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Still Ineligible

10.24.2007 | Campus and Community  For the second time this year, the Ohio Historic Preservation Office has ruled that Building 26 does not appear to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

The opinion came from Barbara Powers, department head of inventory and registration at the Ohio Historic Preservation Office, in an Oct. 18 letter to Jeff Wray, local architect who submitted a National Register questionnaire to the office. The University of Dayton, as the property owner, received a copy of the letter.

Powers reviewed photos of interior selective removal of architectural remnants and information provided by Wray about the eligibility of the building.

"Due to the concealment and loss of historic materials and features the building no longer appears to retain sufficient integrity to be successfully nominated to the National Register," Powers wrote.

Powers reaffirmed the importance of the history associated with the property. "We urge you to explore other means to recognize and commemorate this important aspect of Dayton's role in World War II history," she wrote.

Last month, the University of Dayton hired Steve R. Rauch Inc. to extract architectural remnants from Building 26 in preparation for the removal of asbestos and the demolition of the building. UD's Historical Stewardship Group identified remnants for preservation.

"The selective removal work confirmed the professional studies of the past two years and offered more information. For instance, the art deco façade is obliterated, and there's no sign of the NCR letters or the decorative work above the entry," said Richard Perales, University campus planning director. "There's no evidence of the original windows still existing, and the interior floor plan has been significantly altered. It's a shell of a building, one that's lost its historical integrity. We respectfully believe there's a better way to tell the story."

The University of Dayton will donate architectural remnants from Building 26 to Dayton History, whose board of trustees has committed to telling the story of Joseph Desch and the Dayton codebreakers at nearby Carillon Historical Park as part of an ambitious effort to turn the 65-acre park into a more interactive experience for visitors. UD remains committed to a commemoration on the original site.

Steve R. Rauch Inc. is in the process of removing such architectural elements as crown moulding from the front vestibule, limestone window sills and limestone art deco curves and finishes around the roof of the mothballed building, which sits at the corner of Patterson Boulevard and Stewart Street. In addition, pallets of stone lintels and original bricks have been salvaged for use in telling the story of the former NCR building, which served as a top-secret site during World War II for the development of a code-breaking machine.

Upon the recommendation of UD's Historical Stewardship Group, UD has commissioned Dayton History to complete a Building 26 oral history project. UD will create a "permanent and conspicuous" recognition of the historical events on the site. The commemoration, which could take the shape of a plaza, statue or display, will direct visitors to Carillon Historical Park.