

**ADDRESS: 4025-69 WESTMINSTER AVE**

Name of Resource: PRR YMCA; Unity Mission Church

Proposed Action: Designation

Property Owner: Unity Mission Church Home and Training School

Nominator: Philadelphia City Planning Commission

Staff Contact: Allyson Mehley, allyson.mehley@phila.gov, 215-686-7660

**OVERVIEW:** This nomination proposes to designate the property at 4025-69 Westminster Avenue, historically known as Pennsylvania Railroad Young Men's Christian Association (PRR YMCA), and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. This nomination argues that 4025-69 Westminister Avenue satisfies Criterion J, exemplifying the cultural, social, and historical heritage of the community through its role in the development and evolution of the Belmont neighborhood. From the building's construction in 1894 through the interwar period, the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) branch of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) occupied the building. From the 1940s to just before the turn of the millennium, Father Divine—longtime Philadelphian and founder of the International Peace Mission Movement—utilized the building as the “Unity Mission Church,” a community center and place of worship. In its history, the building at 41<sup>st</sup> and Westminister Avenue has played an important and ongoing role in the surrounding community, continuing today as the Belmont Academy Charter School.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 4025-69 Westminister Avenue satisfies Criterion for Designation J.



# NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT

## PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

### PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM (CD, EMAIL, FLASH DRIVE)  
ELECTRONIC FILES MUST BE WORD OR WORD COMPATIBLE

**1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE** *(must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)*

Street address: 4025-4069 Westminister Avenue

Postal code: 19104

**2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Historic Name: Pennsylvania Railroad Young Men's Christian Association (PRR YMCA); Unity Mission Church

Current/Common Name: Belmont Academy Charter School

**3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

☒ Building

☐ Structure

☐ Site

☐ Object

**4. PROPERTY INFORMATION**

Condition: ☐ excellent ☒ good ☐ fair ☐ poor ☐ ruins

Occupancy: ☒ occupied ☐ vacant ☐ under construction ☐ unknown

Current use: Charter School

**5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

*Please attach a narrative description and site/plot plan of the resource's boundaries.*

**6. DESCRIPTION**

*Please attach a narrative description and photographs of the resource's physical appearance, site, setting, and surroundings.*

**7. SIGNIFICANCE**

*Please attach a narrative Statement of Significance citing the Criteria for Designation the resource satisfies.*

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1896 to 1997

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: Constructed -1894; Altered (addition) - 1896

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Thomas P. Lonsdale

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: \_\_\_\_\_

Original owner: Pennsylvania Railroad Company

Other significant persons: Father Divine

**CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:**

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- ☐ (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- ☐ (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- ☐ (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- ☐ (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- ☐ (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- ☐ (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- ☐ (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- ☐ (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- ☐ (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- ☒ (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

**8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

*Please attach a bibliography.*

**9. NOMINATOR**

Organization Philadelphia City Planning Commission Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name with Title Noah DeSimone + Amanda Stevens, PCPC Interns Email \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address 1515 Arch Street Telephone 215-683-4615

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA, 19102

Nominator ☐ is ☒ is not the property owner.

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: 2 April 2019; revisions received 14 May 2019

☒ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete Date: 16 May 2019

Date of Notice Issuance: 17 May 2019

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Unity Mission Church, Home School Training

Address: 764 S Broad Street

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19146-2232

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Final Action: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Designated ☐ Rejected

12/7/18

## 5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property of 4025-4069 Westminister Avenue sits on a triangular shaped lot and begins at the northeast corner of Westminister Avenue and N 41<sup>st</sup> Street. The boundary extends approximately 206 feet north; then approximately 433 feet southeast towards Westminister Avenue; then runs west along the northern side of Westminister Avenue approximately 400 feet to the place of beginning.

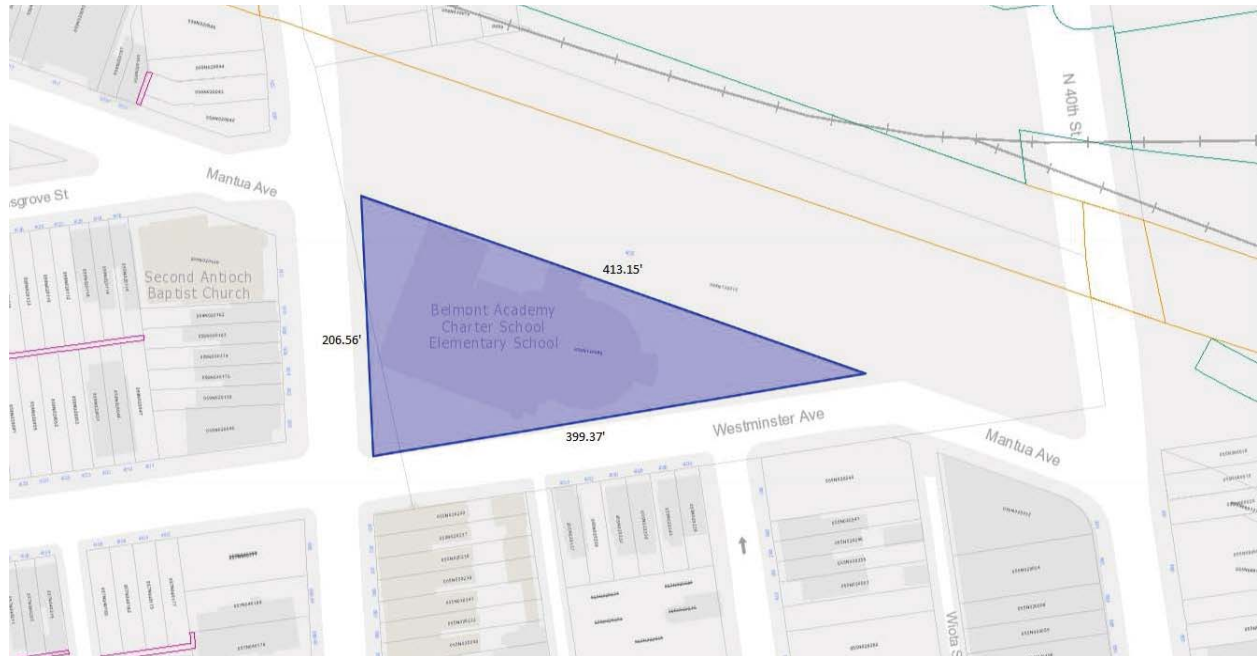


Figure 1: Parcel boundary of 4025-4069 Westminister Ave. Source: City of Philadelphia Department of Records, CityGeo.

The official OPA address of the property is 4025-69 Westminister Avenue. The deed of sale dated 12/24/1943 from Miss Victory Luke, et al. to Unity Mission Church Home and Training describes the boundaries of the property as follows:

All that certain triangular shaped piece of parcel of land, with the buildings and improvements thereon erected, situate in the Twenty-fourth Ward, in the City of Philadelphia and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, bounded and described as follows, viz:

Beginning at a point where the northerly line of Westminister Avenue, sixty feet wide, meets the easterly line of 41<sup>st</sup> Street, seventy feet wide; extending from said beginning point the following three courses and distances: (1) North one degree twenty-four minutes three seconds West, along said easterly line of 41<sup>st</sup> Street, two hundred six feet six inches and three-quarters of an inch to a point; (2) South sixty-seven degrees fifty-nine minutes twenty seconds and eighty-seven one-hundredths of a second East, by land of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, in departing from said easterly line of 41<sup>st</sup> Street, four hundred thirty-three feet seven inches and one-eighth of an inch to a point in said northerly line of Westminister Avenue, distant twenty-eight feet nine inches and one-quarter of an

inch measured South eighty-three degrees forty minutes thirty-one seconds West, along said northerly line of Westminster Avenue from an angle point in said line of Avenue; and thence (3) South eighty-three degrees forty minutes thirty-one seconds West, along said northerly line of Westminster Avenue, three hundred ninety-nine feet four inches and one-half of an inch to the place of beginning. Containing forty-one thousand and ninety-six square feet, more or less.



