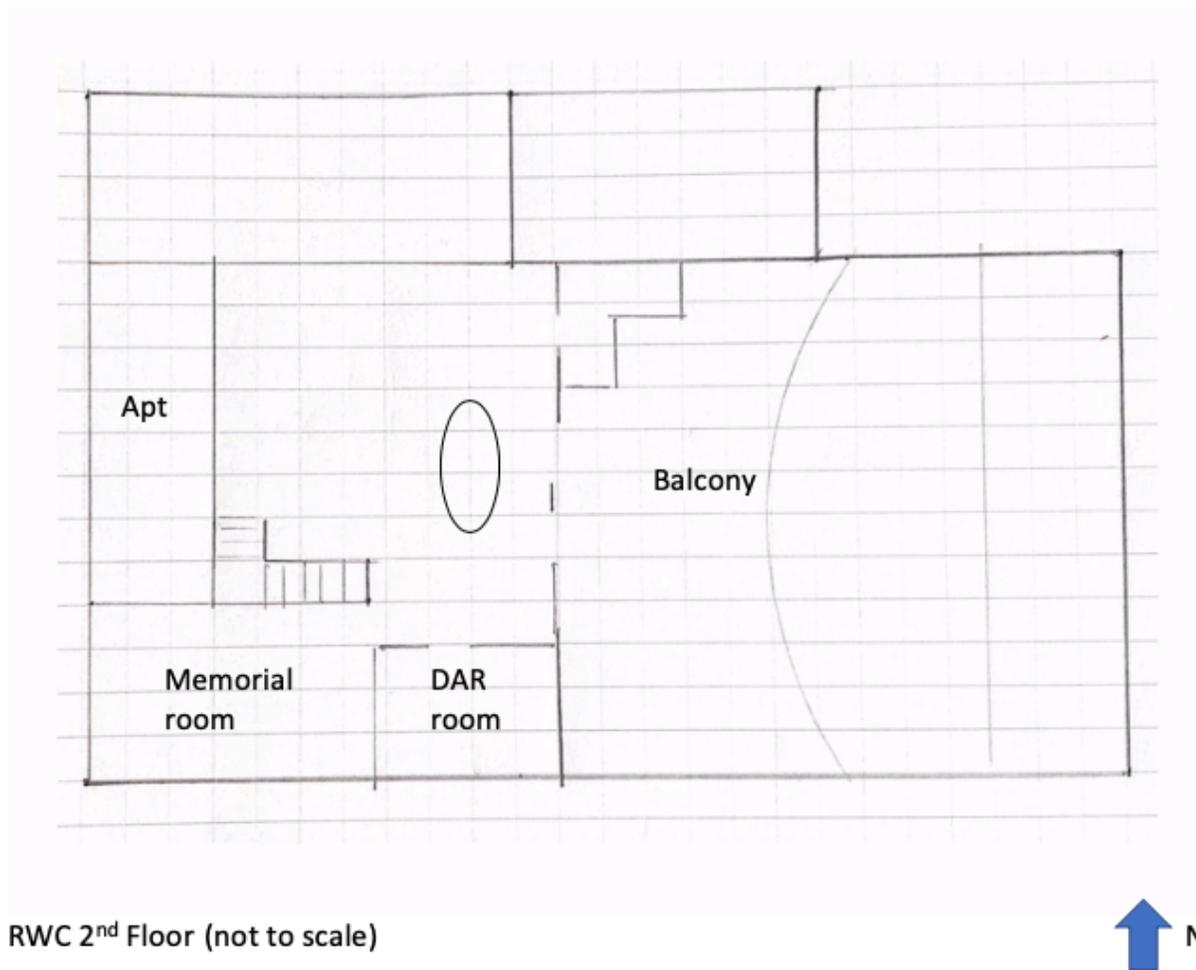
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Figure 4: Current Floor Plan: Second Level



