

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Name of related Multiple Property Listing N/A

2. Location

n/a

n/a

State	Missouri	Code	MO	County	Jackson	Code	095	Zip code	64108
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3. State/Federal Agency Certification

Applicable National Register Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D

MAY 25 2017

Date _____

Date _____

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

_____ other (explain:)

Date of Action

5. Classification

Gillis Orphans' Home

Name of Property

Jackson County, Missouri

County and State

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	0	buildings
1	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: institutional housing

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION: college

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS

Georgian Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: stone

walls: brick

plywood

roof: asphalt

other: stone

metal

☒

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION ON CONTINUATION PAGES

Gillis Orphans' Home
Name of Property

Jackson County, Missouri
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Areas of Significance

Social History

Period of Significance

1900-1929

Significant Dates

n/a

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

Van Brunt, Henry and Howe, Frank M.

☒ 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.

☒ STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE ON CONTINUATION PAGES

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

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: **Missouri Valley Special Collections,
Kansas City, MO
State Historical Society of Missouri**

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Approximately 2.0

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 39.086592° -94.566519° 3 _____
Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

2 _____ 4 _____
Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

_____ NAD 1927 or _____ NAD 1983

1 _____
Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (On continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification (On continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Andrea Herries and Debbie Sheals
organization Historic Preservation Consulting date May 22, 2017
street & number 29 South Ninth St. #210 telephone 573-874-3779
city or town Columbia state MO zip code 65201
e-mail debsheals@gmail.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:**
 - A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
 - A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Photographs**
- **Owner Name and Contact Information**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

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.).

Gillis Orphans' Home

Jackson County, Missouri

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Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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.

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, 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: Gillis Orphans' Home

City or Vicinity: Kansas City

County: Jackson State: Missouri

Photographer: Andrea Herries and Debbie Sheals

Date

Photographed: July 2016 and November 2016

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

- 1 of 25: Façade. Camera facing east.
- 2 of 25: Façade from front lawn. Camera facing southeast.
- 3 of 25: Southwest corner of site. Camera facing southwest.
- 4 of 25: Northwest corner of site. Camera facing northwest.
- 5 of 25: Façade from circle drive. Camera facing east.
- 6 of 25: Southwest corner. Camera facing northeast.
- 7 of 25: South side. Camera facing northeast.
- 8 of 25: South side. Camera facing north.
- 9 of 25: South side. Camera facing northwest.
- 10 of 25: Back wall. Camera facing northwest.
- 11 of 25: Back wall. Camera facing south.
- 12 of 25: North side. Camera facing south.
- 13 of 25: North side. Camera facing southwest.
- 14 of 25: Façade at northwest corner. Camera facing southeast.
- 15 of 25: Front porch with main entry. Camera facing east.
- 16 of 25: Entry hall with view into the chapel. Camera facing east.
- 17 of 25: First floor, chapel. Camera facing southeast.
- 18 of 25: Second floor north-south hall with main staircase. Camera facing northeast.
- 19 of 25: Second floor central hall. Camera facing east.
- 20 of 25: Second floor, rear block. Camera facing southwest.
- 21 of 25: Back staircase to second floor. Camera facing north.
- 22 of 25: Back hall of third floor. Camera facing south.
- 23 of 25: Third floor, rear block. Camera facing northeast.
- 24 of 25: Third floor, rear block. Camera facing south.
- 25 of 25: Third floor central hall. Camera facing east.

Gillis Orphans' Home

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Figure Log:

Include figures on continuation pages at the end of the nomination.

1. Aerial photo map of 2119 Tracy Avenue, Kansas City, M. Screenshot.
Source: Google Earth. Accessed May 22, 2017.
2. Aerial photo map of 2119 Tracy Avenue with surrounding area. Placemark.
Source: Google Earth. Accessed May 22, 2017.
3. Site map.
Source: Survey for 2119 Tracy Ave and surrounding area. Byam Engineering, Independence, MO, March 26, 2016. Adapted by Deb Sheals May 2017.
4. ca. 1907, Gillis Orphans' Home, 2119 Tracy Ave, Kansas City, MO
Source: *Women's Christian Association of Kansas City, Missouri, Annual Reports, 1907-1908*, (Women's Christian Association of Kansas City. Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, MO), inside cover.
5. 1899 Elevation Drawings for Children's Home (Gillis Orphans' Home), Van Brunt and Howe Architectural Firm. Source: *Children's Home for Women's Christian Association of Kansas City*; App Cards 023.009; MVC-SAH Architectural Records Collection (K0006); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Kansas City, MO.
6. 1899 Floor Plans for Children's Home (Gillis Orphans' Home), First Floor, Van Brunt and Howe Architectural Firm. Source: *Children's Home for Women's Christian Association of Kansas City*; App Cards 023.009; MVC-SAH Architectural Records Collection (K0006); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Kansas City, MO.
7. 1899 Floor Plans for Children's Home (Gillis Orphans' Home), Second Floor, Van Brunt and Howe Architectural Firm. Source: *Children's Home for Women's Christian Association of Kansas City*; App Cards 023.009; MVC-SAH Architectural Records Collection (K0006); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Kansas City, MO.
8. 1899 Floor Plans for Children's Home (Gillis Orphans' Home), Third Floor, Van Brunt and Howe Architectural Firm. Source: *Children's Home for Women's Christian Association of Kansas City*; App Cards 023.009; MVC-SAH Architectural Records Collection (K0006); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Kansas City, MO.
9. 1899 Floor Plans for Children's Home (Gillis Orphans' Home), Basement, Van Brunt and Howe Architectural Firm. Source: *Children's Home for Women's Christian Association of Kansas City*; App Cards 023.009; MVC-SAH Architectural Records Collection (K0006); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Kansas City, MO.
10. 2016 Floor Plans for Goins Hall, Western Baptist Bible College (Gillis Orphans' Home), First Floor. Source: STRATA Architecture + Preservation, Kansas City, MO, 2016.
11. 2016 Floor Plans for Goins Hall, Western Baptist Bible College (Gillis Orphans' Home), Second Floor. Source: STRATA Architecture + Preservation, Kansas City, MO, 2016.
12. 2016 Floor Plans for Goins Hall, Western Baptist Bible College (Gillis Orphans' Home), Third Floor. Source: STRATA Architecture + Preservation, Kansas City, MO, 2016.

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13. 2016 Floor Plans for Goins Hall, Western Baptist Bible College (Gillis Orphans' Home), Basement. Source: STRATA Architecture + Preservation, Kansas City, MO, 2016.
14. 1909 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing 2119 and 2125 Tracy Avenue, Kansas City, MO. Source: Sanborn Insurance Maps of Kansas City, MO 1909. (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1909), 349, Special Collections, Ellis Library, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO.
15. Early Postcard of Gillis Orphans' Home and Margaret K. Armour Memorial Home. Unknown Date. Source: Mrs. Sam Ray Postcard Collection (SC58), Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, MO.
16. ca. 1922, Gillis Orphans' Home, 2119 Tracy Ave, Kansas City, MO
Source: *Women's Christian Association of Kansas City, Missouri, Annual Reports, 1922*, (Women's Christian Association of Kansas City. Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, MO), inside cover.

National Register of Historic Places
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Gillis Orphans' Home

Name of Property

Jackson County, Missouri

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Summary

The Gillis Orphans' Home is located at 2119 Tracy Avenue in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri. Built in 1900 for institutional housing, it is a large Georgian Revival style T-shaped, three-story building that has seen minimal alterations. It has a full basement made with coursed ashlar, red brick walls, and an intersecting hipped roof. The building sits atop a hill on approximately 2.0 acres, and is surrounded by open lawns dotted with mature trees to the front (west) and sides of the building, and dense foliage at the back (east). The building and the site are both contributing resources. The front wall of the Gillis Orphans' Home faces west to Tracy Avenue; it features a large projecting front bay that is capped with a closed pediment. The pediment is outlined with a wide, metal bracketed cornice which also runs along all sides of the building. Original window openings and doorways are intact and in good condition, and most have retained original wood frames and sashes. They are symmetrically arranged on all sides of the building. The basement level is fully exposed along the sides and back of the building, and has original large masonry window openings that allowed light to fill the rooms of this lower level, and doorways that were used for access to the side yards. The only exterior alterations of note are the enclosure of original two-story porches located behind the front block of the building and the absence of original decorative iron work at the roof of the front porch and a cupola on the main roof. The interior of the building features an original axial plan developed when the building was used as an orphanage, along with the majority of its original materials including interior window sashes, doors, wood flooring, trim, staircases, and some bathroom fixtures. The building is in fair to poor condition, but retains integrity and is immediately recognizable to its time in history.

Elaboration

Site:

The Gillis Orphans' Home sits at the uppermost point of a large hill, facing west to Tracy Avenue (Photos 2, 3, 5, Figures 1, 3).¹ The site is narrow and long, and includes approximately 2.0 acres. The building, fronted by a large open lawn and circle driveway, and the lawns and forested area directly behind the building are at the center of a larger site that was shared with the Armor Home for the Aged from 1905 until 2016 (Figure 1 and 3, Photos 1, 5, 13). The building and the site are both contributing resources. The property is located near the intersection of Tracy Avenue and East 22nd Street, which is two blocks east of Highway 71, near downtown Kansas City (Figure 2). The properties to the north are largely wooded, and one contains a mid to late twentieth century Quonset hut located close to Tracy Avenue. To the south is 22nd Street, which is edged by a large retaining wall; neither the Quonset hut nor the retaining wall are part of the nominated parcel. The blocks immediately surrounding the site to the south and east are filled with open lots and a very limited number of older residences

¹ The second building seen along the south side of the site in figure 1 was demolished in November of 2016.

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(Photos 3-4, Figure 1). To the north and west are commercial and industrial buildings of downtown Kansas City. The building is set well back from Tracy Avenue, with a large open front lawn and a circle drive which connects to Tracy Avenue (Photo 5). A small square, concrete flag pole platform and flag pole, and a stone marker commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Western Bible Baptist College are located in the front lawn, approximately 200 feet from the building (Photo 2). At the east end of the driveway, near the front wall of the building, is a narrow gravel parking area. (Photo 1, Figure 1).

Exterior, General Form:

The large, three-story, T-shaped building maintains rigid symmetry through axial arrangement of the front (west facing) and rear blocks, decorative brick work that is consistent on all sides of the building, alignment of window openings, and a centered pavilion and entranceway. Intersecting hipped roofs clad with asphalt shingles cover the two blocks of the building. The front of the building has a single-story porch that shades the central front doorway, and both the north and south sides of the building have two-story, enclosed side porches (Photos 1, 8, 9, 12, 13).

At the front of the building, the stone foundation is visible approximately twenty inches above grade, and at the sides and back of the building the full height of the basement is exposed. The sharp change in grade is maintained by a tall retaining wall that extends approximately eighteen feet from the north and south corners of the façade (Photo 9, Figures 5, 9, 10, 13). The foundation is in fair condition with the face of the limestone showing some deterioration.

All four sides of the building are red brick with rustication along the first floor, smooth brick walls at the second and third stories, and brick quoins at all outside corners. Rustication at the first floor is composed of seven brick bands, each five bricks high and divided by a single recessed course. The seven bands are topped with a protruding belt course which visually divides the first and second floor (Photo 6). A protruding four brick course set just below the wide, metal bracketed cornice at the roof line is also present along all sides of the building. The brick walls are intact and in fair to good condition.

Masonry window openings on all sides of the building are symmetrically aligned, and each opening has a smooth stone lug sill with masonry work at the top that is unique to each floor (Photo 6, 8, 10, 12). At the basement level, all the openings have a segmental arch one and one-half bricks tall. The windows of the first floor have thick stone lintels, and the second floor openings have brick segmental arched tops three half bricks high (Photo 6, 8, 10, 12). The third floor has squared tops which abut the pressed metal cornice at the roof line. The lintels and arches at each floor are set flush with the wall. The window opening at the first through third floors have original wood sashes with thin muntins; the taller windows have double hung units with 4/1 wood sashes and shorter windows have single four-light sashes. All of the frames and sashes are in poor condition.