## 6. DESCRIPTION

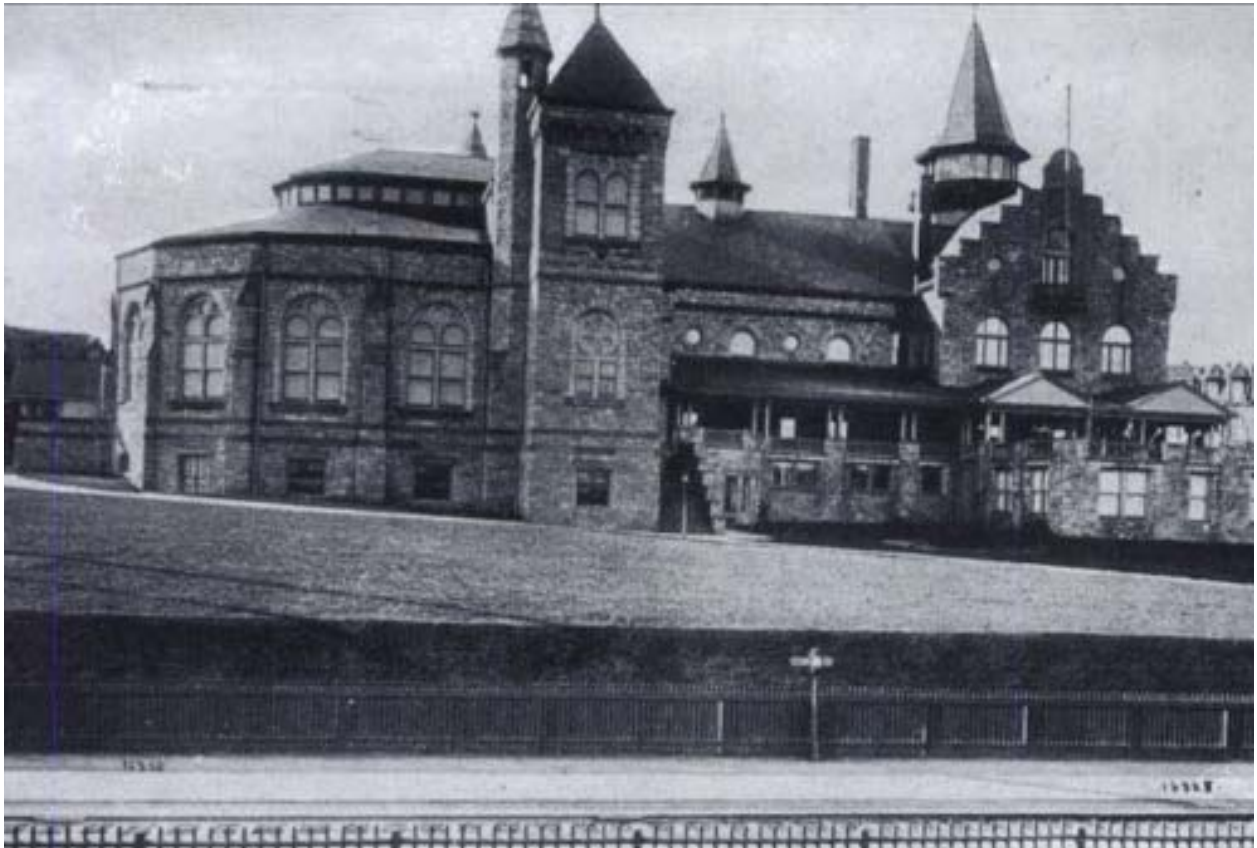


Figure 2: A postcard view of the PRR YMCA north elevation from 1913. Source: Robert Morris Skaler, *West Philadelphia: University City to 52<sup>nd</sup> Street*.



Figure 3: Aerial view of the north elevation. Source: Pictometry Eagleview, March 2, 2019.

The former Pennsylvania Railroad Young Men's Christian Association (PRR YMCA) is a free-standing, ashlar stone structure located on the north-east corner of N 41<sup>st</sup> Street and Westminster Avenue in the Belmont neighborhood of Philadelphia. The building maintains a distinguished presence in the context of the adjacent blocks and neighborhood. The former PRR YMCA sits off-axis from the adjacent developments, and instead, its longitudinal axis runs parallel to Mantua Avenue on the north. This orientation creates an open and grand view of the structure to both those approaching from the south and west. Furthermore, the siting adjacent to the 41<sup>st</sup> Street Bridge and the depressed rail lines increases the visibility of the building from the north and the east. The north elevation of the building contains more decorative elements, and coupled with the fact it was shown on the 1913 postcard in Figure 2, it was likely the primary façade. Today, the north of the site is enclosed with fencing and the main entrance is on the south elevation.

The structure is primarily two-stories with an exposed basement; however, extensions and extrusions on different portions of the property range from one to four stories in height. In addition, the ground elevation on the north side of the structure lowers in height, bringing the basement level to grade. A large, semi-circular addition on the eastern side of the structure further distinguishes the character of the once rectangular building from the blocks of dense row houses and semi-detached houses around it. A range of roof types – hipped, pyramid, stepped gable, and tented – cap the structure and are clad with asphalt shingles.

Designed by architect Thomas Lonsdale, known for his aptitude for breaking classical forms and including contrasting architectural features, the building contains elements of the Richardsonian Romanesque and Romanesque Revival styles.<sup>1</sup> Features such as heavy ashlar masonry, a combination of semicircular and flat arches, decorative plaques, parapeted gables, towers with steep rooves, and use of circular and semicircular windows are consistent with the Romanesque styles. The various elevations are broken up horizontally by a water table above basement level, belt courses, and dentil band that are discontinuous across the surfaces. Although currently painted white, photographic evidence suggests these features was once a darker hue (See Figure 2). Although it is known that the building enlarged with an addition (including an auditorium) in 1896 due to growing needs, the structure maintains a consistent use of materials and style with the addition barely distinguishable from the original structure.

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<sup>1</sup> Sandra L. Tatman, "Lonsdale, Thomas Preston (1855-1900)," Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, [https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/25642](https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/25642) (accessed March 4, 2018).

## South Elevation

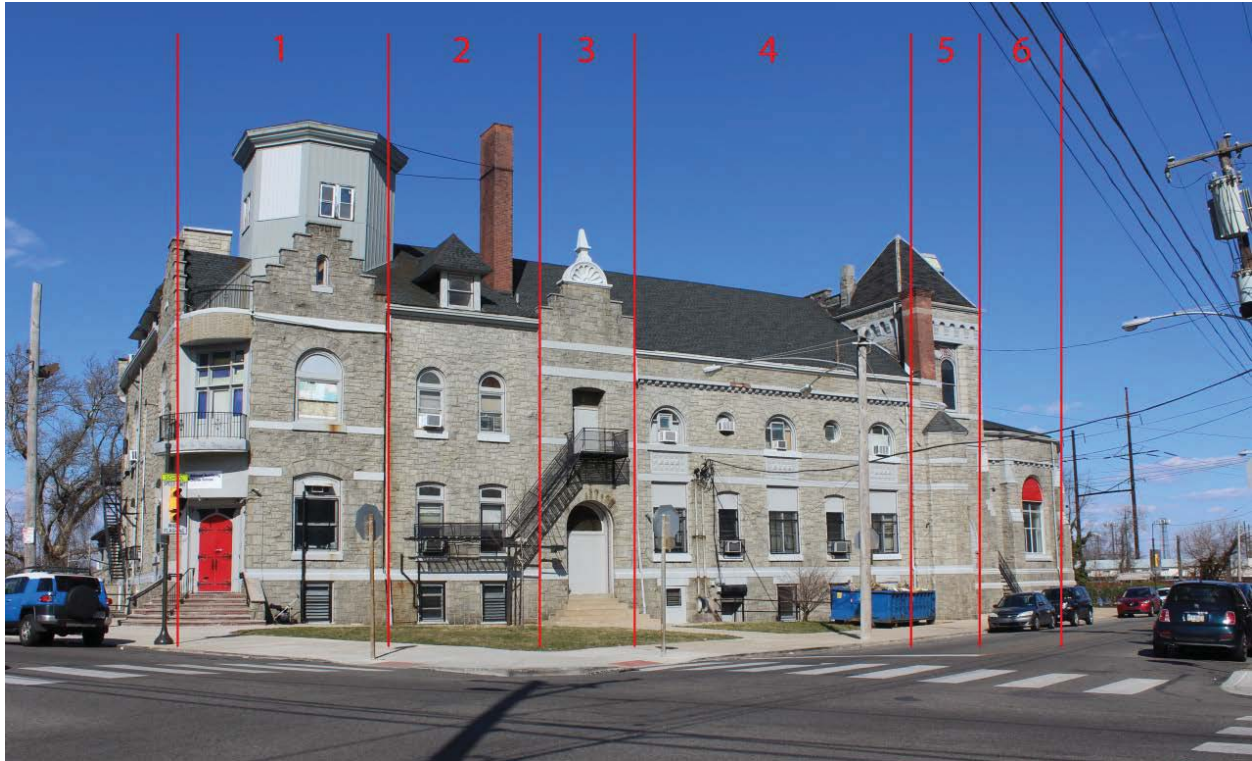


Figure 4: South façade of 4025-69 Westminister broken into sections for further description. Source: Photo by Amanda Stevens, March 19, 2019.

The south side primarily fronts Westminister Avenue but is angled towards N 41<sup>st</sup> Street. The elevation can be broken into six main components as shown in Figure 4.

