NPS Form 10-900
(Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

812

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x' in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Pythian Home of Missouri

other names/site number Pythian Castle; O'Reilly Service Club; Building #501/U.S. Dept. of Army

2. Location

street & town 1451 E. Pythian St. N/A not for publication

city or town Springfield N/A vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Greene code 077 zip code 65802

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mark A. Miles August 18, 2009

Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles/Deputy SHPO Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

☒ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.
☐ removed from the National Register.
☐ other, (explain:) _____

Barbara Wyatt 10-7-09

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
- ☐ public-local
- ☐ public-State
- ☐ public-Federal

Category of Property
(check only one box)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Institutional Housing
Social/Meeting Hall
Defense/Military Facility
Recreation & Culture/Theater
Recreation & Culture/Auditorium

Current Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Single dwelling
Work in Progress

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals:
Late Gothic Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Limestone
Concrete
wall Limestone
roof Rubber
Concrete
other

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

☒See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

Pythian Home of Missouri
Name of Property

Greene County, MO
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

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

☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

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

Property is:

☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ **B** removed from its original location.

☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.

☐ **D** a cemetery.

☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ **F** a commemorative property.

☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Social History

Military

Period of Significance
1913 – 1946

Significant Dates
N/A

Significant Persons
N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Smith, Rea and Lovitt/architect

Sutton, J. H. & Son/general contractor

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

☒See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.

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 #

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☒ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☒ Other Name of repository:

U.S. Military; Springfield Main Library; Evangel University

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

Pythian Home of Missouri
Name of Property

Greene County, MO
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.66 acres

UTM References
(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	15	4/7/6/1/5/1	4/1/1/9/4/53
2	/	/ / / / /	/ / / / / /
3	/	/ / / / /	/ / / / / /
4	/	/ / / / /	/ / / / / /

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

Property Tax No. 88-12-18-101-037

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

☒See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

11. Form Prepared By

name/title see continuation sheet

organization _____ date _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets
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.
Photographs: Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.
Additional items: (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

name/title Tamara Finocchiaro

street & number 1451 E. Pythian St. telephone (417) 865-1464

city or town Springfield state MO zip code 65802

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. 470 *et seq.).*

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

Summary:

The Pythian Home of Missouri, 1451 E. Pythian Street, is located in northeast Springfield, Missouri, approximately two miles from the historic commercial center. Completed in 1913, the Pythian Home is a limestone, T-shaped, flat roofed, two-story structure with a full, raised basement. The Late Gothic Revival style building is 121 feet wide and measures approximately 190 feet from front to back. It faces south. The fortresslike building is of rubble stone construction with the exception of decorative turrets and trim which are rendered in ashlar. The thick walls are punctured by distinctive, evenly spaced, deeply recessed windows. The façade is dominated by a three-story projecting central bay with an arched entry and slender side turrets, the taller and larger of which is castellated. A broad, arcaded stone porch fills the space between three-sided, two-story bay windows centered in projecting side bays. String courses and a water table divide the front of the building into layers, emphasizing its horizontality. The building's historic name, THE PYTHIAN HOME OF MISSOURI, is incised in recessed stone panels in an ornate, central parapet with a molded keystone. With a near-pristine exterior, the Pythian Home of Missouri easily reflects its historic appearance at the time of its association with the Knights of Pythias, the fraternal order that commissioned its construction. Due to its appearance, in modern times it has come to be known as the Pythian *Castle*. Original interior features and spaces are prevalent, with most modifications dating from the 1940s when the building was a military service club associated with the Army's adjacent O'Reilly General Hospital. Apart from some water damage due to a leaky roof, the building is in very good condition. The setting has greatly changed but the Pythian Home otherwise retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

Setting

Historically, the Pythian Home stood on a terraced knoll within a sprawling, 53-acre tract that was mostly farmland. Today this knoll is the only part of the original grand front lawn that is still associated with the property, which after years of subdividing by the General Services Administration—which acquired the property in the 1950s—has dwindled to 2.66 acres. Despite its current environment of modern institutional buildings, open terrain and a vast amount of asphalt, the Pythian Home still has a commanding presence on the landscape. A straight, 800-foot access drive from Pythian Street (originally George Street) enters the southeast corner of the property and runs north-south. A wide stone staircase with rubble sidewalls and a smooth coping leads to the main entrance. Two streetlights atop concrete pedestals (installed in 1920) flank the staircase where it begins at the north edge of a parking area. There are 24 steps from this point to the building's spacious, arcaded front porch. A concrete sidewalk encircles the large south wing or main block.

Originally, the Pythian Home was alone on its acreage except for a power house, barn, and possibly a few other agricultural outbuildings. Today it has a lot of company. An Army Reserve complex is south, west and north of the property. The military's holdings include a rubble stone building with a stepped parapet that originally was a powerhouse and laundry building serving the Pythian facility (the Army used it as a guardhouse during World War II). A National Guard Armory and a Boys and Girls Club are farther north. East and northeast of the Pythian Home is the Evangel University campus which includes a football field and track. Southeast of the Pythian Home but north of Pythian Street are properties owned by ARC of the Ozarks and the Springfield Regional Center for the Developmentally Disabled. South of Pythian Street and west of Fremont Avenue (which intersects Pythian Street on the west) are small residential homes primarily dating from the same period as the nominated property—or a little later.[1]

Primary South Facade

The exterior of the Pythian Home is a combination of rough and smooth Carthage limestone, a uniformly gray, coarsely crystalline building material indigenous to Southwest Missouri. Outer walls consist of two layers of stone and are approximately two-feet thick. The outer layer is primarily squared rubble. The inner layer is a nondescript structural stone covered with two inches of plaster. Most of the coursed ashlar is in a projecting three-story central bay, but window headers, lugsills, copings and projecting horizontal bands (string courses and a water table) throughout much of the building are also smooth stone.

The primary south façade is dominated by an edifice containing a central entryway flanked by ashlar, octagonal, projecting turrets. The 121-foot façade is symmetrical except for the turrets, whose smooth surfaces contrast with the building's rough limestone walls. The east turret is more complex and also six feet taller than the west and, unlike its smaller companion, is wider and castellated. The windowless, slightly tapering turrets frame rooms positioned above the entrance on the second and third floors, but apart from enhancing the building's fortresslike appearance, their function is essentially decorative. Second floor windows above the central entryway (two per exposed side) have four-pane, rectangular transoms. Tapered, ashlar string coursing above the entryway and above second floor windows continues around the turrets and into the façade of the main block; the second floor molding ultimately wraps into the side elevations. The third story room between the turrets has the building's only Gothic arched windows. String coursing over these windows wraps into the sides of the projecting central bay. Above them the incised panels, ornate parapet with a molded keystone, and turret tops contribute to the building's lively roofline.

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[1] In December 1911,with dirt being moved and construction of the Pythian Home's foundation imminent, enterprising realtors such as W. N. Viers Realty Co. promoted the sale of nearby lots in "Pythian Park" at the "old price" of $10 down and $10 a month (Springfield Republican, December__,1911).

A large, one-story, arcaded front porch with five portals rendered in smooth, molded elements of limestone fills much of the facade. A central baskethandle archway at the top of the front staircase leads to a double-leaf entrance at the rear of the porch. The entrance features Gothic-style wood and glass doors, sidelights, and a transom with decorative tracery of varying sizes and shapes. The flanking porch openings, two on each side of the central passageway, are broad Tudor arches outlined with raised ashlar moldings. Additional Tudor arches are in the east and west ends of the porch, and an ashlar string course continues over these windowless openings. A smooth band of stone forms a base for the porch's stuccoed ceiling, and two other archways are integral to the porch itself. Skylights help illuminate it.

Beyond the porch, each outer wing is adorned with a two-story, three-sided bay window with its own small, shaped parapet in the front, below the main roofline. These shaped wall projections are in contrast with the angular versions (some stepped, some tapering) present throughout the rest of the building. Windows in these bays are accentuated by ashlar enframements and two additional smooth, flush bands of stone. Windows in the front walls are wider than those in the angled side walls. Basement windows begin where the porch ends, and an ashlar, tapered water table above them wraps into the side elevations. The basement is raised six feet above grade and features half-sized, opaque windows around the rest of the perimeter. The string course over second floor windows also continues into the east and west sides of the building.

Masonry drainage canales are located on the east and west sides of the arcaded porch. Two canales drain rainwater from the porch roof and four drain the porch floor. Just below the front roofline in roughly the same longitude as the canales are two faux battlement slots or arrow loops. Four additional slots are in the side elevations. Throughout most of the building, raised sections of the decorative parapet suggest a broad, stretched-out battlement. Shaped (semi-circular) parapets on the projecting two-story side bays look like shields. Throughout the building, parapets are topped with smooth stone coping. The parapets wrap for a few feet into the north façade of the building's three main units, each of which has a flat roof that drains rearward into the guttering system.

East and West Elevations

The east and west elevations represent the sides of the T-shaped building, the top of which faces south while the bottom faces north. The building has a depth of approximately 179 feet as measured from the front corners to the rear stone wall (or approximately 191 feet as measured from the face of the turrets; a concrete block addition extends an additional five feet rearward). These elevations, plainer than the primary south elevation, are very similar except for slightly different fenestration. Behind the main block or front wing is a short narrow segment or hyphen followed by a large, wider segment containing a ballroom and theater/auditorium followed by a narrower segment containing a variety of rooms plus a kitchen and a lounge.

The front (south) wing is approximately 50 feet deep. On the east side of this segment are six basement and first floor windows and five second floor windows. On the west side, each level has four windows stacked one over the other. The water table and uppermost string course continue from the primary elevation, then stop until the string course reappears over the second floor theater windows. East and west parapet walls of this segment are stepped and tapering, with faux battlement slots.

Directly behind the front wing, the building narrows to accommodate a lobby, stairways and vestibules before expanding again for the ballroom and theater which are centered in the base of the T. The building is indented approximately 36 feet on both sides. These midway egresses consist of double-door vestibules protruding six feet from the building and halfway between the basement and main levels. On the east is an additional entrance at the top of a short exterior stairway. The west side of the building lacks a comparable entrance but contains two windows instead. Original plans called for construction of a dormitory on the west but the Knights of Pythias sold the property without it having transpired. Stonework surrounding the windows at this location is of somewhat different coloration and appears to have been installed to allow for its (relatively) easy removal.

