

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in 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 any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

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**1. Name of Property**

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historic name Dayton Canoe Club

other names/site number N/A

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**2. Location**

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street & number 1020 Riverside Drive   
not for publication

city or town Dayton  
 vicinity

state OH code 113 county Montgomery  
zip code 45405

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**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.)

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Signature of certifying official

Date

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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.)

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Signature of commenting or other official

Date

---

State or Federal agency and bureau

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

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I, hereby certify that this property is:

- 1 entered in the National Register
  - See continuation sheet.
- 1 determined eligible for the National Register
  - See continuation sheet.
- 1 determined not eligible for the National Register
- 1 removed from the National Register
- 2 other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

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##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- 1 public-local
- 2 public-State
- 3 public-Federal

##### Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- 1 district
- 2 site
- 3 structure
- 4 object

##### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

##### Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "NA" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

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##### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

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## 6. Function or Use

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### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture: Outdoor recreation

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### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture: outdoor recreation

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## 7. Description

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### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century American Movements: Prairie School

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### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation	<u>Concrete</u>
roof	<u>Asphalt</u>
walls	<u>Wood: weatherboard</u>
other	<u></u>
	<u></u>

### Narrative Description

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

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## 8. Statement of Significance

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### 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 a 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)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION \_\_\_\_\_

ARCHITECTURE \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Period of Significance**

1913-1954

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**Significant Dates**

1913, 1914, 1954

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**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

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**Cultural Affiliation**

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**Architect/Builder**

Undocumented, though Oliver Ritzert of Dayton, Ohio provided drawings for an addition.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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**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:

Dayton Metro Library  
Dayton Canoe Club

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** \_\_\_\_\_

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing  
1 \_\_\_\_\_  
2 \_\_\_\_\_

Zone Easting Northing  
3 \_\_\_\_\_  
4 \_\_\_\_\_  
 See continuation sheet.

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title organization Jen Stoecker  
date Sept.27, 2006

street & number 413 Harman Blvd telephone 937-369-4459

city or town Dayton state OH zip code 45419

## 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)

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**Property Owner**

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Dayton Canoe

Club \_\_\_\_\_

street & number 1025 Riverside Drive

telephone 222-9392

city or town Dayton

state OH zip

code 45405

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Dayton Canoe Club, Montgomery County, OH

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The Dayton Canoe Club located at 1020 Riverside Drive in Dayton, Ohio was constructed in 1913 in the Prairie Style. One of few remaining canoe club houses in the United States, the Dayton Canoe Club building represents the period in US history where large numbers of Americans actively pursued outdoor recreation for social as well as health benefits. The first level of the Dayton Canoe Club was constructed by the Structural Concrete Company from concrete. The second story is frame construction and features board and batten siding.

The Dayton Canoe Club reflects a popular architectural type for recreational

buildings during the early 1900s. The horizontal nature of the Dayton Canoe Club appears to emerge naturally from the banks of the Stillwater River. Intended to be the “front” of the building, the more detailed elevation faces the river, where the building clearly shows the two stories in addition to a slightly projecting veranda with large windows dominating the level. The west elevation of the building, facing Riverside Ave, appears to be only one story and ever so gently extends above the horizon, which is built up due to the levees.

Riverside Drive, extended in 1954 from two lanes to four lanes, provides the western boundary of the Dayton Canoe Club. Because the Dayton Canoe Club is orientated towards the river, Riverside Drive does not adversely affect the context in which the Canoe Club sits. A large apartment complex built in the early 1900s as well as a row of houses (ca.1900s) are located on the west side of Riverside Drive (Photo 1). A slight hill extends from Riverside Drive and six concrete stairs lead to the door of the Dayton Canoe Club (Photo 2). An asphalt bikepath runs along the western elevation of the Dayton Canoe Club (Photo 3). The Stillwater Canoe Club sits at the northern boundary of the Dayton Canoe Club building (Photo 4). The eastern boundary of the Dayton Canoe Club is formed by the Stillwater River. The southern boundary extends just south of where the Canoe Club building ends.

The Helena Street Bridge is located north of the Dayton Canoe Club on the Stillwater River. The bridge (c. 1925) concrete construction and features many of the same characteristics as the other historic bridges in Dayton (Photo 5). The Island Park Dam, which in 1917 replaced the Steele Dam (c. 1830) is located south of the Dayton Canoe Club on the Stillwater River (Photo 6).

The east elevation faces the Stillwater River and clearly represents the front façade of the building (Photo 7). The original portion of the building contains two stories, with the first story constructed of concrete and the second story featuring board and batten siding (Photo 8). A one-story concrete addition was constructed in 1914 for additional canoe storage and river access.

