



South French Broad Avenue

In January 1962 at 185 South French Broad Avenue, ground was broken for a new 8,500 square foot Phyllis Wheatley YWCA branch. With a vision for the future integration of the YWCAs, Branch Director E. Thelma Caldwell initiated changing the branch name for the new location from Phyllis Wheatley to South French Broad Avenue. She believed this name change would facilitate an easier transition for the White community when integration did occur in the future.

Dedicated on December 2, 1962, the building cost \$113,000. The staff consisted of Branch Director E. Thelma Caldwell and three other staff members. The original building contained a large multi-purpose room with a fireplace, a craft and sewing room, a kitchen, a room for teenagers, offices, showers, and a conference room.



185 S. French Broad Avenue, 1970s. [0593] YWCA Collection, D.H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, UNC Asheville 28804.

From 1962 -1967, 185 South French Broad Avenue served as the Black YWCA branch. In 1967, the YWCA associations officially became one on paper. Thus, from 1968 -1970, both Whites and Blacks participated in activities at South French Broad. In 1971, when the Grove Street location closed due to financial difficulties, the physical integration of the YWCA of Asheville was complete. All



Gymnasium, 1980s. [0101] YWCA Collection, D.H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, UNC Asheville 28804.



Pool, 1980s. [0304] YWCA Collection, D.H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, UNC Asheville 28804.

YWCA services were combined at South French Broad, the newer facility. It should be noted that at the time of the merger, Whites were already using the South French Broad facility in significant numbers.

For almost fifty years, prior to 1971, the YWCA had a pool and gymnasium. The move to South French Broad created a void in such activities.

However, when the South French Broad location was acquired, the plans included a future pool and gymnasium. In 1974, a campaign was launched to raise \$425,000 to add a pool and gymnasium onto the main structure.

From the 1970s through the 1990s, the YWCA on South French Broad Avenue served thousands of children, teens and women through a wide range of activities. From bellydancing classes to breast cancer support groups, and from summer day camps to Friday night teen dances, the YWCA

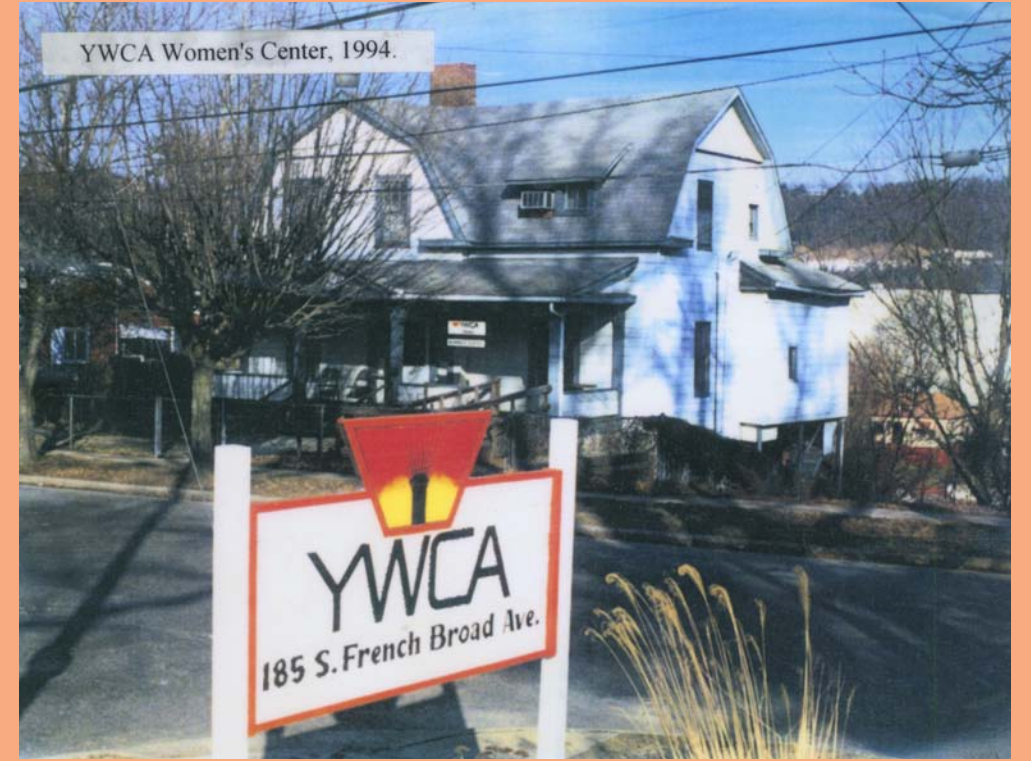


Annual Meeting in Multi-Purpose Room, 1981. [0239] YWCA Collection, D.H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, UNC Asheville 28804.

played a vital role in many people's lives. In addition to the vast YWCA programming that occurred, the YWCA was used for numerous community meetings. People gathered for reunions and wedding receptions, and several communities of faith held worship services.

In 1999, the YWCA board of directors and a broad base group of community leaders announced an ambitious capital campaign for a major renovation and expansion of the 185 South French Broad building. The fundraising campaign raised \$3.8 million dollars from over 800 donors.

Thus, at the age of forty, after years of service in the community, the South French Broad facility was completely renovated and expanded, opening a new youth services wing and a new Health and Fitness Center, Club W.



In 1987, the YWCA acquired 166 S. French Broad Avenue, a two-story house across the street from 185 S. French Broad Avenue. The upstairs served as the YWCA Women's Center and the downstairs was used for afterschool activities for youth until 1995.



Ground breaking for renovation of 185 South French Broad Avenue, 2001. (Left to Right) Leah Karpén, E. Thelma Caldwell, Elspeth Clarke, Laurey Masterton, Holly Jones. [0758] YWCA Collection, D.H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, UNC Asheville 28804.



185 S. French Broad Avenue, 2002. The renovation of the YWCA increased the square footage of the building from 23,999 to 38,437. [0755] YWCA Collection, D.H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, UNC Asheville 28804.

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