The first section is comprised of the main entrance and a bay capped with a stepped gable roof (See Figure 5). The main entrance is located at the southwest corner and is composed of an eccentric doorway which one approaches by six curved steps constructed of brick and concrete. A lancet arch door braced by six large and ornate hinges and the door is framed by lancet arch carved panels on either side (See Figure 6). A transom window is set into the doorframe, and the panes follow the curve of the door and wooden panels. Above the entrance rests curved balconies on the second and third stories (See Figure 5). The second story balcony is composed of a single planar slab that extends beyond the face of the building and is supported by concrete masonry units. Access to the balcony is provided by a windowed door set in a frame with sidelights and a large, six light transom window above. A single door grants access to the third story balcony. Also visible from both the west and south elevations is a large octagonal tower, extruded approximately one story from the south west corner of the roof. The tower appears to be completely covered in vinyl siding except for a pair of double-hung windows on the south and west sides and a single door which exits onto the third-story balcony on the southwest corner. Photographic documentation shows that the tower used to be crowned with a steep pitched tented roof and a base without siding (See Figure 2). By 1957, the steep tented roof was removed and replaced with a relatively flat pitched roof, although it is unclear exactly when this change took place (See Figure 5). The vertical, curved surface of the balcony is covered in stone that differs from the rest of the structure in color and texture, suggesting at some point it was repaired or



replaced. The bay with the stepped gable roof is broken horizontally by three belt courses that lie flat against the stone masonry and by the water table above the basement level. The stone envelope is broken by rounded and segmental arched openings filled with retrofitted double-hung windows with a fixed sash above.



Figure 5: Entryway and truncated tower. Source: Photo by Amanda Stevens, March 19, 2019.



Figure 6: Main entrance and stone with date of construction inscribed. Source: Photo by Amanda Stevens, March 19, 2019.



Figure 7: Second and third section of the south façade showing dormer window and rosette. Source: Photo by Amanda Stevens, March 19, 2019.



The second component acts as a break between two stepped gables. Extending from the main roof is a dormer window capped with a hipped roof clad in asphalt shingles. Below, the cornice line and gutter spans between the two gables. The belt courses do not continue on this section of the south elevation, and the only clearly visible horizontal demarcations are the cornice and the water table. Two rounded arch windows are visible on the second story and segmental arches are utilized on the first. Like the adjacent section, these have been retrofitted with double-hung windows with a fixed sash above. A tall, narrow, brick chimney extends upwards from this section, as well (See Figure 7).

The third section again sees the use of a stepped gable; however, this gable is truncated and is instead topped with a partial rosette and a pinnacle (See Figure 7). A second set of six steps leads to another entrance that has been infilled with concrete masonry units (See Figure 8). Like the first section, three belt courses delineate the surface; however, only two of the three courses in each section are aligned with each other. The second story contains a single-door exit set in a segmental arch opening with an attached metal fire escape extending to the floor. The doorframe appears to have contained a sidelight and transom window, although these are both now covered with boards.

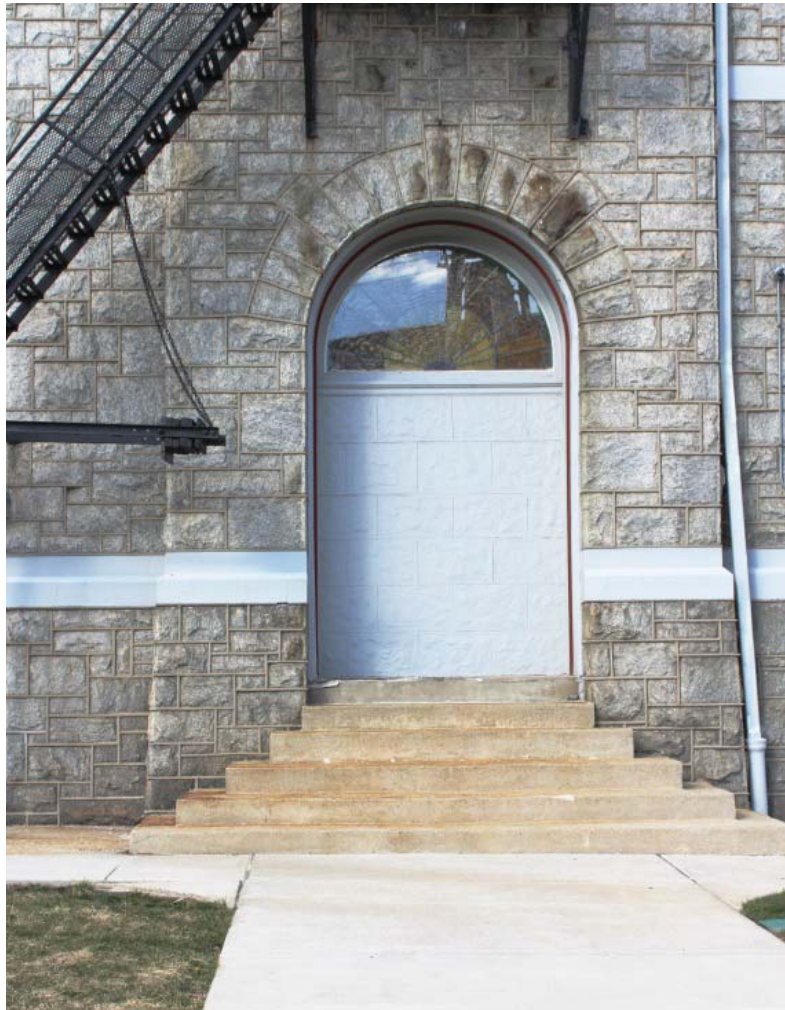


Figure 8: Infilled entry and transom. Source: Photo by Amanda Stevens, March 19, 2019.

The fourth section possesses its own set of ornamentation. A dentil band stretches the length and continues the line of the adjacent belt courses. Like the previous sections, round and segmental arched openings surround window frames, but in this portion of the building, circular windows are intermixed. Below the arched windows on the second story are three panels, divided into grids of 6x3 that contain floral patterns made of plaster (See Figure 9). In line with the windows and panels on the second story are windows on the first floor – squared on top. The effect is that of a window which extends the two stories, despite being broken by belt courses and panels.



Figure 9: Various window styles and plaster work. Source: Photo by Amanda Stevens, March 19, 2019.

The fifth component of the south façade is one of the structure's towers (See Figure 10). The main form is comprised of a three-story, square tower with a pyramid roof. Below the cornice, separated by two courses of stone, a frieze-like element wraps the body of the tower. The body of the tower contains an entrance on the ground floor and an arched window on the second story. A stone arch encases the doorway which contains a single door with two sidelights, a rectangular transom window with three lights, and above that separated by a narrow spandrel, a second window with five lights and tracery. Moving up the tower are two smaller double-hung windows with a large, shared lintel. Further up the tower on the third story is an inset arched window with tracery and spandrels connecting the arch back to the framework. Although like most of the building, trim is painted white, elements on the tower are outlined in red paint. On the southeast corner, a buttress capped with a triangular panel supports the tower. Two smaller octagonal towers are attached to the southwest and northeast corners of the tower. The southwest tower extends two stories, is capped by a tented roof, and contains a stairwell that exits on the ground floor. This tower also meets the facing of a corbeled chimney – composed of both stone and



brick. At the instance where the roof of the octagonal tower meets the chimney, there is a stone foliate. The northeast octagonal tower extends above the roofline of the third story and the form is similar to that of a bell tower, although it is unclear if this is the actual function.

The final component of the south elevation is the auditorium addition of 1896. This will be described in a subsequent and separate description.



Figure 10: Multiple tower structures on the south elevation. Source: Photo by Amanda Stevens, March 19, 2019.

## West Elevation

The west side of the former PRR YMCA faces 41<sup>st</sup> Street (See Figure 11). Extending from the main roof are three dormers crowned with hipped roofs and asphalt shingles and each with a single double-hung window.

A single bay, adjacent to the main entrance, protrudes slightly from the face of the building. The bay is crowned with a stepped gable roof. A small, narrow, round-arch window is centered in the upper portion of the bay. This single bay is divided horizontally by three string courses, two of which are broken where they meet windows, and the water table which runs just above the basement level and is broken by a single access door.

A series of round arch windows with varying widths puncture the envelope on the second story. Like the south side, these openings are supported by stone surrounds and the window itself is comprised of a fixed sash in the upper portion with one or a pair of mulled double hung windows below – one for the narrower widths and mulled for the wider. Windows on the first floor, again, like the south side, take the form of segmental arches. The window frame units each contain a fixed sash with either single or mulled double hung windows below. The basement windows, visible below the water table, have been covered with boards.



Figure 11: West façade of 4025-69 Westminister. Source: Photo by Amanda Stevens, March 19, 2019.



## Northwest Addition

On the northwestern corner of the property, an addition with a height at the first floor's level extends from the building (See Figure 12). The rectangular addition is capped with a pair of gables covered in asphalt shingles. A set of six steps leads to a pair of doors with a painted red doorframe on the western side, granting entrance into this wing. The rest of the wing is enclosed behind a chain-link fence that surrounds the northern portion of the parcel. In this portion the ground elevation decreases, and steps lead down to the exposed basement of the one story addition. The basement level utilizes a similar stone as the main portion of the building, but the first story's exterior material is plaster. Paired Doric columns frame the windows on the top half of the addition.