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The hipped roof is covered with asphalt shingles that are in fair to poor condition. Gutters are not evident along the main roof line. The decorative pressed metal cornice that runs along all sides of the building may have originally disguised an integrated gutter system, as shown in the original plans (Photos 1, 6, 8- 14 and Figure 5). The cornice is in poor condition. Five of six original chimneys extend above the roof line: two at the gable roof near the front pediment, a third one at the south slope of the front block, one at the inside corner of the north wall and one on the south side, close to the southeast corner of the building. A sixth chimney was located at the north slope of the front block. All five of the chimneys have been shortened, the original corbelled tops have been removed and they are in poor condition. (Photos 1, 8, 12, 14, Figures 4 and 5).

Front Wall:

The front wall of the building has a symmetrical façade that is nine bays wide with a centered pavilion capped with a closed pediment. The pavilion has five bays flanked by two bays on both the north and south side (Photo 1). The pavilion projects forward approximately eight feet, with a single window opening at each floor of the shallow return wall (Photo 6). As previously described, rustication of the brick is at the first floor and a shallow protruding brick band is at the top of the wall. This wall also has an additional architectural embellishment of a thin string course set at the sill level of the third floor windows. All of the windows in this wall are tall with 4/1 sashes.

The pavilion has a single-story porch that is three bays wide with a flat roof that is supported by square brick columns (Photo 15). Wide concrete stairs span the length of the porch and low brick walls with smooth stone tops are on the north and south sides. The doorway of the front entrance is located in the center bay of the pavilion, and has a newer flat panel door surrounded by original side lights and transoms. Directly above the entrance, at the second story, are paired window openings that are taller than others in the wall, and the third floor has a multi-light door with side lights (Photo 1). The doors and 4/1 wood sashes in the paired windows are original. The third floor door accesses a narrow balcony supported by scrolled iron brackets. Historic plans and photos show that the perimeter of the porch roof and the balcony originally had iron balustrades supported by brick posts (Photos 1, 6 14, 15 and Figures 4, 5). Two sections of the original iron work remain on the balcony; they are in poor condition.

The perimeter of the closed pediment is lined with the wide, metal bracketed cornice and raised brick work that runs in a stepped pattern. A louvered bull's eye window opening is in the center which was originally filled with glazing (Photos 1, 6, 14 and Figures 4-5).

Side Walls:

The long north and south sides of the building are alike. The walls are L-shaped, with fully exposed stone foundation walls, and similar window fenestrations at the first, second and

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third stories. Each side also has an enclosed two-story porch at the inside corner of the L, and long concrete patios that abut the foundation walls (Photos 8, 9, 12, 13).

The only variation of note on the side walls is the slight variance in placement of the basement doorways and window openings (Photos 7-13). A single doorway is under the enclosed porches on each side. The window openings on the south side of the building are tall and on the north side they varying in height. Three original openings on the north side of the foundation have been slightly altered. A wide opening near the inside corner of the wall is supported at the head with an older, but not original, metal beam. This opening originally had two single window openings. At the east end of the north wall, the bottom half of two tall masonry doorways have older, but not original coursed ashlar infill. All of the basement doorways and window openings have been enclosed with brick, concrete masonry units or frame infill.

Window openings on the side walls are consistent in width, but vary in length. The first floor window openings are tall and retain original 4/1 wood sashes, and the majority of the windows at the second and third floors have single sashes with four panes each (Photos 7-9, 12-13).

The west end of each side wall has early or original metal fire escapes that are in poor condition (Photos 7, 9, 13 Figure 4, 16). Next to the fire escapes are the two-story porches, which have been enclosed with modern materials. The once open air porches (loggias) are original, and have flat roofs and steel beams that support the floors. Original plans show that the porches had a simple half wall between the brick columns at the corners.

Back Wall:

The back (east) wall is consistent with all the other walls in material, decorative brick work and symmetrical alignment of window openings (Photos 10, 11). The first, second and third floors of this narrow wall each have four tall window openings. Most of the openings are covered over and some original 4/1 wood sashes are visible inside the building.

The northeast corner of the wall has two small recessed porches. Each porch has a square corner column, and tall masonry openings. The first floor porch is screened with a low modern wood railing, and the basement level has been boarded over. The openings for the basement porch have been altered since original construction. The headers are made of three separate stones with a steel beam added directly below (Photo 11, Figure 5).

Interior, General Plan and Finishes:

The interior plan of the building is intact. A comparison of current and original floorplan drawings shows that alterations are minimal. Unless otherwise noted, the interior of this T-shaped building is referenced as the front block, which is the west facing section of the building, and the rear block, which sits perpendicular to the front block.

Each floor was built with a combination of large and small rooms. Public and social activities occurred on the first floor and private uses on the upper floors. Each floor follows a

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similar axial plan with a double-loaded east-west hallway in the rear block and a north-south hallway at the front block (Photos 17, 19, 20, 25, Figures 6-13). Hallways at the back of the building (east) also have north-south orientation (Photos 21-22).

All four original staircases are intact and have similar components; square newel posts with recessed rectangular panels; thin, turned spindles; and wide banisters (Photos 18, 21, 22 and 16). Three are accessible from the front block of the building, and the fourth is at the rear block, near the east end of the building. The central staircase that reaches to the second floor hallway is the widest of the four and was originally open (Photo 18 Figures 6-7, 10-11). It was enclosed multiple decades ago, but is intact. The two staircases at the north and south ends of the front block access the first through third floors and the basement; they are also intact. Plans show that the side staircases (north and south) were originally enclosed and have not changed (Figures 6-13).

The majority of original finishes throughout the building have been retained and include wood floors, plaster walls and ceilings, wood doors with original hardware, trim, baseboards, and window sashes that fill interior windows along the corridors. Painted trim is flat with plain block corners at door and window frames. Original interior wood doors have five horizontal raised panels, or three horizontal panels on the bottom and a square light at the top. The interior doorways have transoms and windows on either side with 1/1 double hung wood sashes. Modern finishes generally include carpet, composition tile that was installed over the wood floors, wood paneling on a limited number of walls, and paint over the original dark stained and varnished wood trim. Generally, original and newer finishes throughout the building are in fair to poor condition. The plaster walls and ceilings are crumbling in many areas. The wood floors are intact but most are covered with carpet and composition tile that is loose or missing.

First Floor:

The first floor of the front block has an entry hall that runs east-west with a wide intersecting north-south hallway (Photo 16, Figures 6, 10). The hallways provide access to an office, two large classrooms, multi-stall bathrooms and three of four original wood staircases. The rooms and the north-south hallway in the front block have retained their original size. Alterations include conversion of the original boardroom in the northwest corner of the block to modern multi-stall restrooms, and the addition of the north wall of the entry hall that enclosed a large classroom. Original plans show a large open parlor in this area (Figure 6). Modern finishes in this space include carpet and tile, gypsum board walls, wood paneling and some newer door and window trim.

The east-west hall of the first floor leads through double doors into the chapel, which is a large open room with a central walkway lined by two rows of iron columns (Photo 17). This room originally served as the children's dining room and dimensions are unaltered since construction (Figures 6, 10). Modern finishes include carpet and composition tile on the floor and an acoustical drop ceiling. The columns, wall finishes and trim are original. Doorways at the east end of the chapel lead into additional rooms, hallways and the fourth staircase on the east

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side of the rear block (Photo 21). Most of those rooms are smaller and have original finishes. The large open room in the southeast corner of the rear block has been used as a classroom by the college; it was the location of the original kitchen, pantry and washroom.

Second Floor and Third Floor:

At the second and third floors, multiple medium to small rooms line the outside walls of the front block (west) and back wall (east) of the rear block, and large rooms are located along the double loaded east-west corridor (Photos 19, 20, 23-25, Figures 7, 8). Multi-stall bathrooms are also located in the middle of the second floor, one on each side of the east-west corridor. On the third floor, the only changes of note include installation of temporary partition walls that divided the original large rooms (Photo 23 and Figures 8 and 12). Most of the finishes for both the second and third floor are original. Several of the front rooms of the second floor have paneling and drop ceilings that are in very poor condition. All other walls, ceilings and floors of the upper floors are in poor condition and the bathrooms are non-functioning.

Basement:

Similar to the upper floors of the building, the plan of the basement has remained little-changed since construction (Figures 9, 13). This includes the sunken mechanical room at the intersection of the two blocks, which has retained the original boiler system installed in 1900 (non-functioning). Most of the rooms are currently used for storage, including the two large open rooms in the front block that were originally designated as playrooms and the smaller utilitarian rooms that line the double loaded corridor of the rear block.

Integrity

Overall, this large Georgian Revival style building is remarkably intact. Exterior alterations have been minimal and include removal of some decorative metal work and brick posts at the front porch roof, enclosure of the side porches, shortening of the chimneys and removal of the original cupola. The interior is also highly intact, and changes have been limited primarily to the entry hall, chapel and southeast classroom of the first floor, and temporary partition walls that divide the large rooms of the third floor. The interior and exterior of the building, along with the surrounding site, appear much as they did when they served as home to the children of the Gillis Orphans' Home during the first part of the twentieth century. The building and site are both contributing resources and have maintained integrity of location and setting. Retention of its strong symmetry, pronounced central pavilion, dark red brick walls, and hipped roofs make it clearly recognizable to its period of significance, which runs from 1900 to 1929. The integrity of design, workmanship and materials evokes a sense of its time and place and it clearly reflects its use as an institutional home constructed over 110 years ago.

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Jackson County, Missouri
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n/a
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Summary:

The Gillis Orphans' Home, located at 2119 Tracy Avenue in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of SOCIAL HISTORY. It is significant for its association with the Women's Christian Association (WCA), and as the oldest surviving children's home built by the benevolent organization. Established in 1870, the WCA is Kansas City's first recorded charitable women's organization established specifically to provide relief to the needy and distressed, especially children. The WCA became a well-recognized charity that was supported by some of the city's most prominent citizens. In 1900, the organization built the Gillis Orphans' Home on Tracy, which served an average of 200 children a year. The Georgian Revival style building was designed by the architectural firm of Van Brunt and Howe, Kansas City's first nationally recognized architectural firm.² In 1927 the orphanage and a neighboring building, the Margaret Klock Armour Memorial Home for the Aged (non-extant), which was also owned and managed by the WCA, were sold to the Western Baptist Bible College. The children remained at the orphanage until the summer of 1929 while new facilities were under construction at 81st Street and Wornall Road in Kansas City, Missouri. Contributing resources include one building, the Gillis Orphans' Home, and the site, which consists of 2.0 acres of a 3.5 acre site donated to the WCA specifically for construction of the orphanage and home for the aged (Figures 1, 3). The period of significance begins in 1900 with the construction of the orphanage and ends in 1929 when the children were relocated to a new facility. The Gillis Orphans Home provides an intact, significant link with the critical role that charitable organizations played in the care of orphaned children in Kansas City in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Elaboration

Early Care of the Poor and Dependent Children:

Almshouses were common means to manage the poor and dependent of a community throughout the United States from the middle of the seventeenth century into the nineteenth century.³ They were an early, but failed, effort to minimize what was often seen as a financial strain on local communities.⁴ Conditions within the almshouses were often deplorable. Inadequate facilities, lack of proper food and clean water, and unhygienic conditions made violence, malnutrition, starvation and the rampant spread of disease common. Inmates were not segregated, and children, adults, the physically and mentally handicapped and criminals were forced to live together. Children were commonly found in almshouses, due to circumstances often created by societal conditions such as increases in immigration, industrialization, epidemics such as yellow fever, and war.⁵

² Piland, "Henry Van Brunt of the Architectural firm of Van Brunt and Howe: the Kansas City Years," iii.

³ Dorothy Zietz, *Child Welfare: Services and Perspectives*, 2nd Ed., (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1969), 49-50. Zietz, *Child Welfare: Services and Perspectives*, 50.

⁴ Zietz, *Child Welfare: Services and Perspectives*, 50.