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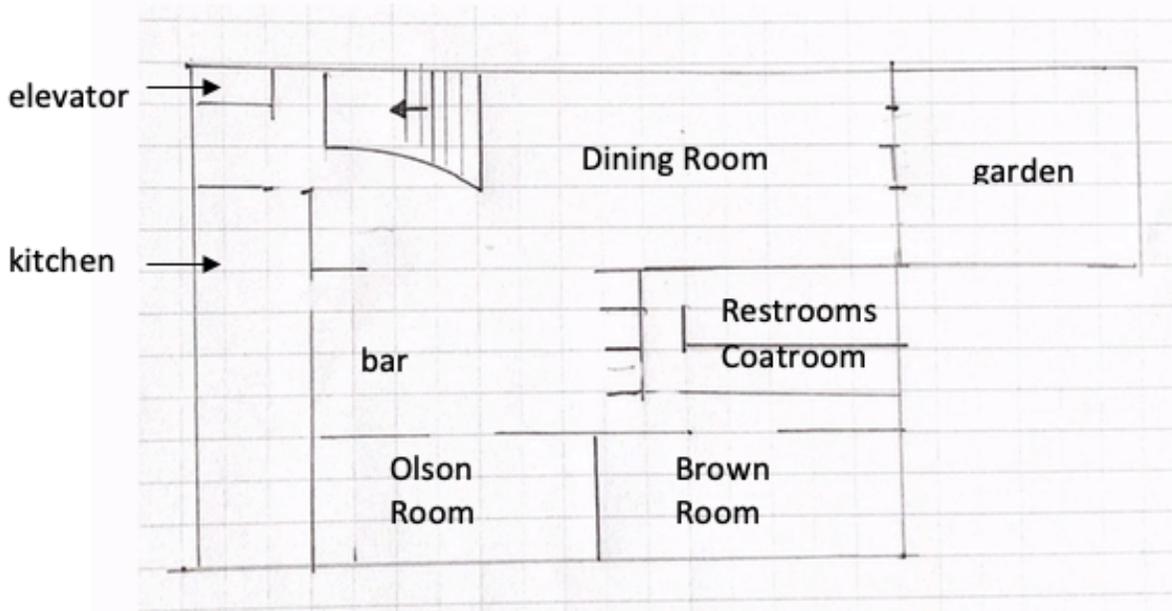
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Figure 5: Current Floor Plan: Lower Level



RWC Lower Level (not to scale)



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Figure 6: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map; update 1951

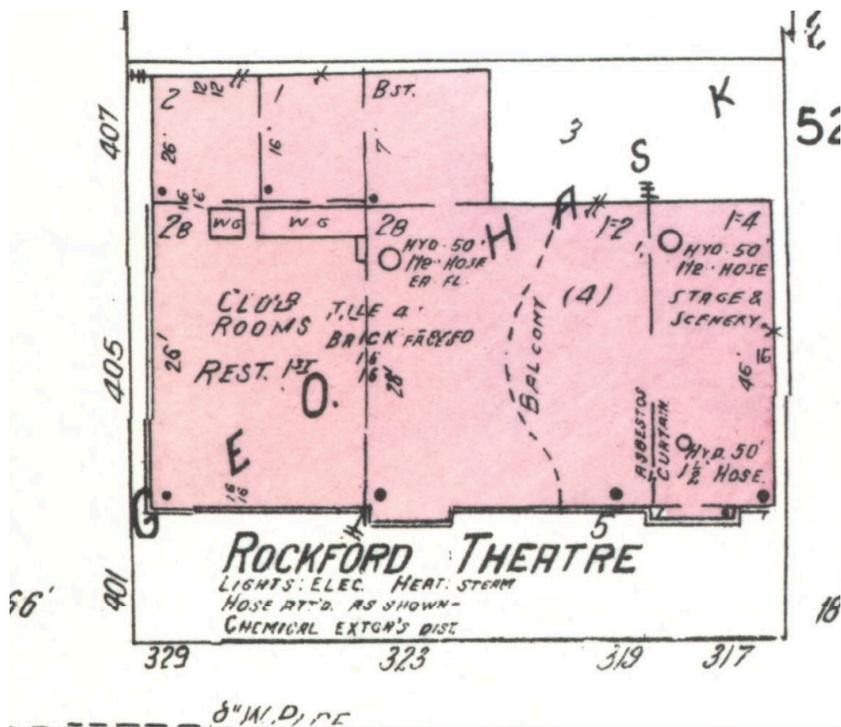
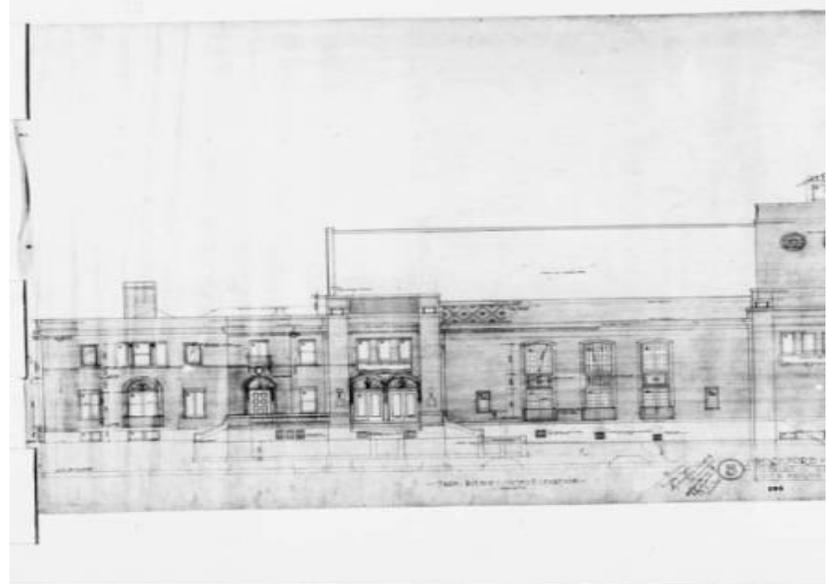