Beyond the indented portion is a large, nearly square segment containing the ballroom on the first floor and the theater on the second. It measures approximately 55 feet north-south (interior dimensions are approximately 50 feet by 52 feet). On each side, it extends outward approximately ten feet beyond the lobby. Except for the projecting turreted element in the front facade, the ballroom/theater portion is the tallest part of the building. There are six windows per floor positioned directly above one another plus another window on each floor where the segment is indented at the north end. On each side, two rough stone pilasters extend into the bottom of the parapet and separate the windows into pairs. Basement windows are full-sized and protected by a below ground retaining wall. Parapet walls are stepped and tapering, with faux battlement slots. The massing of this segment indicates its importance as a primary area of the interior.

Beyond the assembly rooms, the building narrows again. This rearmost portion is indented approximately nine feet on each side. While the first floor in this section has six windows, the second and basement floors each have five windows. There is no string course or water table, but first and second floor windows have smooth, oversized stone lintels and smooth stone lugsills, and basement windows have large tapering lintels. On the west elevation, a rectangular stone chimney begins in the mechanical room in the northwest corner of the basement and extends six feet above the roof. The chimney projects several inches from the wall surface, complementing the pilasters in the previous segment.

North Elevation

The north elevation is the rear, non-public façade. As such, it lacks architectural flourishes. At some point a cinder block room was added, apparently for protection from inclement weather. The side parapets wrap for only a few feet into the rear elevation, allowing water to drain from the flat roof into a gutter. Windows here are plainer than those in other elevations; they have stone lugsills but lack ashlar headers. Windows create an "X" pattern in this elevation, with at least one in each corner room and two over a central stairwell. Two smaller raised windows in the top left (east) corner have opaque glass for a bathroom. A main floor entrance is centered in the rear of the original building with a basement entrance located to the west. A wooden platform around the northeast corner is for ADA accessibility to the main floor.

A sidewalk extends northward 210 feet from the façade to the former power house and laundry building, extant but no longer part of the Pythian property. Under the sidewalk is a 240-foot utility tunnel (accessible from the northwest corner of the basement) with intact pipes that originally carried steam for heating the Pythian Home. The tunnel is blocked at the powerhouse, an attractive stone facility currently owned by the Army.

Fenestration

Fenestration throughout the Pythian Home generally follows a similar pattern, with double-hung wood sash stacked from floor to floor. The typical window design—two sizes of glass in the taller upper sash and two panes of glass divided vertically in the lower sash—is very distinctive. All windows are deeply recessed and, except for half a dozen Gothic windows on the third floor of the projecting central bay, have flat arches. Nearly all windows are operational.

Except for basement windows and a very few others, windows throughout the building are either 8/2s or 8/1s. There are two sizes of panes in the upper sash of most windows---four small panes above four larger panes. Most of these windows measure 48 inches by 72 inches with the exception of second floor windows in the theater which measure 60 inches by 96 inches. Basement windows are small, square, double-hung 4/4s.

Interior

The interior of the Pythian Home has been modified over the years but much remains that is original including the basic floor plan. Historic elements include extensive millwork, doors of various types and sizes including one set of pocket doors, large rooms with original tall ceilings, concrete structural columns, plaster walls, tile flooring, and a great deal of hardware. The building's numerous transom windows are intact, allowing natural light to filter throughout much of the interior.

Like a true castle, no wood or steel beams are used in load-bearing walls. Ceilings and floors are reinforced concrete supported by square columns, also concrete, which are visible throughout most of the building. Steel I-beams are used in the spacious second floor auditorium—measuring approximately 50 feet by 52 feet—which is located at midpoint in the base of the T. Twelve foot ceilings are standard on the first and second floors, while the basement has an 11-foot ceiling.

Behind the double-leaf main entrance in the main block or south wing is a small vestibule with double doors leading into the grand foyer. Inside the foyer, visitors find a reception room to the immediate right (east) and a receptionist/administrative room with an adjacent vault to the left (west). Beyond these are entrances to additional spaces within the east and west halves of the primary south wing—a dining room, kitchen and restroom in the easternmost section, and office space and the first floor's other restroom in the west section. Historically, this wing is where administrative offices were located along with reception rooms and sleeping quarters for residents and staff. The east side was used as a sitting room and also as living quarters for house matrons. The west side originally housed facility managers and guests and later was reserved for girls and women. A nurse's station and bathroom were also in this section. After the Pythian era, this part of the building was used by the Army for administrative purposes and as a lounge and writing room for servicemen assigned to the Medical Department Enlisted Technicians School at O'Reilly General Hospital during World War II. The nurse's station has been converted to an ADA bathroom and there have been other changes, but many of these spaces are still very intact.

The lobby and two grand cascading stairways leading to the second floor theater landing are north of the wing entrances. Directly past the stairwells are the two midway egresses through side vestibules, stairways leading to the basement, and three entrances to the ballroom. Substantially intact, the ballroom is used today as a luxury dining area. Behind the ballroom, the rear segment of the Pythian Home contains a lounge (originally the kitchen), two small rooms and a hallway.

On the second floor at the top of the stairway is the theater, the only large, walled area of the building without at least one support column. The original ticket booth is intact between the theater's two sets of entrance doors. The theater has the building's tallest windows and a 15-foot ceiling which slopes to 12 feet above the original raised stage at the north end. Two anterooms flank the stage, behind which (in the rearmost segment of the building) are six intact "greenrooms" where entertainers relaxed before and after performances. In the rear of the theater is a raised, fireproof projection room. The column-free space is accomplished through the use of steel I-beams which are concealed in a six-foot crawlspace and masked by a crisscross faux concrete beam ceiling. Acoustic tiles have been applied to the theater's beamed ceiling and south wall.

This concept is replicated in the ballroom on the floor below, where the faux beam design conceals the actual concrete beams in the ceiling. This was done primarily because the concrete floor and beams are sloped for the auditorium while a flat appearance was desired in the ballroom. All other exposed beams are solid concrete.

Stairs are poured concrete with a four-bar tread stamped by the manufacturer.[2] All original interior walls are constructed of Pyrobar fireproof block, covered with three-quarter-inch plaster. Portions of some walls including bathroom sidewalls are concrete, apparently to make them waterproof as well as fireproof. Non-original walls (fewer than 10 per cent overall) are easily distinguished from the Pyrobar originals since most of them are either of 2x4 wood and drywall construction or are cinder block. No load-bearing walls have been added or removed and the building has retained its fireproof rating.[3]

Both the east and west halves of the south wing/main block are accessed from the second floor landing. In each half, a large room is at the end and numerous smaller rooms and bathrooms are in between. During the Pythian era, this floor consisted primarily of sleeping rooms. During World War II, the Army used it primarily for administrative purposes. This part of the second floor is in relatively poor condition due to delayed roof repairs, and the large rooms have been divided although the southeast and southwest corner rooms are still fairly large. Two of the former sleeping rooms still bear signage identifying them as "Red Cross" and "Library" from their O'Reilly Service Club period.

A basement with an 11-foot ceiling underlies the entire structure. Primary access is from the central lobby. Floors and ceilings are concrete. Foundation walls, originally unfinished stone, are finished in some areas of the basement and remain exposed stone in others.

Three foundation rooms under the front porch served as a food pantry during the building's years as a Pythian home. Replete with four-inch air holes in the east walls of the two outermost rooms, these intact spaces have since been fancifully nicknamed "dungeons" although they had no such usage.

The Army modified the basement upon acquiring the building for use as a service club. At that time the boiler—non-functional today—was relocated from the power plant to a room in the northwest corner. The kitchen was moved to the basement, directly below its original location. A large room under the ballroom (originally a gymnasium with a basketball court) was converted into smaller, cinder block rooms for various military purposes including, perhaps, prison cells. In one of them, two wall paintings are rumored to be the work of a World War II prisoner of

[2] Stairs are stamped by the manufacturer as "American Mason Safety Tread Co., Junction Bldg., Kansas City, MO Pat August 30, 1892."
[3] The building is currently listed as fireproof by the Greene County Assessor.

war.[4] Under the main block, walls added by the military to create a bowling alley are intact but the equipment has been removed. All exposed stone in this wing of the basement has been covered with cinder blocks and drywall.

Hardly any modifications have been made to the exterior of the structure over the 96 years since its construction. At some point, a bas relief Knights of Pythias crest above the entrance was obliterated and a cinder block addition was attached to the rear; the addition is too small to have an impact on integrity and while not original to the building, it appears to be fairly old. Consequently, the exterior retains most of its historic materials and details from the Pythian era as well as from its years as the O'Reilly Service Club. The original ballroom, theater and many other interior spaces are substantially intact. Of the few partition walls that have been added, most are obvious. Overall, the building's architectural qualities are substantially undiminished and it continues to reflect its historic significance as a pristine example of a Knights of Pythias Home, rendered in the Late Gothic Revival style.

[4]Both German and Italian POWs were assigned to the Army's adjacent O'Reilly General Hospital (no longer extant) as laborers and, in some cases, for medical treatment, so it makes sense that cells would have been constructed in case they were needed to confine anyone at the facility who became unruly. There was also a three-ward block of buildings enclosed with a chain-link fence topped by barbed wire (depicted in historic photo) where POWs were quartered when not on work details. See the Springfield-Greene County Library's on-line collection of historic photographs of O'Reilly General Hospital and the Pythian Home at http://thelibrary.springfield.missouri.org/lochist/oreilly.

Summary:

Completed in 1913, the Pythian Home in Springfield, Missouri, is locally significant under National Register Criterion A in the areas of Social History and Military and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture.[5] Under Criterion A, the Pythian Home is meaningfully associated with the statewide charitable activities of the Knights of Pythias, a fraternal order which originated in 1864. Originally constructed as a home for needy members, widows, and orphans of the order, the building served in this capacity until 1942, documenting the concept of care by a fraternal organization for nearly three decades during the first half of the 20th century. Under Military, the Pythian Home was important for its use during World War II as a service club/recreation facility for wounded patients and enlisted men receiving medical training at adjacent O'Reilly General Hospital, and for its role in the internment of Italian and German POWs who were assigned to O'Reilly as laborers and for medical treatment. The property is also significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as a fine and imposing example of a Late Gothic Revival (or Collegiate Gothic) building in Springfield. The picturesque limestone structure was designed by Smith, Rea and Lovitt, a prestigious Kansas City architectural firm headed by Charles A. Smith. The setting has changed, but the building itself is substantially unaltered and looks much the same today as when used by the fraternal order and, later, the U.S. Army. The period of significance for the Pythian Home of Missouri runs from 1913 when it was constructed through 1946, when O'Reilly General Hospital and its associated O'Reilly Service Club were demobilized. After World War II, the building remained in military hands for several years as an Army Reserve center until it was sold as surplus property. It has been privately owned since 1993.