⁵ Zietz, *Child Welfare: Services and Perspectives*, 50-52;

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By the middle of the nineteenth century, citizens had become far more concerned with the plight of children in these environments, and institutions dedicated primarily to the care of dependent children began to increase.⁶ In most states, religious and private groups, rather than state or local governments, served as the leaders in transforming the institutional care of children. According to Dorothy Zietz, in *Child Welfare: Services and Perspectives*, by 1850, 116 private institutions for children existed throughout the country.⁷ Catholic religious orders were some of the first to provide services for children, but other religious orders also developed assistance programs.⁸

In Kansas City, Missouri the first religious and charitable associations for the care of the poor emerged following the end of the Civil War in 1865, which had caused a significant rise in the number of widows and children left to survive on their own. These benevolent organizations became primary sources of relief for the poor in Kansas City.⁹

Women's Christian Association of Kansas City:

One of the first religious based charitable organizations in Kansas City, Missouri was the Women's Christian Association (WCA). On Jan 13, 1870 approximately twenty Protestant women met for the first time in a church at 12th and Main Street with the intention to "assist working women and girls."¹⁰ Initially, the Association provided food, fuel, paid funeral expenses and "ran a kind of employment office."¹¹ Within one year, the WCA had increased their membership to around 70 women and opened the Working Women's House in a large twenty-two room building that they rented at 11th and McGee Streets in Kansas City.¹² Five years later, in 1876, they moved to a larger rented building at 13th and Walnut Streets to meet the ever increasing needs of the poor in the city.¹³ At this location they continued to operate the Working Women's House, hand out available amenities to those in need, and began to take in a limited number of children.

On May 25, 1877 the Women's Christian Association incorporated and became the first recorded women's association in Kansas City.¹⁴ The WCA is significant as both the city's first incorporated women's organization, and as one of the first benevolent societies created during a

⁶ Dale Keiger, "The Rise and Demise of the American Orphanage," accessed July 17, 2016, <http://pages.jh.edu/jhumag/496web/orphange.html>.

⁷ Zietz, *Child Welfare: Services and Perspectives*, 52.

⁸ Zietz, *Child Welfare: Services and Perspectives*, 52; and Dale Keiger, "The Rise and Demise of the American Orphanage," accessed July 17, 2016, <http://pages.jh.edu/jhumag/496web/orphange.html>.

⁹ A. Theodore Brown and Lyle W. Dorsett, *K.C. A History of Kansas City, Missouri*, (Boulder: Pruett Publishing Co., 1978), 78.

¹⁰ *Missouri State Board of Charities & Corrections*. Monthly Bulletin 13 (1919): 49; and "Women's Christian Association Founded 1870 125th Anniversary, Armour Home, Gillis Center," June 14, 1995: 3, Gillis Vertical File, Missouri Valley Special Collection, Kansas City MO.

¹¹ Brown and Dorsett, *K.C. A History of Kansas City, Missouri*, 75.

¹² "Women's Christian Association Founded 1870 125th Anniversary", 3.

¹³ "Women's Christian Association Founded 1870 125th Anniversary, 5.

¹⁴ Whitney, *Kansas City Missouri, Its History and Its People 1808-1908*, 455.

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time when women's participation in social and philanthropic groups played an important role in the identification and relief of growing social problems in Kansas City.¹⁵

During those first seven years of running the charity, members of the WCA had developed great resilience in response to the many difficult, extenuating circumstances that arose while working to serve many with few resources. The women did much of the work themselves, which included "investigating cases, balancing...the Association's books, soliciting funds, and overseeing the management of the home."¹⁶ What they provided to the needy was received from the community as "in kind" donations that they worked tirelessly to solicit.¹⁷ This tenacity became a hallmark of the WCA, and can be seen throughout their history as a guide used to attain their goal of helping the poor, particularly children.

Increasingly throughout the 1870s, the city came to rely heavily on the work of the WCA, and in turn the Association asked for relief from the local government to aid their efforts.¹⁸ Brown wrote in *K.C.: A History of Kansas City Missouri* that in the 1870s the WCA was, "regarded as headquarters for dealing with the general problem of poverty, and the ladies had to ask for relief, 'as it is an utter impossibility to take charge of the city poor in addition to looking after the Home.'"¹⁹ The WCA did receive some funding from the city, along with donations of materials such as coal, wood, a truck load of potatoes, etc., but by 1880, the women could not keep up with the amount of assistance needed in the community, and the house at 13th and Walnut Streets was closed.²⁰

Over the next three years the WCA focused on reorganization and fund raising, and in April of 1883 they opened a new home at 1115 Charlotte Street (non-extant).²¹ This was the first building constructed by the Association, and it housed both working women and children. It was during this time that the WCA began to care for more children, which eventually became the primary focus for the Association over the next two decades. Mrs. Kersey Coates, the first secretary of the WCA, and later the chair of the purchasing committee for the building on Charlotte wrote, "Our home became the recipient of all classes of distressed humanity, and especially did unfortunate children pour in upon us, and it was thus that the Children's Home came into existence."²² According to one written history of the WCA, the organization served an average of thirty children in the new home at Charlotte Street, ranging in age from infancy to twelve years.²³

¹⁵ Brown and Dorsett, *K.C. A History of Kansas City, Missouri*, 78.

¹⁶ Brown and Dorsett, *K.C. A History of Kansas City, Missouri*, 75.

¹⁷ Brown and Dorsett, *K.C. A History of Kansas City, Missouri*, 75.

¹⁸ Brown and Dorsett, *K.C. A History of Kansas City, Missouri*, 75.

¹⁹ Brown and Dorsett, *K.C. A History of Kansas City, Missouri*, 75.

²⁰ "Women's Christian Association Founded 1870 125th Anniversary", 4.

²¹ "Women's Christian Association Founded 1870 125th Anniversary", 4; and Whitney, *Kansas City Missouri, Its History and Its People 1808-1908*, 455; and *Missouri State Board of Charities & Corrections. Monthly Bulletin* 13(1919): 49.

²² Whitney, *Kansas City Missouri*, 620.

²³ "Women's Christian Association Founded 1870 125th Anniversary", 4.

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The new home at 1115 Charlotte Street was supported by community members through monetary pledges, material donations, and by churches who held fundraisers.²⁴ In 1883, they may have also begun to receive support from an endowment established by Mary Gillis Troost, the niece of William Gillis. Known as one of the first businessmen and property owners in the Kansas City area, William Gillis left two-thirds of his estate to his niece. Mary Troost became one of Kansas City's "great benefactors," who in turn willed all of her estate to charity. According to an article written in the *Kansas City Star* in 1909, her will directed the construction of the Gillis Opera House in Kansas City, in memory of her uncle. Her will also stipulated that the proceeds from the Opera House were to be used by the WCA for the maintenance of a home for orphans.²⁵

The opera house was completed in 1883 and the proceeds were listed at approximately \$4,000 a year.²⁶ Mary Gillis Troost died of small pox in 1872 while visiting a friend in Marcus Hook, Pennsylvania.²⁷ An article written for the 125th anniversary of the Gillis Children's Home stated that she had a "special relationship" with the WCA. This relationship was evident in her deep concern for the welfare of the orphans of Kansas City because her will specifying the endowment had been written within two years of the WCA's first meeting in 1870. The endowment established by Mary Gillis Troost provided sustaining funds for the WCA, but she was only one of several benefactors who significantly contributed to their efforts over the next fifty years.

Throughout the 1880s and into the 1890s, the WCA continued to serve as Kansas City's first benevolent society that cared for poor women and children in the city.²⁸ By this time, the Association was informally considered a community institution and its activities, work and benefactors were regularly reported in the *Kansas City Star* newspaper society pages.²⁹ In the mid-1890s, the papers began to report on the contributions made to the institution by Simon and Margaret Klock Armour. The Armours owned the Armour Meat Packing Company that began in Chicago and had opened a division in Kansas City in 1871.³⁰ They became involved with the WCA during a time when the Association was struggling to meet the increased demands of the poor that resulted from a real-state collapse in Kansas City and a national depression in 1893.³¹

Margaret Klock Armour became a principal member of the WCA, strongly supporting its mission as one of the leading benevolent societies in Kansas City. She served as president of the association from the latter half of the 1890s until the mid-1910s. She also served as a

²⁴ "Women's Christian Association Founded 1870 125th Anniversary", 4.

²⁵ "All She Had to the Poor." *Kansas City Star*, Dec. 4, 1909, n.p.

²⁶ "All She Had to the Poor." *Kansas City Star*, Dec. 4, 1909, n.p.

²⁷ "All She Had to the Poor." *Kansas City Star*, Dec. 4, 1909, n.p.; and *Missouri State Board of Charities & Corrections*. Monthly Bulletin 13(1919): 49.

²⁸ Whitney, *Kansas City Missouri*, 446-465.

²⁹ Brown and Dorsett, *K.C. A History of Kansas City, Missouri*, 88. Articles regularly appeared in several of newspapers, including the *Kansas City Times*.

³⁰ "Armour Meat Packing Company and the Klock Connection," *Klock Connections* 55 (2006): 1-2, accessed July 27, 2016, <http://klockconnections.com/Klock%20Connections,%20Issue%2055.pdf>.

³¹ Brown and Dorsett, *K.C. A History of Kansas City, Missouri*, 88.

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member of other boards which supported the professional organization and growth of institutions dedicated to the improvement of care to the poor, elderly, disabled and incarcerated throughout Kansas City, and all of Missouri. She was one of seven people designated to serve as a committee member in the organization of the Missouri State Board of Charities.³² This board, which officially began in 1887, established guidelines and rules for public and private organizations such as the WCA, wrote and backed state legislation, kept records of institutions' operations, published academic papers, and recorded statistics.³³ The leadership provided by Margaret Armour and donations from her and her husband helped the WCA increase their service in the Kansas City community just before the turn of the twentieth century.

Construction of the Gillis Orphans' Home:

With the numbers of children in need increasing, and limited places available for their care, the WCA wanted to develop a larger facility. Resourcefulness and tenacity in soliciting financial support from the community continued to play an important role in acquiring what the WCA needed for another new building. The WCA's objectives, combined with the Armour's particular dedication to the care of the elderly and orphans in Kansas City, guided the concepts, design and construction of two new buildings for the Association. Simon Armour wanted to open a home for elderly couples, and in 1895 the couple gave \$25,000 towards the establishment of a home for the aged and \$5,000 towards construction of a new home for children.³⁴ The new children's home was planned first, as the building on Charlotte Street could not properly contain the number of children the WCA now served; the April 1899 monthly meeting minutes listed seventy-four inmates (children) in the home.³⁵

Planning and acquisition of a site for the new orphanage began in 1898. That year, Col. Thomas Swope donated 3.5 acres for the site of a new orphanage and a home for aged couples.³⁶ Swope had accumulated large amounts of land in the Kansas City area, and like the Armours, was a benefactor who gave considerable amounts of land and money for the establishment of parks and charitable services to help the needy in Kansas City.³⁷ Margaret Armour served as President of the WCA during the construction of the new building and may have recommended, or even selected, the architectural firm of Van Brunt and Howe to design the new orphanage.³⁸ The firm had built her home and two others for family members.³⁹ Over

³² "State Board of Charities," *Kansas City Journal*, Jan 20, 1895, 6, accessed July 18, 2016, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/76456970>.

³³ *State Board of Charities and Corrections* 1(1910): 3.

³⁴ "Women's Christian Association Founded 1870 125th Anniversary, 5, 6.

³⁵ Report of Monthly Meeting of Women's Christian Association, *Kansas City Journal*, Apr 9, 1899, 14, Accessed July 16, 2016. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/68267038>.

³⁶ Whitney, *Kansas City Missouri*, 455-456.

³⁷ "Thomas Swope Dead," *Wyandotte Herald*, Oct. 9, 1909, 1, accessed July 13, 2016. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/67740355>.