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The first story contains eight wooden double doors with a small square window in between each large double door. The doors are original to the building and contain metal hinges and a diagonal bead board pattern (Photo 9). Each of the doors leads to metal stairs and a canoe “put-in” that is used to move the canoe into the water (Photo 10). The original portion of the building contains three of the double doors and the addition has five of the double doors. Additionally, the pattern of small square windows continues with four windows located on the north end of the elevation.

The second story of the east elevation features a veranda that extends over two-thirds of the original portion of the building. The veranda features six window groupings with three windows each. The windows are all original and feature a pattern that is repeated in windows on every elevation of the building. The pattern consists of four small panes over three larger panes. The three larger panes on the bottom contain a large center pane flanked by two narrow panes. In this case, the pattern is placed over one large pane, or seven over one (Photo 11). At the end of the projecting veranda, three windows are grouped together with the pattern in the upper sash placed over one large pane.

The north elevation of the building contains a two story chimney (Photo 12). The first story of the chimney is constructed of concrete and the second story is constructed of red brick. Additionally, the chimney is approximately 4 feet wide on the first and second stories and is two feet wide extending above the roofline. East of the chimney on the first story is a wooden door that is original with a metal canopy (ca. 1950s). A small square window is present east of the door. East of the chimney on the second story are two original windows grouped together with the pattern of four over three in the upper sash and one large pane in the lower sash. This exact window grouping is repeated directly west of the chimney as well. A small square window is present in the first level. A row of concrete stairs lead up the levee to the bikepath and Riverside Drive (Photo 13). Though the concrete stairs are original, the iron gate and associated stone piers are ca. 1990s. Directly north of the Dayton Canoe Club is a small yard with a gradually sloping levee the features ground cover. A concrete wall is present at the bottom of the levee. This landscaping is ca. 1990s (Photo 14).

The west or rear elevation of the Dayton Canoe Club contains a broad hipped roof with asphalt shingles and wide over hanging eaves (Photo 15). The northern end of the roof is hipped and the southern end of the roof features a gable-on-hip. A metal door sits asymmetrically toward the north end of the elevation. Above the door are a metal canopy (ca. 1950s) and a neon sign that reads “Dayton Canoe Club.” The door and canopy are not original to the building. Ten small windows are present on the elevation. Each of the windows is original and features four small panes over three larger panes, which represents the pattern that is repeated on every elevation of the building. The three larger panes contain a large center

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pane flanked by two narrow panes. The windows are grouped as follows from north to south; three windows, followed by the door and four windows, followed by a grouping of three windows.

The south elevation features the one story addition (c. 1914). The addition contains a flat metal roof that is angled toward the east. A chain link fence surrounds the addition. The addition is constructed from concrete and features wood siding on the upper third of the south elevation. Concrete stairs leading to a metal door are present on the south elevation of the building (Photo 16). On the southern end of the original portion, the building features a gable-on-hip roof and a metal door, which is not original (Photo 17). Two large window groupings are located to the east of the door. One window grouping features two large windows; one with the original configuration of four over three in the upper sash, thus repeating the pattern in the windows on the other elevations. The other window contains a large pane with a window air conditioning unit. The window grouping on the eastern end of the south elevation contains one large window with one large pane. Though the original wood frame around the window remains intact, the glass is a replacement.

The exterior elevations of the Dayton Canoe Club are in good condition. All but a few of the original windows remain intact as well as many of the original doors.

The interior of the Dayton Canoe Club is defined by tongue and groove wainscoting that is stained dark and present on most of the walls and some of the ceilings. Also present are several solid wood doors. Upon entering the door on the rear elevation of the Dayton Canoe Club, a hallway is present with wainscoting covering the walls up to the plaster ceiling (Photo 18). Recessed lighting is present on either side of the hallway and a small staircase leads into the foyer of the building. The foyer is also sided with wainscoting until two feet from the ceiling, a plaster wall and ceiling begin (Photo 19). Original wooden doors are present on every side of the foyer. On the east wall of the foyer are the men's restroom and the women's locker room. The men's restroom was remodeled ca. 1970s and contains faux marble paneling, an acoustic tile ceiling and linoleum (Photo 20). One vanity, one toilet and one urinal are also present. The women's locker room was also renovated ca. 1970s and contains faux marble paneling, 12 lockers, a small closet, a two sink vanity and two toilets (Photo 21). A double door on the south wall of the foyer leads into the ballroom.

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The ballroom is a large room that features tongue and groove wainscoting on all four walls and the ceiling, with hardwood floors. The ceiling extends gradually beyond the wall height and is angled up on three sides of the room (Photo 22). Five wooden double doors are present on the east side of the room. Four of the doors lead out to the veranda; one of the openings has been blocked for kitchen remodeling on the other side. However, the opening is still visible. The original light fixtures and ceiling fans in the room have been replaced; otherwise the room is largely unchanged. A built-in bench runs the length of the west wall and another built-in bench is present on the south wall. The original wooden door is visible on the south wall, though a metal door has been installed on the exterior of the building for security purposes. Six small windows are visible on the west elevation. The windows are original and contain the pattern of four over three in the upper sash of each window that is repeated throughout the building (Photo 23).