Figure 12: Northwest addition pictured in lower center of photograph. Source: Photo by Amanda Stevens, March 19, 2019.

## North Elevation

The north side of the structure is not fully visible from the public right of way. The following description is based on what is publicly visible (See Figure 12).

Moving west to east, the first component of the northern side is comprised of a three bay wide face with a stepped gable roof. It is three stories tall and the first floor has the northwest addition (described above) extending from it. Windows are primarily round arches with the exception of two circular windows on the third floor. A metal fire escape also begins on the third level,

descends to the second, and wraps around to the west side. On the north east side there is also a small tower which has retained its conical roof and ornamental pinnacle (See Figure 13).



Figure 13: View of north towers. Source: Photo by Amanda Stevens, March 19, 2019.

### **East Elevation – Auditorium**

The auditorium was added to the east side in 1896 (See Figure 14). The semicircular, or more accurately partial octadecagon, addition is capped with a tented monitor roof which meets a hipped roof at its center point. The windows along the upper portion of the roof have been enclosed, although it is unclear when this occurred. Each of the nine sides contain similar details; however, not all sides are visible from the public right of way, so it cannot be confirmed that all sides have remained unaltered. Of those visible, they are comprised of the following features. The primary material is stone arranged in a random ashlar pattern. Approximately four courses down from the cornice runs a dentil course with widely spaced dentils. Large arches are centered in each side and encase window frames. The upper portions, situated in the curves of the arches, have been infilled and painted red. The lower portion is comprised of a hybrid window form which rests on a stone sill. Small windows enclosed by metal grates rest at ground level under a stone lintel and provide light to the basement, with the exception of the side that meets the southern elevation where a larger window leads to a window well as a form of egress. Each corner is supported by a stone buttress that extends to the height of the dentil course and is capped with a carved triangular panel.

The central side of the auditorium, facing east, varies from the other sides as it contains the entrance into the space. Although the side still contains a dentil course and buttresses, the round arch window is instead a semicircular one. The panes are split by a single door leading to a metal fire escape. Below the window is a portico covered with a gable roof. The portico is supported



by stone walls and a set of wooden posts. Components of the portico and entryway are outlined in red trim. Seven steps lead to the pair of doors under the portico.



Figure 14: View looking west at auditorium. Source: Photo by Amanda Stevens, March 19, 2019.

## 7. SIGNIFICANCE

The property of 4025-4069 Westminster Avenue is historically significant and should be listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places under the following criterion:

(J) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

### Introduction

On the corner of 41<sup>st</sup> Street and Westminster Avenue in West Philadelphia sits the Belmont Academy Charter School, established in 1998,<sup>2</sup> in a building that dates back to 1894.<sup>3</sup> For over one hundred years, the building at 4025-29 Westminster Avenue served as a community center for the surrounding neighborhood, historically referred to as Belmont. From the building's construction through the interwar period, the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) branch of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) occupied the building. From the 1940s to just before the turn of the millennium, Father Divine—longtime Philadelphian and founder of the International Peace Mission Movement—utilized the building as the “Unity Mission Church,” a community center and place of worship. In its history, the building at 41<sup>st</sup> and Westminster has played an important role in the surrounding community. Its uses exemplify the heritage of the community, its location and architectural design are important to the neighborhood itself, and it has great value in terms of the history of the development of the community it serves.

### Development in Belmont

By the 1880s, industrial development had become fleshed out in Philadelphia like it had in most large American cities. Philadelphia was an important hub for the massive Pennsylvania Railroad, and the railroad's growth spurred the growth and development of the surrounding community. Historically, Belmont was mostly undeveloped land as a result of private landholders like William D. Kelley, a state politician, controlling large parcels in the area.<sup>4</sup> Belmont had developed at a slower pace as compared to other neighborhoods located nearer Center City, in part because it was separated from the downtown by both the Schuylkill River and railroad lines. This was compounded by the fact that the main form of transportation into the neighborhood was horsecar lines. The result was a village-like setting with a variety of architectural typologies and styles found within. Development at this time often took the form of one of Philadelphia's most defining housing styles – the semi-detached, or twin, house. Land speculation and the introduction of more efficient means of transportation aided the popularity of the neighborhood. As the population slowly increased, institutions began to form within the neighborhood, such as the Belmont Grammar School in 1869, the West Philadelphia Hospital for Women in 1889, and the PRR YMCA in 1894. In 1895, a year after the YMCA opened, the Route 40 streetcar began its service. The presence of the YMCA along with other institutions in the neighborhood and the

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<sup>2</sup> “Belmont Charter Network | Our History,” Belmont Charter Network, <http://www.belmontcharternetwork.org/history/> (accessed March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> William Bender Wilson, *History of The Pennsylvania Railroad Department of The Young Men's Christian Association of Philadelphia*, (Philadelphia, Steven Greene, 1911), 57.

<sup>4</sup> Joshua Bevan, “In Belmont, The Making Of A ‘City Of Villas’,” Hidden City Philadelphia, <https://hiddencityphila.org/2017/01/in-belmont-the-making-of-a-city-of-villas/> (accessed March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

new access provided by the Route 40 streetcar led to an increase in development in Belmont.<sup>5</sup> Permits for speculative developments increased in the early 1890s and clusters of new residents and housing formed in the vicinity of the key institutions.<sup>6</sup> By the turn of the century, Belmont had transformed, and the villas and detached houses which once comprised its character were now also surrounded by row houses to serve the growing community. Between 1883 and 1887, the Mantua Transfer Station was in operation on the northeast side of 40<sup>th</sup> Street and the railroad tracks – nearby the future site of the PRR YMCA. The transfer station employed 350 to 500 people, depending on the daily need.<sup>7</sup> As the railroad grew, the number of PRR employees did as well, and Belmont soon swelled in its size as parcels in the neighborhood were sold off to PRR staff throughout the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>8</sup> Many Pennsylvania Railroad employees could be found living in the surrounding blocks according to census records from 1900.<sup>9</sup> The effects of the institution and the railroad impacted the physical form of the neighborhood around it.

### The Formation of the Pennsylvania Railroad Young Men's Christian Association

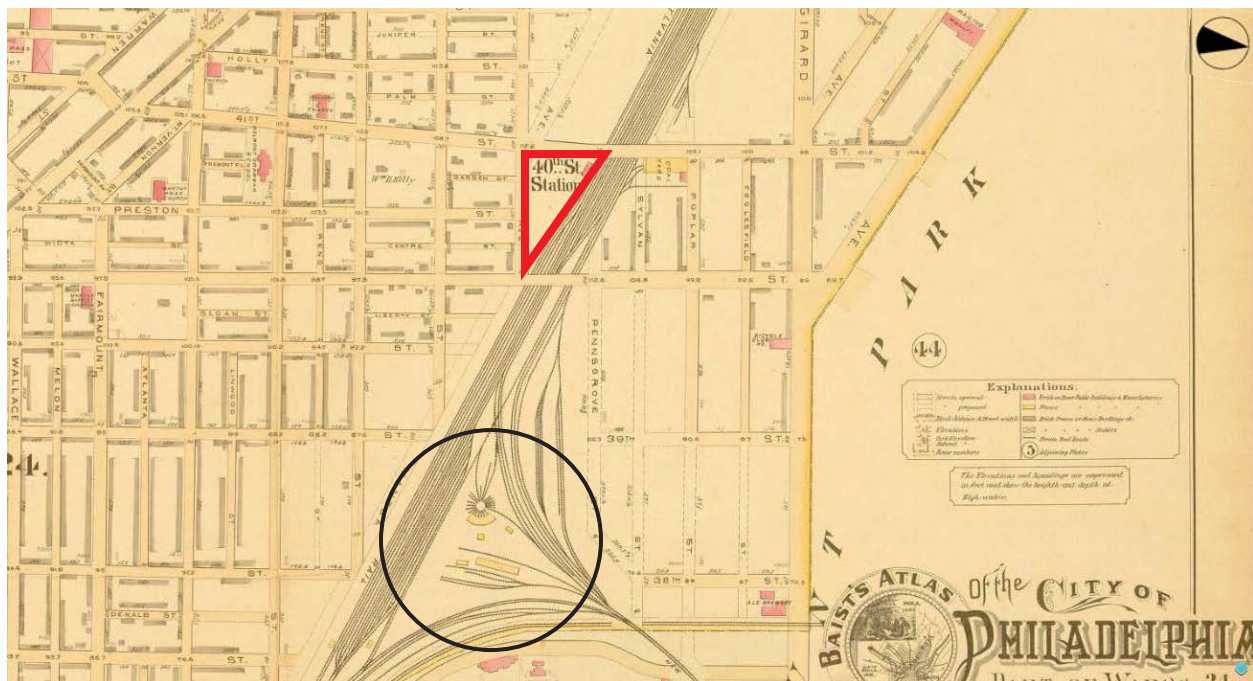


Figure 15: An 1888 map showing the low density in Belmont at the cusp of turn-of-the-century development, as well as proposed street layouts. The future block of the YMCA is outlined in red and the Mantua Transfer Station is circled in black. Source: The Free Library of Philadelphia, Map Collection.