³⁸ "New Children's Home, at Twenty Second and Tracy, To Be Opened Today," *Kansas City Journal*, June 11, 1900; and Sherry Piland, "Henry Van Brunt of the Architectural firm of Van Brunt and Howe: the

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the winter of 1899, the firm developed three different plans for the new building. The final plan was accepted by the WCA, with an estimated cost of \$25,000. The new building was expected to be modern in conveniences and equipment (Figures 5-9).⁴⁰

Advancement of the project was regularly covered in the local papers and highly anticipated by the members of the WCA and the community. Articles helped raise awareness of the WCA's work and solicit monies needed for the building fund. The \$5,000 donated by S.B. Armour was intended to serve as seed money for the construction, with the community giving the remaining amount.⁴¹ The newspapers also explained that once the building was complete, an endowment of \$25,000 would be released from the S. B. Armour estate for the maintenance of the home.⁴² Once the final design had been approved, the *Kansas City Journal* published an article titled "A New Children's Home" on August 20, 1899, showing a sketch of the building and listing details of its size and accommodations. One member of the WCA was quoted as saying, "For several years it has been the ambition of the association [WCA] to have more adequate quarters, larger playgrounds, more light and air, so essential to children."⁴³

Van Brunt and Howe's sketch showed a large, red brick, three-story Georgian Revival style building that was described in the 1899 WCA annual report as "chaste and simple in design."⁴⁴ Simplicity is displayed through the use of strong, but limited classical elements such as an axial plan and a wide, shallow projecting front section capped with a closed pediment.⁴⁵ The architectural embellishments on the walls and roof are common to the Georgian Revival style, but are also unpretentious. Only brick was used for projecting bands at the first floor and for quoins on all corners of the building. The only differing materials that stand out against the red brick walls are the light colored limestone sills and lintels at the window openings, and a pressed metal cornice along the roof line.

Multiple factors may have influenced the selection of a Georgian Revival design. It may have been preferred simply because, according to architectural historians John Poppelers and S. Allen Chambers, it had become very popular throughout the country between 1890 and 1930 during a revival of several classical and academic styles.⁴⁶ Van Brunt and Howe did not specialize in a particular architectural style, and often designed buildings that displayed form

Kansas City Years." Masters diss., University of Missouri – Kansas City, 1976, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, MO.

³⁹ Piland, "Henry Van Brunt of the Architectural firm of Van Brunt and Howe: the Kansas City Years." The firm is credited with building a residence for Mrs. S.B. Armour, Mrs. A.W. Amour and the Kirkland Amour Residence.

⁴⁰ "A Children's Home," *Kansas City Journal*, Apr. 8, 1899, 7; and "New Children's Home," *Kansas City Journal*, August 20, 1899, 6.

⁴¹ "\$5,000 is Needed," *Kansas City Journal*, April 23, 1899. Accessed July 14, 2016, 1. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/68270369>.

⁴² "\$5,000 is Needed," 1.

⁴³ "A Children's Home," *Kansas City Journal*, Apr. 8, 1899, 7.

⁴⁴ "Women's Christian Association Founded 1870 125th Anniversary, 6.

⁴⁵ Virginia and Lee McAlister, *Field Guide to American Houses*, (New York: Knopf, 1986), 140, 326.

⁴⁶ John C. Poppelers and S. Allen Chambers, *What Style is It?*, (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2003), 18, 99

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and decoration that was imitative of a variety of classical and revival studies. Their design of the Gillis Orphans' Home followed the "more authentic symmetrical hipped roof shape" of the Georgian style and also had a cupola on the roof that was commonly seen on larger, public buildings.⁴⁷ The axial plan displays an orderly system that may have also been preferred by the WCA, and the simple architectural embellishments may have allowed the WCA to finance the largest manageable building, with the expectation that they could care for a considerably larger number of children than had been imaginable at the home on Charlotte Street.

WCA Management of the Gillis Orphans' Home from 1900 to 1929:

The children and staff moved into the new, spacious three-story home in April of 1900 (Figure 4).⁴⁸ An opening reception for members of the WCA and the community took place on June 11, 1900.⁴⁹ This year begins the period of significance for the Gillis Orphans' Home. An article in the *Kansas City Journal* states that the home had been built for 125 children. Sarah Maxwell served as the first superintendent and Mrs. L. Scott was the first matron of the home with 58 children in residence.⁵⁰

The orphanage opened under the title Children's Home but within the year, the WCA renamed it the Gillis Orphans' Home in honor of the late benefactor, Mary Gillis Troost.⁵¹ This name change honored her wish for an orphan's home in Kansas City. During the early years of operation at the new home on Tracy Avenue, the charter for the WCA also reflected the clear mission of the association; object 1 of the Charter of the Women's Christian Association now read "The object of this Association shall be the improvement of the religious, intellectual and temporal welfare of the children under our care."⁵²

Operations of the home, the number of children in the orphanage, how the children were cared for, and who cared for them was well-documented by the WCA. Maintaining records, producing annual reports and making them public had been a long standing practice with the Association. In his book *K. C. A History of Kansas City, Missouri*, Theodore Brown refers to the collection and "broadcast" of information from the WCA as providing a partial view of the early social history of the city.⁵³ The manners of communication established by the WCA may have helped it operate better and longer than many of the other early associations and societies

⁴⁷ McAlister, *Field Guide to American Houses*, 140.

⁴⁸ Whitney, *Kansas City Missouri*, 456. Margaret Klock Armour was amongst the attendees at the opening reception, but Simon B Armour had died one year earlier. The Amours continued to serve as significant benefactors to the WCA through endowments from their estate and later the Armour Foundation.

⁴⁹ "New Children's Home, at Twenty Second and Tracy, To Be Opened Today," *Kansas City Journal*, June 11, 1900.

⁵⁰ "New Children's Home, at Twenty Second and Tracy, To Be Opened Today," *Kansas City Journal*, June 11, 1900; and "Women's Christian Association Founded 1870 125th Anniversary, 4.

⁵¹ "The Women's Christian Association" *St. Board of Charities and Corrections*, 1919 vol. 13: 49.

⁵² *Women's Christian Association of Kansas City, Missouri, Annual Reports* (1907). Women's Christian Association of Kansas City. Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, MO.

⁵³ Brown and Dorsett, *K.C. A History of Kansas City, Missouri*, 75-77.

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forming in Kansas City. According to Brown, "During a period when the local society's internal coherence seemed to be coming apart, the W.C.A. was one of the agencies which institutionalized communication."⁵⁴

The WCA annual reports, newspaper articles and original architectural plans provide a view into life at the orphanage. According the plans, some of the largest public spaces for the children were a dining room on the first floor, a classroom on the same floor, and separate playrooms for boys and girls in the basement (Figures 6, 9). Attached to the playrooms were bathrooms and doors to outside play yards. Very large rooms used for sleeping quarters were at the second and third floors (Figures 7-8). Plans show that the house was divided equally for boys and girls, with boys' rooms always on the north side of the building and girls on the south, but a newspaper article from 1907 suggests different arrangements. In the article, girls were housed on the second floor and boys were on the third.⁵⁵ That article also lists a chapel on the first floor, which is not identified on the original plans (Figure 6).

Smaller rooms were located at the front and back of the building. These rooms were used for support services and staff. The first floor had a formal parlor at the front entry and a board room used by the officers and committee members of the WCA.⁵⁶ The second floor had a sewing room, dispensary, matron's bedroom, and a day nursery for the youngest children at the orphanage. The third floor of the front block had two rooms used as an infirmary, a crib room, and "simple provisions" for nurses and servants which were located at the back the building.⁵⁷

Recorded staff in the house in 1911 included a matron, multiple nurses, one maid, one cook, one dining room girl, one seamstress and two laundresses.⁵⁸ A large number of physicians were available to the home and cared for the children through illness such as measles, whooping cough, and pneumonia.⁵⁹

Members of the WCA were very involved in the operations of the orphanage. The staff of the orphanage managed the home, while members of the WCA made sure that the children were properly supplied with necessities such as food and clothing, and that they took part in social and cultural activities such as holiday celebrations. Committees were created for each important aspect of care. One annual report listed eight committees: Pantry Supply, House furnishings, Fuel, Funeral, Entertainment, Wardrobe, Adoption, and Visiting (inspections conducted in homes that the children were coming from or going to).⁶⁰

Children who came to the Gillis' Orphans Home did not always become permanent residents. On average, about 200 children were received each year in the home, but less than

⁵⁴ Brown and Dorsett, *K.C. A History of Kansas City, Missouri*, 76.

⁵⁵ "It was Interesting: Mrs. Cotton Thus Describes Her Visit to the Gillis Orphan Home at Kansas City, Mo." *Beloit Daily Call*, Kansas, May 24, 1911, 1.

⁵⁶ *Women's Christian Association of Kansas City, Missouri, Annual Reports* (1907), 27.

⁵⁷ "New Children's Home," *Kansas City Journal*, August 20, 1899.

⁵⁸ "It was Interesting:..." 1.

⁵⁹ *Women's Christian Association of Kansas City, Missouri, Annual Reports*, (1907), 8 and 17.

⁶⁰ *Women's Christian Association of Kansas City, Missouri, Annual Reports*, (1907), 7.

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100 stayed at any one time.⁶¹ Some of the children stayed for years, others were sent to new families, and often those who were termed "half orphans" returned home.⁶² These children were usually placed in the Gillis home for a temporary time by a parent, until the parent could afford to care for them again. All of the children accepted where white, between the ages of 3 and 14 years old, and had to be residents of Kansas City.⁶³

The WCA was not the only benevolent association that worked with poor children, but it was the oldest on record in Kansas City.⁶⁴ For many years, prior to construction of the Gillis Orphans' Home, the WCA worked with other benevolent charities and societies in Kansas City to aid the poor. This relationship continued at 2119 Tracy by reviewing referrals for children to be placed in the Gillis Home, or to help find permanent homes once they were accepted. They reviewed referrals from placing agencies such as the Provident Association (incorporated 1880), the Humane Society (1883) and the Children's Home Society (1892).⁶⁵

By 1904, The Gillis Orphans' Home was one of just four orphanages in Kansas City operated by a charitable society.⁶⁶ State-wide, there were 31 orphanages operated by private or ecclesiastical associations, the McCune home run by Jackson County, and no state run orphanages or children's homes.⁶⁷ The orphanages recorded for Kansas City in 1904 were Gillis Orphans' Home, (extant, 21st and Tracy Ave.); Kansas City Boys' Orphan Home, (non-extant, 922 Westport Ave.); St. Anthony's Home (non-extant, 23rd and College); and St. Joseph's Female Orphan Asylum (non-extant, 31st and Jefferson).⁶⁸

Four years after the children had moved into the new home on Tracy Avenue, a new project was underway. The Armour Memorial Home for Aged Men and Women was built adjacent to the orphans' home and opened on May 15, 1905. (Figure 14-15, non-extant) This was the third building constructed by the Women's Christian Association. Margaret Klock Armour continued to serve as president of the WCA during construction and the home was built in memory of her husband, Simon B. Armour. The building cost about \$42,000 to build and was

⁶¹ *Women's Christian Association of Kansas City, Missouri, Annual Reports*, (1907), 19.

⁶² *Women's Christian Association of Kansas City, Missouri, Annual Reports*, (1907), 19; and "Women's Christian Association Founded 1870 125th Anniversary, 5, 6.

⁶³ "It was Interesting:" 1; and United States Census, "Children Under Institutional Care, 1923," (Bureau of Census, Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1927), 86.

⁶⁴ Keiger, "The Rise and Demise of the American Orphanage." St. Joseph's Orphan Asylum was opened in 1880 and the Provident Society incorporated in 1880.

⁶⁵ United States Census, "Children Under Institutional Care, 1923," Bureau of the Census. Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1927, 86., and *Women's Christian Association of Kansas City, Missouri, Annual Reports*, (1907), 8; Whitney, Kansas City Missouri, 448, 452.

⁶⁶ *Benevolent Institutions 1904*, Special report prepared by the Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1905), 11, 14, 23, 26. Google Books, accessed July 28, 2016, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=NqIZPI1qj4EC&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&hl=en&pg=GBS.PP2>.

⁶⁷ *Benevolent Institutions 1904*, 26. The first state run orphanage was built in Carrolton Missouri in 1923.

⁶⁸ *Benevolent Institutions 1904*, 86.

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maintained by the Armour Endowment.⁶⁹ Couples accepted into the Armour Memorial Home increased each year and operations at the orphanage continued as before, with the board of trustees, staff and volunteers caring for both houses.

