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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.

"When it became clear that the building was coming down, our board wanted to make sure that the story wasn't lost. We want to make a commitment to sharing this story with the world," said Brady Kress, CEO and president of Dayton History. "We want people to understand, remember and get excited about the kind of world-changing events that happened in Dayton, Ohio. Research indicates that most of the building's art deco façade was lost decades ago (after renovations), but we will use the remaining art deco in any type of interpretive display."

Dayton History has commissioned the Indianapolis firm of Browning Day Mullins Dierdorf Architects to develop a master plan for Carillon Historical Park that will guide its development as the showcase of Dayton's heritage and creativity. Dayton History will embark on a capital campaign to fund the recommendations of the plan. The plan is expected to be completed later this year.

The University of Dayton has hired Steve R. Rauch Inc. to remove such architectural elements as crown molding 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 will be 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. That work starts this week and is expected to be completed by the end of September.

UD spent nearly two years meeting with preservationists, investigating whether Building 26 had retained any historical integrity and exploring the financial feasibility of alternatives to demolition. On May 31, the Ohio Historic Preservation Office said that the heavily altered structure appears to be ineligible for the National Register. That opinion verified a January study by ASC Group Inc., specialists in historic architectural assessments. On June 12, UD announced it was moving ahead to clean up 11 acres of riverfront land and remove the building as part of a Clean Ohio Revitalization Fund grant.

Kress envisions incorporating architectural elements into an interpretive display near Deeds Barn and the Sugar Camp WAVES cabin at Carillon Park. He'd also like to feature Dayton's two contributions to top-secret World War II projects — codebreaking and the Manhattan Project — in a special wing of a proposed Center for Entrepreneurship and Manufacturing at the park.

"How can I feel like Joseph Desch and break the code? That's the experience we want to create," Kress said. "It could be a dark, top-secret room where visitors feel like they're cloaked in the war effort. There could be screens that would allow a visitor to code a message. Your friend on the other side of the room decodes it. You wouldn't stand there and read a plaque. You'd get involved in being part of the story, part of history. You're not walking into a full-scale replica of Building 26, but an area that gives you that feel — with a twist."

The Building 26 story will become part of a larger effort by Dayton History to preserve and tell the story of the growth and development of NCR. Carillon Park features already the first electric cash register; a Corliss steam engine that powered and heated the NCR factory; a Rubicon steam locomotive used for switching engines at NCR from 1909-1961; and one of 60 cabins used to house U.S. Navy WAVES as they worked on the classified code-breaking project during World War II. Dayton History also manages, catalogues and preserves NCR's corporate archives.

"After the University of Dayton decided to move forward with the demolition of Building 26 as part of our master plan, Dayton History stepped up and offered to tell the story in a highly visible and engaging manner. The University of Dayton is still committed to a commemoration on the site, and we believe Dayton History is the best steward to showcase this important story," said Daniel J. Curran, University of Dayton president.

Upon the recommendation of UD's Historical Stewardship Group, comprised of preservationists, community leaders and UD
officials, Curran has commissioned Dayton History to complete a Building 26 oral history project. The Historical Stewardship Group, which supports the Dayton History initiative, also will recommend ways to create a "permanent and conspicuous" recognition of the historical events on the site. Any commemoration will direct visitors to Carillon Historical Park.

"Dayton History had planned to tell a Joe Desch story at Carillon Park. We see this as an opportunity to team up with the University of Dayton and tell this story," said Robert Connelly, a Dayton History trustee who just finished a term as chair. "We can provide an audience and an educational tool. We can put the story in context. We believe the story is critical."