Elaboration: Pythian History

The Pythian movement—replete with elements of Greek mythology, Christian philosophy, Middle Ages affinities and super-patriotism—started slowly but grew rapidly during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Founded during the Civil War, the Knights of Pythias is one of the oldest secret male fraternal organizations in North America (a few fraternal orders such as the Masons and Odd Fellows are older still). Justus H. Rathbone is credited with writing *The Rituals of the Knights of Pythias*, a treatise based on Greek folklore, in 1859. This story about the friendship and loyalty of Damon and Pythias, a senator and a soldier during the time of Pythagoras, became the founding principle of the "Pythian Trinity" of friendship, charity and benevolence. Partially as an antidote to the passions unleashed during the Civil War, Rathbone and a handful of friends, primarily government clerks, instituted Pythian Lodge No. 1 in Washington, D.C. At its first official meeting on February 19, 1864, the new organization

[5]The Pythian Home of Missouri was determined eligible by the National Register of Historic Places on November 26, 1980. The DOE was in connection with the Army's request to dispose of it as surplus property.

agreed to become a secret order, meaning that its rituals, passwords, doctrines, banners and uniform decorations would be known only to members who had completed a series of initiations.[6]

The fraternal movement mushroomed over the next few decades, and by 1895 Missouri alone had 269 Knights of Pythias lodges with more than 21,000 members. At its peak in the early 1900s, the order boasted several thousand lodges across the United States and Canada.[7] In 1904, St. Louis had 33 Pythian lodges with a combined membership of 5,315. At the same time Kansas City, on the other side of the state, had six lodges with a total membership of 2,215.[8]

The Pythian organization is modeled after the federal government in the sense that it has executive, judicial and legislative branches. Local lodges (also known as subordinate lodges) are under the authority of grand lodges at the state level, and grand lodges answer to a supreme lodge (Supreme Lodge Knights of Pythias) which governs the order in North America. Dues, used among other things to help support various charities, are called taxes. In Missouri and other states with Pythian homes, a special tax provided funds for their construction as well as operation.

The Missouri Grand Lodge was chartered in 1871 by the state's original seven lodges which were located in Kansas City, St. Louis, Hannibal and Independence.[9] The first Pythian lodge was established in Springfield in 1873. By the time the Pythian Home of Missouri opened in 1914, Springfield boasted three Pythian lodges (Springfield No. 85, Orient No. 86 and Atlas No. 213) as well as several other secret societies. The local Pythians were described at the time as "one of the youngest strictly fraternal organizations that has done much for Springfield and Greene county, and which today [1915] numbers among its membership nearly one thousand Springfield citizens."[10] Along with the Pythians, Springfield had Freemasons and their various

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[6] Compiled from various sources including James R. Carnahan, Pythian Knighthood, Its History and Literature (Cincinnati: The Pettibone Manufacturing Co., 1904), p. 121; Michael W. Carr, Supreme Representative Domain of Iowa, Fourteen Decades of Brotherhood (Audubon, Iowa: Audubon Media Corporation, 1997), pp.1-6; and Knights of Pythias websites.

[7] Such significant and influential men as Presidents William McKinley, Warren G. Harding, Franklin D. Roosevelt; Vice Presidents Hubert Humphrey and Nelson Rockefeller; Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black; labor leader Eugene V. Debs; Mayor Fiorelo LaGuardia; comedian Charlie Chaplin; and numerous senators, congressmen, governors, entertainers, etc., have all been Pythians. For most of the above and others, see Notable Names Database website http://www.nndb.com/org/849/000041726/ (accessed 2/18/09).

[8] Although St. Louis boasted Missouri's greatest concentration of Pythian lodges, the state's first Pythian lodge was actually established in Kansas City in 1870, thanks to the efforts of Robert Roth who moved there from Tremont, Pennsylvania, in 1869 and began recruiting his neighbors as members. Missouri Knights of Pythias website http://www.missouri pythians.org (accessed 5/4/09).

[9] Missouri Pythians website.

[10] M. C. Smith and C. G. Young, "Secret Societies," in Jonathan Fairbanks and Clyde Edwin Tuck, Past and Present of Greene County, Missouri, Indianapolis: A. W. Bowen, 1915 (see

offshoots including Knights Templar, Cryptic Masonry, Order of the Eastern Star, Pleiades Shrine and Mystic Shrine, plus the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Woodmen of the World, Royal Neighbors, Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, Improved Order of Red Men, Knights of Columbus, Brotherhood of American Yeomen, Court of Honor, Loyal Order of Moose and the Fraternal Order of Eagles. Some of them offered more social opportunities than others but all were more or less established for the general purpose (as they saw it) of improving mankind.[11]

Long before Social Security, Pythian homes like Missouri's provided what could be considered a form of old age, health, and life insurance all rolled into one for members of the order and their families. The nation's first Pythian home was built in Springfield, Ohio, in 1894-95. Unlike the Missouri facility, however, Ohio's was specifically for orphans. Other homes built by the order or purchased and converted (through 1928) include the Pythian Home for the Aged in Harmony, Pennsylvania (early 1900s); the Pythian Widows and Orphans Home in Lexington, Kentucky (1907); the Texas Pythian Home in Weatherford, Texas (1909); the Pythian Home in Clayton, North Carolina (1910); the Pythian Childrens Home in Decatur, Illinois (1910); the New York Pythian Home in Ogdensburg, New York (1913); Ovoca in Tullahoma, Tennessee (1917?); the Pythian Home for the Aged in Decatur, Illinois (1916); the Old Homestead in West Swanzey, New Hampshire (1921); the Pythian Orphanage in Ben Avon, Pennsylvania (1923); the Oregon/Washington Pythian Home in Vancouver, Washington (1924); Kinkora in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania (1927); the Indiana Pythian Orphans Home in Lafayette, Indiana (1927); the Hines Memorial Home in New Market, Virginia (1927); and the Kansas-Oklahoma Pythian Home in Winfield, Kansas (1928).[12] The three Pennsylvania homes were purchased and converted, as were the homes in Kansas, New York and New Hampshire. Whether the homes in Kentucky and North Carolina were constructed by the Pythians or purchased and converted was not determined. But the Pythian homes in Illinois and Texas, like Missouri's home, were definitely Gothic-looking castles made of stone.

The order's original, altruistic Declaration of Principles helps explain how the Pythian home concept developed: "Founded upon the purest and sincerest of motives its [the order's] aim is to alleviate the sufferings of a brother, to succor the unfortunate, zealously watch beside the sick, soothe the pillow of the dying, perform the last sad rites at the grave of a brother offering consolation to the afflicted and caring for the widow and the orphan. Having these purposes in view, its members will endeavor to exemplify them by practical tests; and, if, by the grace of

http://thelibrary.org/lochist/history/paspres/ch17pt1.html, (accessed 2/18/09).

[11]Smith and Young, op. cit.

[12]Carr, pp. 34-46. Carr acknowledges that his records, on which this list is based, are incomplete. The list does not include a Maryland home and others may also have been overlooked.

God, they shall successfully carry out this object they will feel their mission has not been in vain."[13]

As times changed and the fraternal movement waned, each of Springfield's three Pythian lodges eventually disbanded—and the Pythian Home of Missouri itself was vastly underused even before the Army decided in 1941 that it needed the property. The Pythian fraternal order remains active today, contributing funds and support for causes such as the American Cancer Society (the current "national" charity), United Cerebral Palsy Fund, Special Olympics, etc., while also providing services and financial assistance in support of local charities. Although no Pythian lodge currently calls Springfield home, a relatively new one (Syracuse Lodge No. 437) currently meets in nearby Republic. Six other Missouri cities have subordinate lodges: Carthage, Columbia, Fayette, Independence, Lebanon and Rolla have one lodge each. In recent years, the Missouri Grand Lodge voted to take Kansas and Arkansas into its domain until enough new lodges have been established to reinstate grand lodges in those states. Currently, Missouri/Kansas/Arkansas has 10 lodges with a combined membership of only 231, which of course is a far cry from the Pythian era.[14]

What did it take to become a Pythian? Today an official website says, "If you are trustworthy, loyal, kind and brave, **we want you!**"[15] An obvious oversimplification, but modern membership requirements—as is true for virtually all of the historic fraternal orders—are definitely looser than at the time the Pythian home was built.[16] Historically Pythians sought "to make better men, better citizens, better husbands, better fathers [and] to do the most good for the greatest number." Of the Pythian Trinity (friendship, charity and benevolence), "friendship is the cardinal virtue, and its members are pledged to exemplify it by the practice of fraternity."[17] Those values apparently remain unchanged.

Elaboration: The Pythian Home of Missouri

Under Criterion A for Social History, the Pythian Home is associated with the statewide charitable activities of the Knights of Pythias in Missouri, providing shelter, care and sustenance for elderly members, widows and orphans of the order for nearly three decades during the first

[13] As quoted by W. D. Settle, History of the Pythian Home of Missouri (Kirksville, MO: Journal Printing Co., 1923), p. 29.
[14] According to Steve Glise, Supreme Lodge Secretary, Kansas has subordinate lodges at Anthony, Topeka and Wichita. Arkansas currently (as of July 2009) lacks a Pythian lodge.
[15] Knights of Pythias Grand Domain of Missouri website, http://missouripythians.org/ Accessed 5/5/2009.
[16] For example, the minimum age for applicants has been lowered from 21 to 18 and there no longer is a maximum age (originally, it had been 50). And although the *Black* Knights of Pythias organization was formed because membership in the Knights of Pythias was originally limited to Caucasians, all races are welcome today. Auxiliary branches exist for youths (Junior Order and Sunshine Girls) and women (Pythian Sisters).
[17] Settle, pp.28-29.

half of the 20th century. Under Criterion C for Architecture, the Pythian Home is a fine local example of a substantially unaltered Late Gothic Revival/Collegiate Gothic style building in Springfield, seemingly impregnable and reflecting the Pythian values of permanence and stability. Designed by the prominent Kansas City architectural firm of Smith, Rea and Lovitt, the imposing building was clearly a source of pride to the entire community, not just the Pythians.

The concept of a special, statewide home in Missouri had been considered for some time before it came to fruition during the peak years of membership. The first resolution to establish a statewide home was presented at the 1892 annual session of Missouri's Grand Lodge, meeting in St. Louis. But there were delays on top of delays, and by the time construction was finally under way in 1913, Pythian homes already existed in several states including Ohio, Illinois, Texas, Kentucky, New York and Maryland.[18] And within Missouri, homes serving members of the Masons and Odd Fellows already existed as well. While Missouri's home arrived on the scene somewhat later than others, at least it has prevailed. Ultimately more than a dozen Pythian homes would be constructed in the United States from the 1890s through the 1920s, and while each design was unique, at least a few of them were large, Gothic buildings that stood out on the landscape exactly as intended by their builders. Many existing hospitals, hotels and other large buildings also were purchased and converted into homes. While many of these homes no longer exist, the Knights of Pythias organization still supports retirement homes as part of its mission to promote the welfare of society.