As the number of PRR workmen city-wide rose, a need for a proper place of refuge from this work was recognized by railroad managers and directors. The political unrest in Philadelphia was

<sup>5</sup> Robert Morris Skaler. *West Philadelphia: University City to 52nd Street*. Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2002, p. 95.

<sup>6</sup> Bevan, "In Belmont, The Making Of A 'City Of Villas'."

<sup>7</sup> William Bender Wilson, *History of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company: With Plan of Organization, Portraits of Officials and Biographical Sketches, Volume 1*, (Philadelphia: Henry T. Coates, 1895), p. 180.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Bevan, "In Belmont, The Making Of A 'City Of Villas'."



no different than the unrest felt by the many railroad workers across the United States, who worked long hours often many miles away from their homes.<sup>10</sup> This, combined with support from railroad management to settle this angst in the middle of largely-unregulated growth in industrial capitalism, led to the support and creation of railroad YMCAs.<sup>11</sup>

The YMCA, or Young Men's Christian Association, was founded in 1844 in London, England by Congregationalist George Williams. Though they originally were founded to serve as community centers for imparting Christian values on young men, YMCAs eventually evolved to host recreational and educational facilities. The idea was to impart Christian principles by promoting a healthy body, mind, and spirit. YMCAs had spread to much of the United States by the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and they soon became a common part of American life in the Gilded Age. The YMCA's success can be attributed to its business model, which encouraged donations from wealthy benefactors. Many of these benefactors were industrialists who were more than happy to make investments and give back massive amounts of wealth to YMCAs. This practice of giving back to lower classes created justification for large-scale capitalist control, which was representative of the then-prevalent Social Gospel approach to philanthropy.<sup>12</sup> The Social Gospel Movement was founded in the second half of the nineteenth century and taught that salvation and good works – particularly helping the needy – were tied. Additionally, YMCAs were touted as refuges from vice and bastions of moral Christian standards for immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe.<sup>13</sup> All of these factors led to YMCAs receiving support from industrialists as well as their workers,<sup>14</sup> and they soon began to accommodate specific industries, like coal mining and logging.<sup>15</sup> Railroad YMCAs also emerged, with the first of these specialized locations forming in 1872 in Cleveland. There is a history of attempts to form organizations for the betterment of the railroad workers, but often they did not succeed due to the lack of an element holding them together. That is, until the YMCA “presented itself as the solution to the problem.”<sup>16</sup> By 1900, 1 in 8 YMCAs were railroad YMCAs.<sup>17</sup> The railroads themselves often provided assistance and funds—28 YMCAs in 1900 were built by railroads—and consortiums of railroad workers, employees, and corporations typically footed the bill.<sup>18</sup>

In Philadelphia, the concept was supported by the efforts of PRR employees themselves. On May 1, 1877 the proto-chapter of the Pennsylvania Railroad YMCA was founded by several railroad employees, but its development stalled due to the lack of a suitable meeting place.<sup>19</sup> Interest reignited in 1886, and the chapter met in various churches throughout West Philadelphia until November 15<sup>th</sup> of that year, when the decision was made to find a permanent residence for the

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas Winter, *Making Men, Making Class: The YMCA and Workingmen, 1877-1920*, (Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 67-68.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Owen Pence, *The YMCA and Social Need*, (New York, Association Press, 1939), 55-56.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Winter, *Making Men, Making Class: The YMCA and Workingmen, 1877-1920*, 4.

<sup>15</sup> “History – 1900 to 1950s,” The Y, <http://www.ymca.net/history/1900-1950s.html>, (accessed April 25th, 2018).

<sup>16</sup> Wilson, *History of The Pennsylvania Railroad Department of The Young Men's Christian Association of Philadelphia*, 8.

<sup>17</sup> Pence, *The YMCA and Social Need*, 55.

<sup>18</sup> Pence, *The YMCA and Social Need*, 55-56.

<sup>19</sup> Wilson, *History of The Pennsylvania Railroad Department of The Young Men's Christian Association of Philadelphia*, 9.



YMCA. On April 1, 1887 the association moved into a row house at 3607 Haverford Street in Belmont, within distance to numerous PRR railroad facilities in West Philadelphia.<sup>20</sup> The YMCA, continuing to serve PRR railroad employees, would remain here until 1893.<sup>21</sup> By this time the association had largely outgrown its home, as its membership had swelled to 438 members.<sup>22</sup>



Figure 16: Laying of the cornerstone at 41<sup>st</sup> St. and Westminster Ave. on June 17, 1893. Source: *History of The Pennsylvania Railroad Department of The Young Men's Christian Association of Philadelphia*.

The Pennsylvania Railroad was enthused with the organization's growth and had begun to recognize its importance to railroad workers, and as a result the company loaned \$10,000 for the construction of a new building at 41<sup>st</sup> and Westminster Streets on a parcel that was donated by the company.<sup>23</sup> In May of 1892 architect Thomas P. Lonsdale's plans for the building were accepted.<sup>24</sup> On May 10, 1893 the association temporarily moved to 4028 Westminster Avenue,

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 11-13.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 37.

<sup>24</sup> Christopher T. Baer "A General Chronology of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company Its Predecessors and Successors and Its Historical Context: 1892." The Pennsylvania Railroad Technical & Historical Society.

next door to the building site, in order to accommodate its growing membership.<sup>25</sup> Ground broke for the new building on April 27<sup>th</sup> of that year,<sup>26</sup> and it was completed on January 23, 1894.<sup>27</sup> The creation of the PRR YMCA in Philadelphia coincided with a period of growth for the Pennsylvania Railroad. In the late nineteenth century, the Pennsylvania Railroad was expanding its operation west as well as extending its coverage throughout Pennsylvania (See Figure 17 and Figure 18).

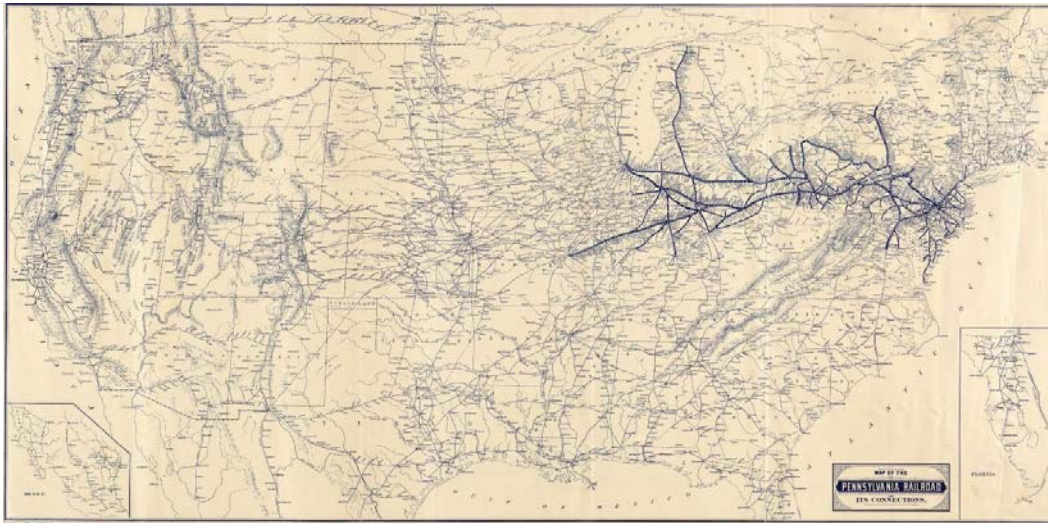


Figure 17: Map of the extents of the PRR in 1889. Source: S.C. Patterson, *Map of the Pennsylvania Railroad and its connections*, 1889.



Figure 18: Map of the extents of the PRR in 1893. Source: Allen, Lane & Scott, *General map of the Pennsylvania Railroad and its connections*, 1893.

<sup>25</sup> Wilson, *History of The Pennsylvania Railroad Department of The Young Men's Christian Association of Philadelphia*, 53.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 50.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 57.