1907 marks the first year of the annual "Loose Shoe Day" sponsored by a new benefactor, Mrs. J. L. (Ella) Loose. Ella Loose was the widow of Jacob Scull Loose who had owned the Loose-Wiles Biscuit Company in Kansas City. Annually, for over thirty years, each child at the home received a new pair of shoes from the "Loose Shoe Day". The event usually took place in coordination with the Easter holiday and for years, Ella Loose attended the parties arriving with all the shoes in her limousine.⁷⁰

The object of "tending to improvement of the religious, intellectual and temporal welfare of the children" at the Gillis Orphans' Home involved attendance at the local public school and Sunday school, and developing skills in "practical housekeeping" for the girls and 3 hours a day of manual training for the boys.⁷¹ The goal was to teach the children self-sufficiency and resourcefulness, which were characteristics that the WCA had always employed as part of their enduring tenacity to succeed at helping the poor. The 125th anniversary report about the orphanage mentioned the resourcefulness of maintaining a large garden, during the years of World War I, when food and money were tight. The report refers to the boys being paid ten cents per hour to tend to gardens large enough to provide for both the Gillis Orphan's Home and the Amour Memorial Home.

The Gillis Orphans' Home continued to help around 200 children a year into the 1920s (Figure 16). By 1922 there were ten recognized children's homes under private philanthropy in Kansas City. Gillis kept seventy children that year, which was the fourth largest number in the group of ten institutions.⁷² During this time, management by the WCA remained the same with staff that lived in the home and WCA committee members working to secure funding, maintain the building and provide for the children.

Consistently, from the first year at 2119 Tracy into the late 1920s, events were planned by the staff and committee members to celebrate the passing of the year and bring joy and fun to the children. This was always made possible by the citizens and charitable groups of Kansas City. Annual superintendent reports and newspaper articles stressed that these events made the orphanage feel like a home. The usual celebrations were Fourth of July, Valentine's Day, Halloween, the Loose Shoe Day (Easter Time), Thanksgiving, and Christmas. One other annual event was publicized in the *Kansas City Star* on June 4, 1927. That year, eighty-three orphans from the Gillis Orphans' home visited the farm of Frank Payne for a day of strawberry picking and a picnic. The event was described in detail, pointing out the happiness of the children. The

⁶⁹ Whitney, *Kansas City Missouri*, 456.

⁷⁰ "Largest Stockholder," *Joplin Globe* (Joplin, Missouri), Sep 27, 1945, 2. accessed July 13, 2016, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/38514506> and KC times Nov 17, 1969 "Forty Years Ago."

⁷¹ *Women's Christian Association of Kansas City, Missouri, Annual Reports*, (1916), 8-9,

⁷² *Missouri State Board of Charities & Corrections*. Monthly Bulletin 24 (1920-22):61.

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article also mentioned that Frank Payne was a former resident of the Gillis Orphans' Home, adopted at a young age by John S. Payne, a Wyandotte County farmer.

Stories of success for children like Frank Payne, point to the importance of the Gillis Orphans' Home in helping the WCA achieve its mission of providing relief and care to the poor, which had begun almost sixty years earlier.

Around 1925, The WCA began to think about relocating in order to expand the Armour Memorial Home (now named the Margaret Klock Armour Memorial Home following the death of Margaret Armour in 1915). The home was at capacity with thirty couples and had a waiting list of 100.

At the end of November in 1927, the Gillis Orphans' Home and the Armour Home for the Aged was deeded to the Western Baptist College for Negroes (now known as the Western Baptist Bible College in Kansas City).⁷³ Both buildings and the land were sold for \$25,000, which funded the purchase of land at 81st and Wornall Road in Kansas City for the new orphan homes and the home for the elderly.⁷⁴

Construction of the new buildings was, in large part, funded by an endowment willed to the WCA by the Loose family. The Loose family, like the Armours, had become one of the leading benefactors of the Women's Christian Association in the first few decades of the nineteenth century. Donations began with the Loose Shoe Parties in 1907 and extended to 1927 when the WCA received one third of a two million dollar distribution from the Jacob Scull Loose Trust.⁷⁵

The children and older couples remained at the homes on Tracy Avenue until construction of the new facilities was complete in 1929. At the end of August in 1929, the children moved into three smaller cottages that housed twenty-eight children each and were named the Gillis Childrens' Home.⁷⁶ About two weeks later, the elderly couples moved into larger facilities that could host up to eighty residents. The move to the campus at Wornall Road marks the end of the period of significance for the Gillis Orphans' Home.

Western Baptist Bible College:

The Western Baptist Bible College was established in 1889, and is recognized as the oldest institute of Christian based religious learning west of the Mississippi established exclusively by African-Americans.⁷⁷ The school purchased the Gillis Orphans' Home and the Margaret Klock Armour Home for Aged Couples from the Women's Christian Association in 1927 because they were in need of larger facilities for their program. After the children moved to new facilities at 81st and Wornall Streets in 1929, the Western Baptist Bible College began to use the orphanage and the home for the aged as their new campus. The Gillis Orphans' Home was renamed Goins

⁷³ "Gillis Orphanage Transferred," *Kansas City Star*, December 4, 1927, n.p.

⁷⁴ "Women's Christian Association Founded 1870 125th Anniversary, 8.

⁷⁵ John Doohan, "Forty Years Ago: From the Star Dec. 20, 1927," *Kansas City Times*, Dec 20, 1967, 36, accessed July 13, 2016, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/51437092>.

⁷⁶ "Women's Christian Association Founded 1870 125th Anniversary, 9.

⁷⁷ "Western Baptist Bible College." accessed Oct 14, 201, <http://www.wbbckc.org/history>.

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Hall and the Margaret Klock Armour Home for Aged Couples was renamed Johnson Hall. Johnson Hall was demolished in November 2016. The remaining Goins Hall (Gillis Orphan's Home) is intact and in fair to poor condition.

Conclusion:

The Gillis Orphans' Home meets National Register Criteria A in the area of SOCIAL HISTORY as the oldest remaining building constructed for the Women's Christian Association. Established in 1870, the Women's Christian Association is the first recorded women's association in Kansas City, Missouri. It was founded during a time when women's social and philanthropic groups played an important role in identifying and providing relief to the poor. The WCA began with the goal to assist working women and girls, but due to lack of resources in Kansas City, they soon began to care for children. It is significant as one of a few buildings constructed specifically as an orphanage by a benevolent organization in Kansas City at the turn of the twentieth century. The period of significance runs from 1900 to 1929, the almost thirty years that the home operated as an orphanage. The building is intact and it strongly conveys a sense of its time and place.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the property are indicated by a heavy dashed line in the map Figure 3. The nominated parcel covers approximately 2 acres in Blocks Q and T of LOCKRIDGE'S ADDITION, a subdivision of Kansas City.

Boundary Justification

The current boundaries include the building and approximately 2 acres of land historically associated with the orphanage. This is the core of a larger site that was shared with the Armour Home for the Aged from 1905 to 2016. The boundaries described above include the historic orphanage building, as well as the original large front lawn and circle driveway.

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1. Aerial photo map of 2119 Tracy Avenue, Kansas City, M. Screenshot.

Source: Google Earth. Accessed May 22, 2017.

White dashed boundary lines added by Andrea Herries. The building shown to the southwest of the Gillis Orphan's Home in this image was demolished in 2016.

Google Earth

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Gillis Orphans' Home

2119 Tracy Ave. Kansas City, MO 64108 Latitude: 39.086592° Longitude: -94.566519°



Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

2. Aerial photo map of 2119 Tracy Avenue with surrounding area. Placemark. Source: Google Earth. Accessed May 22, 2017.



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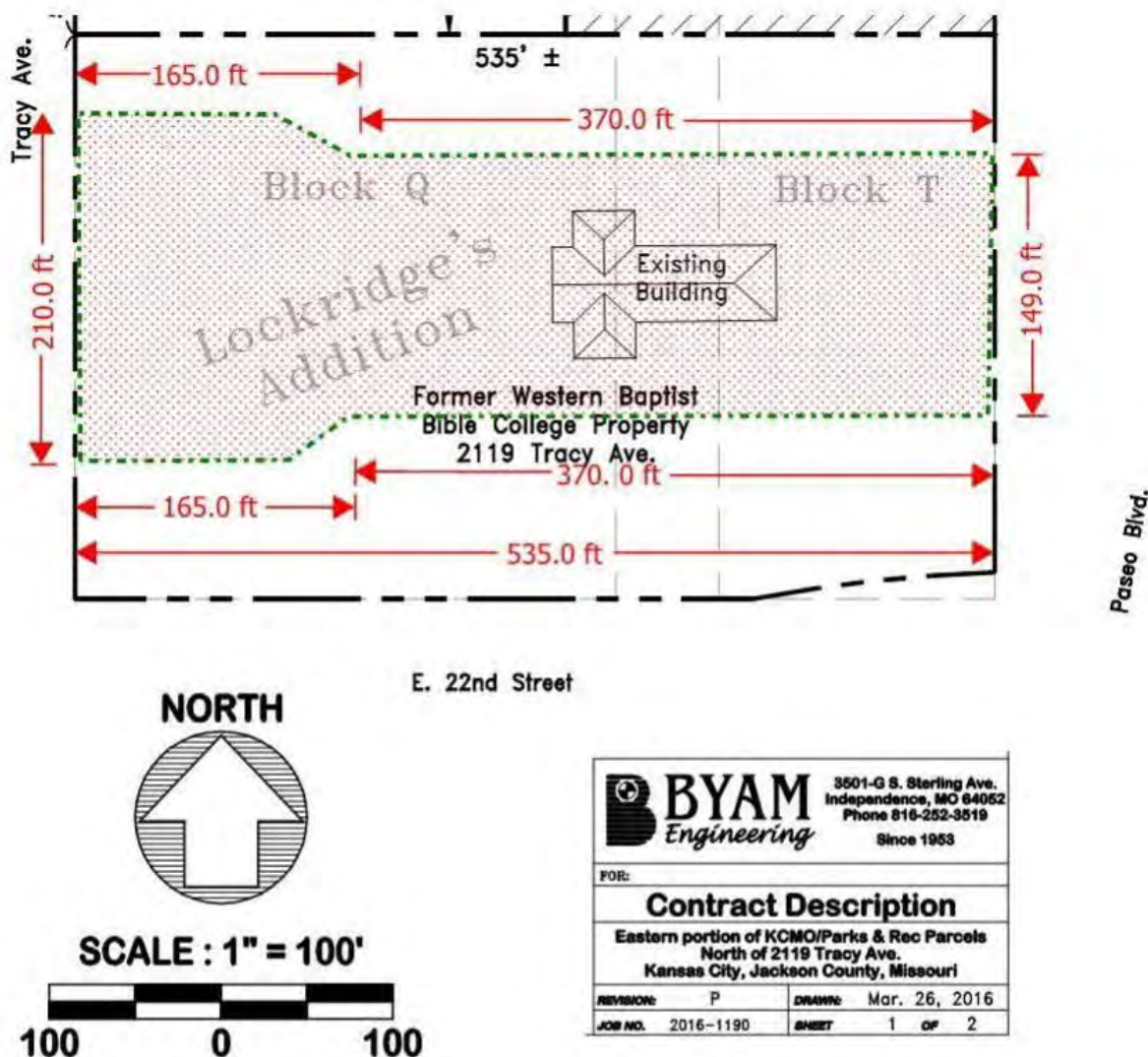
County and State

n/a

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

3. Site map.

Source: Survey for 2119 Tracy Ave and surrounding area. Byam Engineering, Independence, MO, March 26, 2016. Adapted by Deb Sheals May 2017.



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4. ca. 1907, Gillis Orphans' Home, 2119 Tracy Ave, Kansas City , MO
Source: *Women's Christian Association of Kansas City, Missouri, Annual Reports, 1907-1908*
(Women's Christian Association of Kansas City. Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, MO), inside cover.