Figure 7: Historic Tallmadge and Watson Architectural Plan; South Elevation



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Figure 8: Historic Tallmadge and Watson Architectural Plan; West Elevation

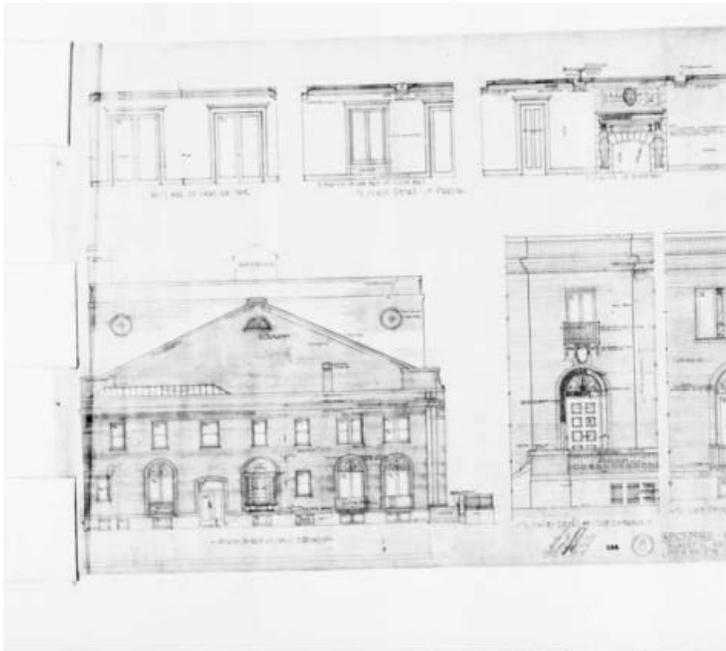
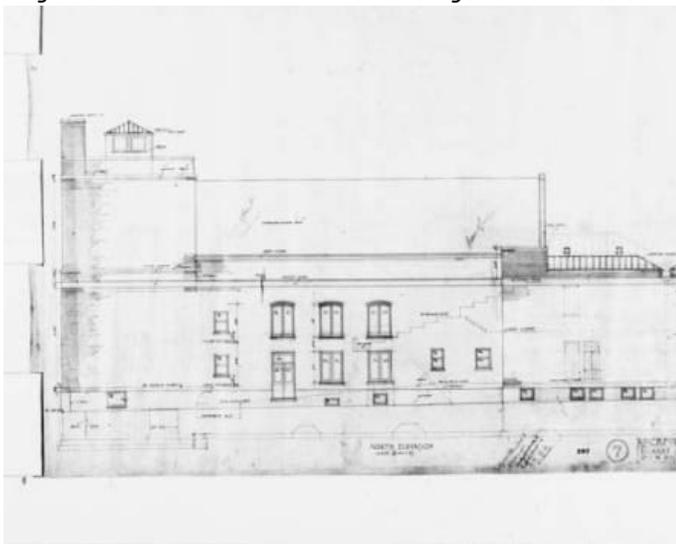