## Design and Construction

The YMCA was designed by Thomas Lonsdale, a Girard College graduate and prolific Philadelphia designer of churches, public buildings, and institutions. Born in Norristown, PA, Lonsdale entered Girard College at the age of nine, and upon graduating he pursued architectural training from James H. Windrim.<sup>28</sup> Windrim himself was a successful Philadelphia architect, responsible for designing many public structures throughout the city.<sup>29</sup> Lonsdale remained with Windrim for fourteen years before establishing his own firm in 1885.<sup>30</sup> He worked independently until his early death in 1900. During the course of his career, Lonsdale designed many Philadelphia-area buildings, including Roman Catholic High School at Broad and Vine Streets, the Baptist Temple and other buildings on the campus of Temple University. Lonsdale is also responsible for the design of the Pennsylvania Building for the 1893 Chicago World's Fair.<sup>31</sup> Lonsdale, a Protestant, was known for his Christian designs and architectural work for religious institutions, and the PRR YMCA was just one example of this precedent.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, Lonsdale was known for his very grand and flamboyant designs that often featured multiple contrasting architectural features and large numbers of rooms. One of his more famous flamboyant designs was the American Life Insurance Co. Building, also known as the Manhattan Building, which was demolished in 1961.<sup>33</sup> In his designs he did not shy from breaking forms and classical molds to create eccentric pieces of architecture.<sup>34</sup>

The YMCA expressed the same individualism which defines most of Lonsdale's other works. Its design incorporated many rooms for various functions, including business and reception offices, social and reading rooms, a library, classrooms, a gymnasium, public baths, as well as bowling alleys and shuffleboards.<sup>35</sup> The building's multi-faceted façade, with its many windows and varied heights, also exemplified Lonsdale's ostentatious style. So great was the success of the site that it took less than two years from the opening of the YMCA for the building to require an expansion to accommodate the growing needs of members. Lonsdale's design soon outgrew its own walls as YMCA membership continued to grow, and by 1896 it was believed that the PRR YMCA at 41<sup>st</sup> and Westminster was the largest railroad department YMCA in the world.<sup>36</sup> In 1896 the Pennsylvania Railroad dedicated more land to the PRR YMCA, and Lonsdale returned to oversee the gymnasium renovation and the addition of a large auditorium.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Tatman, "Lonsdale, Thomas Preston (1855-1900)."

<sup>29</sup> Sandra L. Tatman, "Windrim, James Hamilton (1840-1919)," Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, [https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/21564](https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/21564) (accessed July 10, 2018).

<sup>30</sup> Tatman, "Lonsdale, Thomas Preston (1855-1900)."

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Robert E. Cooper, *Historic American Buildings Survey, Robert E. Cooper, Photographer January, 1961 DEMOLITION, SHOWING STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS. - American Life Insurance Company Building, 330-336 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, PA*, Historic American Buildings Survey, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/pa1080.photos.137616p/resource/>.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> "The P.R.R. Y.M.C.A." *International Railway Journal*, 12, (September 3, 1904), 31.

<sup>36</sup> William Bender Wilson, *History of The Pennsylvania Railroad Department of The Young Men's Christian Association of Philadelphia*, 112.

<sup>37</sup> See Appendix II.

## Use as a YMCA

For many years, the property also included the 40<sup>th</sup> Street Pennsylvania Railroad station towards which the YMCA was originally oriented; however, in November 1901 the PRR Board approved the abandonment of the 40<sup>th</sup> Street Station and the nearby Zoological Garden Station with the next timetable change. This decision to close the 40<sup>th</sup> Street Station was met with much disapproval from employees due to the proximity of the station to the YMCA.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, the station was decommissioned in an effort to consolidate service and speed up travel times on local trains, which had to compete with an expanding Philadelphia trolley system and the then newly-completed Market Frankford Elevated line.<sup>39</sup>

During the building's tenure with the PRR, it hosted numerous events of historic and cultural significance. On January 30, 1897 over 1,600 people witnessed the funeral of much-beloved Pennsylvania Railroad president George Roberts, a Quaker and Philadelphia native with ancestry tracing back to the original founders of the Commonwealth.<sup>40</sup> From October 11 to October 14, 1900 the YMCA hosted the "Tenth International Conference of the Railroad Department of the Young Men's Christian Association," an international conference exhibiting railroad YMCAs and their work. Representatives were hosted from numerous countries, including Russia, Canada, and Germany.<sup>41</sup> The PRR YMCA served as an international model of employee benefits for other railroads across the world, and its effects on boosting railroad morale were praised.<sup>42</sup> American railroad representatives from across the United States also attended the conference, looking to improve the YMCAs associated with their railroads.<sup>43</sup> On January 25, 1905 then-former president Grover Cleveland spoke at the YMCA, hailing the efforts of railroad YMCAs as important institutions for instilling American values. Additionally, numerous concerts and shows were held in the YMCA's auditorium over the years, which featured a pipe organ that was donated by tycoon Andrew Carnegie in 1904.<sup>44</sup>

Although the site was a draw for these larger, singular events, it was the day-to-day activities which established the PRR YMCA as a significant neighborhood institution in the first place. The YMCA served as a community center, providing educational assistance, religious services, and leisure space for the many PRR employees who resided in West Philadelphia and beyond. Amenities offered included business offices; a reception office; social and reading rooms; a library with over 8,000 volumes, classrooms for vocational training; a gymnasium; baths; bowling alleys; shuffleboards; a plant for demonstrating different forms of technology; a banquet hall with a culinary department; an auditorium that sat 1,200; ten rooms for the sons of railroad workers under sixteen; and weekly church services.<sup>45</sup> Classes offered included subjects directly related to the railroad industry like arithmetic, railroad geography, and railroad organization and

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<sup>38</sup> Christopher T. Baer, "A General Chronology of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, Its Predecessors and Successors, and Its Historical Context: 1901, [http://www.prrths.com/newprr\\_files/Hagley/PRR1901.pdf](http://www.prrths.com/newprr_files/Hagley/PRR1901.pdf).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Wilson, *History of The Pennsylvania Railroad Department of The Young Men's Christian Association of Philadelphia*, 127.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 154.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 170-180.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 206-207.

<sup>45</sup> "The P.R.R. Y.M.C.A." *International Railway Journal*, 12, (1904), 31, [https://books.google.com/books?id=DvIKAAAAYAAJ&lpg=RA1-PA31&dq=pennsylvania railroad ymca philadelphia&pg=RA1-PA31#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=DvIKAAAAYAAJ&lpg=RA1-PA31&dq=pennsylvania%20railroad%20ymca%20philadelphia&pg=RA1-PA31#v=onepage&q&f=false), (accessed March 5, 2018).



operation, as well as night classes in English, penmanship, business, drafting, and telegraphy.<sup>46</sup> The branch was so successful that in 1904 the *International Railway Journal* reported that the PRR YMCA in Philadelphia was the “largest in membership, in committee service, in equipment and in variety and extent of the work.”<sup>47</sup> It was a place where all employees and their sons could come together – a place that served the community that had grown around it.