The veranda is located east of the ballroom and contains tongue and groove wainscoting on the ceiling and board and batten siding on the east and west walls that is similar to the exterior of the club (Photo 24). The veranda has a hardwood floor. Four window groupings are present on the east side with three casement windows in each grouping. The familiar pattern of four over three is present in the upper sash of each window. One window grouping is also present on the south end of the veranda.

A pocket door leads to the kitchen on the north end of the veranda. The kitchen was expanded in ca. 1980s and includes modern countertops and cabinets on the west wall, a tile ceiling and ceramic tile floor (Photo 25). The east wall of the kitchen contains a countertop and the original windows, which continue the same pattern of four over three in the upper sash that is present in the veranda (Photo 26).

At the north end of the kitchen, a wooden door leads to the club room. The club room features tongue and groove wainscoting on all of its walls, with acoustic tile beginning two feet from the ceiling and continuing on the ceiling (Photo 27). Under the

acoustic tile is the original tongue and groove wainscoting. Another window grouping of three is present on the east side of the room. Again, these windows repeat the familiar pattern found on windows throughout the building of four over three in the upper sash and are original. The club room features several original items including a Stickley card table and chairs and miniature Old Town Canoes, used to aid in the sales of Old Town Canoes (Photo 28).

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The club room also features an original trophy case in addition to other Stickley furniture. Several trophies are present, one example is a canoe paddle that served as a traveling trophy in the 1950s (Photo 29). On the north elevation of the room, a wide brick fireplace is present with a massive mantle place supported by large brackets (Photo 30). Over the fireplace is the watercolor rendering of the expansion plan for the Dayton Canoe Club drawn by architect Oliver Ritzert in 1919 (Photo 31). The original Brunswick pool table is still present in the room (Photo 32). Wooden double doors lead from the club room into the foyer (Photo 33).

Stairs leading to the first level of the Dayton Canoe Club are accessible from the west side of the foyer. The walls and ceiling of the enclosed staircase are covered with tongue and groove wainscoting (Photo 34). Pictures of the Dayton Canoe Club's Commodores from its founding to present day are located on the south wall of the enclosed staircase. A rusticated banister and post are present. One flight of wooden stairs is broken up by a small landing followed by another flight of wooden stairs. The south wall is slightly curved on the first level along the second flight of stairs (Photo 35).

The stairway opens up to the original canoe locker area (Photo 36). The first room contains 42 lockers for canoes on the west wall. The lockers are wooden and built into the walls. The floor in the room is concrete and the ceiling is wood and contains fluorescent lighting. The east wall features three double doors that lead to the Stillwater River and the

canoe “put-ins.” At the south end of the room, double doors lead to a larger canoe locker area, the c. 1914 addition. This room follows the same design as the original, and 81 lockers are present on the west wall (Photo 37). Five double doors lead to the Stillwater River in exactly the same design as the previous room (Photo 38). Rolling metal security doors positioned behind the original exterior doors are not visible from the exterior. Three large “war canoes” hang from the ceiling in this room, originally intended to honor Dayton Canoe Club members who died in World War I.

The room to the north of the original canoe locker room is known as the “men’s locker room.” A small storage closet with metal lockers exists between the original canoe locker room and the men’s locker room. The men’s locker room features tongue and groove wainscoting on the walls and ceiling (Photo 39). A wooden support beam is present in the center of the room in addition to built-in bookcases in the northeast corner of the room. Three original single pane casement windows are present on the east wall and one on the north wall. A small closet is present on the west wall.

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The Dayton Canoe Club in Montgomery County, Ohio is significant under Criteria A and C as a rare example of a building built in the early twentieth century for river recreation that is still used for the same purpose today. Still operating as the Dayton Canoe Club, this building serves as a present day example of the shift that occurred as Americans living in cities looked to outdoor recreation and exercise as a way to spend their leisure time. In Dayton, boathouses, clubhouses and dance halls sprung up along its rivers – the Great Miami, the Stillwater, and the Mad as recreation on and around the river became a popular option for spending leisure time.

Under Criteria C, the Dayton Canoe Club reflects a popular architectural style for outdoor recreational buildings built to support Dayton’s growing interest in leisure time pursuits during the early 1900s. Built in the Prairie Style, the horizontal nature of the Dayton Canoe Club appears to emerge naturally from the banks of the Stillwater River.

Intended to be the “front” of the building, the more detailed elevation faces the river, where the building clearly shows the two stories in addition to a slightly projecting veranda with large windows dominating the level. The west elevation of the building, facing Riverside Drive, appears to be only one story and ever so gently extends above the horizon, which is built up due to the levees.