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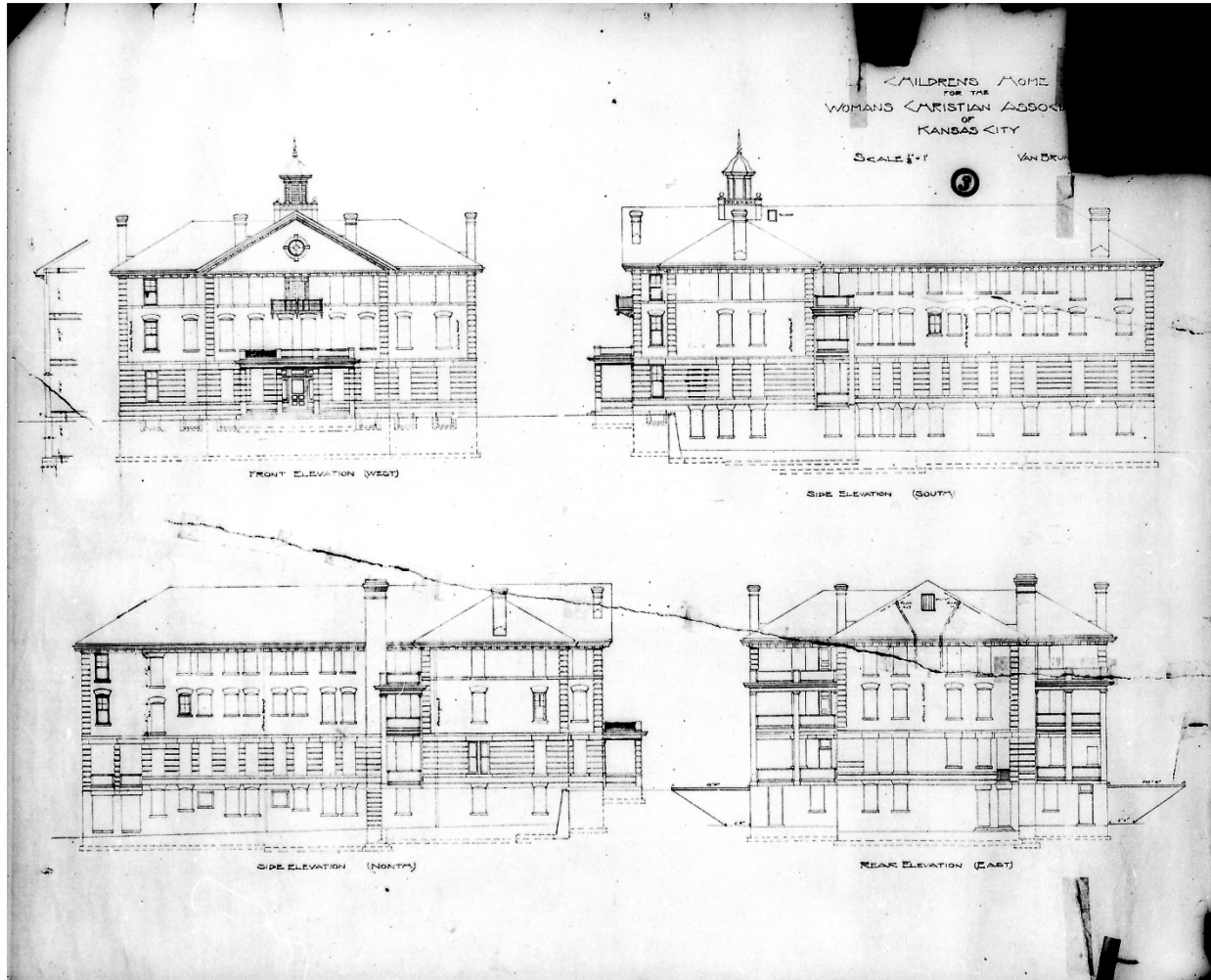
County and State

n/a

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

5. 1899 Elevation Drawings for Children's Home (Gillis Orphans' Home), Van Brunt and Howe Architectural Firm.

Source: *Children's Home for Women's Christian Association of Kansas City*; App Cards 023.009; MVC-SAH Architectural Records Collection (K0006); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Kansas City, MO.



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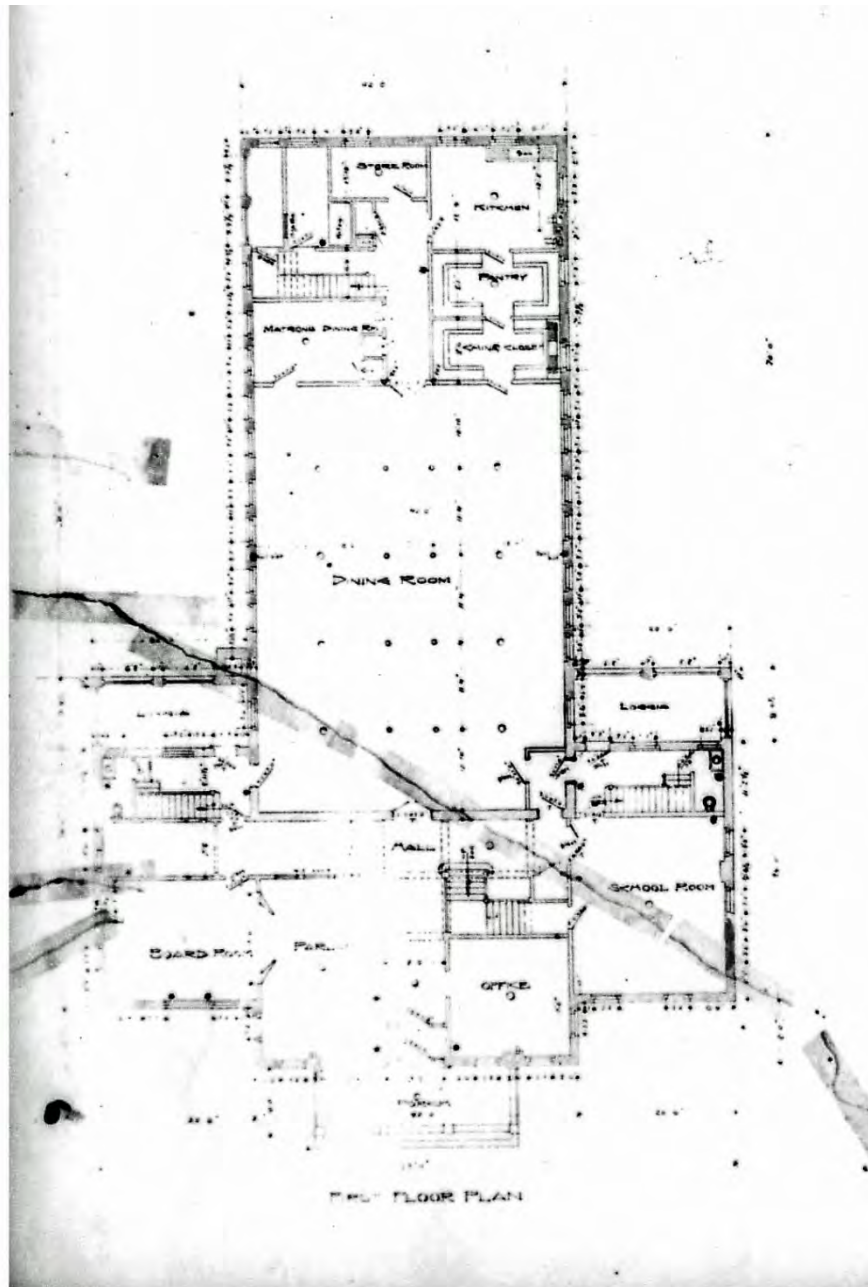
County and State

n/a

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

6. 1899 Floor Plans for Children's Home (Gillis Orphans' Home), First Floor, Van Brunt and Howe Architectural Firm.

Source: *Children's Home for Women's Christian Association of Kansas City*; App Cards 023.009; MVC-SAH Architectural Records Collection (K0006); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Kansas City, MO.



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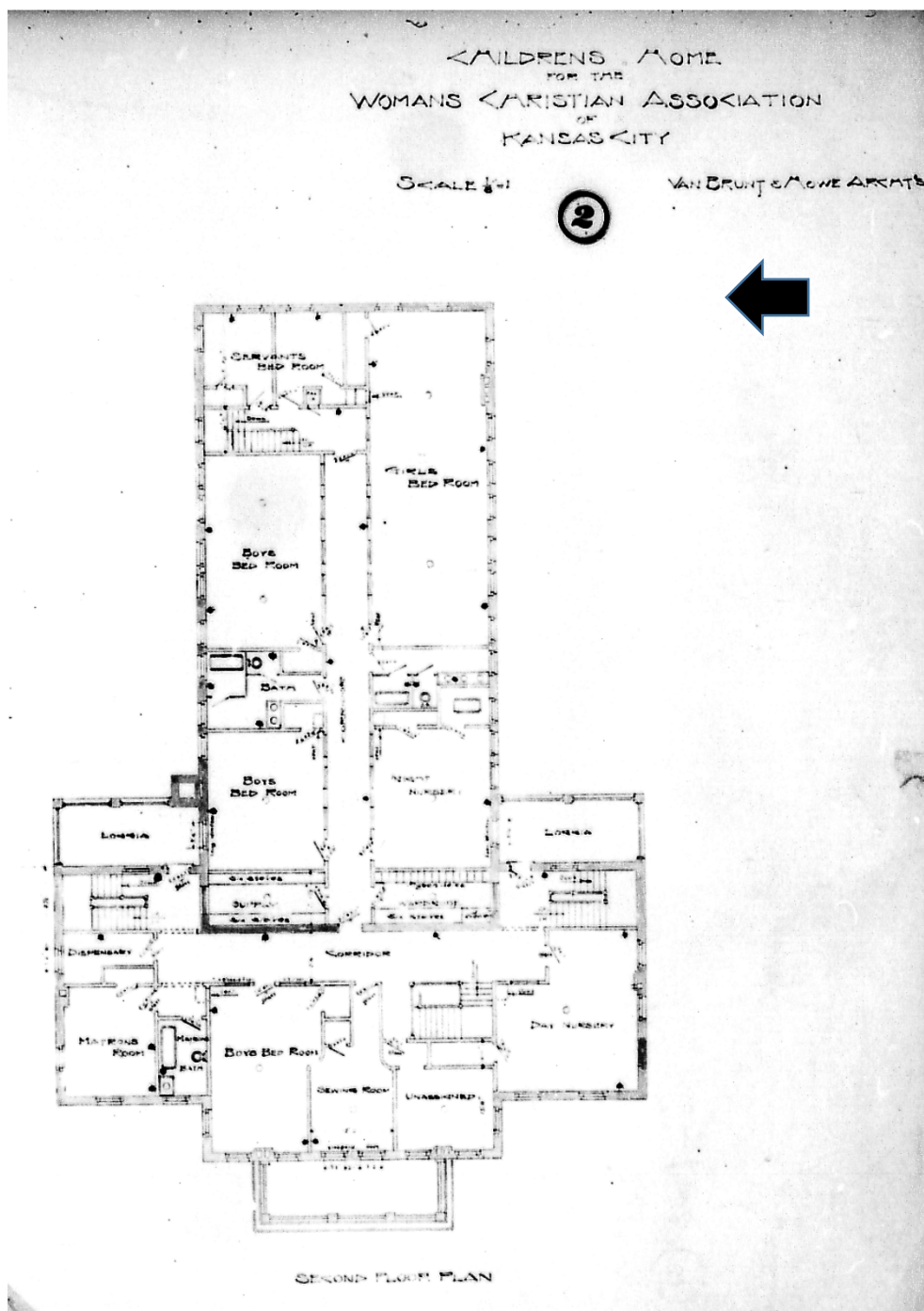
County and State

n/a

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

7. 1899 Floor Plans for Children's Home (Gillis Orphans' Home), Second Floor, Van Brunt and Howe Architectural Firm.

Source: *Children's Home for Women's Christian Association of Kansas City*; App Cards 023.009; MVC-SAH Architectural Records Collection (K0006); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Kansas City, MO.