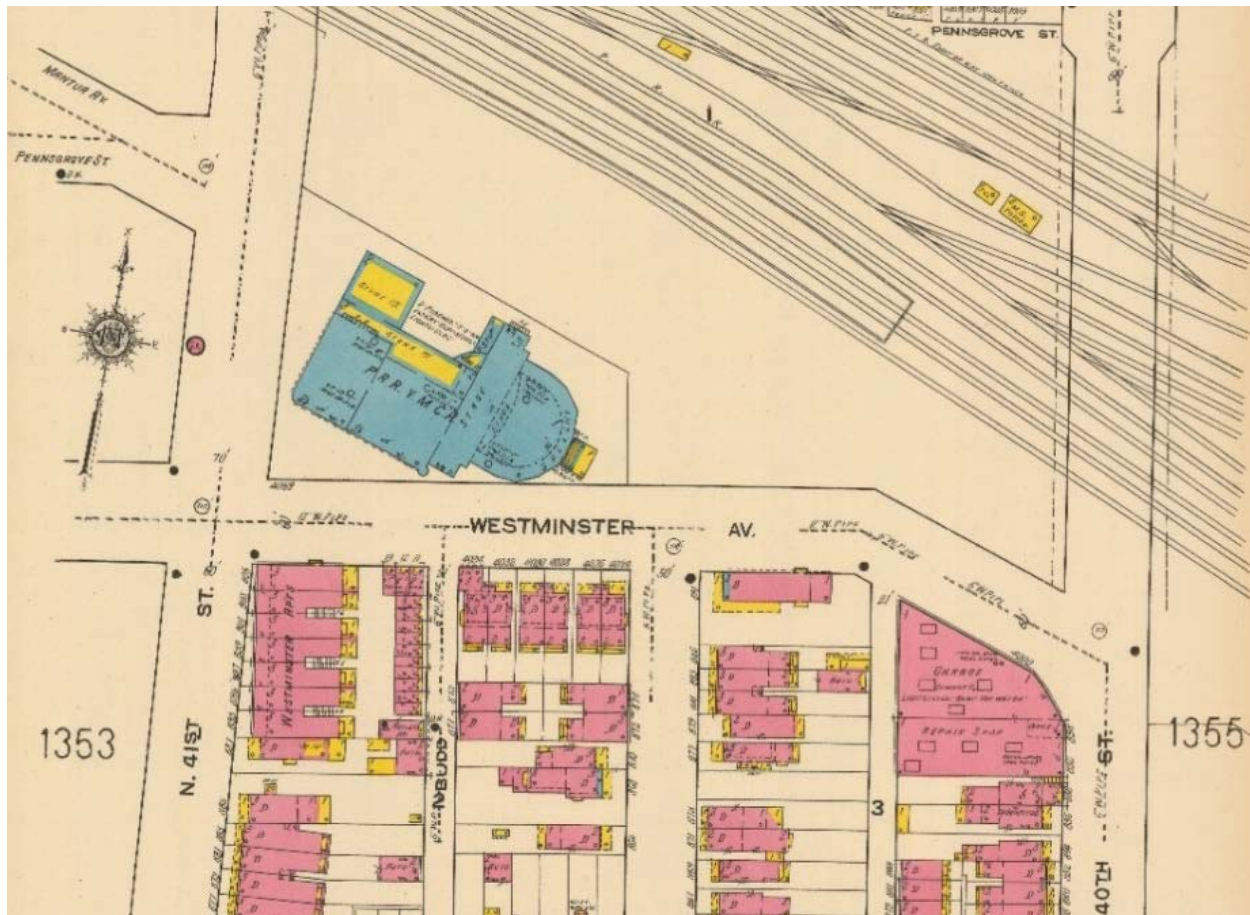


Figure 19: 1922 Sanborn map showing the "PRR YMCA" and dense development in Belmont. Source: Pennsylvania State University Libraries, Digital Map Drawer.

### Father Divine and the Unity Mission Church and Home Training School

Coinciding with the Great Migration post-WWI and the decline in industry city-wide, the demographics of West Philadelphia began to change from a European immigrant community to a largely African-American one as discriminatory practices boxed residents into an intensely segregated area in Belmont and the surrounding neighborhoods.<sup>48</sup> As this change occurred, so did a change in use for the YMCA building. Although the jobs were slowly declining, many of

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 68, 94.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 68.

<sup>48</sup> Jake Blumgart, “West Philadelphia,” *The Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia*, <https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/west-philadelphia-essay/>.

the West Philadelphian African-Americans held unionized industrial positions.<sup>49</sup> By 1938 the once flourishing PRR YMCA could no longer meet its obligations so the property was released back to the Pennsylvania Railroad Company.<sup>50</sup> In 1943 the PRR property was sold to members of the International Peace Mission Movement. These members later transferred the property unto the Unity Mission Church and Home Training School — continuing the building’s legacy as a community center for Belmont area residents.<sup>51</sup> The leader of this movement was Reverend M.J. Divine, more commonly known as Father Divine. The purchase of the YMCA was part of his move from New York City to Philadelphia. Father Divine was the founder and leader of the International Peace Mission Movement (IPMM), which he established in Brooklyn, NY in 1914.<sup>52</sup> The IPMM was a religious movement of which Divine was the spiritual leader and object of worship.<sup>53</sup> His movement preached the abolition of racial boundaries and the concept of race, a life of purity without vice, and the belief that the present life that we all live is in fact the afterlife.<sup>54</sup> Father Divine first visited Philadelphia on September 3, 1939 on a grand tour that included much press coverage.<sup>55</sup> Arguably the tour caused Father Divine’s attention to be drawn to Philadelphia and its recently increased African-American population. He moved to the city that year, purchasing multiple properties and businesses that culminated with the Unity Mission Church, Home, & Training School—the former PRR YMCA.<sup>56</sup>

Divine’s move to Philadelphia was part of a golden age of the IPMM. Part of Divine’s movement resulted in its own religious vernacular. Architecture was used for their search for perfection, but instead of creating a new typology, the movement saw a “spiritualized appropriation of existing spaces.”<sup>57</sup> In accordance with the principle, the former PRR YMCA was given a new purpose. At the helm of great wealth with its largest following, Father Divine used the building as just one example of his movement’s gleaming businesses. Many IPMM businesses offered free or heavily-discounted services, as well as services that were entirely racially integrated during an era when many facilities were still segregated.<sup>58</sup> The Unity Mission Church did all of these things—and was a stellar example of racial equality in the 1940s.

The Unity Mission Church continued to offer many of the services and amenities that the original PRR YMCA offered, but to a much greater range of area residents. Unlike the PRR YMCA, which limited its use to Pennsylvania Railroad employees, the Unity Mission Church

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> According to Deed book DWH 611, Page 121 &c. dated July 21, 1938, the YMCA was financially unable to continue the obligations placed upon it, and “rather than fail to maintain said obligations desires to acknowledge that inability and to release unto the said Pennsylvania Railroad Company.”

<sup>51</sup> Philadelphia County Deed Book CJP 321, p. 305 &c., 8/10/1943; and Philadelphia County Deed Book CJP 417, p. 547 &c., 12/24/1943.

<sup>52</sup> Leonard Norman Primiano, “International Peace Mission Movement and Father Divine,” The Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia, <http://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/international-peace-mission-movement-and-father-divine/> (retrieved April 20, 2018).

<sup>53</sup> Arthur Huff Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis*, Vol. III, (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944), 62.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 59-63.

<sup>55</sup> Leonard Norman Primiano, “International Peace Mission Movement and Father Divine,” <http://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/international-peace-mission-movement-and-father-divine/>.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Leonard Norman Primiano, “‘Bringing Perfection in these Different Places’: Father Divine’s Vernacular Architecture of Intention,” *Folklore* (2004): 115:1, 3-26, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0015587042000192501>.

<sup>58</sup> Primiano, “International Peace Mission Movement and Father Divine,”

was open to the entire community, regardless of membership to the IPMM.<sup>59</sup> The Unity Mission Church reflected one of Father Divine's most important contributions—his advocacy that the International Peace Mission Movement was an important tool to combatting gang membership and juvenile delinquency. The Unity Mission Church adhered to exactly this mission by offering haircuts, a public gymnasium, and bowling alleys among other amenities at no charge to area residents.<sup>60</sup> In addition to these services, the building served as a church and was home to many of Father Divine's religious services and Holy Communion Banquet Services. These banquet services were large feasts open to all, and were also fully integrated.<sup>61</sup> In further support of their overall goals and tenets, the Unity Mission Church also owned multiple row houses across the street from the Home Training School, likely used as affordable apartments.<sup>62</sup> Additionally, the IPMM worked with the Philadelphia Police Athletic League to run community sports in the building, and offered its facilities to local youth sports leagues.<sup>63</sup>



Figure 20: Mother Divine rings a bell signifying the start of a Holy Communion Banquet at the Unity Mission Church on 41st and Westminister in 1967. Source: September 23rd, 1967 edition of *The New Day*, a newsletter publication of the IPMM.

Blight plagued Belmont as early as the 1960s and well into the 1970s, a problem that persisted in many American cities like Philadelphia. Changing demographics led to much of the housing stock in the area to become abandoned or dilapidated, and the industrial-use zoning that was

<sup>59</sup> "Building Democracy, Curbing Juvenile Delinquency at Father Divine's Mission," *The Baltimore Afro-American*, January 12, 1946.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Arthur Huff Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis*, 64.

<sup>62</sup> Deed book VCS 310 page 473 &c., May 28, 1993 and Deed book JTD 19, page 371 &c., June 17, 1996.

<sup>63</sup> Mother Divine, *The Peace Mission Movement*, (Philadelphia, Imperial Press).



common in Belmont no longer was ideal as businesses moved out or changed focus. The City Redevelopment Area Plan for Belmont from 1972 advocated radical changes in zoning and large visionary projects as a way of addressing blight. Yet the community center at 41<sup>st</sup> and Westminster remained unchanged in future plans of the neighborhood, clearly indicating the building's positive impact on the surrounding area.<sup>64</sup> The Unity Mission Church remained important to the community well into the latter half of the century, and continued to serve as an important resource for Belmont-area residents.



Figure 21: A 1972 proposed land use map published by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission shows the property as an "Institutional" parcel, indicating its continued use as a community center. Source: Philadelphia City Planning Commission, *Belmont Redevelopment Area Plan*, 1972.

<sup>64</sup> "Belmont Redevelopment Area Plan," *Philadelphia City Planning Commission*, 1972.



Very little information regarding the International Peace Mission's background, or notably its statements on church finances, exists. The movement kept a policy of withholding this information for its entire existence. In fact, this policy was often cited as the reason Father Divine left New York for Philadelphia in 1939—to escape legal trouble involving a former member and insufficient record of donated property.<sup>65</sup> This trend carries to the history and records of the church post-WWII for much of its time as an IPMM-owned property. Eventually, over a period from the 1980s to the early part of the millennium, the IPMM began to sell its properties.<sup>66</sup> Despite the sale of other properties, 4025-4069 Westminster was not sold. The Unity Mission Church and Home School Training continues to own the property although its use as a church ended in the late 1980s or early 1990s. In the 1990s, the property was repurposed for use as a school and opened as Belmont Charter Academy in 1998.<sup>67</sup>

No matter this uncertainty, what is clear is the building's continued significance for Belmont and West Philadelphia. The Unity Mission Church was important not only in that it continued the legacy of a community center at 41<sup>st</sup> and Westminster, but also in that it progressed in its scope of services and constituents. It continued the role of the original PRR YMCA as an important community center.