### **Importance of Rivers to Dayton’s Early Settlement**

Founded in 1796, Dayton, Ohio began as a frontier settlement with agriculture and commercial trade as its primary industries. Dayton’s three major rivers, the Great Miami, Mad and the Stillwater Rivers were important to the livelihood and even survival of Dayton’s earliest residents. Farmers and merchants traded their commerce to other nearby settlements including Springfield, Piqua, Troy and Sidney. By 1810, Dayton was a growing town with keelboats heading north and south on the Great Miami (*Dayton, Ronald and Ronald, 26*). Once completely bounded by the Mad River to the north and the Great Miami River to the west, Dayton expanded across the rivers by opening the first bridge in the area across the Mad River in 1817. A toll bridge followed across the Great Miami in 1819 (*Dayton, Ronald and Ronald, 28*).

Canals became another form of water transportation that emerged in Ohio due to the success of the Erie Canal built in 1819. At this time, most of the major settlements in the state were north on Lake Erie or south on the Ohio River. Farmers faced limitations in getting their crops to market due to periodic low water levels of the Miami River and also fish traps (*Dayton, Ronald and Ronald, 30*). The Dayton-to-Cincinnati canal was built in 1825. This canal complemented the larger Ohio and Erie Canal that ran from Cleveland to Portsmouth on the Ohio River (*Land between, Ronald and Ronald, 126*). By making Dayton even more accessible to larger cities, the canal became a significant factor in the city’s growth. In 1830, Dayton’s population was 2,954, which represented a 40% increase in two years. By 1845, the

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canal system even gave Daytonians access to New York City via the Erie Canal (*Ibid, 37*). In addition to transportation, Dayton’s canals and rivers provided power to the city’s young industries such as flour, oil and paper mills through the creation of hydraulics or hydraulic races (*Ibid, 32*).

Until the mid to late 1800s, Dayton was still primarily agricultural. The first steam engine and first steam bakery appeared in Dayton in 1851 (Sealander, 1). Natural gas soon supplemented steam as a cheaper and more efficient fuel source (Ibid). The new factories fueled by these power sources caused people to move to Dayton in large numbers. For example, in 1870 Dayton's population numbered 30,473, and by 1890 the population was 61,220 and by 1900, 85,333 (Ibid).

### **Industrialization and Leisure Activities**

Dayton provides an example of the larger transformation that was occurring across the county as the United States moved from a simple agricultural society to complex urban society (Dulles, 84). The rapid industrialization that occurred in the latter part of the nineteenth century crowded people together in cities in a way that was new to America (Ibid). Historian Foster Rhea Dulles writes in *A History of Recreation: America Learns To Play*, that the emergence of a new urban democracy brought about dramatic changes in recreational activities and their place in American life. According to Dulles, the informal country pastimes of the early nineteenth century were no longer sufficient for the growing demand for recreation outlets caused by "indoor confinement and the monotonous routine of so much city work" (Dulles, 85.)

The societal shift toward greater recreational opportunities was met originally with resistance by the prevailing Puritan work ethic, which condemned idleness and specifically forbade the playing of sports and games on Sunday (Ibid, 89). Activities such as theatre, minstrel shows, and public dance halls were especially singled out for ridicule and reproach. Church and civic leaders alike encouraged their fellow citizens to spend their leisure time in the self education opportunities made available through reading and public lectures (Ibid 92). Dayton exhibited this zest for self improvement with the "Women's Literary Club," "The Helen Hunt Club," and the "Present Day Club" all organizations directed toward improving one's mind (Conover, 231). Foreign observers viewed America as a very dull place indeed. One such observer noted, "In no country that I know is there so much hard, toilsome, unremitting labor; in none so little of the recreation and enjoyment of life. Work and worry eat out the heart of the people and they die before their time" (Ibid, 86).

By the latter part of the nineteenth century, the persistent demand for urban amusements as well as a successful movement for the 8 hour work day led to American's widespread

## **NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET**

acceptance of leisure time activities. Acting on the principal of volume production at a low cost, spectator amusements such as the theatre, horse racing and the circus attracted the wealthy and working classes alike (Dulles, 103). In 1905, the creation of a motion picture theatre named “The Nickelodeon” in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania became the beginning for widespread inexpensive entertainment across the country. Dayton, Ohio was no different and over the next 20 years movie houses flourished in the city becoming an affordable form of entertainment for the Dayton’s working class (Dalton, 8)

To this point, besides the occasional organized dance, urban Americans did not focus on their own physical exercise as a form of recreation. The lack of physical activity prevalent in America led some to champion against the widespread prejudice people held of sports as an idle diversion and to encourage more active participation in outdoor games (Dulles, 183.) Dr. Oliver Wendall Holmes lent his opinion to the new cause in *Harper’s Monthly Magazine* by blaming an aversion to sports as turning young America into “a pale, pasty faced, narrow chested, spindle-shanked, dwarfed race...” (Dulles, 184).