Only some Pythian homes resembled castles, but whenever a home was built its size, design, and construction was overseen by the state's grand lodge.[19] Pythian homes such as the one at Springfield were not only modern but of what was considered fireproof construction as well: "The floors, stairways, roof-supports, etc., are reinforced concrete, thus making it standard fireproof, an essential feature in buildings to be occupied by aged persons and children."[20] The Springfield home was sometimes referred to as an administration building but in practice it housed all of the residents, employees and most of the home's functions including administration and indoor recreation. Dormitory wings were contemplated early on but never built. The city (in competition for the home with seven other cities) had donated the 53-acre site, and the original Pythian investment was approximately $100,000.

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[18] The long, drawn-out process was not without embarrassment to some Missouri Pythians including W. D. Settle, a member of the home's board of managers: "It is difficult to understand that it was FIFTEEN YEARS before such an institution was definitely established, and TWENTY-ONE YEARS before it was completed and in operation," he wrote in his official history of the home, using capital letters for emphasis. Settle, pp. 40-41; 57.

[19] Some subordinate Pythian lodges in Missouri also featured turrets and other "castle" elements, notably those at Bethany and Slater. Having such a building was mainly a matter of wealth; some local lodges could only afford to be tenants in someone else's building.

[20] Settle, p. 87.

At the historic 1892 Grand Lodge session in St. Louis, a decision was made to build a home which would be funded by a semiannual tax of ten cents per capita, to be known as the Pythian Home Fund.[21] Little more was done, however, until October 1907 when a committee was formed to determine the cost of constructing, equipping and maintaining the proposed home. The committee consisted of Thomas L. Rubey, Joseph H. Hawthorne, H. W. Belding, Louis Hild and Thomas McNeil. A year later, they presented their findings along with a resolution that activated a Board of Managers, set admission requirements, and allowed for the appropriation of funds for "acquiring the necessities of constructing the home."[22] The resolution was unanimously adopted. A Board of Managers was elected with Hawthorne as president, Belding as secretary, and members S. H. Woodson, W. H. Welpott, F. J. Vollmer, F. V. Loos, H. C. Steer and W. D. Settle.[23]

In 1908, subordinate lodges that had expressed interest in submitting proposals for the location of a Missouri Pythian Home were sent financial data including the amount of money projected for the project and the amount actually on hand. Information about existing Pythian homes in Ohio, Illinois, and Texas was also provided. Bids would be accepted in any of five forms: cash alone, site alone, cash plus site, site for specific price plus cash, and site for specific price but no cash. On May 22, 1909, the Board opened sealed propositions from eight cities: Rolla, Maryville, Springfield, Clinton, Kirksville, Mexico, Liberty, and Nevada. The Pythian Board of Managers visited each site but chose Springfield whose offer of 53 acres "in the direct line of the trend of the city's growth and development" was guaranteed by the Springfield Club, the Retail Merchants Association, and the three Knights of Pythias lodges located there. Although all of the propositions had merit, the Springfield tract, within a mile of the commercial center, the courthouse, the city hall, the Carnegie library, Drury College and the Springfield high school, was selected because it would "best serve the purpose."[24]

Plus although Springfield's offer apparently did not include cash, other amenities more than made up for it. Since the site was three blocks from both the end of the streetcar line and the end of the sewer line, the proposition stipulated that both would be extended in time to serve the home. The main improved street leading to the property (George Street, soon to be renamed Pythian) also would be improved under an agreement with the County Court, and it was guaranteed that gas, water, telephones, and electric lighting would be extended to the site. Water service for at least the first year would be free. Also, the Springfield school board offered to replace an existing five room ward school adjacent to the site with a modern eight-room brick

[21] Ibid., pp. 37-38.
[22] Ibid., pp. 53-54.
[23] Ibid., pp. 63-64.
[24] Ibid., pp. 65-69.

schoolhouse off the southwest corner of the property.[25] The soon-constructed Tefft School enabled the orphans to enjoy the same educational benefits as other Springfield children. The city also provided the Pythians with space in its Hazelwood Cemetery for the burial of residents.[26] Over the years, there would be 105 burials—103 elderly and two children, both 14 years of age.[27]

In its report to the Missouri Grand Lodge, the board described the tract as "very sightly, of very excellent soil, part in cultivation, but most of it in grass, and part of it is shaded by beautiful forest trees. That part in cultivation this year shows that it grows fine corn and vegetables, and its reputation is that it is very fertile and produces abundant crops whenever farmed. It has upon it a small dwelling house and the ordinary farm improvements." These agricultural details were very important since Pythian homes needed to be self-sufficient in order to make ends meet: residents would grow at least some of their own food and raise farm animals. Another important consideration was education, and the report noted that "our children may have at their very door the best school privileges without any cost whatever. The High School is about ten blocks distant and Drury College is a little nearer. In the ward schools manual training will be taught to a limited extent, but both in the High School and the State Normal a thorough course in manual and industrial training for the boys and domestic science training for our girls will be conveniently available, free of any cost."[28]

On October 7, 1909, the 53-acre site was sold to the Grand Lodge of the Knights of Pythias for the sum of $1.[29]

By October 1910, apparently, the board had selected the prestigious Kansas City architectural firm of Smith, Rea and Lovitt to design its building.[30] Two of the architects, Charles A. Smith and Walter U. Lovitt, had accompanied the board on an information-gathering tour that included the Pythian Home of Illinois, the Masonic Home at St. Louis, and the Odd fellows,

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[25] Ibid. Today the Tefft School building is an administrative building for the local school district.
[26] Ibid., pp. 99; 110-111; and "New Tefft School Contract Awarded," Springfield Republican, May 15, 1914.
[27] Many of the deaths, including the home's two suicides, occurred on site—one in 1940 and the other in 1942.
[28] Settle, pp. 68-69.
[29] Warranty deed filed October 7, 1909 with Greene County recorder's office.
[30] Smith, the senior partner, arrived in Kansas City in 1893 and became junior partner with William F. Hackney, who at the time was the Kansas City School District architect. Upon Hackney's death in 1898, Smith became the district's architect and is credited with designing more than 50 schools in the Kansas City area from 1898 through 1936. Smith formed a partnership with Rea and Lovitt in about 1907, and this firm designed such Kansas City landmarks as the 1915 Firestone Building (NR 1/3/86), 1918 American Hereford Cattle Breeders' Association Building, 1921 Kansas City Club Building (NR 11/19/02), the Jenkins Music Co. Building (NR 3/2/79), the Rialto Building, the Ridge Arcade, the Ivanhoe Masonic Temple (NR 5/2/85), the Isis Theater/Wirthnam Building and the Rothenberg & Schloss Co. Building. After the partnership ended, Smith practiced alone until his retirement in 1936. Kansas City schools designed by Smith (apparently without Rea and Lovitt) included the Hale H. Cook School in 1923, the Woodland School and the Barstow School in 1926, and the Public High School (in Liberty) in 1925.

Masonic and Pythian homes at Springfield, Ohio, after which the final plans and specifications for the Pythian Home of Missouri were drawn.[31] By October 31, 1911, the plans were complete and the Springfield Republican reported that Smith and Lovitt would soon arrive to "lay out the grounds for the work to proceed according to their plans."[32]

The general construction contract was awarded to J. H. Sutton & Son of Bethany, Missouri for $78,576. Squires Electric Co. of Kansas City received the electrical contract for its bid of $2,118.50. The plumbing contract went to Edmund & Son of Kansas City for $3,842 and the heating contract was awarded to A. Holtman Heating Co. of Kansas City for $9,508.[33] All of the subcontractors were from Kansas City, apparently because bids from local contractors were notably higher than anticipated. In fact, a west wing believed to have been in the original plan apparently was omitted because its construction would have exceeded the $100,000 budget. A 50-cent annual tax on Missouri members had generated enough money to enable construction to proceed and would continue generating operating funds, but there was not a lot of money to spare.

A groundbreaking ceremony was on November 22, 1911, and three months later construction superintendent G. C. Peck informed the Springfield Daily Leader that most of the foundation work including excavating had been completed. Thirty men including a dozen masons were at work on the home. Five-hundred feet of six inch water main had been installed to provide sufficient water for construction.[34] The cornerstone was laid on May 9, 1912.[35]

Because much of the food had to be grown on the property to make ends meet, a barn and poultry house were constructed at an early stage as was a rubble stone powerhouse which also housed the home's laundry. A small building already standing was converted into a temporary hospital for any residents who contracted a contagious disease and needed to be quarantined. Of the various Pythian properties, however, only the home and powerhouse are extant and only the home is being nominated.

Although the Pythian Home of Missouri apparently opened without fanfare in late March or early April of 1914,[36] the dedication ceremony some two months later on June 1, 1914, attracted thousands of visitors to Springfield as Pythian Knights and Pythian Sisters from

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[31] Settle, p. 72.
[32] "5000 Pythians Coming Here to See New State Home Begun," Springfield Republican, October 31, 1911.
[33] Ibid.
[34] "Rush Work on Pythian Home," Springfield Daily Leader, February 18, 1912.
[35] Settle, pp. 81-82.
[36] On March 26, a delegation of Pythian Sisters selected linens, curtains, bedding and other goods for the home at the local Heer's store and on March 27, Mr. and Mrs. G. H. Eppard of Moberly officially began their duties as superintendent and matron. See "Custodians of Home for Pythians Here," Springfield Leader, March 26, 1914.

throughout the state filled the city's hotels and boarding houses. Many also stayed in private homes while the Pythian Uniform Rank, a military-style branch that probably appealed to some Pythians more than others, arrived in force and pitched tents on the grounds west of the new building. Downtown blocks were decorated for the occasion in red, yellow, and blue (Pythian colors) along with red, white and blue and even the streetlights were tinted. In addition to music and formal dedication ceremonies, the gala affair included a parade and a meeting of the Missouri Grand Lodge. The number of Pythians attending the event was estimated at 5,000 and up.[37]

Superlatives were commonly used in discussing the Pythian Home. What the Springfield Republican said upon its completion was especially exuberant: "Adorned with all the skill of modern architecture...the Missouri Pythian Home...stands today as one of the most imposing, unique and magnificent structures in the middle west. The massive structure, located in the east section of the city on an elevation overlooking the city of Springfield, displays the striking elements of [a] style of architecture peculiar to the Middle Ages."[38]

Beyond that, the 37-room building had electric lights and city water and was heated by steam from its own powerhouse. On the first floor were living rooms for the superintendent and matron, a guest room, a reception room and parlor, a sewing room, a large dining room, a serving room, kitchen, pantry, office, meeting room for the Pythian Board of Managers, bath rooms and a vault. The second floor included an auditorium with seating for 355, a library with several hundred books, dormitories for girls and boys and bedrooms for adults, and bath rooms.[39] The spacious basement housed a gymnasium and basketball court used by the orphans, while Methodist, Christian, Baptist and Pentecostal churches alternately conducted Sunday services in the auditorium. Motion pictures (open to the public as well as the residents) were regularly shown in the auditorium, which was also used for dramatic presentations.