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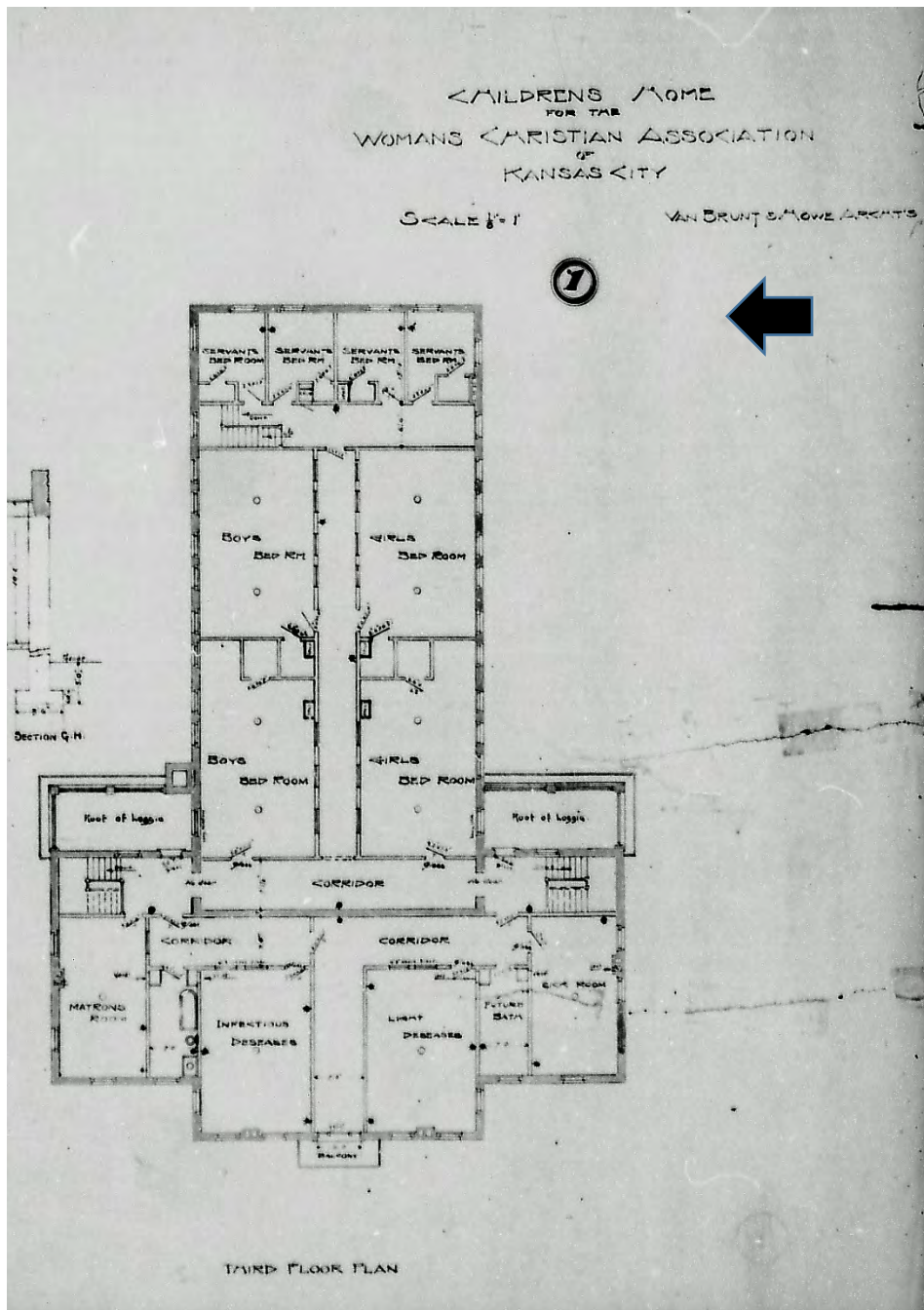
County and State

n/a

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

8. 1899 Floor Plans for Children's Home (Gillis Orphans' Home), Third Floor, Van Brunt and Howe Architectural Firm.

Source: *Children's Home for Women's Christian Association of Kansas City*; App Cards 023.009; MVC-SAH Architectural Records Collection (K0006); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Kansas City, MO.



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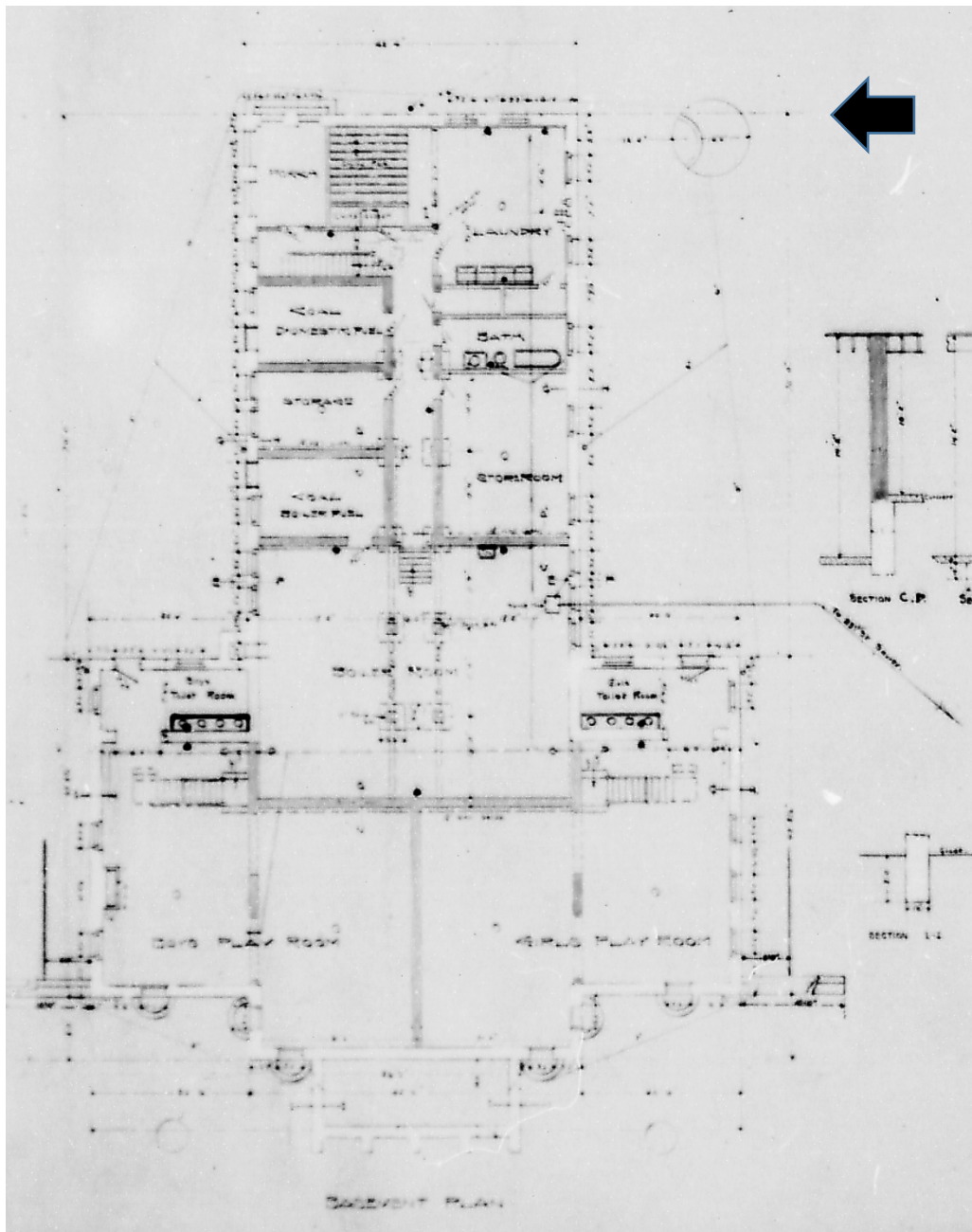
County and State

n/a

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

9. 1899 Floor Plans for Children's Home (Gillis Orphans' Home), Basement, Van Brunt and Howe Architectural Firm.

Source: *Children's Home for Women's Christian Association of Kansas City*; App Cards 023.009; MVC-SAH Architectural Records Collection (K0006); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Kansas City, MO.



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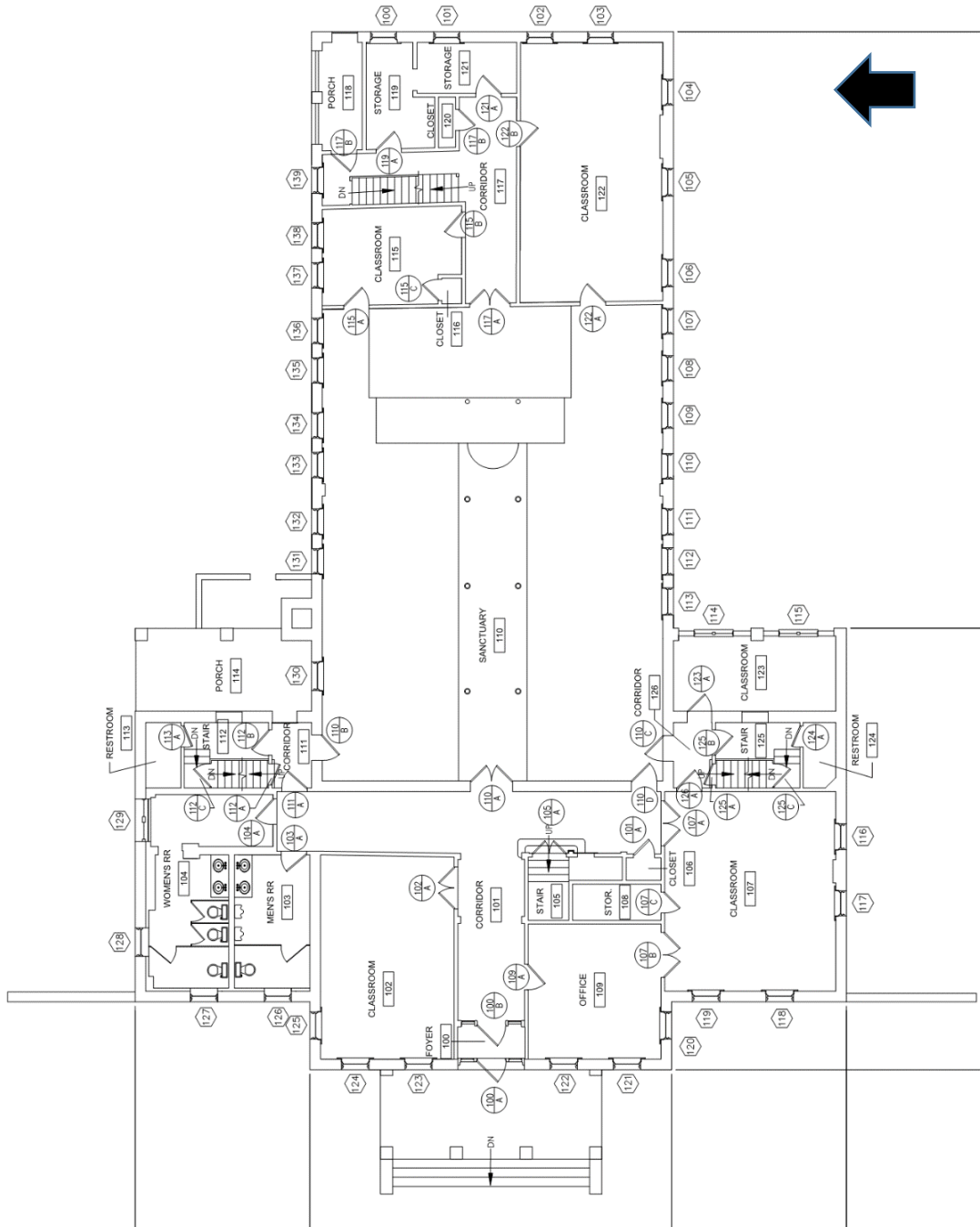
County and State

n/a

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

10. 2016 Floor Plans for Goins Hall, Western Baptist Bible College (Gillis Orphans' Home), First Floor.

Source: STRATA Architecture + Preservation, Kansas City, MO, 2016.



Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

11. 2016 Floor Plans for Goins Hall, Western Baptist Bible College (Gillis Orphans' Home), Second Floor.