With national leaders and publications encouraging the pursuit of outdoor activities, people began to locate city and neighborhood parks to play sports such as croquet, archery and lawn tennis. Local Dayton business leader, John Patterson embraced physical activity as part of his employee welfare program and converted 325 acres of land surrounding his home into a country club for his employees. By 1916, the grounds included tennis courts, golf courses, baseball diamonds, hiking trails, and a playground for children (Sealander 25.) But no leisure time activity caught on quite like the bicycling craze of the late nineteenth century. In the 1890s, bicycle shops began appearing all over the city of Dayton. And clubs, such as the YMCA Wheelman, held races and sponsored group excursions (Crouch, 107).

It was in this environment of outdoor exploration and recreation that the Dayton Canoe Club began its almost 95 year existence.

### **The Dayton Canoe Club**

“The Dayton Canoe Club, first originating in 1912, must get the credit for putting boating, especially canoeing, on the pedestal of popularity which it now occupies,” the *Dayton Journal* declared in 1915 (Dayton Journal). Reaching out and sharing enthusiasm for canoeing with the larger community separated the Dayton Canoe Club from its contemporaries. One such group was the Stillwater Canoe Club, whose charter member and former Commodore, Charles W. Shaeffer, had a vision for a new club (Dalton, 15). Shaeffer envisioned a clubhouse that offered more than simply a place for canoe storage. His vision included a building that offered a ballroom, a veranda overlooking the river, and a club room for games and other

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activities (Ibid). According to the *Dayton Journal*, “The Dayton Canoe Club was formed because men wanted to see water accessible to Dayton for the health and happiness of the City” (*Dayton Journal*).

The group grew from 14 original members to 50 and on December 17, 1912 the Dayton Canoe Club became incorporated. The not-for-profit corporation was formed for “the purpose of the encouragement of aquatic sports and the promotion of social relations among its members.” The newly incorporated organization went before the Dayton City Council and received permission for a lease on the levee just below the confluence of the Miami and Stillwater Rivers and directly south of the Stillwater Canoe Club (Dalton, 15). Almost immediately, December 23, 1912, construction began on the Dayton Canoe Clubhouse.

The concrete foundation of the club was completed and the framing almost finished, when on March 25, 1913 the greatest flood in Dayton’s recorded history occurred. Damage to the city was devastating, claiming over 428 lives and 20,000 homes and commercial properties. Remarkably, little damage was done to the partially constructed Dayton Canoe Club (Ibid). A pamphlet from the time recorded some of the members’ fears, “...when the waters of the never-to-be-forgotten calamity had receded, many were the members who wended their way to the site of the new Clubhouse, expecting to find destruction, as elsewhere, but hoping for the best. But the Fates which had brought the flood were kind to us. Possibly Neptune, understanding that we three, the water, the canoe and the individual, were inseparable friends, interceded and had the angry waters pass up, around, and even through our uncompleted Clubhouse, doing but little damage” (Ibid).

Previously located just north of the site of the Dayton Canoe Club, the Stillwater Canoe Clubhouse was washed from its foundations and found down river (Ibid). Rebuilt on its original foundations at a cost of \$1,500, the former Stillwater Canoe Club building now serves as a private residence.

Though no architect can be specifically attributed to the original design of the

Dayton Canoe Club, Oliver Ritzert of Dayton, Ohio was likely involved. Ritzert was tapped in 1919 to design the addition for the facility and he became a member of the Dayton Canoe Club in 1914 (*Dayton Canoe Club Membership Roster*). His office was located in the Callahan Bank Building in downtown Dayton. The rendering that he designed still hangs above the fireplace in the Club Room of the Dayton Canoe Club today.

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In a county dominated by European revival styles at the turn of the century, both in residential and commercial properties, the architect of the Dayton Canoe Club demonstrated intentionality in selecting the newly emerged Prairie Style for the design. The Prairie School came from a group of Chicago architects at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century who sought to consciously reject the popular academic revival styles and instead to create buildings that reflected the rolling Midwestern landscape (Poppliers, 80). Characteristics of the style include; a predominately horizontal appearance with broad hipped or gabled roofs and widely overhanging eaves (Ibid). Additionally, the windows were often casements arranged in horizontal ribbons. If indeed involved in the Canoe Club's original design, Oliver Ritzert would have chosen a very different style from his previous work designing movie theaters, another popular recreational venue for turn of the century Daytonians. The inherent natural qualities of the Prairie Style proved dramatically different from Ritzert's Classical Revival Ohio Theatre (closed in 1969) and the Wayne Theatre (demolished in 1966).