The significance of the home's Gothic styling was explained by Pythian historian W. D. Settle: "The style of architecture—old castle—adds beauty to strength," he wrote, "and incidentally awakens in the mind of the observer, vivid recollections of his imaginary pictures of old castles and armoured knights, galloping with sword and lance to "Combat and to conquer."[40] Elderly Pythians who resided there could rest easy, knowing they were probably safe from just about everything except death itself. By its very massiveness the Pythian Home of Missouri suggests impregnability, while turrets, battlements and various other details including faux arrow loops

[37] "Impressive Ceremonies Mark Home Dedication," Springfield Republican, June 2, 1914.
[38] "The Pythian Home," Springfield Republican, May 31, 1914.
[39] Settle, p. 88.
[40] Ibid., pp. 93-94.

and raised sections of the parapet are specifically evocative of a medieval fortress.[41] As such it exemplifies Late Gothic Revival or Collegiate Gothic architecture in America.

Missouri's Pythian Home was designed to accommodate between 50 and a hundred residents, but it was probably never fully occupied. Persons entitled to admission were members of the order in good standing who by reason of age and infirmity were dependent upon others for support, their wives in many cases, and needy orphaned children (under the age of 16). Restricted were the insane and persons considered to have a contagious or infectious disease.[42] While the Pythian home probably was never occupied to capacity, apparently it was always occupied at a comfortable level. It opened in 1914 with only 15 residents (not counting staff) but by April 30, 1915, the number of residents had increased to 32 (eight adults and 14 orphans).[43] By 1918, four years after its opening, 10 elderly persons and 20 orphans resided at Missouri's Pythian Home.[44] The 1920 U. S. census listed 21 adults, 29 children and a "staff" of four including Superintendent William J. Marr, his wife Frances who served as matron, and their teen-age daughter. By October 1922, there were 24 elderly, 16 girls and 19 boys and the cost per capita was slightly over $20 per month.[45] The 1930 census listed 42 adults, 19 children, and six staff including Superintendent F. W. Patterson. By January 1932, the home housed 17 children and 45 elderly residents, and there was a staff of eight consisting of a physician, two supervisors (one for boys and one for girls), a nurse, a housekeeper, a cook, a farmer and a fireman.[46] When the home was closed in 1942, the number of residents had dwindled to 17.[47]

Self-sufficiency was always important at the facility. Like other Pythian homes, Missouri's was not purely a charity because able-bodied residents were expected to operate all aspects of the surrounding farm and help with other chores—cleaning, food preparation and canning, doing laundry, delivering meals to bedridden residents, maintaining machinery, etc. Missouri's home was not a universal type, however, since many Pythian homes in other states were exclusively for widows and orphans or just orphans.

Glimpses of what it was like to be an orphan at the home were provided by Mildred Hall Cherry in a 2005 interview. In 1928 when her father suffered a fatal heart attack, Mrs. Cherry was

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[41] Pythian lodge halls, while typically much smaller than the homes, also tended to be designed for permanence and strength when constructed by lodges that could afford it. Romanesque Revival along with Gothic Revival were popular styles.
[42] Settle, pp. 62 and 96.
[43] Settle, p. 120.
[44] Carr, p. 37.
[45] Settle, p. 120.
[46] "Pythian Castle Shelters Old Folk, Orphans," Springfield News and Leader, January 24, 1932.
[47] "Pythian Official Confirms Sale of Home to Army," Springfield Daily News, April 27, 1942.

placed in the home at the tender age of eight. She was accompanied by five of her six siblings ranging in age from 15 months to 16 years:

"At mealtime we'd have plenty," Mrs. Cherry recalled. "Breakfast meant oatmeal, bacon and eggs. We had chickens and cows on the farm, both of which the boys helped take care of. They'd get the foodstuffs to the cooks, and then the girls had to pluck the birds. But," she added, "it was strictly forbidden for the boys and girls to talk to each other even if they were brother and sister. I think that's why my oldest brother ran away. He couldn't talk to us and felt lonesome..."

"Here we grew everything we ate, or almost. The boys took care of the garden. They did the planting and the picking, and then we girls would do the canning. Lots of canning! I don't think I ever canned anything again after I left the home. I remember I had to peel tomatoes and I'd cry; I didn't want to do it. That got me a few whippings, too," she recalled.

"When we came home from [Tefft] school, we'd do homework first and then work in the laundry. Everything went into the big washers, clothes, sheets, all of it altogether. Then when the roller drums stopped, the girls would use the mangle and iron everything. We knew our own clothes. We always wore dresses, cotton ones. We didn't know that such things as blue jeans existed...But in the home we had only a couple of dresses apiece, and our shoes had to be really bad-looking before they'd take us to the Square to buy new ones. I don't know who paid for all this, but probably it was the Pythian members," she said.

"I don't have any bitterness about going to the home. It was a 'have to' thing and Mom kept us all together the only way she could."[48]

Among Mildred's favorite memories were watching silent movies in the home's second floor auditorium on Friday nights. Members of the public were admitted for a nickel: "It was during the Depression and a nickel was hard to come by, but that old auditorium would be full. But we had our own seats and everything. For the movies it was girls on one side and boys on the other."

Orphan children at the home were not up for adoption, and after her mother remarried—approximately five years after the children were placed in the home—Mildred and her siblings were gradually reunited.[49]

Elaboration: O'Reilly Service Club

[48] Mildred Hall Cherry was interviewed by Sherlu R. Walpole in 2005. See "Life in an Ozarks Castle" in Springfield!, April 2005, pp. 36-39.
[49] Ibid.

Perhaps the Army saw some of the same qualities of permanence and strength that appealed to the Pythians when, in 1942, it took over the home and all of its acreage by order of immediate possession.[50] America was at war, casualties were arriving almost daily, and the Army wanted the property for use in connection with the proposed expansion of adjacent O'Reilly General Hospital—a sprawling complex of interconnecting, primarily one-story barrack-like buildings. The big, stone Pythian building was originally seen as ideal for a nurse's residence before it was converted into a service club instead.[51]

Under Criterion A for Military, the old Pythian Home is significant for its World War II use as a service club. Thousands of enlisted men assigned for training at the adjacent military hospital frequented the O'Reilly Service Club. Wounded patients, including many flown directly from overseas battlefields, also used the facility. The O'Reilly Service Club was in near-continuous operation (for twelve hours daily) from its opening on December 23, 1942, through at least July 1946, providing servicemen with opportunities for recreation and entertainment as well as a comfortable place to read, write letters, or just relax. At one point a survey indicated the service club was used by an average of 2,000 persons daily. The demobilization of O'Reilly General Hospital was complete by September 30, 1946, and it is likely that the O'Reilly Service Club was closed at about the same time.[52]

The former Pythian Home is also significant for its role in the internment of Italian and German prisoners of war who were assigned to O'Reilly General Hospital as laborers and for medical treatment. Missouri, with four base camps supported by numerous branch camps (O'Reilly General Hospital was one of the branch camps), received and held approximately 15,000 German and Italian POWs during World War II.[53] The number of POWs interned at O'Reilly as workers is undetermined, but probably was never more than a hundred at any one time and apparently there were no prisoner/laborers at all during the first two years of America's involvement in the war. However, a group of 14 German POWs arrived at O'Reilly for medical treatment as early as August 1943. These particular Germans were described as "hostile" and were constantly guarded. Italian POWs, however, "worked in and around the hospital virtually indistinguishable from most of the American employees."[54] On March 1,

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[50] Case No.279, Civil Order of Immediate Possession, Book 715, p. 553, Greene Co. Recorder, U.S. vs. Grand Lodge, Knights of Pythias, a Missouri corporation, June 11, 1942.

[51] Colonel _____ Foster, in charge of negotiating the Army's purchase of the Pythian property and an adjacent park, said the facility, with some remodeling, would be a "natural" for a nurse's home. "U.S. Acquires Pythian Home for Hospital," Springfield Leader and Press, December 30, 1941.

[52] O'Reilly General Hospital was not vacant for long. From February 1947 through August 1952, it was operated as a 600-bed Veterans Administration hospital. Soon after that, however, it was declared surplus government property.

[53] O'Reilly was centrally located for all three base camps in southwestern Missouri: Camp Crowder, Camp Clark and Fort Leonard Wood. Apparently there were no Japanese POWs in Missouri.

[54] David Fiedler, The Enemy Among Us: POWs in Missouri During World War II (St. Louis: Missouri Historical

1944, the Springfield Leader and Press reported the arrival of the first group of prisoners to be used as laborers, 60 Italians who would "keep grounds and roadways in repair and be housed at hospital quarters."[55]

During its tenure in the old Pythian home, the military constructed a series of cinder block rooms in the basement which may well have been intended for confinement, if not actually used for that purpose. Whether any POWs were incarcerated there is unknown, but their work assignments certainly included tasks that were centered on the building itself such as window washing. The prisoners helped maintain the grounds and roadways but the extent to which they worked inside the home, if at all, is undetermined.[56] The cell-like rooms are intact.

As it had once pursued the Pythians, Springfield through its Chamber of Commerce pursued the proposed new military hospital to be constructed in southwest Missouri, and its offer of the Glenstone Municipal Golf Course, a 93-acre tract east of the Pythian property, was accepted by the Army. Construction of the hospital commenced in April 1941, and what turned out to be only the first phase (91 buildings with 1,000 beds) was completed that August. The hospital was activated in September 1941 and the first patient was admitted that November exactly one month before Pearl Harbor.[57] However, it soon became apparent that 1,000 beds might not be enough. Determined to expand, the Army targeted the 53 acres of Pythian property which was immediately adjacent to O'Reilly General Hospital.