Figure 9: Historic Tallmadge and Watson Architectural Plan; North Elevation



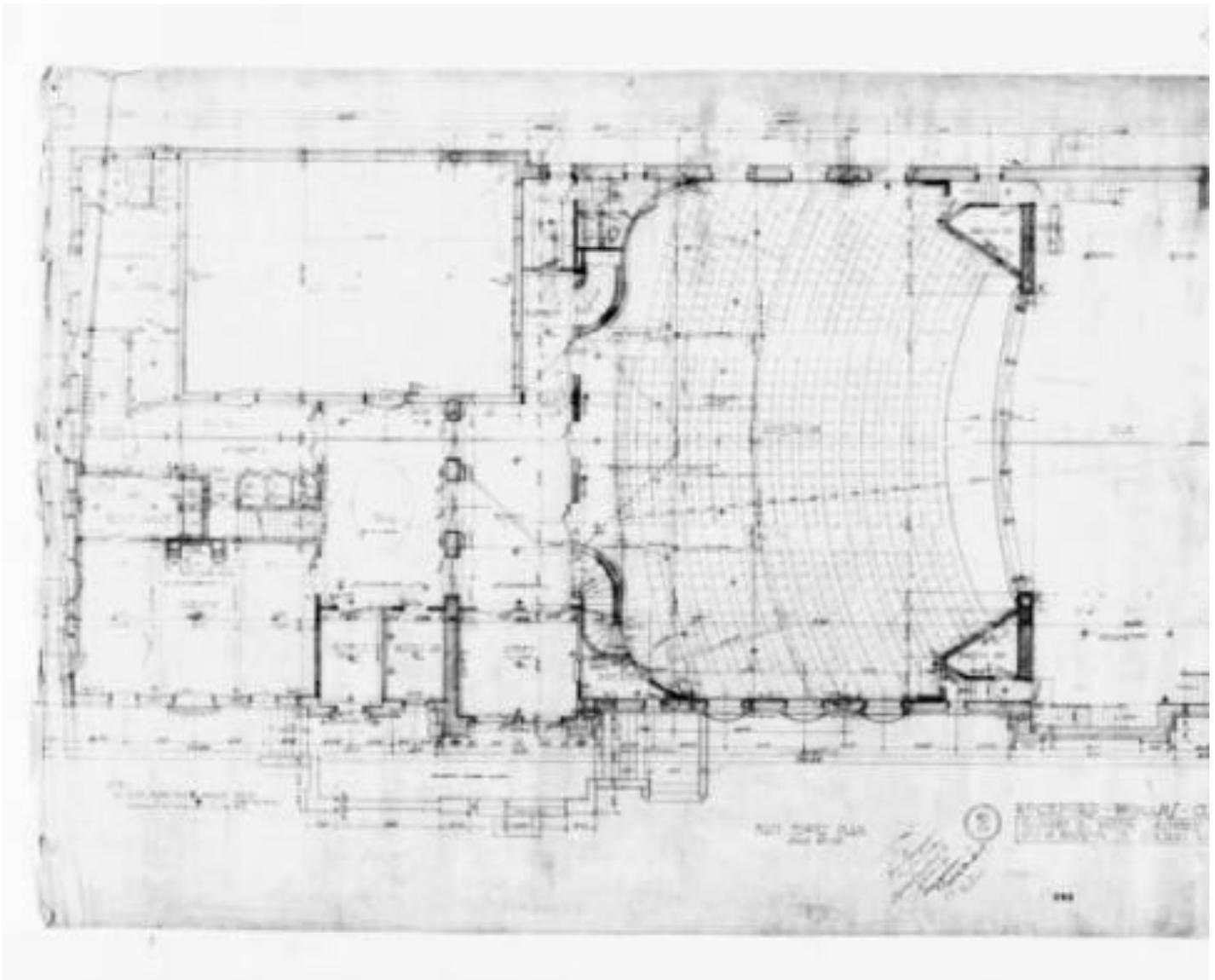
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Figure 10: Historic Tallmadge and Watson Architectural Plan; Clubhouse and Theatre; 1st level