Just four months after the Dayton Flood, the Dayton Canoe Club was finished at a cost of \$15,000, including furnishings. Members marveled at the convenience of having 42 dry storage lockers only a few feet away from the Stillwater River and a dock that ran the entire length of the clubhouse (Dalton, 16). In addition to a more convenient recreational experience on the water, Canoe Club members enjoyed both the Brunswick pool table and billiard table and relaxing on the veranda to the player piano or records on

the Victrola (Dalton, 19). The clubhouse was also equipped with a ballroom that was cleared for dances and other socializing. In fact, the non-canoe related features of the Club house were so attractive to Daytonians that Canoe Club members developed a special membership for those who were solely interested in a social membership. The oral history of the Dayton Canoe Club states that Orville Wright and John Patterson were some of the notables who enjoyed playing pool in the Club Room. The membership records do not indicate either man as a member of the club (*Dayton Canoe Club Membership Roster*).

The formal opening of the Dayton Canoe Club was celebrated with a regatta on July 12, 1913. Hundreds of spectators arrived to watch the festivities which included boat races such as the tilting matches, two man single paddle, the two man double paddle and the upset canoe race (Dalton, 21). The Dayton Journal stated, "Flags waved in the breeze from canoe and motorboat and clubhouse, while fair maidens cheered their favorites on to greater energy with black and orange pennants bearing the D.C.C of the club in charge" (Dalton, 21). This was the first of many regattas, which became so popular for spectators that the Greater Dayton Association sent a letter on behalf of the Montgomery County Fair asking the Dayton Canoe Club to kindly "avoid having any conflicting attractions during Fair Week" (Dalton, 28). The Dayton Canoe Club obliged and moved their annual Labor Day regatta to July 4<sup>th</sup> instead.

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In addition to regularly held regattas, the Dayton Canoe Club organized canoe excursions (Dalton, 35). On one such trip to Troy, Ohio, members left early in the morning in the spring of 1914 to paddle up the Miami River to the Troy Pike Bridge. The canoes were then loaded onto interurban freight cars while the members boarded parlor cars for the rest of the trip to Troy (Ibid). In Troy, the canoes were positioned for the trip down river to Dayton. According to one account, many Troy citizens were present to cheer on the canoes (Ibid). The excursion to Troy became a regular event for members of the Dayton Canoe Club.

In 1914, a 100 foot addition was constructed on the south end of the club. The addition provided storage for 84 more canoes and brought the membership to 100. The cost of the addition was about \$5000. "According to the latest reports, the numbers desirous of taking advantage of the opportunity to get on the list are great (Dalton, 41). "People who want to come in will have to hurry," said Mr. Coppack late last week,"

because so many are asking for admission that we will soon have to refuse application blanks” (Ibid). The popularity of canoeing was also reflected by the growing number of canoe sales in the City of Dayton. According to the *Dayton Journal*, there was an “unprecedented demand for the long, light shifts.” 175 canoes had been purchased in Dayton in the year 1915. The G.W. Shroyer Company had orders for 100 Old Town canoes. Niehaus & Dohse had sold approximately 30 of the Old Town and Carlton canoes and the Dodd’s store expected sales of approximately 30 Old Town and Mullens canoes (Dayton Journal, 1915).

The physical expansion of the Dayton Canoe Club building was not the only expansion of canoeing opportunities that occurred in Dayton. Directly across the Stillwater River from the Dayton Canoe Club, was an aging park known as “White City.” Originally owned by the White City Amusement Company, it offered a dance pavilion, canoe lockers and refreshment stands (Dalton, 37.) As early as 1911, the city began to make plans to renovate the property. However, the flood of 1913 damaged many of the buildings and washed out a bridge that provided access to the park. The condition of the White City after the flood proved too expensive for the city to consider making improvements (Ibid).

The Dayton Canoe Club began holding their regattas, with the first one held on July 13, 1913 and hundreds came to the water’s edge to view the event. The first regatta was followed by others, with each one bringing even more spectators to the riverfront (Dalton, 37). The next summer, the city began to rebuild the White City. Sand was brought in to create a beach for swimming; a new dance pavilion was erected in addition to a boat livery, canoe lockers and a motion picture (ibid). And, at the suggestion of the Dayton Canoe Club, the city changed the name of the park from White City to “Island Park” (Ibid). The Welfare Department of the city also turned over the opening ceremonies of Island Park to the Dayton Canoe Club.

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Over 25,000 people attended Island Park on its opening day and many eagerly anticipated the illuminated carnival in the evening. According to one account, “The boats

met in the lagoon with their lights out. A signal of one pistol shot was given and the lights were turned on. Two shots and the parade started. Commodore Adolph Smith, of the Dayton Canoe Club led the procession followed by a 35 foot motor boat on which the Lytle Band played” (Dalton, 38). 35 canoes from the Dayton Canoe Club followed and 15 canoes from the Riverside Canoe Club joined the procession. News reports the next day said this of the special evening, “dim, fantastic Japanese lanterns swung from 200 canoes while glaring searchlights whipped to and fro, lighting up the banks and showing the almost endless chain of spectators that held position on both sides, as the illuminated carnival passed up the river” (Ibid).