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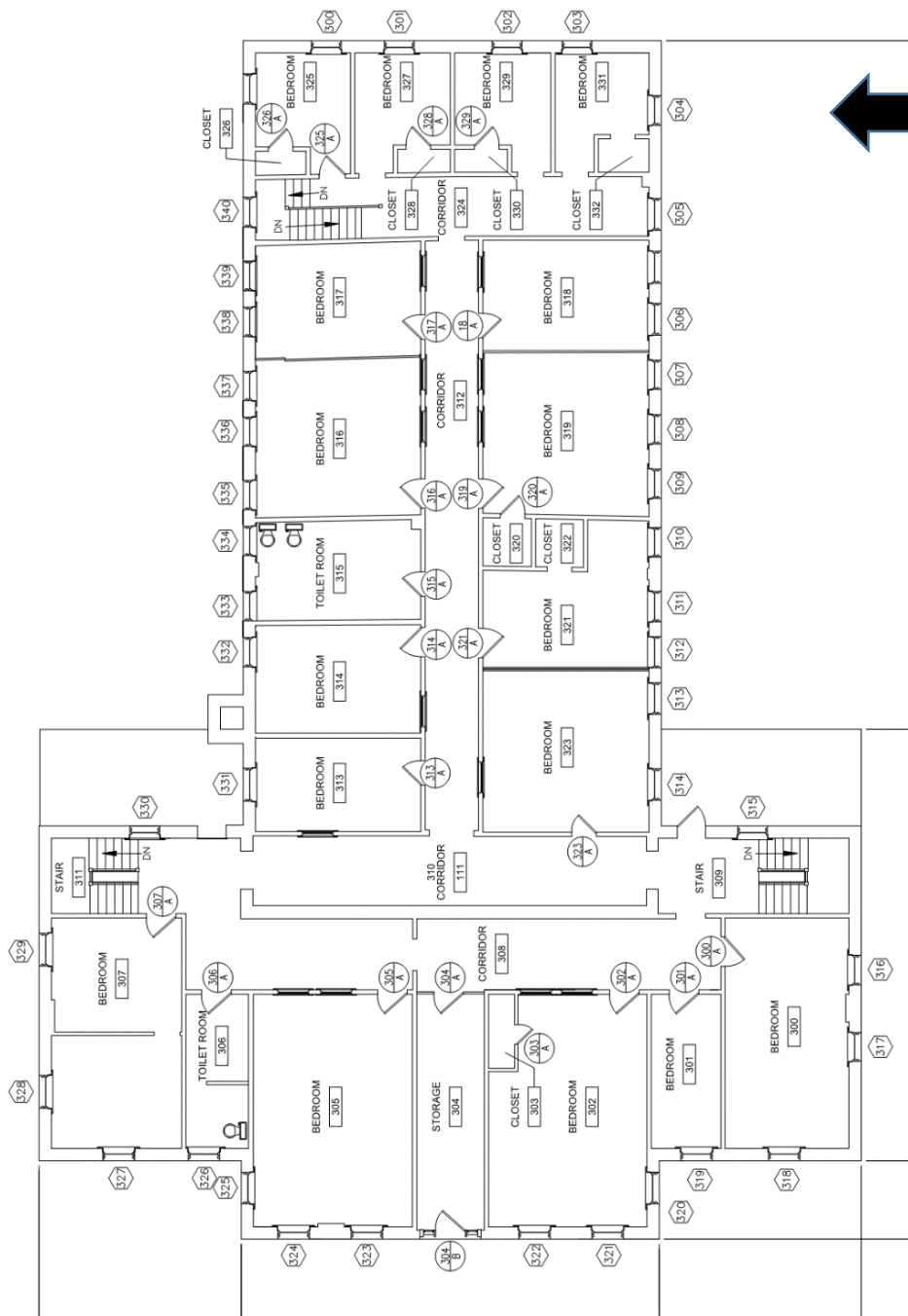
County and State

n/a

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

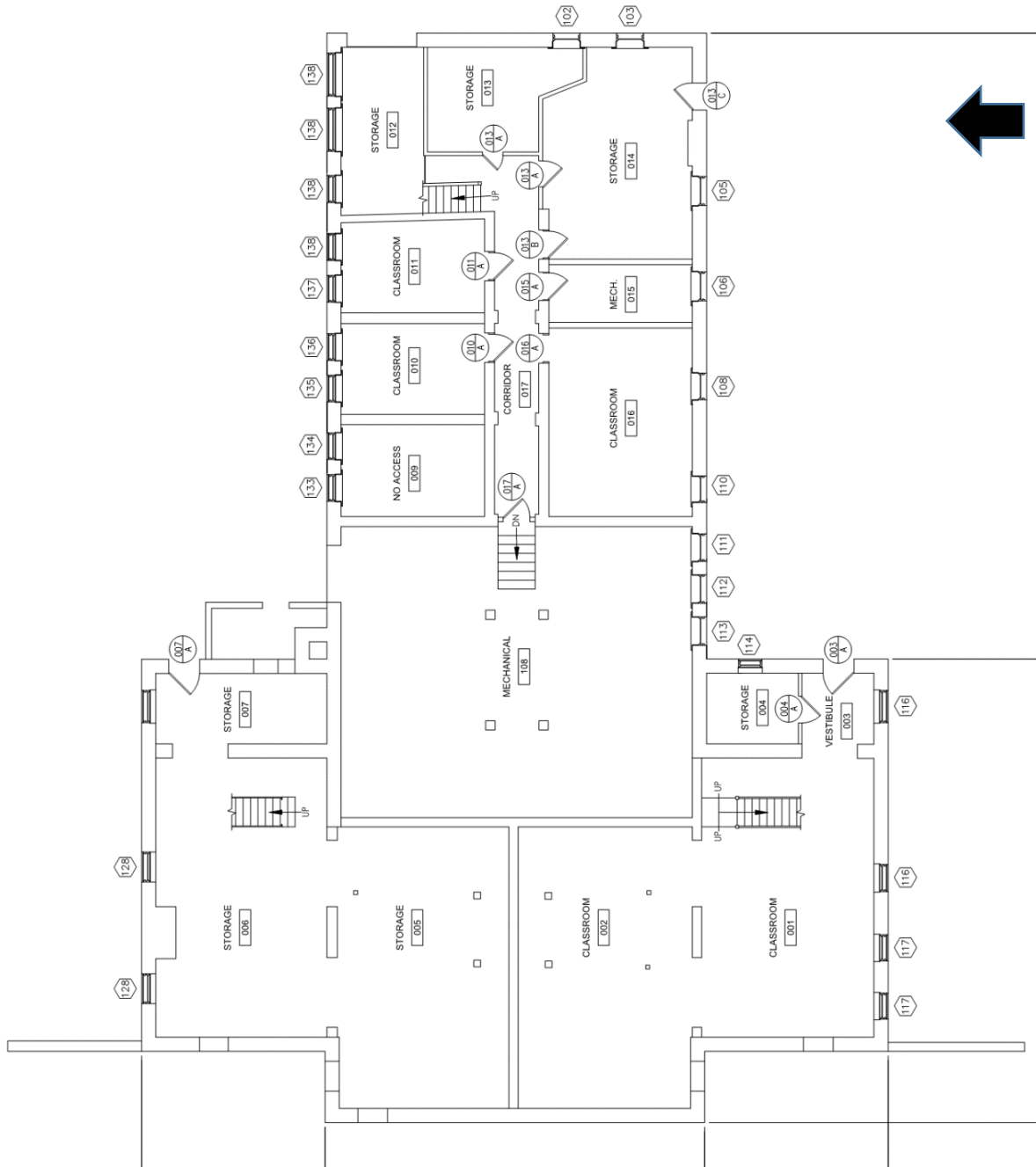
12. 2016 Floor Plans for Goins Hall, Western Baptist Bible College (Gillis Orphans' Home), Third Floor.

Source: STRATA Architecture + Preservation, Kansas City, MO, 2016.



Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Source: STRATA Architecture + Preservation, Kansas City, MO, 2016.



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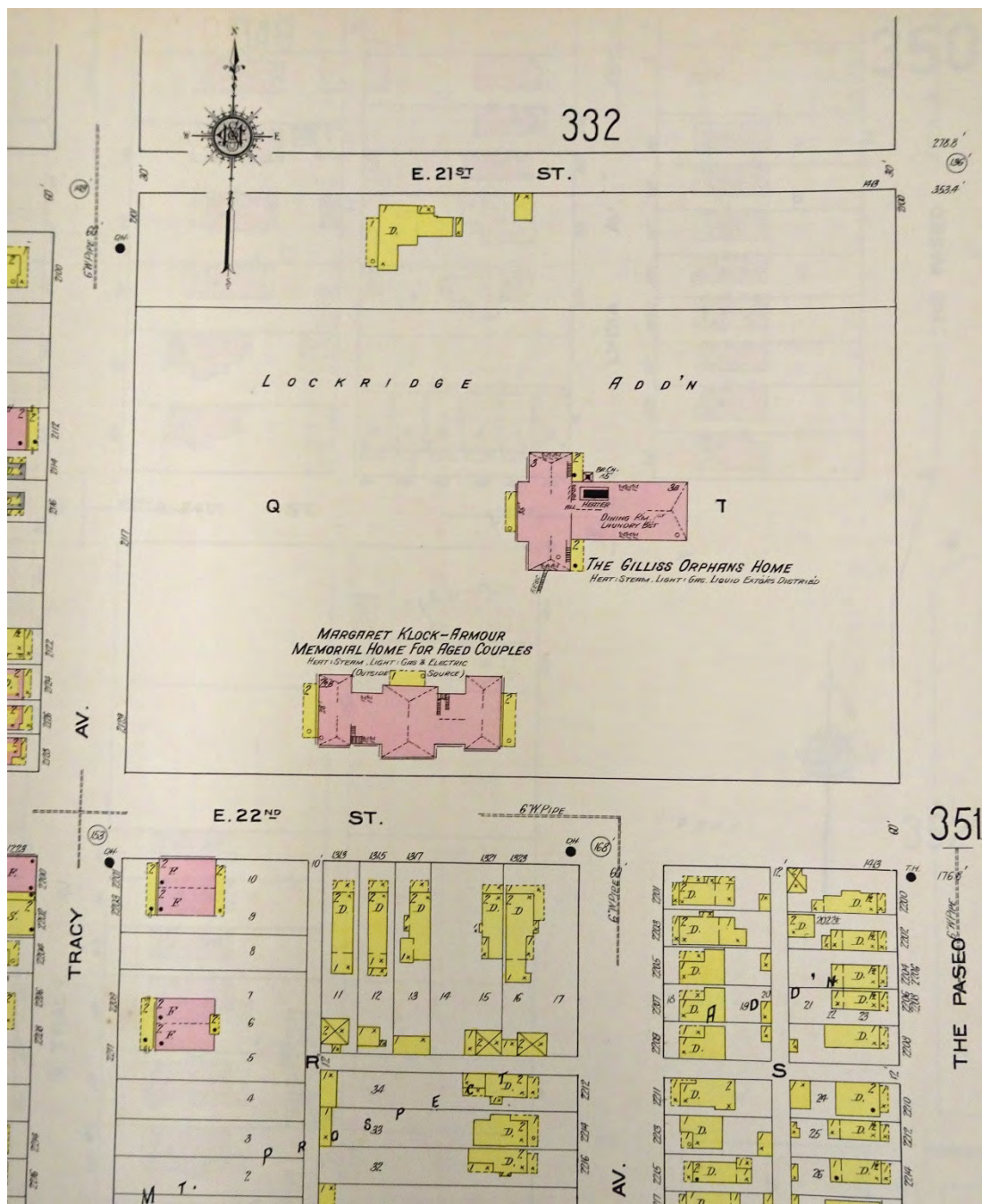
County and State

n/a

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

14. 1909 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing 2119 and 2125 Tracy Avenue,
Kansas City, MO.

Source: Sanborn Insurance Maps of Kansas City, MO 1909. (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1909), 349, Special Collections, Ellis Library, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO.



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15. Early Postcard of Gillis Orphans' Home and Margaret K. Armour Memorial Home.
Unknown Date.

Source: Mrs. Sam Ray Postcard Collection (SC58), Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, MO.



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16. ca. 1922, Gillis Orphans' Home, 2119 Tracy Ave, Kansas City, MO.

Source: *Women's Christian Association of Kansas City, Missouri, Annual Reports, 1922*

(Women's Christian Association of Kansas City, Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, MO), inside cover.



GILLIS ORPHANS' HOME

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The floor plan shows a building with various rooms including classrooms, offices, a library, a cafeteria, a gymnasium, and restrooms. 18 numbered exit points are marked with arrows indicating the direction of egress. The legend indicates that different patterns represent different floor levels: 3rd Floor (dotted pattern), 2nd Floor (dashed pattern), 1st Floor (solid pattern), and Exterior (solid square).

Legend:

- 3rd Floor
- 2nd Floor
- 1st Floor
- Exterior





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