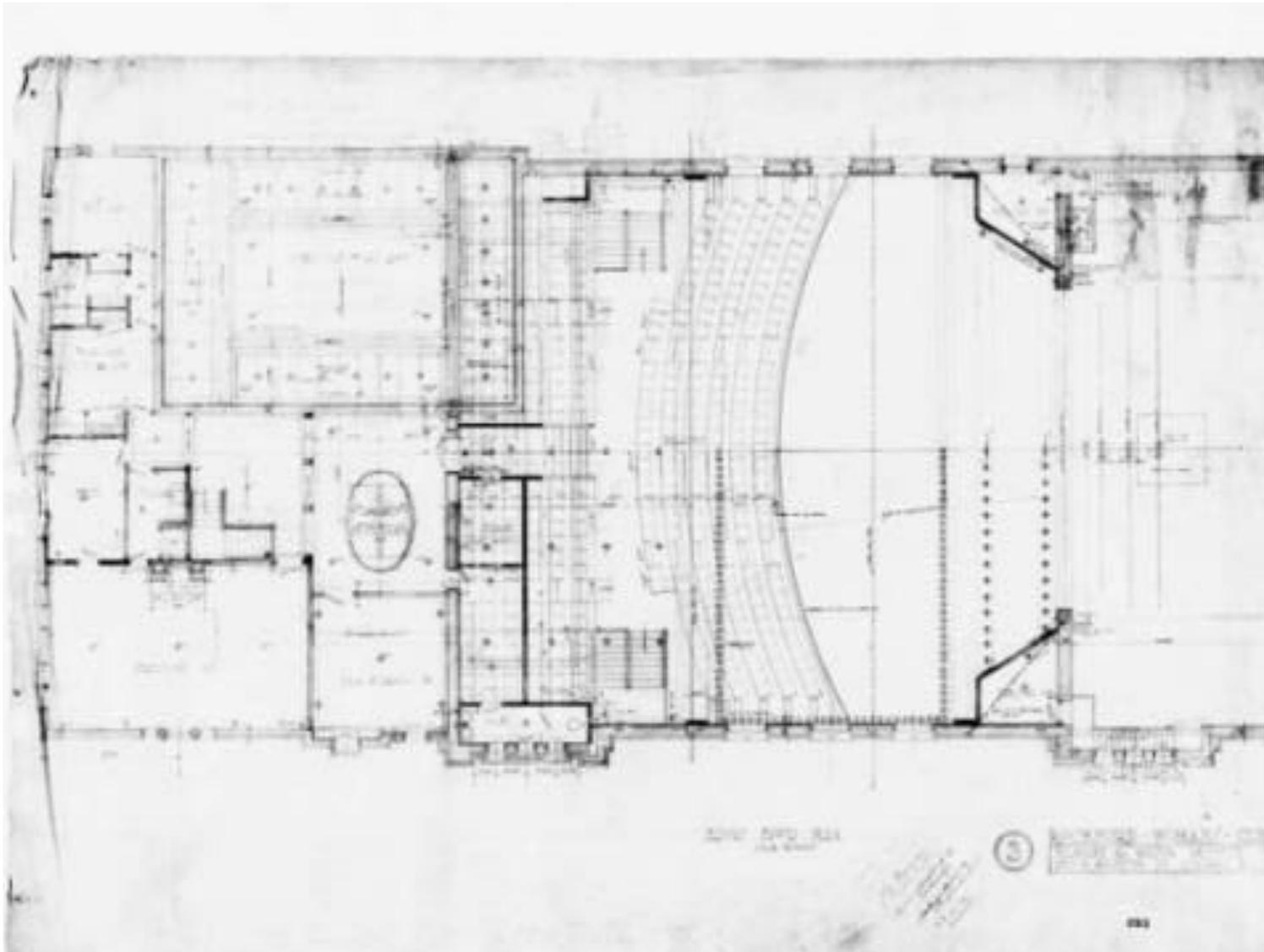
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Figure 11: Historic Tallmadge and Watson Architectural Plan; Clubhouse and Theatre; 2nd level