Although the government offered only a fraction ($40,625) of what the Pythians thought their property was worth (value estimates ranged from $125,000 to $180,000), the organization apparently did not mind selling, especially for such a patriotic cause; by that time the home had become something of a white elephant due to reduced memberships and additional options for the elderly thanks to the Social Security Act. The Springfield Chamber of Commerce added $12,500 to the Army's offer, an amount that enabled the Pythians to begin shopping for another, smaller home in the area. Given 90 days to vacate, they ended up purchasing a brick building on Springfield's South Campbell Avenue, and the few remaining residents were simply transferred.[58]

Society Press, 2003), pp. 379-383.

[55] As cited in Fiedler, p. 381. The contingent came in a convoy from Camp Clark, a base camp near Nevada, MO.

[56] See the Springfield-Greene County Library's on-line collection of O'Reilly General Hospital photographs, notably the one showing two POWs washing windows on the old Pythian home at http://thelibrary.springfield.missouri.org/lochist/oreilly/r0288.cfm (accessed 8/5/09)

[57] "The O'Reilly Shamrock", Volume V Number 34, August 15, 1946

[58] "U.S. Acquires Pythian Home for Hospital," Springfield Leader and Press, December 30, 1941; "Pythian Official Confirms Sale of Home to Army," Springfield Daily News, April 27, 1942; "Where Knights Built a Castle," Springfield Leader and Press, September 4, 1967.

Questioned in late December of that year (apparently by a local reporter) as to the need for expansion, the Army's negotiator for acquisition of the home and a small park, Colonel _____ Foster, replied, "The Army's expanding, and the number of hospital beds needed is based on experience that has never failed." At that time the hospital already had about 130 patients, the colonel said, with new ones arriving daily. "The institution is filling up rapidly," he added.[59]

East of the Pythian Home, the landscape was soon filled with additional hospital wards and other structures that the military deemed necessary to complete the complex, which ultimately grew to 258 buildings containing some 4,000 beds and support facilities sprawling over much of the military's approximately165 acres. Two-story, frame barrack-type buildings were constructed northeast of the hospital for personnel assigned to the Medical Department Enlisted Technicians School but the O'Reilly hospital buildings themselves were frame, one-story structures interconnected through a network of covered walkways. An outdoor stage was erected directly in front of the Pythian Home while the spacious front lawn became a parade ground. The old powerhouse and laundry building was used as a guard house. The Pythian Home itself was gradually transformed into the O'Reilly Service Club, although most of the changes occurred on the inside, particularly in the basement. Virtually the only exterior changes to the building involved signage: the installation of a removable O'REILLY SERVICE CLUB sign over the stone panel where the name PYTHIAN HOME OF MISSOURI remains incised, and the placement of a small sign with a caduceus where a bas relief Knights of Pythias crest, unfortunately, was obliterated to provide a flat surface.

The O'Reilly Service Club provided a multitude of activities with a plush setting. Enlisted personnel assigned to the hospital for training as well as any wounded GIs who were well enough to take advantage of the facilities were the main users. Among the building's many features during this period were a library, writing room, snack bar with soda fountain, photography lab and studio, three-lane bowling alley, billiards hall, and arts & crafts areas.[60] Dances were held in the first floor ballroom on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays with music provided by the O'Reilly Band. Professional actors, entertainers and musicians entertaining troops at the service club through the USO and on their own included Jeanette MacDonough, Alice Marble, Jane Wyman, the Ritz Brothers, Basil Rathbone, Spring Byington, Lynn Bari, Jose Iturbi, the Ink Spots, Jimmy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, Jack Teagarden, Sonny Dunham, Johnny "Scat" Davis and vocalist Sally Long, Bob Strong, Stan Kenton, Frankie Masters and Leighton Noble. Outdoor activities included a circus and boxing matches. Just as for the Pythians, movies were shown in the second floor auditorium which the Army designated as Theatre No.1.

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[59] "U.S. Acquires Pythian Home for Hospital," Springfield Leader and Press, December 30, 1941.
[60] "The O'Reilly Shamrock," Volume V, Number 34, August 15, 1946, p. 23 and "The O'Reilly Shamrock," November 21, 1945, p. 1.

Between March 1944 and July 1946, a total of 1,444 Special Service shows had been attended by 156,899.[61]

After the war, the government's need for the property lessened. In 1947, after O'Reilly General Hospital closed, the Veterans Administration reopened a portion of the hospital as a tuberculosis treatment facility which it remained until August 1952. After the service club was demobilized, the home was converted into an Army Reserve facility before ultimately being disposed of as surplus government property. Portions of the former Pythian acreage were sold as surplus property, beginning a series of reductions culminating in the current 2.66 acres.

In 1955, the U. S. conveyed a portion of what had been O'Reilly General Hospital acreage to the General Council of the Assemblies of God for use a college.[62] This college, Evangel, currently borders the Pythian property on the northeast. In 1964, additional neighboring property was sold to the State of Missouri for Arc of the Ozarks and the Department of Public Health and Welfare, Division of Mental Diseases known as the Springfield Regional Center.[63] The military meanwhile subdivided the remaining land along the south, west, and north sides of the Pythian Home and built several buildings including a new Reserve Center. No longer needed, the Pythian Home was leased to the Ozark Area Community Action Corporation from 1980 until 1993. The Pythian building and its remaining acreage was then turned over to the General Services Administration for disposal as surplus property. When the home was auctioned in 1993, the powerhouse and laundry building were not included; they remain government property today. The home itself was sold in a sealed bid auction for $4,000.[64] In 2003 the property was purchased by its current owner, Tamara Finocchiaro.

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[61]Ibid., p. 23.
[62]Quitclaim deed between the U.S. and the General Council of the Assemblies of God, Book__ pp. 384-390, Greene County Recorder, November 29, 1955.
[63]Quitclaim deed between the U.S. and the Department of Public Health and Welfare, Division of Mental Disease, Book 1333, p. 15, Greene County Recorder, March 27, 1964.
[64]Quitclaim deed between the U.S. and William Eugene Taylor and wife Rhonda Ann Taylor, Book 2290, Page 1160, Greene County Recorder, November 17, 1993.

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"Pythians Complete Encampment Plans," Springfield Missouri Republican, May 12, 1914.

"New Tefft School Contract Awarded," Springfield Missouri Republican, May 15, 1914.

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"Thousands Throng Queen City Streets," Springfield Missouri Republican, June 2, 1914.

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"Pythian Official Confirms Sale of Home to Army," Springfield Daily News, April 27, 1942.

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the Pythian Home of Missouri is shown as the dashed line on the accompanying site map (Figure 5) entitled "Assessor's Office," and dated November 5, 2004.

Boundary Justification

The boundary consists of the remaining acreage that is associated with the historic Pythian Home of Missouri with the exception of a powerhouse and laundry building approximately 210 feet north of the home which is no longer part of the property. After a series of reductions beginning in 1950, the property today consists of only 2.66 acres. An 800 foot access road from Pythian Street is included.

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Photographs

The following information is the same for all photographs, except as noted:

Pythian Home of Missouri
1451 E. Pythian St.
Springfield
Greene County, Missouri
Photographer: Tamara Finocchiaro
September 2008

1. South (primary) elevation, facing northwest
2. East elevation, facing west
3. North (rear) elevation, facing south
4. West and south elevations, facing southwest
5. Front porch, facing west
6. Grand foyer, facing north (photographer Andy Walls, 2004)
7. Ballroom, facing northeast (photographer Jack Van Matre, 2007)
8. Ballroom, facing south (photographer unknown, ca.1940s)
9. Theater, facing northeast (photographer Crystal Stewart, 2007)
10. Theater stage, facing north (photographer unknown, ca.1940s)
11. South elevation during Pythian era (photographer unknown, ca. 1920s)
12. South elevation during O'Reilly era (photographer Carl Datz, 1943)
13. South elevation as U.S. Army Reserve facility (photographer unknown, 1972)
14. Aerial view of O'Reilly Hospital with former Pythian Home slightly right of center (photographer T/Sgt. Edward Hurcomb, ca. 1940s)

List of Figures

Figure 1: Historic photo of Pythian Home on Dedication Day, June 1, 1914

Figure 2: First floor plan

Figure 3: Second floor plan

Figure 4: Basement plan

Figure 5: Site plan

Figure 1

Pythian Home of Missouri on Dedication Day, June 1, 1914
Source of photo: Anita Roberts

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National Park Service

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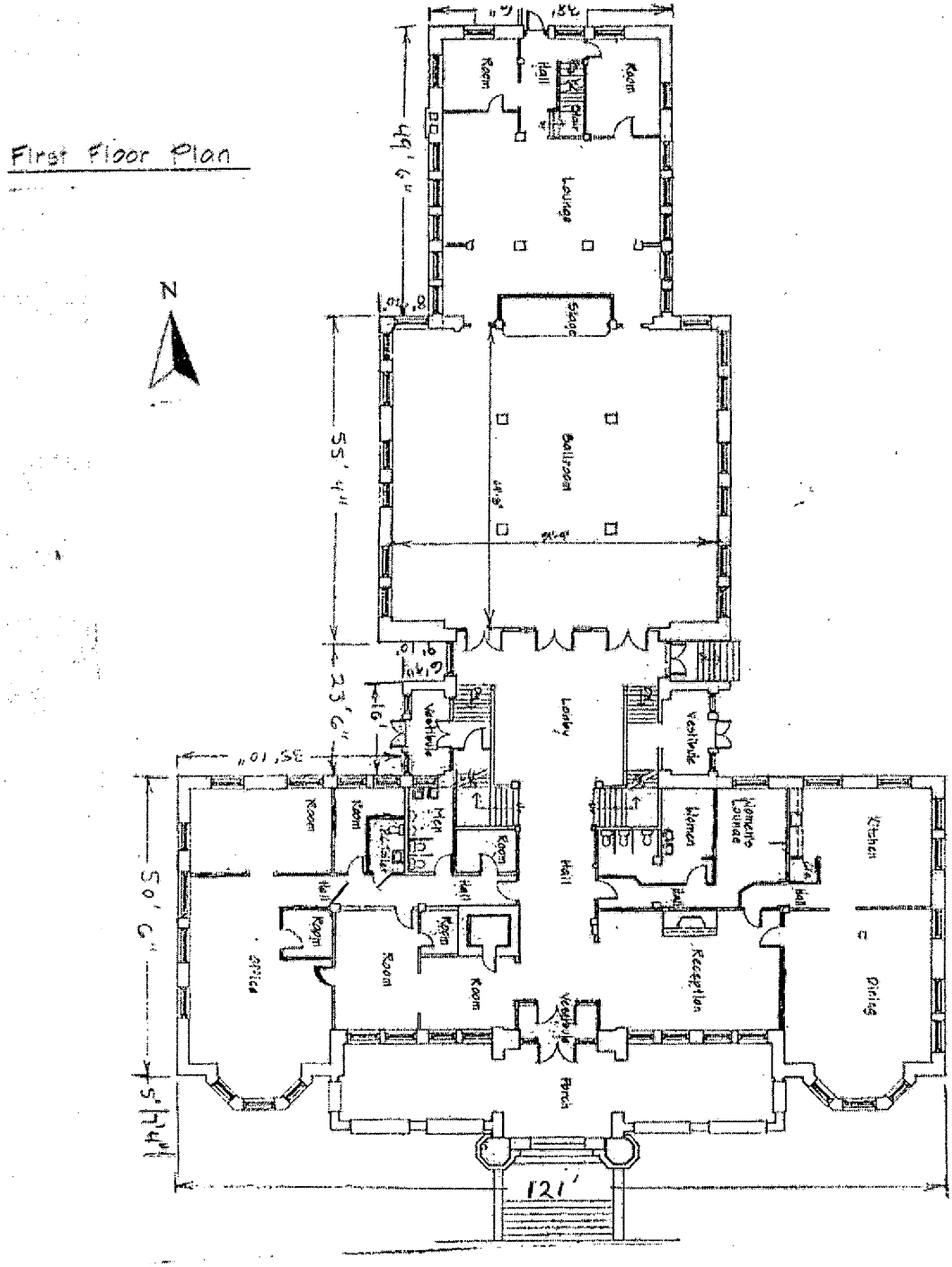
Pythian Home of Missouri
Greene County, Missouri