The role that the members of Dayton Canoe Club played in the opening of its neighbor, Island Park, demonstrated a strong sense of civic responsibility. The joy of river recreation was not to be reserved for an elite few, but available for all classes. The Dayton Journal echoed this sentiment while reflecting on the popularity of canoeing in Dayton in 1915, “Previous organizations concerned themselves solely with the interests of their members. Though the Dayton Canoe Club was an organization primarily for members, it has endeavors to stimulate public interest in water sports everywhere with no eye for its own material aggrandizement” (*Dayton Journal*). One reporter took this idea a step further and stated, “Though a private club in practice, it [the Dayton Canoe Club] has become municipal in purpose ” (*Dayton Journal*).

The early rosters (1912-1922) of the Dayton Canoe Club show that members resided in a variety of neighborhoods in the city and held differing occupations (*Dayton Canoe Club Membership Roster*). Many members during the early years of the club were skilled laborers; such as platers, mechanics, toolmakers, and machinists. Others held white collar positions such as accountants, bank clerks, salesmen and physicians.

By 1916, the repair of the Steele Dam (c. 1830), located south of the Dayton Canoe Club, had begun to wash away. This had an adverse effect on the Dayton Canoe Club as the dam prevented the Stillwater River in front of the clubhouse from becoming a mud flat, making it impossible to canoe (Dalton, 44). It was clear that a new dam must be constructed if the river was to be used for canoeing and swimming. Many citizens opposed the use of tax money going to rebuild a dam whose sole purpose was to hold back water for recreational purposes. Originally, the Steele Dam was used for hydraulics that supplied power in support of factory production. However, as other power sources proved more reliable than water, the dam’s role in industry became obsolete (Ibid).

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The Canoe Club circulated a petition that received 12,000 signatures after a three day canvas of the city in support of rebuilding the dam. Construction on the dam began on May 14, 1917. The new dam was to be named "Island Park Dam" and it was built 200 feet downriver from the original Steele Dam (Dalton, 44).

World War I brought the loss of William T. Clements, a member of the Dayton Canoe Club and the first man from Dayton to die in the war (Dalton, 49). In honor of their fallen member, the Dayton Canoe Club named one of their war canoes in honor of Clements.

This honor became a tradition in the Dayton Canoe Club and the war canoes are still hanging in the club's locker rooms.

The 1920s and 1930s maintained the active pace that the Dayton Canoe Club enjoyed in its first decade. Competition from canoe clubs based out of Island Park, the "Miami Tribe" and the "Mi-ah-mi Tribe" kept activity on the Stillwater River buzzing as canoe racing became a popular spectator sport (Dalton, 39). The "Wa-Ton-Ga Tribe," a female club that began in the 1930s met first at Island Park and then the Dayton Canoe Club and took many honors. During this time, women were not allowed to be members of the Dayton Canoe Club, however they were regularly seen at the clubhouse for various meetings, dances and other social activities. The 1930s and 1940s brought bridge parties to the Dayton Canoe Club and a house band or "orchestra" that played popular music of the era (Dalton, 55). Social members would dance until 12:00 midnight and then the attendees would enjoy coffee, baked beans, and potato salad prepared by the women (Ibid).

The Dayton Canoe Club produced programs for their various activities. One such program titled "Social Affairs: The Dayton Canoe Club" dated 1934-35 contained rules for dancing. One of the rules read, "Assume a light, graceful position. Neck holds and cheek-to-cheek holds will not be tolerated. Regard your reputation and that of your partner- avoid public love-making" (Dalton, 57). During the Depression, activity at the Dayton Canoe Club was still popular. Many of the social activities were priced reasonably. Members would also take advantage of the frozen Stillwater River in the winter with ice skating and ice hockey. In 1949, members pooled their money together to buy a new television set for the Club Room (Dalton, 56). Leisure time in America was shifting.

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### **A Shift in Recreational Opportunities**

In 1954, increasing automobile traffic moving in and out of downtown lead the City of Dayton to propose the demolition of the Dayton Canoe Club. The demolition would make way for the widening Riverside Drive from two to four lanes. Members of the Dayton Canoe Club held an emergency meeting and elected a committee to meet with the Dayton City Commission to discuss the situation (Dalton, 81). At this meeting, members of the Dayton Canoe Club presented a variety of ways that the club enhanced the City of Dayton, by providing meeting space for many clubs and organizations, recreational opportunities for its members, and the regattas that the club had taken over from the city that had brought many people to the riverfront (Ibid). The City Commission agreed to spare the club house although the property in front of the building was lost to the road widening project. Although the Dayton Canoe Club had won this battle with the automobile, the pace of activity at the club house was changing as widespread use of automobiles and better roads opened up new opportunities for recreation outside of the city. This shift in recreation was occurring all over the county and the Dayton Canoe Club would not be immune from it.