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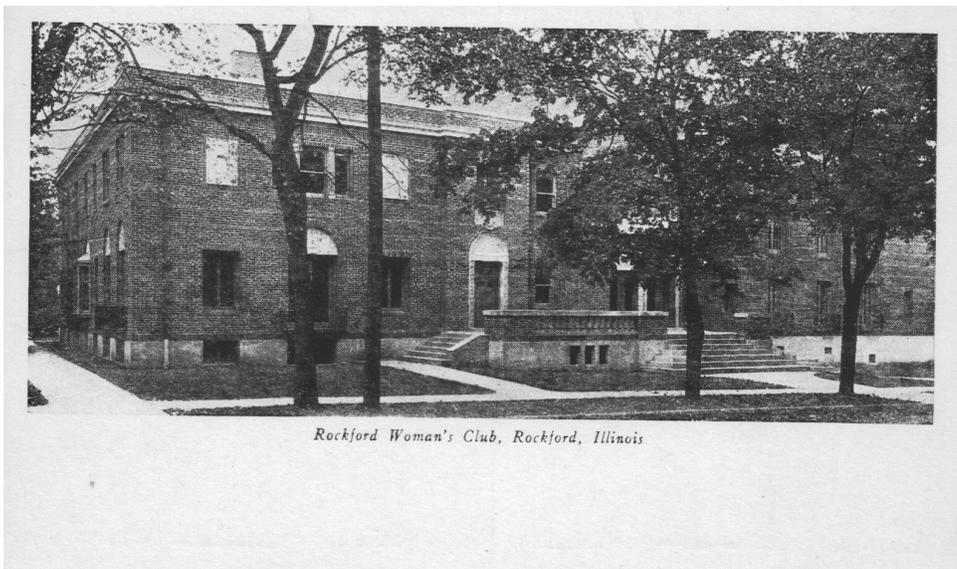
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Figure 12: Nancy Cox McCormack Bas Relief Panels; Photo/2020



Figure 13: Historic Exterior; Photo of South Elevation; c 1927



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Figure 14: Barloga Addition Architectural Sketch North/West Elevations; 1938



Figure 15: Historic exterior Photo; South Elevation; 1951



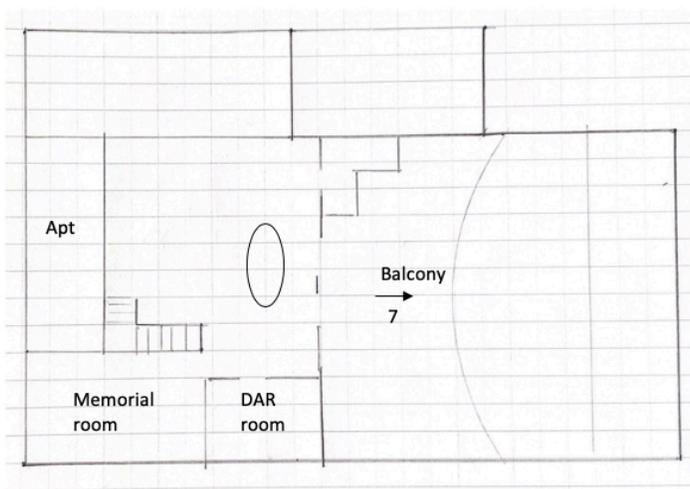
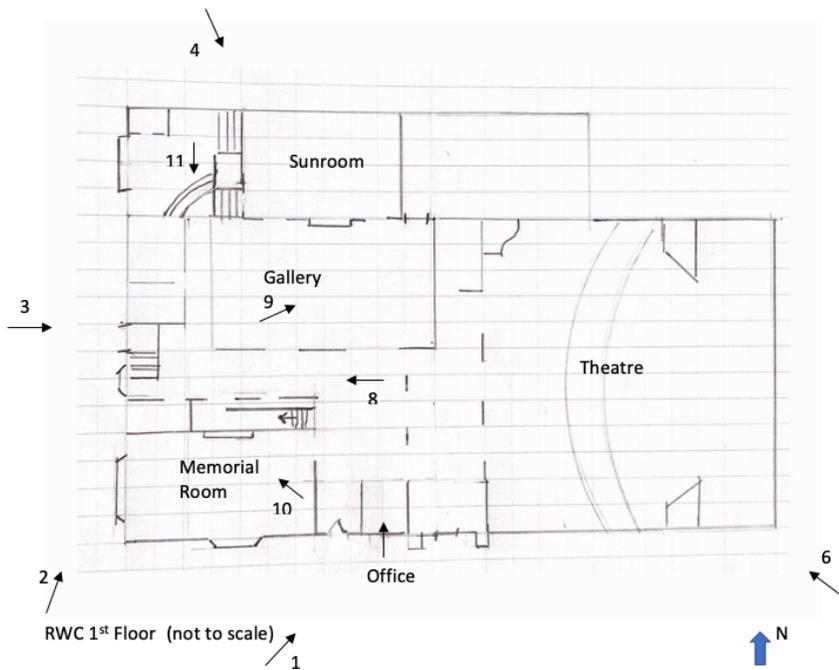
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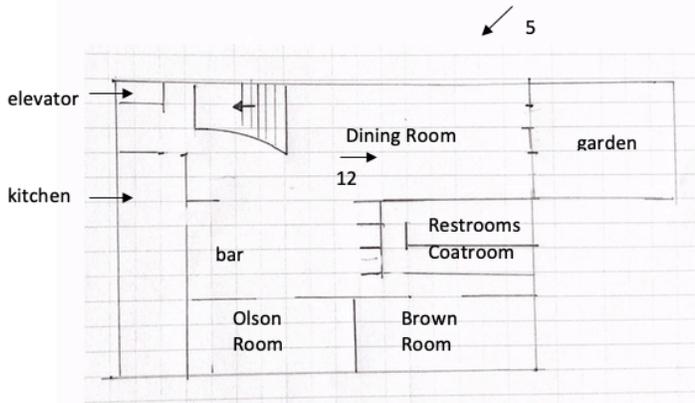