Figure 2



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National Park Service

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Pythian Home of Missouri
Greene County, Missouri

Figure 3

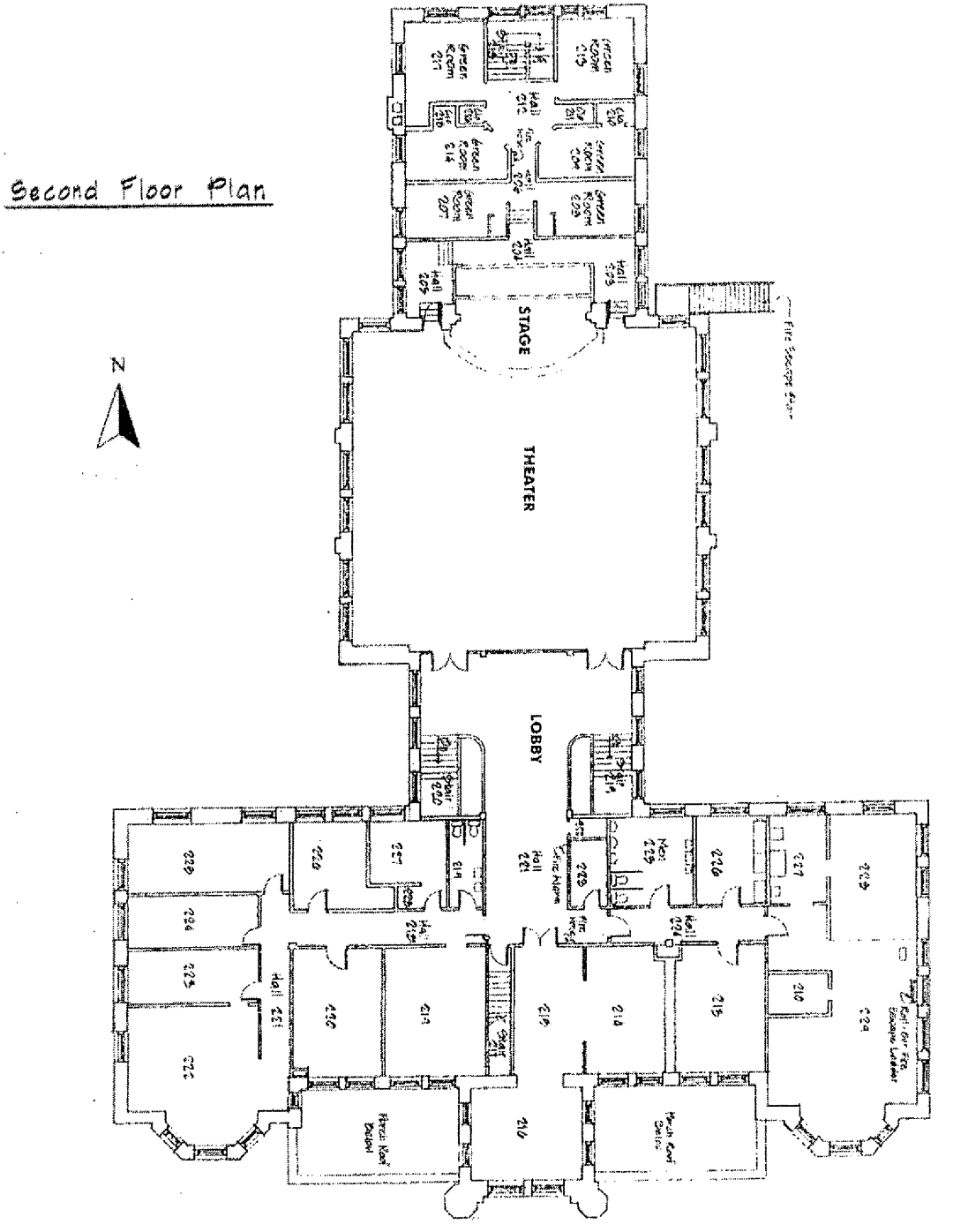
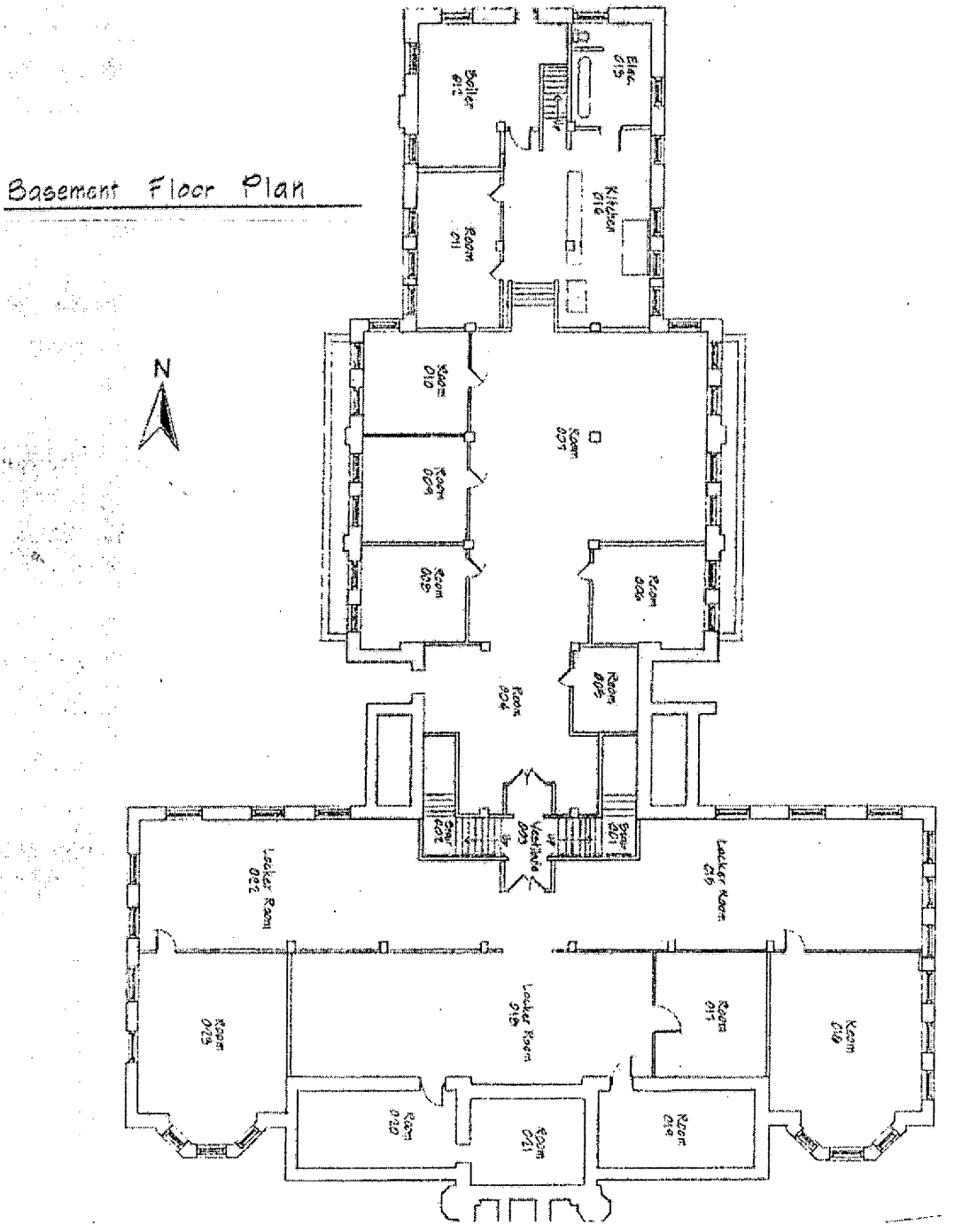


Figure 4


Basement Floor Plan
N
Boiler 012
Elec. 015
Kitchen 016
Room 011
Room 010
Room 009
Room 008
Room 007
Room 006
Room 005
Room 004
Vestibule 003
Room 002
Room 001
Locker Room 002
Locker Room 013
Room 023
Locker Room 019
Room 014
Room 018
Room 020
Room 021
Room 017
Room 016