## Conclusion

The property of 4025-4069 Westminster Avenue has held a continued presence in the Belmont neighborhood since its construction in 1894. From its tenure as the YMCA facility for the Pennsylvania Railroad to its time as the Unity Mission Church and even now as the home of the Belmont Charter Academy, the legacy as a place for people to gather has continued with the structure. The Thomas Lonsdale designed structure at 41<sup>st</sup> and Westminster has played a very important role in Belmont and its history, and as the community has changed, the former YMCA has been its rock. Its importance is great enough to merit its designation as a historic Philadelphia property.

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<sup>65</sup> Leonard Norman Primiano, "International Peace Mission Movement and Father Divine," <http://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/international-peace-mission-movement-and-father-divine/>.

<sup>66</sup> Associated Press, "Father Divine's Movement Slowly Fades," *Los Angeles Times*, June 14, 2003, Accessed March 25, 2018, <http://articles.latimes.com/2003/jun/14/local/me-religdivine14>.

<sup>67</sup> Belmont Charter Network, <http://www.belmontcharternetwork.org/history/> (accessed 15 May 2019).

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## APPENDICES

### I. Additional Figures

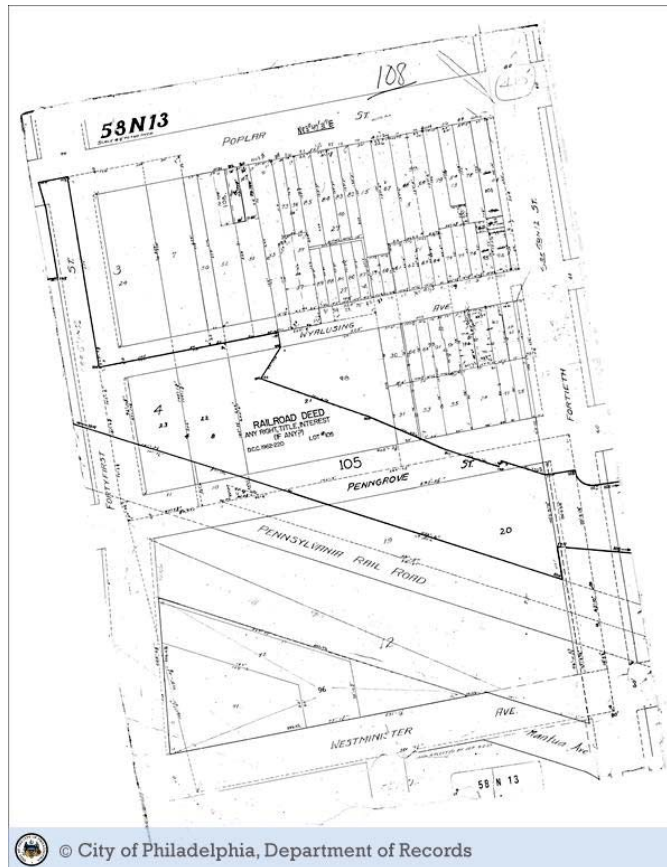


Figure 22: Aerial view of 40125-4069 Westminister Avenue. Source: City of Philadelphia Department of Records, CityGeo.



Figure 23: Auditorium interior, year unknown. Source: William Bender Wilson's *History of The Pennsylvania Railroad Department of The Young Men's Christian Association of Philadelphia*.

## II. Maps



Map 2: Registry Map 058N13, 2000. Source: City of Philadelphia Department of Records, Registry Map Collection.



Map 1: 1895 Philadelphia Atlas, G.W. Bromley.



### III. Chain of Title

#### **March 13, 1867, Rufus Story et al to the Pennsylvania R.R. Co.**

*Property:* Containing 135,254 square feet (3 acres and 5 hundredths and 55 thousandths of an acre).

*Price:* \$15,000

*Source:* Deedbook JTO 26, Page 294 &c.

#### **April 8, 1869, Owen Jones et al to the Pennsylvania R.R. Co.**

*Property:* Beginning at the northeast corner of Westminster and 41<sup>st</sup> Street along the northerly line of Westminster north 83° 40.5', 27' east to the lot marked "G" of Egglesfield now the property of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, then by the said line northwardly about 153' to the intersection with the easterly line of 41<sup>st</sup> Street, and then by the same southwardly about 153' to the place of beginning. Containing 2,000 square feet.

*Price:* \$1

*Source:* Deedbook JTO 183, Page 485 &c.

#### **March 22, 1893, Pennsylvania R.R. Co. to P.R.R. Branch Y.M.C.A.**

*Property:* Being a parcel comprised of a portion of the land granted to the Pennsylvania R.R. Co. on March 13, 1867 and April 8, 1869. Beginning at the northeast corner of 41<sup>st</sup> Street and Westminster Avenue and extending northward along the east side of 41<sup>st</sup> Street 158' 4 ¾", then southeastward parallel with the line of the Pennsylvania Railroad 189' to a point, southward at a right angle with Westminster Avenue sixty feet to a point, then westward along the northern line of Westminster Avenue 180' to the place of beginning.

*Price:* unknown

*Source:* Deedbook TG 332, Page 553 &c.

#### **June 9, 1896, Pennsylvania Railroad Company to Dedication**

*Property:* Beginning on the eastern line of 41<sup>st</sup> Street distant 148' 4" northward from the northern line of Westminster Avenue – being the land dedicated for the use of the PRR YMCA by deed dated March 22, 1893 – and extending northward along the eastern line of 41<sup>st</sup> Street 53' 6 ¾", southeastward to other land of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company parallel with the center line of the Pennsylvania Railroad and distant 148' southwestward then from the distance of 265' 8 ¼", then southward at a right angle with the line of the said Westminster Avenue and in range of the western line of Preston Street 78' 10 3/8" to the northern line of Westminster Avenue then westward 73' 1 ½" to the corner of the land now in the name of the PRR YMCA, then northward 60', then northwestward 129' to the place of beginning. Containing 16,672 square feet.

*Price:* n/a

*Source:* Deedbook WMG 40, Page 487 &c.

*Note:* Land was dedicated in order to expand facilities.



**July 21, 1938, PRR YMCA to Pennsylvania Railroad Company**

*Property:* All land (described above) dedicated for the use of the PRR YMCA reverted back to the Pennsylvania Railroad Company.

*Price:* \$1

*Source:* Deedbook DWH 611, Page 121 &c.

*Note:* The PRR YMCA could not meet its financial obligations as set forth in prior documents, so the PRR YMCA released the property back to the Pennsylvania Railroad Company.

**August 10, 1943, Pennsylvania Railroad Company to V. Luke et al**

*Property:* Beginning at the point where the northerly line of Westminster Avenue meets the easterly line of 41<sup>st</sup> street and extending (1) 1°24'3" west along said easterly line of 41<sup>st</sup> Street to a point 206'6 ¾" to a point (2) south 67°59'20 <sup>87</sup>/<sub>100</sub>" east by land of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, in departing from said line of 41<sup>st</sup> Street, 433' 7 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" to a point in the northerly line of Westminster Avenue, distant 28' 9 ¼" measured south 83°40'31" west along the northerly line of Westminster Avenue from an angle point in said line (3) south 83°40'31" west along the northerly line of Westminster, 399'4 ½" to the beginning point. Containing 41,096 square feet.

*Price:* \$4,000

*Source:* Deedbook CJP 321, Page 305 &c.

*Note:* Property was owned by joint tenants with right of survivorship. Joint tenants include the following: Ms. Victory Luke, Ms. Love Light, Ms. Precious Jewel, Mrs. Stephen Love, Ms. Archangel May, Ms. Mary Devotion, Ms. Willing Love, Mrs. Ascension Olivette, Mrs. Abraham Truth, Ms. Angel Rebecca, Ms. Ann Determined, Ms. John Archibald, Ms. Harmony Grace, Ms. Glorious Heart, Ms. Freedom R. Love, Mr. Isaac Happy, Mr. Job Paul, Mr. Joseph Mind, Mr. Alfred Larson, Mr. Solomon Heart, Mr. Willing Heart, Mr. Moses Freemind, Mr. Enoch Mental, Mr. Joseph Love, and Mr. Royal Doveine.

**December 24, 1943, V. Luke et al to Unity Mission Church Home and Training School**

*Property:* The same boundaries as above.

*Price:* \$100

*Source:* Deedbook CJP 417, Page 547 &c.