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RWC Lower Level (not to scale)



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Photo 1 of 12: Park Avenue façade; looking N



Photo 2 of 12: Church Street Façade; looking NE

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Photo 3 of 12: Church Street façade; looking E



Photo 4 of 12: North façade; looking S

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Photo 5 of 12: North façade detail (addition); looking SW

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Photo 6 of 12: rear of Theater; looking NW

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Photo 7 of 12: Theater interior; looking E



Photo 8 of 12: Interior lobby and hall; looking W

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Photo 9 of 12: Gallery; looking E

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Photo 10 of 12: Memorial Room; looking NW

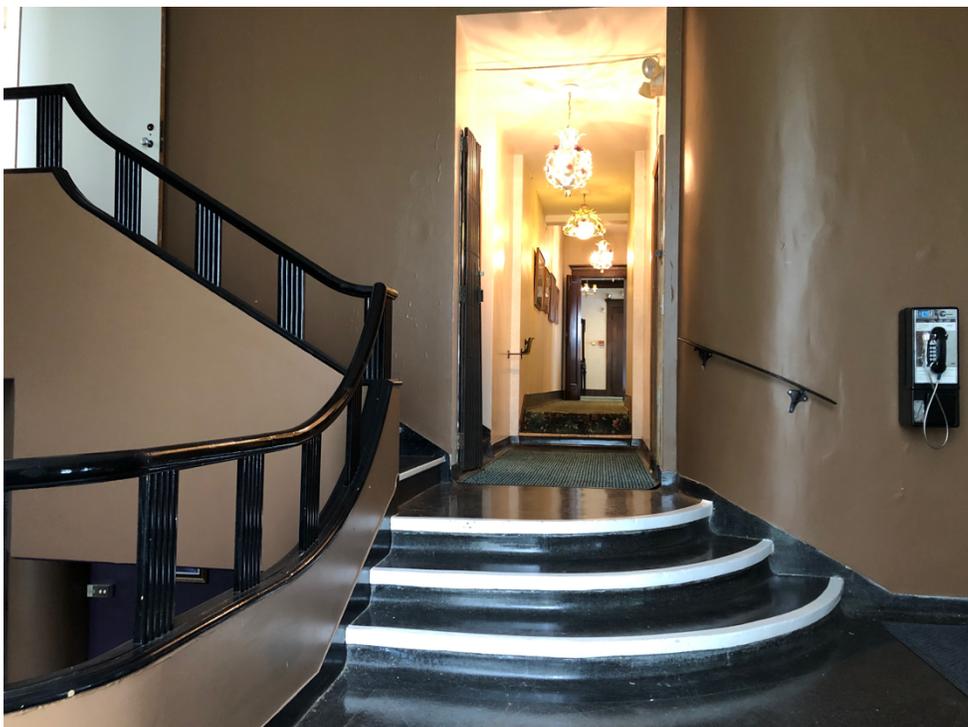


Photo 11 of 12: Addition lobby; looking S

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Photo 12 of 12: Dining Room, lower level; looking E

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