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National Park Service

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Pythian Home of Missouri
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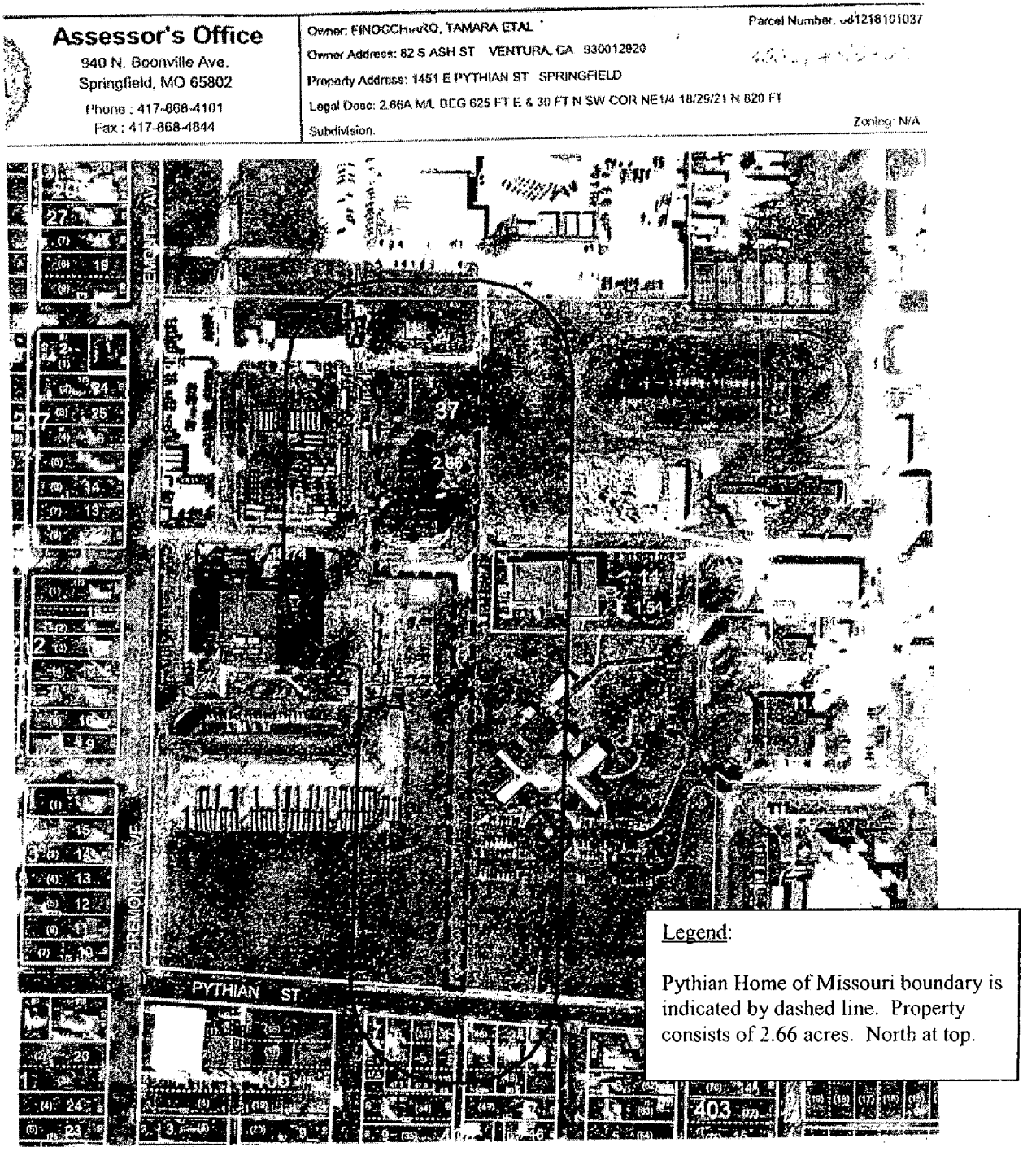
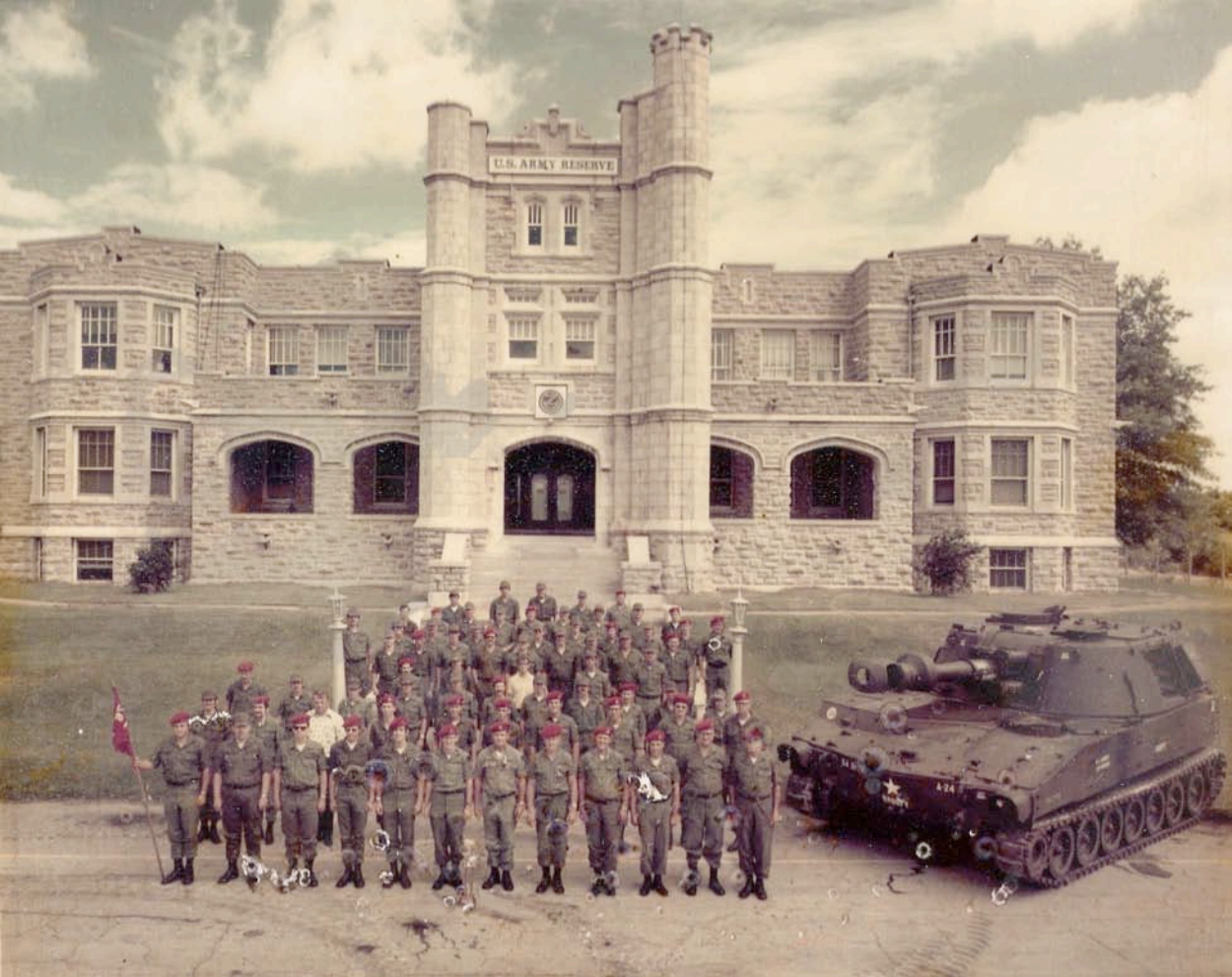
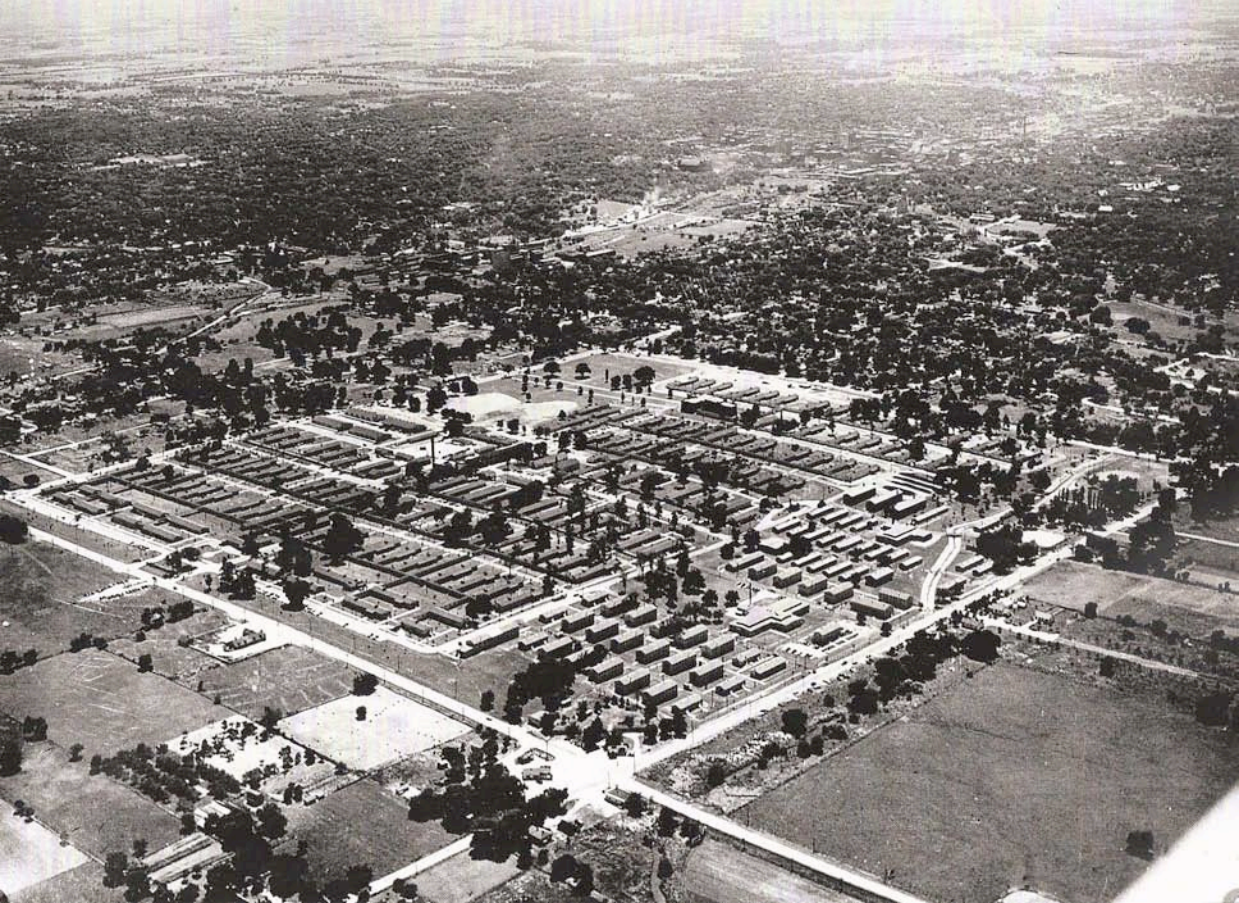
Figure 5: Site Plan



EXIT

O'Reilly Service Club


U.S. ARMY RESERVE