The 1950s and 1960s represented the beginning of a decline in the popularity of river recreation. Across the river, Island Park was suffering from deferred maintenance and the beginning of unsavory behaviors that made it unattractive for its previous patrons. Also, more and more middle class families were moving from Dayton to the suburban areas surrounding the city that had been opened up for development by the automobile and interstate system. Despite this movement away from the city, the Dayton Canoe Club maintained steady membership. However, the club's interest in canoeing was no longer buoyed by other the canoe clubs or even the casual canoeist based out of Island Park.

Despite the changing times, Dayton Canoe Club members continued to pursue their passion for canoeing. Canoe sailing became a particular interest of some of the members and the club even sponsored teams to compete in national sailing competitions. In 1965, a Dayton Canoe Club member won top honors at a national competition. This win would be followed by several others for the next thirty years. The Dayton Canoe Club continued to sponsor events over the years, including the “Canoe and Kayak Festival,” the first of which was held in 1989 in conjunction with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (Dalton, 89). This event continued for years later and included contests for the most outrageous boat design (anything that would float), kayak races, and a slalom course (Dalton, 90). In 1985, women were officially allowed to join the Dayton Canoe Club. Though always a part of the club’s activities, they were not previously allowed to vote or take part in the decision making (Dalton, 83).

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Dayton Canoe Club members continue to hold social events on holidays including the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and New Year’s Eve. Additionally a kayaking excursion is planned each spring. Today, membership is just under 200 members.

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Dayton Canoe Club Membership Roster, 1912-1970

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### Verbal Boundary Description:

The Dayton Canoe Club is bounded by the Stillwater River to the east, the Stillwater Canoe Club Building to the north, Riverside Drive to the west and a concrete stairway to the south.

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The following information is correct for all photographs:

Name: Dayton Canoe Club  
Location: Montgomery County, Ohio  
Photographer: Richard Hock  
Date: August 19, 2006  
Negative Location: Dayton Canoe Club

Photograph 1 of 39  
View of Riverside Drive facing northwest

Photograph 2 of 39  
View of west elevation facing east

Photograph 3 of 39  
View of west elevation of the Dayton Canoe Club and bike path, facing southeast

Photograph 4 of 39  
View of Stillwater Canoe Club, facing north

Photograph 5 of 39  
View of Helena Street Bridge, facing northwest

Photograph 6 of 39  
View of the east façade of the Dayton Canoe Club and Island Park Dam, facing northwest

Photograph 7 of 39  
View of the east façade of the Dayton Canoe Club and the Stillwater River, facing northwest

Photograph 8 of 39  
View of the east façade of the Dayton Canoe Club facing west

Photograph 9 of 39

Detail of one of the double doors on the east façade, facing southwest

Photograph 10 of 39

View of double doors and canoe “put-ins” on the east façade, facing southwest

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Photograph 11 of 39

Interior view of window grouping in the veranda with the repeating pattern of four over three in the upper sash, facing northeast

Photograph 12 of 39

View of north elevation, facing south

Photograph 13 of 39

View of concrete stairs and iron gate near north elevation, facing west

Photograph 14 of 39

View of yard and concrete retaining wall, facing southwest

Photograph 15 of 39

View of eaves at southwest corner of building, facing northeast

Photograph 16 of 39

View of south elevation of addition (c. 1914), facing north

Photograph 17 of 39

View of south elevation of original portion of building, facing northeast

Photograph 18 of 39

View of interior entrance hall and metal door, facing west

Photograph 19 of 39

View of foyer and doors to the men’s restroom, women’s locker room, and ballroom,

facing southeast

Photograph 20 of 39

View of interior of men's restroom facing northeast

Photograph 21 of 39

View of interior of women's locker room, facing northeast

Photograph 22 of 39

View of ballroom, facing southeast

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Photograph 23 of 39

View of ballroom, facing northwest

Photograph 24 of 39

View of veranda, facing southeast

Photograph 25 of 39

View of kitchen, facing northwest

Photograph 26 of 39

View of kitchen, facing southeast

Photograph 27 of 39

View of club room, facing northeast

Photograph 28 of 39

View of club room, facing southwest

Photograph 29 of 39

View of traveling award paddle

Photograph 30 of 39

View of club room and mantle, facing northeast

Photograph 31 of 39

View of mantle and fireplace, facing north

Photograph 32 of 39

View of club room and Brunswick pool table, facing southwest

Photograph 33 of 39

View of double doors between the club room and the foyer, facing south

Photograph 34 of 39

Detail of tongue and groove wainscoting in stairway hall with window at top, facing west.

Photograph 35 of 39

Detail of curved wall at the bottom of staircase, facing west

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Photograph 36 of 39

View of canoe lockers in the original portion of building, facing southwest

Photograph 37 of 39

View of canoe lockers in the addition, facing southwest

Photograph 38 of 39

View of hanging war canoes and doors out to the river in addition, facing southeast

Photograph 39 of 39

View of men's locker room, facing northeast

